

FIGHT FOR PEACE SPURRED IN CHICAGO BY AUG. 31 ACTION

**Demonstration Broke Conspiracy of Silence,
Strengthened Urge for Unity—Bared Sec-
tarianism in Communist Party**

By Harry Haywood

Chicago is witnessing a growing mass fight for peace, for the defense of Ethiopia and against fascist reaction.

The strength of this anti-war movement was unmistakably demonstrated on August 31 when more than 10,000 Negro and white friends of peace and Ethiopia, defying an immense police mobilization, united in the heart of Chicago's Black Belt in one of the largest and most militant anti-war demonstrations ever witnessed in the city.

Called by the Joint Conference for the Defense of Ethiopia, representing many organizations, including Negro churches, trade unions, lodges, Italian workers' groups, the Socialist and Communist parties, the August 31 demonstration was an undoubted step forward. It laid a definite basis for the development of a powerful people's movement for peace and in defense of Ethiopia.

Silence of Press Broken

The results of this militant demonstration were definite and far-reaching. First, it broke through the conspiracy of silence established by the capitalist press on the mass fight against Mussolini's war plans. The demonstration forced front page headlines in all the papers. As a result tens of thousands now know of the Joint Conference and its program for Ethiopia. Friends of peace now know that there is a militant center around which they can rally.

Second, the entire city, shocked by the brutal attack on the parade and the wholesale arrests (more than 500), was made aware of the systematic and deliberate policy of police brutality by which the city authorities are attempting to suppress civil rights. Intense indignation is widespread throughout the city, an indignation which is confined not only to the working class but to many small merchants, professionals, and other observers not directly involved in the parade, who were indiscriminately attacked by the police.

United Front Spurred

As a result, the movement, after the August 31 demonstration is assuming even broader character and is developing into the widest front against the menace of fascist reaction and the denial of civil rights, a menace that the people can see emanates directly from the city administration of Chicago. Already, a wide protest movement is under way on the South Side, with middle class elements playing an active part, demanding an investigation of police brutality. It is noteworthy that this movement is being sponsored by the Interracial Commission of the Chicago Urban League and the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee.

Especially, as a result of the August 31st demonstration, the prestige of the united front and the Communist Party has grown. The Communist Party now stands clearly before thousands on the South Side and throughout the city as a front rank militant fighter for the United Front and for the immediate needs and rights of the masses.

In addition the Party on the South Side itself has been strengthened by a renewed determination to work actively among the masses. Pessimism is being eliminated and a big step forward has been taken in overcoming remnants of sectarianism. This is particularly shown in Section 7 in the healthy enthusiasm for the Daily Worker drive and the considerable gains in recruitment into the Party.

Enemies Isolated

Finally, the position of the United Front has been strengthened in relation to those elements who resisted and opposed it. We are in a much stronger position now in relation to such people as Rev. H. C. Austin, who backed out of the united front, Robert Ephraim of the Negro World Alliance (a Garvey organization), who sought to hinder the united front, and the Chicago Defender, which consistently sabotaged the movement by withholding publicity. This result has come about despite the fact that Rev. Austin's defection did hurt the movement at first by keeping many of the churches out of the joint action. (Rev. Austin is minister of an influential Negro church and chairman of the Baptist Ministerial Alliance.) In short, the situation since August 31 has shifted definitely in favor of joint action by all groups.

The demonstration showed to the masses that the program of certain reactionaries is wholly lacking in real elements of effective struggle for Ethiopia and brought the masses more and more to the militant program of struggle of the Joint Conference.

A real achievement was the decision of the Socialist Party of Cook County to actively participate in this broad united front.

With the success of this demonstration, the Joint Conference must now lose no time in consolidating its gains and go forward to strengthening and broadening the united front, involving new organizations and new masses.

Weaknesses of Party

In this connection, it is necessary for the Communist Party to analyze some of its own weaknesses. Insufficient efforts were made to involve the membership of the various mass organizations such as churches, trade unions, in the active participation in the united front. We also failed to work energetically toward extending the committee in order to involve other leaders and organizations, particularly unions and churches. As a result, we were unable to take advantage of the possibilities for a really broad united front. The united front work remained chiefly the property of the

leading committees, with the lower Party organizations, the units, etc., insufficiently involved in building the united front through approaching the mass organizations churches, clubs, unions, etc., in their neighborhoods. In other words, the units were not active centers of the united front in their territories, as called for in the decision of the May plenum of the Central Committee.

Another distinct weakness of the Party was its lack of initiative in carrying through independent actions such as street meetings, demonstrations, etc., in order to arouse the masses.

We can therefore say that an outstanding weakness which hindered the broadening of the united front up to August 31 was the failure to sufficiently involve the lower organizations of the Party, the Party membership, as active builders and carriers of the united front. Why was this so?

There were two reasons. First, as pointed out by the May plenum of the Central Committee, the preparations for August 31 revealed organizational looseness in the Party, with the Party organizations failing to act with the needed speed as a result of the weak ties between the leading committees and the units.

Remnants of Sectarianism

Second, the August 31 preparations revealed strong remnants of sectarianism which still exist among some sections of the membership and functionaries. The sectarian moods in the Party were shown in a hesitancy to approach the mass organizations and their membership with proposals for joint action in defense of Ethiopia. But it was in the attitude of certain comrades on the South Side that this sectarianism took the sharpest form in the theory that the section leadership, by its negotiations for united front with the reformist leaders, was making "a peace pact" with reformism, was "too trusting," and was relaxing its vigilance against reformism; that these negotiations of the Party on joint action for Ethiopia endangered the position of the Party and its leadership.

There was an erroneous counterposing of the united front "either" from the top "or" from below, forgetting that the united front is carried through simultaneously above and below. Such a sectarian attitude fails to differentiate between various types of leaders—between reactionaries and those who are willing to unite for the defense of democratic rights and against fascism. It also fails to consider that among the various leaders there are many who are honestly against fascism and war; people who can and must be won for the people's front.

Underneath all this is revealed a deep distrust of the Party's bold united front activities. It is the expression of an ill-concealed fear that the Party will not be able to work successfully in joint action on a minimum program with non-Party elements; that the Party must avoid the risks of such joint action. It is clear that in the present situation such an attitude, rooted in sectarianism, blocks the path to winning the broadest masses for joint struggle against war and fascism and for the building of a genuine people's front.

In the face of this situation, two lessons stand out. There is an urgent need for the carrying through of the decisions of the May Plenum of the Central Committee for the improvement of the fighting fitness of the lower Party organizations and their ability to lead the masses through a tightening of the Party organizations and strengthening the work of the Party units through improving the links between the section committees and the lower organizations to make the units real centers of the united front in their neighborhood. There must be a clarification in the Party on the united front tactic as outlined in the speeches of Dimitroff and Browder, etc., and the resolutions of the Seventh Congress.

The united front is being broadened through two main actions; the Open Hearing on Police Brutality to be held Oct. 21, at Warwick Hall, 543 E. 47th St.; and the city-wide Conference for the Defense of Peace and the People of Ethiopia, to be held at Lincoln Center, Oct. 23, 700 Oakwood Blvd.

The city-wide Conference will meet to carry forward the organization of the movement for Ethiopia and will discuss plans for another demonstration for peace and against fascism.

The Open Hearing will dramatize, through the reading of affidavits and the giving of evidence by people arrested and beaten, of the police brutality; the menace of this brutality and the growing threat of fascism to all progressive movements in the city. Affidavits are going to be collected and a jury of prominent people, liberals, professionals and others is being formed to prepare the plans of the mass hearing.

The sentiment for struggle in defense of Ethiopia, for civil rights, and against fascism is deep and strong in Chicago. With proper work a mighty mass movement can be created on the basis of the successes already achieved on August 31. Forward to building a wide People's Front, in the fight against fascism and war in the city of Chicago!

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