Some Plain Words on Communist Unity

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Communist unity is one of the greatest needs of the day. With the Communist movement thruout the world split and divided, the question of Communist unity can not be brushed aside by a wave of the hand. The lack of unity among the Communists, at a time when the very foundations of capitalism are being shaken by a world crisis of great political and economic consequences, is to be deplored. Only political fools and blundering, stupid leaders can boast that everything is as it should be with the Communist movement. Only such an attitude can account for the failure to give adequate and serious attention to the important question of unity.

Every Communist must in all earnestness ask the question: Why is it that, at a time when the objective conditions thruout the capitalist world make for an advance and growth of the Communist movement, no such advance and growth is taking place?

If we will be Communists and not crystal-gazers, if we will base our judgment upon facts and will not attempt to ignore realities because they are unpleasant, then we will answer:

Because at a time of world capitalist crisis, the Communist movement too finds itself in a crisis. Because the leaders of the Communist movement have pursued, in the last three years, policies which have split the movement, weakened and demoralized the forces and undermined the prestige of the movement as a whole.

The events which recently took place in Germany, the poor showing of the Communist Party in the Presidential elections and in the Prussian elections, the phenomenal growth of the Hitler hordes, should arouse every Party member and convince him that something must be done to halt the downward rush to disaster. It should convince every Communist that the most immediate necessity is to unite the movement, to reestablish Party democracy and to make it possible unitedly to tackle the problems before the Communist movement,

so that our Communist ship can be steered into the proper channels, its sails unfurled to the breeze and progress registered. An examination of policies, a correction of the disastrous line, will most surely be possible when the movement will be united. The more the question of unity will be ignored, the more time is lost in achieving unity, the greater will be the damage, the more costly the defeats.

The working class as never before needs militant revolutionary leadership such as only the Communist movement can provide. But the Communist movement fails to inspire confidence in its powers of leadership, in the effectiveness of its policies.

Communist unity is essential if the working class is to be mustered, inspired with revolutionary enthusiasm and organized for action. Communist unity is therefore a vital question for the whole working class and especially for the Communist movement as a whole. It is not merely the special concern of the Communists who were driven out and expelled from the Party. It should be much more the concern of the Party than of any other organization. To make it the concern of the whole Party is the duty of each and every Party member. If the Party members will cease being lambs and will become lions, Communists will make known in no uncertain tones what they want and will see to it that they get it; then Communist unity will be achieved!

Communist Party members must call for Communist unity, must demand it, must organize to get it.

* * *

It is my purpose to present the facts concerning the unity negotiations between the Communist Party and the Communist Party U. S. A. (Majority Group) so that the membership of the Communist Party will have definite, accurate knowledge of the policies and tactics of the Party leadership. The Communist Party (Majority Group) is of the opinion that there is nothing to gain and a great deal to lose by keeping the unity negotiations behind a veil of secrecy, which makes possible the dissemination of the wildest rumors and falsifications. Furthermore, we are convinced that once the Party membership knows the facts, there is every likelihood that more Party members will take on courage and move energetically and determinedly for unity.

* * *

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

When Comrade Jack Stachel returned from Moscow he informed our group that, had the letter sent by the members of our National Buro to the Political Committee of the Party on January 15 requesting the permission to appear before a committee to take up the question of unity, been received by the Communist International separately from other letters and material dealing with the question of unity, this letter would have been favorably acted upon. He let it be known that the letter of January 15 was received by the Communist International without any comment from the members of the Political Committee, who had forwarded it to Moscow.

He further let it be known that the Political Committee and the Communist International would like to have the matter of unity reopened. He even hinted that he would have no objections to meeting Comrades Lovestone and Gitlow personally in order to talk about the matter, provided the Political Committee would sanction it!

The talk with Comrade Stachel did not materialize. Instead, he informed us that the Political Committee was desirous of getting a letter from Comrades Gitlow and Lovestone requesting unity and readmission into the Party. We informed Comrade Stachel that any letter on unity would have to come officially from our group and would have to meet with the approval of the National Buro.

The question was taken up by the National Buro. It approved the sending of a letter.

On April 20, a letter in behalf of the Communist Party, U. S. A. (Majority Group) was sent to the Political Committee of the Party. The letter, signed by the Secretariat, is as follows:

> We have not, as yet received a reply to our letter of January 15, 1932, signed by the members of our National Buro, urging that we get together to talk over arrangements for immediate Communist unity.
>
> We desire to place again before you the question of the readmittance of the comrades in our Group, expelled over the controversies which have arisen in our Party since the Sixth National Convention.

We are anxious to put an end to the demoralizing state of disunity and disruption in the Communist ranks in the United States and elsewhere.

We reaffirm our readiness to do everything in our power to facilitate this work of unification in every way possible so that we can all work together united in the revolutionary class struggle.

We are particularly anxious to hasten Communist unity in view of the acute danger of imperialist war against the Soviet Union and the growing possibilities for the revolutionary proletarian movement, as a result of the world crisis. We, therefore, urge that you appoint an authoritative committee to represent the Polburo in conferring with us regarding the necessary steps to be taken to achieve full Communist unity.

With Communist Greetings,

BENJ. GITLOW
JAY LOVESTONE
WILL HERBERG
Secretariat
COMMUNIST PARTY, U. S. A.
(Majority Group)

The important thing to note here is that the initiative was taken by the Political Committee thru Comrade Stachel. We had our doubts about the sincerity of the requests by Comrade Stachel and the Political Committee. If the Political Committee really desired to take steps for unity, then it could have replied to our letter of January 15 and elected a sub-committee to confer with a committee of our group in an effort to determine a course for unity.

But the letter of January 15 was never answered, even tho that letter was the result of negotiations and was requested by Comrade Max Bedacht and Wm. Weinstone on behalf of the Political Committee.

Even tho we were of the opinion that the request of Comrade Stachel was not a sincere one, but a contemplated manouver to utilize the question of unity to break up, weaken and discredit the Communist Opposition nationally and internationally, the National Buro of the group nevertheless took the position that

every little opportunity and loophole must be availed of in an effort to achieve unity.

We recognized that the step taken was evidence that there was considerable sentiment inside the Party ranks for unity. Evidently the ballyhoo of the Party, which characterizes its activities today, could not drown the voices of discontent with the wrong policies and line responsible for serious defeats and isolation from the masses.

The fact that the Party leadership, which is doing everything in its power to arouse in the membership a hatred of our group as "counter-revolutionists," "renegades", "agents provocators," etc. took this step is evidence of the two things:

1. That they do not consider us as enemies of the working class but recognize us still as Communists.

2. That they have failed to crush the Opposition because the criticism of our group is being justified by the force of events and our policy, when contrasted in action against the policy of the Party leadership, proves its correctness, as in Paterson, in the needle trades, in the Workmen's Circle, etc.

* * *

THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE "OBJECTIONS" CONSIDERED

This letter of April 20 does not demand that the Party be given over to our group. It does not demand that Comrades Lovestone, Gitlow, Wolfe, etc., be given the Party leadership. It does not even demand that the false Party line be abandoned and replaced by the line of the Communist Party (Majority Group).

The letter is the most sincere offer on the part of our group to do everything to bring about genuine Communist unity.

Had the Political Committee and its emissary, Jack Stachel, been really desirous of unity, this letter would have been answered, a committee appointed and steps worked out for the unification of the movement.

The Political Committee, however, was interested in manouvers and not in unity. It was not concerned about the great need for unity. It failed to take the very step that would do most to overcome the split and crisis in the Communist movement. It did not answer the letter but instead, if the words of Comrade

Jack Stachel are to be believed, rejected the letter on the following astounding grounds:

Paragraph One, reading as follows:

> "We have not, as yet, received a reply to our letter of January 15, 1932, signed by the members of the National Buro, urging that we get together to talk over arrangements for immediate Communist unity."

is objected to because it refers to the letter of January 15, signed by all members of the National Buro. Reference to this letter, it is said, raises again the proposals brought forward in that letter for unity and makes them binding as far as this letter is concerned.

Paragraph Two, reading as follows:

> "We desire to place again before you the question of the readmittance of the comrades of our group, expelled over the controversies which have arisen in our Party since the 6th National Convention."

is objected to because it refers to the readmission of comrades expelled over "controversies which have arisen in our Party since the 6th National Convention." The claim is that there have been no such controversies! The Political Committee doesn't know of any!

Paragraph Three, reading as follows:

> "We are anxious to put an end to the demoralizing state of disunity and disruption in the Communist ranks in the United States and elsewhere."

is objected to on two grounds: (1) Because it states that a "demoralizing state of disunity and disruption exists in the U. S. and elsewhere." The Political Committee claims there is no disunity or disruption anywhere! It doesn't exist! (2) "Elsewhere," they claim, refers to the settling of unity internationally whereas, they insist, it has nothing to do with the International, it being a purely national question, for the United States alone!

Paragraph Four:

> "We reaffirm our readiness to do everything in our power to facilitate this work of unification in every way possible so that we can all

work together united in the revolutionary class struggle."

is objected to because the Political Committee doesn't "like the tone" in which we express our readiness to do everything in our power for unity.

Paragragh Five:

> "We are particularly anxious to hasten Communist unity in view of the acute danger of imperialist war against the Soviet Union and the growing possibilities for the revolutionary proletarian movement, as a result of the world crisis. We, therefore, urge that you appoint an authoritative committee to represent the Polburo in conferring with us regarding the necessary steps to be taken to achieve full Communist unity."

is objected to because the Political Committee does not like our proposing unity because of the acute war danger and war against the Soviet Union!

These are astounding reasons. Jack Stachel states he blushed for shame when he read our letter. I have my doubts as to Jack Stachel's blushing propensities. But the reasons given are astounding. It should make the Party members realize that something must be done to make the Party leadership understand that unity is desirable and necessary.

Let us deal with Paragraph One. Does the letter of January 15 lay down proposals for unity? It is impossible to understand the reasoning of the Political Committee. The letter of January 15, signed by all members of the National Buro of the Communist Party (Majority Group), was one of the sincerest moves taken for unity. The letter was sent as a result of conversations with Comrade Max Bedacht and was sent in compliance with a request of the Political Committee of the Communist Party, stating that such a communication would be given favorable consideration. The failure of the Political Committee to reply can be only explained by its fear to act upon the letter except upon direct orders from the Communist International or by the fact that it was only playing with the unity question in an endeavor to manouver the Opposition into a position where it would be discredited.

The letter of January 15 had no strings attached to it; it laid down no proposals, asked only for the opportunity of a committee of ours appearing before

the Political Committee to discuss in a constructive way how to achieve Communist unity. The letter of January 15 speaks for itself. It is as follows:

> We have been informed that the Political Committee of the Central Committee has decided to give consideration to the problem of reuniting the Communist movement in this country and to put an end to the demoralizing state of disunity and disruption that exists today.
>
> We wish to declare that we stand ready to do everything in our power to facilitate this work of unification in every way possible.
>
> We suggest that a committee of ours appear before the Political Committee to discuss in a constructive and comradely manner the various problems arising in the reunification of our movement and on the reinstatement of the expelled members.
>
> We are prepared to appoint and send such a committee at any time the Political Committee signifies its willingness to receive it.
>
> We assure you that we will take every Communist step leading in the direction of unity.
>
> *Buro of the National Council of the*
> *COMMUNIST PARTY, U. S. A.*
> *(Majority Group)*
>
> *Chas. S. Zimmerman*
> *Edward Welsh,* *Bertram D. Wolfe*
> *D. Benjamin* *J. O. Bentall*
> *Ben Lifshitz* *D. C. Gitz*
> *L. Becker* *Jay Lovestone*
> *Pearl Halpern* *Will Herberg*
> *Benj. Gitlow,* Secretary *Alex Bail*

The failure of the Party leadership to take a position on this letter, its fear to explain to the Communist International what it thought about the letter and its recommendations on the same, do not excuse the Executive Committee of the Communist International for its failure to welcome this move for unity. The leadership of the Communist International is even more guilty in this instance because, if it was sincerely interested in unity, it was in a position to act. It received adequate reports from the representative of the Communist International who had a long conference

with Comrade Lovestone in which he promised to report back this conference to the Executive of the Communist International. If the Communist International Executive had acted, it would surely have gone a long way in paving the way for unity not only in the United States but thruout the International. The failure of the Executive to act boldly and openly upon the January 15 communication, in spite of the flimsy excuse given by Comrade Stachel that all the material "came together", is proof that the Executive of the Communist International is not ready as yet to move sincerely and genuinely for Communist unity. This is a bad indictment of the leadership of the Communist International. It has to be made. The facts bear it out.

The objection to Paragraph Two is of the most flimsy character. For, if there have been no controversies since the 6th National Convention of the Communist Party, something really mysterious and unexplainable must have taken place. We are dealing with a political party, with issues and individuals. We are not engrossed in fairy tales. Comrade Stachel and the Political Committee may want to appear like ostriches hiding their heads in the sand. But really their necks are too short—their memories not so bad--and there is no political desert that affords them such an opportunity. If there were no controversies over the 6th National Convention of our Party, how can they explain that 90% of the convention delegates, the overwhelming majority of the convention, elected a delegation to appeal, on behalf of the convention, against the decisions of the Executive of the Communist International? How can they explain that it was precisely this majority of the delegation to the Communist International, with the accredited leadership of the Party, which was expelled from the Party? The controversies are of a fundamental and basic character. To deny their existance is to put obstacles in the way of achieving unity and liquidating the causes for the present split and crisis in our Party and in the Communist International.

The position of the Political Committee on Paragraph Three is too ridiculous in its denial that there is a state of disunity and disruption in the Communist movement here and elsewhere.

If that is the case, why bother with unity altogether, since no disunity exists? How can one maintain such a ridiculous position in the face of the various groups of Communists, with their organizations, outside of the official Communist movement? How can any one deny the splits in the Communist Party and in the Communist International? How did it come that the very founders and builders of the Communist Parties and the Communist International are today outside of the official movement, expelled from their Parties and from the Communist International? The Communist Opposition in Germany, Sweden, Austria, Czechslovakia, France, the U. S. A., etc., the Trotskyist oppositions, and the other split-off groups all over the world, show that there is a crisis in the Communist movement and call for the speediest and most energetic steps to liquidate the crisis and to unite the Communist movement once more.

But the objection to "elsewhere", as stated in Paragraph Three, is made because it raises the question of *international unity.* Is unity only an American question? Obviously not! It is an international question of the first order for the Communists. Why the insistence of the Political Committee that it is a question for the United States only, a purely national question? Because the Political Committee was foolish enough to believe it could make a national movement to split up the Communist Opposition on an international scale. It was of the opinion it could make some unprincipled bargain at the expense, especially, of the German Opposition ("Brandler group"). But when the Political Committee inferred from our last letter that we were ready to achieve unity to begin with nationally, *but only on a basis that would make it possible for us to continue the fight for complete Communist unity,* that is, on an international basis, they threw up their hands, protested and would have nothing further to do with unity.

The objection to Paragraph Four is that the Political Committee does not like, in the face of its unprincipled tricky manouvers, to face a declaration of sincere genuine efforts for Communist unity.

The most astounding objection is the objection to Paragraph Five. How dare the Communist Party (Majority Group) raise the question of the war danger

as a driving reason for unity? The Political Committee is very touchy upon this point because it has been guilty of petty bourgeois pacifism and even outright chauvinism. How can the Political Committee explain its call upon the government of the U. S. to break diplomatic relations with Japan, an act which the Party leadership knows well enough must lead to war between these two imperialist governments? Such a war would in all possibility lead to a world imperialist struggle. Nor was the Party leadership alone in demanding a break in diplomatic relations! Prominent bourgeois forces in the U. S. also demanded such a rupture. Then the Party, from opposition to the slogan of a Japanese boycott, went over boot and saddle in favor of the boycott! No wonder the Political Committee does not feel comfortable when the Communist Party (Majority Group) calls for Communist unity in the face of the acute war danger and especially the danger of war against the Soviet Union! That the membership of the Communist Party remained practically silent on the chauvinist stand of the Party leadership indicates the supineness and docility of the Party masses, a very unhealthy condition for a Communist Party. This chauvinistic policy on the part of the Party leadership should have called out a mighty protest from the Party ranks. It should have given rise to the sharpest criticism. Had there been unity such a policy could never have been carried out without a most bitter struggle against it in the Party ranks.

It is precisely the acute war danger and the imminence of a war against the Soviet Union that more than anything else demands that Communist unity be achieved so that a united Communist movement can tackle most effectively the problems of mobilizing and organizing the workers for a fight against war, for the defense of the Soviet Union and for the revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

* * *

FOR COMMUNIST UNITY!

The leadership of the Communist International and the leadership of the Communist Party U. S. A., by refusing even to discuss the question and by their very attitude, are delaying Communist unity, so essential for the unity of the working class and for the revolutionary struggle. The Communist Party (Majority

Group) has consistently stood for Communist unity. It has worked for Communist unity from its very inception as a group. Our group did not split the Party. The leadership of the Communist International, with Stalin at its head, is responsible for deliberately splitting the Communist Party of the U. S. A. The present leadership of the Communist Party merely carried out the instructions which accompanied the infamous Open Letter of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the American Communist Party. These instructions brought about the expulsion of hundreds of members and the loss to the Party of thousands who just dropped out. We, who were the victims of the ruthless splitting policy, have every reason to work for the unity of the Communist Party and the Communist International. We are certain that unity will pave the way for a correction of the line of the Communist International and the Party which has proven so damaging to the Communist movement. It is this conviction which has characterized our fight for unity in all its stages.

It is not surprising that in approaching our group for unity, Comrade Jack Stachel stated that the Comintern and Profintern had realized that some very grave mistakes had been made by the Party in its trade union work, especially in its attitude to the unions of the American Federation of Labor. He stated that many of our criticisms of the line of the Party were correct. He further stated that he had taken the matter up with the Profintern and that he was going to write a series of articles especially on Paterson and on the needle trades, sharply critcizing and condemning the wrong tactics and policies employed by the Party members in those two fields. His articles, however, have not appeared!

Instead of a change in line in recent months, we have witnessed a growing emphasis upon the whole sectarian line. "Social-fascism" is again in the center of the stage. Dual-unionist and splitting trade union tactics characterize the trade union course of the Party and the T.U.U.L. Had there been a definite departure from the present policy, there undoubtedly would have been registered some definite progress towards the unification of the movement.

The Communist Party (Majority Group), however, does not, as has already been stated, demand *as a pre-*

requisite for unity that the Party line be dropped and the line of our group be substituted.

We formulated our program for unity on the following basis in an appeal to the delegates of the seventh convention of the Communist Party held in New York City in July 1930. The appeal follows:

> "Let us weld our forces to unify our Party, to overcome its crisis, to put it on the road to becoming a mass Party. To accomplish this the following steps are necessary:
>
> "1. The unconditional readmission with full rights of all comrades expelled for disagreeing with the present ultra-left course of the Party leadership—the cessation of the destructive 'enlightenment campaign' in all its forms.
>
> "2. The initiation of a free and thoro discussion in the Party with a guarantee of freedom of expression for all viewpoints.
>
> "3. On the basis of this discussion the calling of a special Party convention at which there shall be the fullest and freest representation of all viewpoints and which shall re-examine the recent course of the Party and shall decide its future policies.
>
> "These are the simplest demands of Party democracy. Only those who are blind to the critical situation of our movement or who are afraid of a free discussion can reject them. We are confident that the bulk of the Party membership will recognize the justice of these demands. We call upon the Convention to grant them and so to pave the way for the unification of the Communist movement of the United States!"

The three demands for unity embodied in the above appeal represent, as the appeal states, the simplest demands of Party democracy. All that is demanded is the reinstatement of the expelled, the institution of a free discussion of issues within the Party to be followed by a Party convention, the Party itself to finally decide the questions at issue.

But it is precisely the question of party democracy that is objected to most of all! We were told that if we come back into the Party, we will have to do "as we are ordered," that discussion "has been completed" and is "out of the question," that under no circum-

stances will the holding of a special convention be agreed to.

Why this fear of discussion? Why this opposition to Party democracy? Because the leadership of the Communist International and the Party are afraid that, once discussion is permitted and the comrades are free to express their opinions and stand by their convictions, the pent-up dissatisfaction and disagreement with the line and policies of the Party will assume the proportions of a mighty wave of protest which they will be unable to stem and which will force the abandonment of the present course and the adoption of fundamental changes in policy, methods of work, organization and leadership.

The acceptance of these three elementary demands of Party democracy would immediately mark a decisive turning point in the Party and in the International. The past with its formalism, its parrot-like repetition of platitudes and pledges of explicit loyalty to all expressions of policy handed down from above, the whole inner-Party regime of preventing the expression of convictions inside the Party and the institution of puppet regimes and leaderships, would be left to the historian of the movement to ponder about. The Party, united and freed from these fetters, would develop a Communist spirit of self-confidence and intellectual courage which would enable the Party to grow and prosper as never before.

Another point has to be considered on the Unity question. It may be asked that, since the Communist Party (Majority Group) is also part of an International Opposition, will it agree to make unity nationally? To be more explicit, will the Communist Party, (Majority Group) agree for unity with the Communist Party of the U. S. A., if the German Opposition is still excluded from the Communist International? In fact, the representative of the Communist International and even Comrade Stachel were very anxious to know whether we would stand for the continued exclusion of the German Opposition from the Communist International. The position of our Group was transmitted both to the Party and to the Communist International. It is that, even tho we recognize that Communist unity is to be attained on an international scale, nevertheless we are ready to unite nationally, *provided we are guaranteed Party*

democracy, it being expressly understood that we reserve the full right, inside the Party and inside of the Communist International, to fight for the admission of German Opposition and the other Communist Oppositions! Without such a guarantee we cannot make unity. We are positively and categorically opposed to making unity on the basis of splitting up and fighting an unprincipled fight against Communists in other countries who are today fighting against the wrong line of the Communist International and their respective Parties! Such an unprincipled unity does not overcome the crisis in the international Communist movement; it intensifies and aggravates it.

Some additional facts. In moving for Communist unity our group has reached the conclusion that every effort should be made to include also the Trotsky group in the unification of the Communist movement, provided it is ready to drop its Thermidorian charges against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. However, the Trotsky group has seen fit to ignore every communication and invitation to conferences for the discussion of Communist unity. It has not even had enough concern about unity to answer communications sent to it. Such an attitude certainly doesn't help to bring the forces of the Communist movement together.

We have sent a very large number of communications to the Party, to the Trotsky group, to the Executive of the Communist International, to Leon Trotsky and to Joseph Stalin, in particular, dealing with the question of unity. There has been nothing surreptitious on the part of the Communist Party (Majority Group). All the letters, resolutions and information of negotiations, were published in the *Revolutionary Age* and in the *Workers Age*.

Responsible for keeping the Party members in ignorance, in the dark, concerning all unity negotiations has not been the Communist Party (Majority Group) but the leaders of the official Communist Party! At last they have had to take notice and say something. In the *Daily Worker* of May 20, they call the fight of our group for unity a "swindle" tho they must admit that Stachel had very much to do with negotiations "outside of the Party office."

Vituperation, calumny, abusive language, hurling of

invectives, giving expression to wrath, will not overcome the convincing arguments that unity is imperative, that Communist unity is possible and necessary!

It is up to the Party members! Be Communist fighters! If you demand, if you fight for unity, it will be achieved!

A united Communist movement will be a victory for Communism, a victory for the working class!

Communist Party of the U. S. A.
[Majority Group]

ADVOCATES:

Communist unity on a national and international scale.

A policy that will root the American Communist movement in American soil.

A policy that will build the left wing in the trade unions and in other workers organizations.

The united front and trade union unity.

The defense of the Soviet Union.

The proletarian revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, a communist society.

FIGHTS AGAINST:

Dual-unionism and union-splitting.

Reactionary policies and reactionary leadership in the trade unions.

The danger of a new imperialist war.
Capitalism and all its supporters.

It calls all workers, black and white, of all races and creeds, to a revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of American capitalism and the establishment of a Workers and Farmers Government in the U. S. A.

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