

# Left Chaos

## Pre-mortem to Working-class Defeat?

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In the past few weeks huge sections of the organized left in this country have been thrown into a state of chaos by a confrontation that initially erupted between the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) and the Communist Party (CP). Physical clashes have ensued; debates have raged; editorials have been written. There has been much posturing and affectations of indignation.

### What Is The Issue?

This is not a news article. We are not going to take sides in this or that particular petty squabble. We have decided instead that a coherent political response is necessary, not only because of the widespread shallow pretensions of the left movement and the growing tactical errors of NCLC, but more importantly because of the larger issue involved—defense of the working class. When we are entering a phase that is witnessing massive assaults by government on all sections of the working class with full complicity of the union bureaucracies, it becomes more imperative that the left present a cohesive, competent, strategy for defense.

In the escalating confrontation, these are the political issues that must be raised in any criticisms of CP and NCLC strategies. The reactions by the left so far have generally been apolitical and have left these points undressed. Let's begin by bringing the CP into focus.

### Historic Role of the CP

Even the most casual glance at the history of the Stalinist Communist Party will reveal that it has, through its bureaucracy and its "popular fronts," initiated countless attacks and betrayals against working class movements.

Starting with Stalin's brutal liquidation of the Bolshevik Party over fifty years ago, to the CP's continued policy of allying with the national bourgeoisie and suppressing revolutionary activity for its own ends, the CP has functioned as a counter-revolutionary force wherever and whenever it has had the opportunity to do so.

It was the Stalinist CP which forced a weak Chinese communist movement into a "popular front" with Chiang Kai-shek in 1924, only to have his troops massacre their striking industrial workers in Shanghai in 1927. In France in 1936 the CP, through the reformist "Blum regime" again launched a "popular front" during a mass upsurge that never presented a progressive program and served to drain and dissipate the energy of that strike wave until the chance for revolution had passed.

Meanwhile, in Spain, it was the CP which, under Stalin's direction, allied itself with backward bourgeoisie elements during the Civil War; savagely repressed any attempts at working class revolt; withheld arms from the workers militia and caused the class to be defeated and fed to the fascists.

The anti-working class conspiracies of Stalin following the withdrawal of German troops during World War II reached startling depths around the globe. In Greece, for an example, Stalin cynically joined hands with Churchill and agreed to sell out the Greek Liberation Front in exchange for a free hand in Rumania. Stalin ordered the Greek CP—the leadership of the liberation front—to disband the front and surrender its weapons to the British. Within a few months thousands upon thousands of unarmed guerrillas were arrested, killed or sent to concentration camps, and the revolution was crushed.

Meanwhile back in America, the CP-USA was busy with collusion schemes of its own (including supporting pay by piecework!) During World War II they gave full support to Roosevelt's anti-labor policies and continued them into the post-war period. The CP refused to support striking workers, calling them "fifth columnists and scabs;" the party declared "The strike weapon is overboard, not only for the duration of the war, but after the war," and later announced: "We frankly declare that we are ready to co-operate in making capitalism work effectively in the post war period."

There seems to be no limitation to the opportunism and collaboration of the CP. They have in the past and will continue today to consciously use their hegemony to ruthlessly and violently crush all opposition. They have proven that they are no more than Moscow puppets and are unwilling to defend the working class. They, in fact, will oppose and assault it when necessary to maintain their position. They are entrenched within the bourgeoisie and stand counterposed to the interests of working people.

Any efficient plan for defending the class from wage cuts, price rises, slave labor welfare schemes, productivity drives, and all current incursions, must also necessarily include the destruction of any "left" organization that is willing to co-operate with the government. Especially one that had demonstrated again and again, not only its unwillingness to defend the class, but has proven that it is so eager to appease the capitalists in exchange for a "piece of the action" that it will stop at nothing. Whenever an organization is to be criticized for "violence" against the CP the issue must first be put into this historic perspective.

## **A Strategy Is Imperative**

Aside from the necessity of putting an end to CP opportunism and murderous tactics, a wide strategy is needed to "unify all elements of the working class." The erroneous, self restricting issue orientation of the left is disastrous. The left must broaden in scope to understand the complete wholistic nature of the working class.

Narrow trade unionism has never, and can never, be a method for adequate class-resistance. As the Labor Committee has stated; "All sections of the class, trade unions as well as the unemployed, welfare recipients as well as non-unionized labor, must come together around a Socialist program that provides a common defense."

Only when this United Front exists can the Capitalist be prevented from playing one section of the class against the other in their attempts to drive the wages of the class down to compensate for a receding economy. Disunified self interest group reaction to the rising "hard times" would only allow opportunists and dilettantes to feed us piece-meal down the road to working class defeat.

We must immediately come to grips with the empirical fact that the economy and its cycles limit the alternatives available to the ruling class in their relationship to wage labor. We must understand that these same cycles afford the left an opportunity to organize. We must recognize this now and begin "to prepare class-wide defense." The class needs to fight for itself as a whole or suffer the consequences of being incapable of halting the capitalist onslaught which can do nothing in this period but intensify.

As an example: City services are being cutback; municipal workers are being laid-off; they are forced, due to rampant unemployment, onto the welfare rolls, and then are channeled into Nixon's "Work Incentive Program" (WIN). They could then wind up back on the job, scabbing against their former fellow workers just to receive the monthly welfare check. This is slave labor. This is now occurring and is nothing short of fascistic labor recycling implemented as an austerity program necessary for the capitalist's survival in a "period of economic recession." Unless that strategy to fight is developed, how far the "labor-recycling" goes becomes the decision of the ruling class.

## **The NCLC—Where it's Right**

To the extent to which NCLC has projected, in embryonic form, a strategy for uniting the class, we support them. The National Unemployed and Welfare Rights Organization (NU-WRO), initiated by the NCLC, is a concrete step in the right direction. NU-WRO was a product of a split within the old Welfare Rights Organization (WRO) that occurred around the issue of resisting government welfare scab programs (WIN). NU-WRO is being organized around the concept of uniting the unemployed with welfare recipients and with all layers of labor.

NU-WRO states in the preface to their "Bill of Rights of the Unemployed" at the founding convention; "Our fight is not against employed workers. On the contrary, the "Bill of Rights of the Unemployed" can only be won by employed and unemployed fighting arm-in-arm for the same demands."

To the extent to which NCLC has presented a socialist strategy to all sections of the class that does unite their demands into a cohesive transitional program, we support them.

Their program calls for the complete re-organization of society around "expansion of socially productive goods and services." What other tendency has exhibited an understanding of the necessity of expansion of the economy as a pre-requisite for human survival?

To the extent to which NCLC projects an understanding of the ever decreasing capitalist alternatives in this "period of economic crisis," and is prepared within their strategy to fight against the attempts to smash organized labor, disunify resistance, institute austerity, and generally to enslave the class, to that extent we support their fight.

NCLC has consistently opposed trade unionism as a limited narrow strategy and attacked union bureaucracy that co-operated with government. They have organized against Zero Population Growth as a racist, anti-working class tactic of Right-wing capitalists. They fought against community control schemes as being backward expressions of self-interest groups that prevented unity and promoted competitive disunity. What other left tendency exhibits an understanding of the necessity of opposing class collaboration in its varied and complex manifestations?

The above described historic role of the CP and the programs and policies of the NCLC are again the political questions that must be addressed when considering the confrontation. The "left movement" has, without any exception to our knowledge, ignored these, and all political issues, involved in the situation. In their panic over the so-called "violence" of NCLC they have let the real issues slide away and have degenerated into sophomoric banalities about free speech and civil liberties. This is the height of self deception and hypocrisy. Do the various groups on the left believe that their rhetoric about class struggle was never to come to pass? Did they believe that they would be allowed to forever babble inside vacuums? Has the Socialist Worker's Party been merely cynically lying, for forty years, when they spoke of smashing the Stalinist CP? Or have they too bought "peaceful co-existence" with the assassins of Trotsky? Trotsky would vomit before the slimy collaboration of the SWP as they, in his name, set up popular front "defense squads" against the NCLC.

Now let us bring these points together and clarify our position further. While we condemn the CP as an insidious evil and would welcome the destruction of its hegemony; while we accept the theoretical perception of the NCLC as being essentially correct; while we denounce the "organized left" and their-panic-stricken flounderings; does this mean that we endorse the NCLC tactics that are daily growing more senseless and schizophrenic? Hardly.

## **The NCLC—What Went Wrong?**

This brings us to our final section, and to the question: What has caused the tactical degeneration of NCLC? We do not see tactics as an isolated phenomenon. Within the organizational framework of NCLC they have developed no means of combating dogmatism. This, we see, as being the problem. They suffer from dogmatism.

It is dogmatism as a substitute for understanding that leads to isolation. Isolation develops sectarian character that feeds the dogmatism. The vicious cycle continues as sectarianism grows into organizational elitism. The degeneration moves inevitably on down the road past elitism into cultism, fanaticism, to eventually either extinction, self-destruction, or political irrelevance.

How has this train of events manifested itself within the Labor Committee? They have recklessly allowed their tactic of smashing CP hegemony on the left to escalate beyond its value, and now see their enemies emerging everywhere. They have publicly announced their refusal to accept criticism that does not originate from within the organization. They have expanded rapidly in the past few months and have fallen back to rely on a tight hierarchical structure and a tendency toward cultist unquestioning allegiance to central leadership.

Many rank and file members as well as some “secondary leadership” have turned in their creative imagination in exchange for dogmatic adherence to party line and jargon. The ability to communicate—to explain and develop a position and win people to it—has been substituted with trivial belligerence and absurd arrogance. With such pattern emerging to the forefront within NCLC one is forced to ask: How can they control their “defense squads” when dogmatism is organizationally encouraged and approved?

We believe that the roots of the dogmatism, rampant within NCLC, can be found in their consistent use of a pattern of thought—a form used when developing their positions. Much of their membership seems either incapable or unwilling to distinguish between the subjective and objective factors of phenomenon. They continually escalate the particular to the general without considering that what may be true in part or in isolated detail can’t be immediately elevated to an absolute.

The Labor Committee often brilliantly isolates phenomenon and predicts potentiality or tendency, but then dogmatically insists upon drawing massive dramatic conclusions and calling for instantaneous action upon those conclusions. This error, as Frederick Engels concisely described, is, an inevitable outgrowth of the “metaphysical mode of thought” that “sooner or later reaches a limit, beyond which it becomes one-sided, restricted, abstract, lost in insoluble contradiction.” For the Labor Committee the particular is the general, “a thing either exists or does not exist...cause and effect stand in a rigid antithesis one to the other.” If at a particular historic moment it were true that a specific mode of behavior led to a certain manifestation, then NCLC would announce, that that behavior is always true in all cases all the time. This thinking obviously produces dogmatism within an organization.

The isolated phenomenon and observed potential become absolutes. They believe they are always right, about everything, forever. All a new member of NCLC need do these days is memorize the absolutes and be prepared to faithfully regurgitate them in exact detail over and over again.

Will this continue until the dogma resembles cultist chants exercised daily, isolated inside four walls, waiting for extinction?

We will conclude with one final note. While we do not entertain the remotest intention of participating in the “popular front defense squads” against NCLC—which we see as essentially an unprincipled gaggle of Maoist, Stalinists, and phony “Trotskyists”—we also would want, in the fullest “sensual content” of the words, to announce that we would deem any physical attack on this newspaper or on our organization as a pointless, meaningless, reckless act which would invite immediate retaliation in kind.

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