

July 31, 1936

State Organizational Committee
Young Communist League

42

Dear Comrades:

Comrade Lloyd Brown has asked me to prepare a statement containing my differences with the line of the Young Communist League and of the Communist Party. Before going into an explanation of these differences, I should like to make clear that, although I disagree on several points of policy, I still regard the Young Communist League and the Communist Party as the only revolutionary organizations in the United States. Furthermore, I wish to state that although I hold these opinions, I have never broken the discipline of the Young Communist League by publicly stating that its policies were wrong or by refusing to do activity which entailed my carrying out the line. As a matter of fact, I have on numerous occasions defended the line with which I disagreed. At the same time, I also wish to make clear that in judging and evaluating the line of the Y.C.L. and Party, I feel that sane and intelligent discussion would rectify and put forward a correct line.

The first point in order of discussion is the policy of war. Since the Communist Party is a Section of the Communist International and takes responsibility for the actions of other parties throughout the world, my criticisms will be directed mainly against the C.P. of France with the understanding that the C.P.U.S.A. regards their actions as correct. I feel that the Communist Party of France is making a terrible mistake when it comes out and says it will support its "own" government in a war against Nazi Germany. I do not think this is the correct Leninist approach to the problem of war. France is an imperialist nation having a bourgeois democratic form of government. Its policies are that of the bourgeoisie in any war which it conducts and any war which it conducts is an imperialist war. To say that France wants peace and that Germany is the aggressor merely avoids concrete facts. Both nations are aggressors since the roots of this war find their basis in the imperialist nature of both, and in the last war. The French working class in supporting the war of its own bourgeoisie would be forced to give up the class struggle and would tie itself hard and fast to the imperialists of France as in the last war. The Communists would have to condone French imperialism and would lose respect in the eyes of the French working class when the true nature of the war would unfold itself. To say that such a war would lead to the overthrow of Hitler merely belies the facts since the bourgeoisie of France will first institute Fascism in France at the outbreak of the war and will later see to it that the bloody reign of Fascism would continue in Germany once they had beaten her in warfare. The French bourgeoisie has no desire to see the working class in Germany come to power and will certainly act in that light. If, however, the working class would work for the defeat of its own government in the war, with the purpose of turning the imperialist war into a civil war, they would then act in the spirit of proletarian internationalism, following the trail blazed by the Russian Bolsheviks in 1917.

The same thing holds true for an alliance of France with the Soviet Union or the United States with the Soviet Union. In his letter to the American working class, Lenin points out that the U.S.S.R. is a beleaguered fortress and that the task of the American proletariat in defending the Soviet Union is to struggle against the American capitalist class. The same thing holds true today as well as then. To say that the American bourgeoisie is fighting a progressive war, as Comrade Hathaway did in the Daily Worker some time ago, is merely an evasion of certain facts. The American bourgeoisie has demonstrated that it is now the reactionary class in its suppression of the American colonies, in South America, and in its activities and deprivations against the Chinese people. To serve in the bourgeois army and fight for its victory would be forgetting the needs and interests of the oppressed masses everywhere. It would even hurt the masses of the Soviet Union, since no guarantee would be had that the bourgeois army of the United States would not attack the U.S.S.R. after reaching an agreement with Japan. What curb could then be placed in the way of the American army if the working class is not prepared before the outbreak of war to fight against the imperialist policies of its own government? There would be no curb and the working class of the U.S. would be to a measure responsible if the Soviet Union were defeated.

This expresses in as short and concise a form as possible my disagreement with the war position of the Party and League.

The People's Front idea also raises some doubt in my mind. In reference to this, I quote from the Communist Manifesto: "The lower middle class, the small manufacturers, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are, therefore, not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interests; they desert their own standpoint to adopt that of the proletariat."

Therefore, in passing judgment on the Peoples Front policy, it is necessary to see whether the program of the Peoples Front is a working class program or not. The essence of the Peoples Front program is in the slogan of defending bourgeois democracy against fascism. In the period of declining capitalism, bourgeois democracy manifests its true class nature and degenerates into an open dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, in the role of what we call Fascism. The Peoples Front, therefore, attempts to fight Fascism on the petty bourgeois and middle class basis, for it counterposes bourgeois democracy to Fascism. The correct approach to this problem, following the footsteps of Lenin, who fought against Kerenskyism and all forms of bourgeois democracy as well as Czarist reaction, would be to counterpose the idea of a Socialist state, a Soviet Republic. Then would the proletariat best be able to combat Fascism, for it would attract to its program the mass of petty bourgeoisie and peasantry, who have become disillusioned with bourgeois democracy and are looking for a way out: "they desert their own standpoint and adopt that of the proletariat." Otherwise they will go to the Fascists, who offer them a new way demagogically. The alternative to the Peoples Front should be a strong, united labor front, to fight for every democratic right of the working class but not for the preservation of the bourgeois democratic system as such. This is basically my objection to the tactics of the Peoples Front.

The policy of Peoples Front finds its reflection in the U.S. in the evaluation of class forces here. The Party and the League say that the main danger lies in the Landon-Hearst-Liberty League alliance, and that the main duty of the working class is to defeat this combination. The Party also maintains that Roosevelt yields to reaction and borrows from the right, and is not a barrier to reaction. I think that this formulation is incorrect. We cannot talk of Roosevelt as a "vacillator" who is reactionary only insofar as "he borrows from the right", since he represents the Democratic Party, a thoroughly bourgeois party. Roosevelt shows his true nature in the system of repression maintained by his own Party (even before there was a Liberty League) in the South. Furthermore, his huge military budget, his strike-breaking activities during the N.R.A. (automobile sell-out, \$13. code minimums, etc.), testify to his role as a fit representative of the big bourgeoisie. If the Party analysis is correct, then its attempt to roll up a big vote for the Communist Party is an obvious contradiction. We criticize Lemke inasmuch as he is a stooge for Landon, drawing votes from Roosevelt. Won't we also draw our votes from those who would otherwise vote for Roosevelt? This contradiction can be done away with by openly declaring that both parties are reactionary and anti-working class, and that the greatest danger to the working class lies in support of either.

There are many points in relation to this that I could cite, but I am sure that in the forthcoming Y.C.L. Convention I will have ample time.

I do not know exactly why Comrade Brown asked me to prepare this statement, but I should like to point out a few things in relation to it. I would not like to be called a counter-revolutionist or some other equally obnoxious name when this is read. In view of this, I should like to point out that many organizations, including the revolutionary ones, hold that the right of members to express individual views is sacred. However, the member must at all times be bound, in action, by the discipline of his organization. I should like to point out that the discipline of the Y.C.L. is not that of the C.P. Further, the Y.C.L. is also in a process of change for the building of a United Youth League. It is only in this light that my theories and action should be judged. I have never broken discipline of the Y.C.L. and I don't intend to now. I have only presented my point of view within the organization constructively. I therefore end this statement with these words: Forward to a mass Communist movement in America!

Fraternally yours,

(Signed) Milton Miller,
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Young Communist League.

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