NEW MASSES

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WHAT THE COMMUNISTS DID

By JOSEPH NORTH

"Belief in the greatness and dignity of man has been the guiding principle of my life and work. The logic of my life and work leads me therefore to apply for membership in the Communist Party."

—Theodore Dreiser.

FEW brief weeks ago I returned from travels through wartime Britain, France and Germany; the convoy ran the gauntlet of submarines lurking off Cemetery Lane near Ireland; I watched the buzz-bombs over London and heard the thunder of the V2's; I observed the heroism of the British people who reflected their painful education when they turned the Tories out several days ago; I saw the overwhelming victory of the resistance movement in France during the municipal elections and I stood humbly in Dachau with the proudly incorruptible on V-E Day; I returned home on a troop ship with our wounded and POW's a few days out of concentration camps. I thought of all that I had had the privilege of witnessing these past epochal weeks as I attended the national convention of the Communists in New York several days ago. It was all of a piece. This convention, and the discussion which preceded it, was warp and woof of the pattern I cite above.

The convention demanded that the delegates evidence every whit of courage, integrity and self-sacrifice history requires today. They had come to attempt rectification of a big mistake and to construct a program that would guard, as much as is humanly possible, against ever permitting such a mistake again. They came of their own free will, impelled by the dictates of their political integrity. They sought to conduct their convention upon the fundamental of a Marxist organization-selfcriticism. The Philistines of the commercial press have held holiday with that concept this past two months; it has a bizarre quality to them, for those hostile to Marxism will never grasp it. They can never fathom Lenin's dictum that the earmark of a serious Communist Party is its attitude toward selfcriticism. "To be able to recognize an error openly, to discover the causes of that error, to analyze the situation which gave rise to it, to examine attentively the means of correcting it . . . ," these are the attributes of men who have come to guide their lives by the scientific principles of Marx and Lenin.

A BIG challenge faced the delegates: first and foremost, to create a policy correcting the revision of Marxism of the past year and a half; second, and simultaneously, to root out harmful practices of bureaucracy and opportunist approaches that had crept into the structure over the years and particularly in the past eighteen months; third, to strengthen the leadership with the most capable men and women from the fundamental areas of American life-the factories, the unions, the veterans, the Negroes, the youth; fourth, to clarify aspects of the resolution and program of action adding depth to certain analyses such as those dealing with the nature of the Truman administration, the role of monopoly capitalism, the war against Japan, the struggles of the Negro people and national minorities, the no-strike pledge and the fight for jobs and wages. Finally, to make these changes in a manner that would strengthen the unity of the party, avoid factional dispute and that would also avoid the extremes of over-correction-i.e., a stultifying sectarian approach that would cut the movement from its allies.

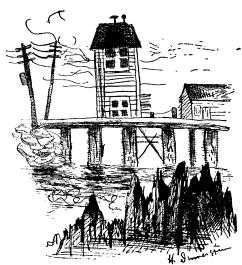
How would one summarize the results of the convention? I believe it amounts to an historic achievement, despite certain weaknesses and limitations. It tackled first things first, i.e., fundamental policy. Certain questions regarding the practical program were left unsolved, and this phase of the discussion could certainly have been improvedhad there been time and had there been a greater representation of the membership. But these latter two factors were imposed on the convention by ODT restrictions: only ninety-three delegates could attend, and the time was strictly

limited. Three days could not exhaust the complex of problems before the delegates: but they laid down a basic approach that should enable them to grapple successfully with these problems in the days to come. They did not shirk their responsibilities.

wish every Communist, every workingman, every American of good will, had the opportunity to observe the delegates in that torrid, cramped hall where nobody commented on the discomfort, rapt as they were in the vitality of the proceedings. Plain people they were, as plain as a councilman from Brooklyn named Pete Cacchione. Americans all, they were as Irish as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, as Jewish as Ben Gold, as Negro as Ben Davis; they were steel and auto and marine, farm and city. Old as Mother Ella Reeve Bloor and young as that twentytwo-year-old veteran, Leon Wofsy, whose call for attention to the crucial problems of the youth inspired every man and woman in the hall. Though only ninety-three were there their deliberations reflected the minds and hearts of thousands of American Communists; practically the entire membership had already, in the multitude of meetings throughout the nation the past two months, registered their overwhelming will. The ninety-three came mandated to repudiate a policy based on a "notorious revision" of Marxism—that science which they recognize as mankind's salvation and as dear to them as life itself. They came to create a new policy that accords with reality: to recognize the grasping role of American imperialism, and what to do about it. Their comrades at the state conventions had already gone on record for the policy outlined in the draft resolution presented by the previous National Committee. Let me say, in passing, that the convention resolutions committee had to sift 5,000 amendments sent by the membership as proposals to strengthen the original draft resolution. It was an index to the released initiative and power of Marxist thought the membership possessed; a Niagara of unified strength was unleashed when the opportunist dam broke several months ago upon the appearance of the Duclos article, the subsequent draft resolution and the publication of William Z. Foster's letter. He had written this letter January 1944 in profound difference with the position taken by Earl Browder and endorsed by the leaders of the party: the letter was not made public to the membership because of an erroneous conception of unity. The nature of the resolutions, the fruits of genuine democratic discussion, evidenced the real unity existing within the party's ranks today.

The delegates scrutinized their own errors and the sources of those errors; they saw that the roots of the mistake lay in the past when opportunist approaches crept into their thinking and practices during the middle and late thirties and laid the basis for general acceptance of the full revisionist line at the time of Teheran. They chose a leadership deriving from America's grass roots, and recognized the need for collective leadership, recognized the imperative to depart from previous practice wherein one man's leadership was accepted uncritically, and he became the recipient of adulation and "hero-worship" that had nothing in common with Communist approaches. They reconstituted the Communist Party, the prerequisite for regaining its role as a vanguard of the working class and the nation. They adopted an immediate policy that involved the struggle for higher wages within the limits of the no-strike pledge, and including the unceasing campaign for 60,000,000 jobs: they adopted a long-term policy that made abundantly clear to all that although socialism is not the issue today the ultimate solution of our nation's ills lies in a socialist America, and they would continually educate the people of the country along those lines in the course of the daily struggle. In conclusion, most felt they had taken a big step forward, a big step, but only a step, for it is clear that the correction lies in the deeds that flow from the resolution. But they had taken the soundings and repaired the compass; the ship should steer a truer course henceforth.

As New Masses' readers know, some eighteen months ago the Communists accepted Earl Browder's analysis and a program based upon it, that the historic Big Three agreements at Teheran had ushered in an era auguring long-term amity between classes within the capitalist nations—that those who



H. Dinnerstein

exploit would exercise their intelligence, their "progressivism," to afford a happier life for those they exploit. This conclusion required the abandonment of basic Marxist principle: it declared Lenin's thesis on imperialism outmoded. It fathered a host of illusions that held down the undeniable achievements of the Communists throughout the war, and that threatened absolute disaster if those illusions continued unpricked. These misconceptions, briefly, involved the illusion that monopoly capitalism in America and Britain could exorcise economic crisis which breeds war; that big business would, in effect, take the initiative to double the wages of American labor in the postwar period in order to maintain production and job levels achieved during the war: that the path to durable peace was relatively smooth. It departed from Marxist science when it gave rise to the illusion that in this historic era monopoly capital was the decisive class and that the working class must play a subordinate role. In brief, as Mr. Foster indicated many months ago, it meant accepting the leadership of big business—the same class of economic royalists who, as the resolution declares, "supported the war against Nazi Germany, not because of hatred of fascism or a desire to liberate suffering Europe from the heel of Nazi despotism but because it recognized in Hitler Germany a dangerous imperialist rival determined to rule the world. From the very inception of the struggle against fascism, American finance-capital feared the democratic consequences of defeating Hitler Germany." To repose confidence in this class, the delegates felt, would mean utter betrayal of the Teheran perspectives. That was the surest way of losing the historic promise of Yalta and Teheran. Only by the creation of a powerful, anti-fascist democratic front, based upon

united and vigilant labor, could longterm peace be achieved and fascism prevented from engulfing America.

Delegate after delegate (space does not permit the full recital of their remarks) proved by specific example how this false premise led immediately to a host of practical mistakes: it brought the dissolution of the party and the diminution of the vanguard role of the Communists and the working class. It fostered illusions in the trade union field particularly concerning the postwar years; it limited the splendid work the Communists had done in the field of Negro rights; it lost contact with the youth of America. New Masses is preparing a number of articles that will deal with many of these issues fundamentally. Let me here, however, summarize a few of the principal results, details of which you will find in the final form of the resolution:

The delegates and the membership overwhelmingly saw the principal issue as the correct definition of monopoly capitalism today. It is aggressively imperialistic; its decisive sections are not in favor, but are opposed, to the democratic aims of the American people. This reverses the previous position presented by Earl Browder, that the decisive sections of American capitalism could be relied upon as allies in the struggle for democracy, long-term peace, prosperity. To curb the designs of the Economic Royalists requires the formation of the broadest, democratic, anti-fascist front, based upon unified, vigilant labor. That the latter, on a world scale, holds the balance in the question of achieving the agreements of Teheran.

The resolution reaffirmed the war again Japan as a just war, one of national liberation, but it warned against perilous influences in the government, reflecting the designs of American imperialism which seeks a peace that would reconstruct the Mikado-Big Business pattern in Japan to the continued detriment of the colonial people's struggle for freedom.

A more precise definition of the Truman administration was achieved. As NM declared last week, this received consideration as a central question because a faulty estimate of the Rooseveltian role had lent credence to the illusions of the "progressivism" and "intelligence" of American monopoly capitalism. The Truman administration was regarded as a bourgeois-democratic government which, though making concessions to reactionary influences, still responds to the critical pressures of the democratic-labor coalition.

The nature of the Negro question was probed, and its national aspect high-lighted. Central in the program of action is emphasis on the fight to safeguard the gains the Negro people won during the war and the past decade, and to extend those gains in terms of social, political and economic equality.

Earnest attention was paid the crucial issues of reconversion, the fight for jobs and higher wages. This struggle must, the delegates agreed, take place within the limits of the no-strike pledge during the war, but it would require the utmost mobilization of labor and its allies; events have more than amply proved that big business will not move toward a progressive solution of these issues unless pressed in that direction: the question of the returning veterans and their reintegration into American life, based upon their alliance with labor, received foremost attention: the problem of growing anti-Semitism too, came in for critical appraisal. Other issues discussed were those dealing with youth, women, farm, small business.

MENTIONED at the outset that I felt this convention was of a piece with the tremendous events marching across the world, some of which I had witnessed in Europe; this was part of a world process in which the democratic masses of humanity, strengthened by the outcome of the war, were girding themselves to maintain their gains, to drive for new ones. That demanded clarity, utmost energy in organization. The common men of all lands, graduates of the hard school of war, were bringing their infinite energies into play. We cannot mistake the currents that are moving through the world as we watch events on the Continent, in China, the recent elections in Britain. I recall vividly the several meetings of the national committee of the British Communist Party I had the privilege to attend. There I saw the drive, the initiative of the rank-and-file and the close interplay between leadership and membership; the exchange of ideas, the submission of all plans to the constructive criticism of the party mass. That fundamental

Marxist quality had been diminishing in the development of the Communist movement here due to a complex of factors, some of which I have already indicated. The recognition of this basic lack stood in the forefront at the convention. You were struck first and foremost by the democratic proceedings—the give-and-take which dominated the discussion. Few took anything or anybody for granted.

I recall especially the Negro panel which I attended (and I understand the same quality characterized the other panels—youth, veterans, labor, farm). Many delegates spoke, Negro and white -from the South, from Chicago, from Harlem, from the Coast. Deep convictions, rock-bottom sincerity. As a matter of fact the Negro issue assumed a central place in the proceedings. One can readily understand why. The policy of revisionism, of concession to big business meant, in practice, an unfulfilled struggle against the bitter inequities the Negroes suffered during the war. Theirs are the most burning among many crucial ques-

The Revival of the Communist Party

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The following is the preamble to the Constitution of the newly reconstituted Communist Party, adopted by the Party convention July 28.

THE Communist Party of the United States is the political party of the American working class, basing itself upon the principles of scientific socialism, Marxism-Leninism. It champions the immediate and fundamental interests of the workers, farmers and all who labor by hand and brain against capitalist exploitation and oppression. As the advanced party of the working-class, it stands in the forefront of this struggle.

The Communist Party upholds the achievements of American democracy and defends the United States Constitution and its Bill of Rights against its reactionary enemies who would destroy democracy and popular lberties. It uncompromisingly fights against imperialism and colonial oppression, against racial, national and religious discrimination, against Jim Crowism, anti-Semitism and all forms of chauvinism.

The Communist Party struggles for the complete destruction of fascism and for a durable peace. It seeks to safeguard the welfare of the people and the nation, recognizing that the workingclass, through its trade unions and by its independent political action, is the most consistent fighter for democracy, national freedom and social progress.

The Communist Party holds as a basic principle that there is an identity of interest which serves as a common bond uniting the workers of all lands. It recognizes further that the true national interests of our country and the cause of peace and progress require the solidarity of all freedom-loving peoples and the continued and ever closer cooperation of the United Nations.

The Communist Party recognizes that the final abolition of exploitation and oppression, of economic crises and unemployment, of reaction and war, will be achieved only by the socialist reorganization of society—by the common ownership and operation of the national economy under a government of the people led by the workingclass.

The Communist Party, therefore, educates the workingclass, in the course of its day-to-day struggles, for its historic mission, the establishment of socialism. Socialism, the highest form of democracy, will guarantee the full realization of the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," and will turn the achievements of labor, science and culture to the use and enjoyment of all men and women.

IN THE struggle for democracy, peace and social progress, the Communist Party carries forward the democratic traditions of Jefferson, Paine, Lincoln and Frederick Douglass and the great workingclass traditions of Sylvis, Debs and Ruthenberg. It fights side by side with all who join in this cause.

For the advancement of these principles, the Communist Party of the United States establishes the basic laws of its organization in the following Constitution:

NM August 14, 1945



"Hon. Jockey," by Edith Glaser.

tions; their sons bear the deep scars of Jim Crow in the Army; they see the reconversion period looming with big lay-offs that are already taking place, the consequent threat to their wartime gains. Because they are the newest recruits into many industries the seniority provisions won by organized labor would in many cases, exclude them, and once again they witness the danger of wholesale relegation to the ranks of unskilled categories.

It was easy to understand why the party's dissolution in the South created such a painful sensation at the New York State convention. As the heartrending speech of a young Negro woman recently from Alabama indicated, this was the party, the only party in America that offered hope, offered a basis for effective struggle against semislavery. And it was dissolved in the very part of America where it was most needed. This dissolution was part and parcel of the entire trend toward liquidation of the Communist movement—it could not be regarded as a thing-in-itself. It afforded the most dramatic illustration of a revisionist policy in life.

I shall never forget the Negro delegate, a trade-unionist, from Winston-Salem, who spoke simply the needs of his people: their hunger for knowledge, information, ideological weapons in their fight. "We do not have much learning," he said. "Most of us go to school six, eight weeks a year and never get past

third or fourth grade." He pleaded for more explicit attention to their problems and for its more simple expression, for literature written in a form acceptable to his people. He told how they eagerly turned to the Daily Worker and similar publications for specific attention to their struggles and how, too often, they were disappointed. He described the current efforts to turn white against black in his community, to destroy the union's base. And he recounted the zealous, self-sacrificing work of the Negro youth in building the union and shouldering the day-to-day issues. "We wanted to carry on a daily fight against those trying to destroy OPA. We looked every day in our press to get exact information who they were. But when we couldn't find it, I figured out myself that it must be Hoover and his folks. And I told my people that. Then they immediately understood, and helped in the fight to save OPA." He pleaded for leadership that had close ties with rankand-file, that spoke their language and understood their needs. Too often, he warned, those who cross the Mason-Dixon line from the South grow away from their kin, acquire habits and language that separate them from their brothers. His statements struck hard, deep, and they were accepted in the spirit given, constructive criticism about which something should be done and immediately. For there is a "Mason-Dixon" line in organization that is more than

geographical—the line where leadership becomes separated from those who elect it; when separation leads toward bureaucracy and its consequent ills. As the resolution indicated, opportunism fed bureaucracy and the latter made it possible for acceptance of the full revisionist line.

So the delegates asked hard, searching questions and sought collectively to find the answers. This spirit, this new mode of work, distinguished this convention from most others of past years. A true commingling of ideas from above and below manifested itself, the beginnings of real democratic centralism, the fusion of rank-and-file with leadership. Yet as Mr. Foster warned and as delegates emphasized, it could only be regarded as a beginning. Many bureaucratic practices linger stubbornly on, unconsciously, and the membership and leaders must be ever on guard. Self-criticism is not a property with which men are born; it must be learned, studied, mastered. The two-way street of democratic centralism is not as simple as city traffic; those who pass that way must be constantly vigi-

I thought of that when Earl Browder spoke for an hour defending his thesis before the delegates. They expected some expression of self-criticism. They heard none. A vast gulf revealed itself between Mr. Browder and the delegates when he contended, in discussing the phase of the resolution dealing with the Japanese war "that official American policy, whatever temporary vacillations may appear, is pressing toward the unity and democratization of China." That idea ran counter to the beliefs of the entire convention. The delegates had unanimously considered the war on Japan a just war of liberation, but they realistically recognized the perils before the nation. A number of delegates spoke in instant disagreement with Mr. Browder, voicing their opinions emphatically. And Eugene Dennis, member of the secretariat, trenchantly expressed the unanimous sentiment when he warned of the grave dangers of a shabby peace that would reconstruct a postwar Japan retaining its present most dangerous aspects, and laying the basis for future Pacific wars. Mr. Dennis posed the imperative policy of real unconditional surrender which adds up to "total destruction of the Japanese war potential, as well as the prosecution of all war criminals, including the emperor." He also urged a powerful campaign for an American policy toward China based on Yenan's proposals and policies.

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POLITICAL AFFAIRS

A Marxist magazine devoted to the advancement of democratic thought and action

AUGUST, 1945

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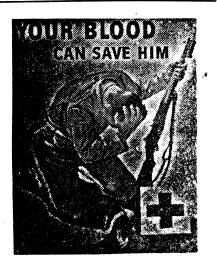
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elements—color, texture, pattern, light and shade, planes, volumes, etc. Each element has its opposing aspects within itself and also functions in opposition to other elements. Taken as a whole a composition can be said to have its static and dynamic aspects, certain parts playing perhaps a more static, and others a more dynamic, role, but none playing entirely a single role. The ultimate effect of the whole composition must be one of asymetric balance, of static tension, or may be defined by any combination of words which conveys the idea of the unity of rest and motion and the fusion of opposites. It is for this reason that the "laws" of composition will, in the last analysis be found to be dialectical in character. And it is also for this reason that a good painting, while it may not be a realistic representation of nature, is an embodiment of the same laws which operate throughout natural phenomena. It is an equivalent, not a superficial imitation, of nature. It is a materialization of dialectical laws worked out in terms of the potentialities, as well as the limitations, of the pictorial medium.

Painting must also be studied from the standpoint of its evolution from a relatively simple to a more complex mode of expression. Seen in this light, Renaissance art, considered by many superficial and decadent when compared to the Byzantine mosaics, was at least historically inevitable. It should be remembered that an essential aspect of matter is its multiplicity of forms and its tendency to evolve from the simple to the complex. Realism, such as dominated the Renaissance, introduced complexity into painting (though it does not mechanically follow that the great variety of pictorial material implied by realism is in every instance thoroughly integrated as a composition—this is rather the exception). But assume, on the other hand, that a particular master such as Cezanne has succeeded in forging a unified composition from a multiplicity of lines, colors, volumes, planes, etc., abstracted from a penetrative analysis of reality. The result is a complex organization in which the opposition of unity and diversity functions at extreme polarity. Another important difference between Cezanne and some of the abstract painters who followed is that the latter have sacrificed his complexity in favor of a greater emphasis on unity and perfection of composition. In other words, their achievements are generally realized on a lower level of complexity. This, indeed, is the best answer to the art of Mondrian, which might otherwise seem to have summarized and exhausted the art of painting itself-i.e., the endless mission of painting is to seek perfection on ever higher levels of complexity of organization.

It seems to me that too many Marxist critics evidence a scarcely concealed prejudice against the formal aspects of art, "formalism" being one of their favorite epithets. This is probably because of these critics' tendency to think of form as something absolute, universal, and unchanging in the history of art; as a bag of tricks and devices from which the artists of different periods select the most appropriate means of presenting the content of their inspirations. Actually, the formal aspects of art undergo transfiguration along with content. The nature and direction of these changes are dictated both by changes within society and by the potentialities for development inherent within the pictorial medium itself. Only when form is understood as being dialectical in character, as playing a constantly dynamic role in painting, and as something which undergoes progressive change in itself will Marxism finally realize all of its possibilities in the field of art criticism.

The Communists

(Continued from page 6)

The press has published Mr. Browder's final statement at the convention that he withdrew his charges of "revisionism" against the discussion and that he declared there had taken place "a consolidation of our ranks on the foundation of correct Marxist-Leninist concepts." The National Board, in reply, said, however, "You still do not repudiate your former position; you evade expressing either agreement with or taking a direct position on the Resolution that has been adopted by the Convention or on Comrade Foster's report on the struggle against revisionism." The Board asked for a prompt clarification of his position.

In brief, these are some of the highlights of this remarkable convention. Its lessons are profound, far-reaching, and merit full study of all Marxists and their friends. It did not solve all the issues before the delegates, but it made real headway. And in conclusion one must emphasize the genuine unity that grew out of the intense discussion of the past two months. The Communists had made a basic turn in policy, and retained the monolithic quality of their organization. As Mr. Foster indicated, they had made this turn, rapidly, in unity, because the previous policy had not eaten deep into the party structure; many could not fundamentally bring themselves to believe it. They accepted it formally, out of loyalty to the concept of unity. Secondly, the events of history in the recent weeks had discredited the basic assumptions of the past policy, and finally, when true democracy within the movement found full expression, the Marxist intelligence of the membership reasserted itself, and brought the necessary turn.

As editor of New Masses I personally felt keenly the truths of the convention. We, too, on New Masses have unconsciously been affected by the infiltration of bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideas which affected our way of work and thought. We had failed to be sufficiently searching of our mistakes; had lapsed into faulty approaches and modes of thinking. Our Marxist scalpel had acquired rust. This was evidenced, as some of our readers have pointed out, in our recent editorial statement which glossed over our errors and responsibilities. I can only say that we shall do everything within our capacities to rectify our mistakes, to surmount our weaknesses. We urge our readers' fullest cooperation, for this is a process that will not be terminated with the close of the discussion, with the bang of the gavel that closed the convention. For so long as we live and think within the ambience of the most powerful capitalist nation on earth, nefarious pressures will continue, and all of us—editors and readers, too—must constantly be on our guard. These are but a few of the realities the Communist discussion pressed upon all Marxists. We can only be grateful that it happened now, before it was too late.

Cartels

(Continued from page 16)

American trade expansion, at the same time favors inter-government agreements of the cartel type in certain raw materials. Cartels, even governmentsponsored or initiated, are favored when they prove useful in disposing of surplus stocks or in obtaining a greater American share of strategic and industrial raw materials, many of which had been monopolized by Britain and other countries. Cartels are opposed when they end to hamper the drive for a greater share of the world market. As in the case of world air traffic and telecommunications, or in the field of world trade and foreign capital investment, government intervention is sought to "unify" policy and to aid expansion.

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