

## CHAPTER IX

### THE UNITED FRONT

THE united front is the central question before the working people in the United States. It is the only way to fight off the imminent danger of fascism and war. Unless the toilers unite their ranks, the reactionary forces will bring fascism to America. The Tories of the Liberty League are gathering all their forces to prevent the organization of the workers, and break up the trade unions. Civil liberties are being denied to all who try to use their democratic rights to improve their conditions. Yet, while the reactionaries unite, there is great division among those who must fight against this menace. We cannot wait until fascism is actually victorious in the United States before we build the united front.

It should be possible, first of all, to reunite the Socialists and Communists. There are many serious differences between the two parties on the question of the road to socialism. But we agree on the fundamental issue that capitalism must be abolished, that we must strive to establish socialism. The differences between us are growing smaller. Even on the most fundamental differences which still remain, we no longer face an unbridgeable gulf.

The militant wing of the Socialist Party narrowed down this difference when they abandoned their old dogma that never could the Communist answer to fundamental questions be accepted. This was well expressed in the words of Norman Thomas:

"But to press this principle into the demand that Socialists must swear that they can never conceive of any circumstances that will justify armed insurrection, or to compel Socialists to affirm a blind belief in a romantic parliamentarianism is complete and unsocialist folly. What we have to do in the future will be determined far more by events than by fine spun theoretical speculation or dogmatic affirmation." (*Socialist Call*, April 20, 1935.)

From the Communist side we have also narrowed this gulf. In the most determined fashion we are removing every remnant of sectarian attitudes on the question of fighting for the preservation of all democratic liberties. At the recent historic Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, George Dimitroff, its present General Secretary, made this very clear when he said:

"We are adherents of Soviet democracy, the democracy of the toilers, the most consistent democracy in the world. But in capitalist countries we defend and shall continue to defend every inch of bourgeois democratic liberties which are being attacked by fascism and bourgeois reaction, because the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat so dictate."

In the previous chapter we discussed how Socialists and Communists differ on the methods of bourgeois democracy or proletarian dictatorship as the way to socialism. But everyone will agree that, regardless of what is the final road to socialism, the immediate task is to strengthen the American workers, so that they can successfully defend their economic and political interests. In the final analysis, life itself will show the workers and the other toiling sections of the population whether the Communist or Socialist answer is correct. In the meantime, no Socialist movement can be called effective which does not battle every day for the needs and demands of the toiling people. We propose that we shall have united

action to achieve this end. In the course of experience the masses will decide who is right on all the questions on which Communists and Socialists still disagree.

Many Left-wing Socialists, in particular their leader, Norman Thomas, raise questions of sincerity and good faith. Our answer to this is that a few weeks of united effort to save Angelo Herndon did more to prove sincerity on all sides than years of argument. We could split hairs for years about sincerity, and get nowhere. But as the experience of Socialists and Communists in France and Italy has shown, joint action will quickly remove the bitter prejudices that are a hangover from the past political fight of the two parties.

Socialists and Communists both agree that we must organize the unorganized, and build a powerful trade union movement. These unorganized millions must be brought into strong fighting industrial unions. United activity between Socialists and Communists will give a tremendous push forward to the industrial union forces within the A. F. of L. Militant Socialists have in many cases found it necessary and possible to work with Communists against the disruptive policies of the reactionary bureaucracy, even against the Old Guard wing of their Party, which supports the Red-baiters in the unions.

At the 55th Convention of the A. F. of L., militant Socialists united with Communists on all important issues. Through united action they were together able to play a big part in strengthening the forces of the industrial union bloc in the A. F. of L., and in rallying for the cause of the Labor Party over 5,000 votes out of 30,000. This significant action of Socialists and Communists again demonstrated beyond doubt the enormous possibilities of the united front, even its first steps, before a formal agreement and therefore without plan. Such practical work shows that Socialists and Communists are able to find a common understanding and a common pro-

gram in trade union work. If such informal beginnings can give such splendid results, then does this not drive home the necessity of bringing the united front systematically into every trade union, to all Socialists, and Communists, and through them to the whole working class?

We all agree that fascism is making headway in the United States. The Liberty League, backed by the Morgan-du Pont interests, is driving hard toward fascism. They wish to establish a system of murder and concentration camps for every one who raises his voice against exploitation and oppression. Even today under the Roosevelt administration, workers are slugged and killed wherever they strike for the improvement of their miserable conditions. Is it not obvious that unity between Socialists and Communists would give a ringing call and provide a persuasive example to all toilers and bring them in millions into a common struggle against war and fascism?

Such united action would be a great stimulus to the great mass of American workers who are as yet not convinced of the necessity for socialism. It would remove many of their doubts, since they would see the adherents of socialism, formerly sharply divided, now agreeing to act together on those immediate issues that press for solution. The united front would multiply many-fold the attractive power of the Socialist and Communist Parties over the masses, and break down that wall of isolation which kept the parties from striking deep roots in the working class.

We also agree that, to hasten the coming of socialism in the United States, it is necessary for the American working class to break with the two old capitalist parties. To establish this political independence, the workers require a political party, much broader in appeal and program than either the Communist or Socialist Parties. That is why we Communists have proposed a Farmer-Labor Party, which will fight for all the

necessary demands of the toilers. Such a party could be neither Socialist nor Communist, but it also could be neither anti-Socialist nor anti-Communist; it could be a genuine anti-capitalist party. Such a Farmer-Labor Party would embrace all those who are ready to break with the capitalist parties. It would be a coalition of workers, farmers, the city middle classes, of all those oppressed and degraded by capitalism. It must be emphasized that only one thing can stop the advance of fascism in our country, and that is the building of a powerful people's anti-fascist front, given an organized expression in a Farmer-Labor Party.

The coming presidential elections are already in full swing. The forces of reaction—the Liberty League, the United States Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Republican Party, and their drummers, Hearst, Coughlin and Hoover—are working daily to bring about the victory of unrestrained reaction. Surely no militant Socialist will take the position that the present weak and divided forces of the Socialist and Communist Parties can save this country from the menace of fascism, can hope to cope with the unlimited resources at the command of the reactionaries. Under such conditions, how can we delay for a single moment the formation of the united front?

We all agree on the need of fighting for peace, and against imperialist war. A successful struggle for peace must be based on the independent actions of the masses themselves. On this we agree, and a large number of practical achievements could be attained if there were united action against the warmongers here and abroad. At the moment we must do all in our power to defeat Mussolini's war of aggression against Ethiopia. If we fought jointly for aims on which we agree, we could strike a powerful blow at this fascist war that would be a warning to all those actively preparing a second world catastrophe.

In the struggle for peace, collaboration with the Soviet Union is necessary. One cannot fight effectively for peace when one refuses to utilize the tremendous influence of the Soviet Union among the masses of the world and its great power in international diplomacy. The Socialist Party has recognized that the Soviet Union is building socialism. If it is to fight effectively for peace, it must support the socialist peace policy of the Soviet Union. We should rejoice that this policy dominates one of the most powerful countries in the world. We must unite in defense of the Soviet Union, that bulwark of peace and socialism.

The time has come for the militant Socialists to take a clear stand on the question of the Soviet Union. A situation can develop tomorrow where the Nazis and the Japanese imperialists will simultaneously attack the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. If the Socialists adopt a position of neutrality, they will be helping the warmakers as well as giving indirect aid to the reactionaries in America, who will support this imperialist war against the Soviet Union with munitions and money, behind the smoke-screen of the slogan: Keep America Out of the War. A defeat for the Soviet Union would not merely be the defeat of the Russian workers and peasants. It would be the defeat of the workers in all countries, including the United States. It would mean the reign of capitalist reaction and barbarism for generations. That is why every anti-fascist, every Socialist, must defend the Soviet Union. Its fight is their fight. Its defense is their defense. Its victory speeds up the victory of socialism in all countries.

At the present time the militants in the Socialist Party are engaged in a sharp battle with the reactionaries of their own party, who are bitterly opposed to the united front. If the militant Socialists come out boldly for the united front, then their party, which deeply desires the united front, will rally

around them, and they will be able to multiply the strength of the Socialist Party many-fold. The united front will unloose the flood of energy which was dammed up in the Socialist Party by the sectarian and reactionary policies of the Old Guard. This flood of enthusiasm will, at the signal of the united front, spring forth in a great stream that will carry us far along the path to victory. By establishing the united front we will be taking a decisive step in preparing the working class to struggle towards socialism.

The road of the united front will lead toward that organic unity between the Communist and Socialist Parties, of which we have spoken, to the creation of one revolutionary political party. The burning need of the moment is an organized united front between Socialists and Communists on the economic, political and cultural fronts, to fight against fascism and war.

That the united front is possible has been demonstrated conclusively in France. On a small scale, we have seen to what decisive actions unity between Socialists and Communists will lead in the trade unions and in the fight for civil rights in the United States. Communists, when they propose the united front, do not desire the defeat of the Socialist Party, as the Old Guard claims. Communists do not want a weak Socialist Party which is no asset to the working class. They urge Socialists to join the struggle for the united front because it will strengthen both the Socialist Party and the Communist Party and thus strengthen the working class. What the Communists desire most of all is the victory of the united front, the victory of the joint struggle of Socialists and Communists against fascism and war. This will lead to the formation of a broader People's Front, that will still more strengthen the fight against reaction and fascism in this country. Through the united front of a fighting Farmer-Labor Party, we will protect our rights now and prepare the workers for socialism.