

10/18/37 "I RESIGN FROM THE Y.C.L." 45

TO THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE (CCNY BRANCH)

This is a brief statement of the why and wherefore of my resignation from the YCL and my intention to join the YPSL (Fourth International)

Most of you know me personally--not a "great revolutionist" or "brilliant intellectual" but simply an average socially conscious student who joined the YCL in search of a better world to live in. I joined because I felt that the Communist Party was the only organization with a fighting chance to change this system of society--because I felt that only in the CP (and allied groups) was there combined that sincerity, that singleness of purpose, and that theoretical correctness, which could and must lead to victory--because I felt that the CP was the only organization where theoretical problems of a political nature, no matter of what sort, were settled by honest, sincere discussion with decision determined by the majority--and not by means of lies, of slanders, and of the rifle. I no longer believe any of these things to be true. That is why I am leaving.

I joined the League about three years ago. That was the time the party was in the throes of an about face from social-fascism to the Popular Front. Soon after I began to feel qualms about the continual talk of "defending democracy" of "defeating fascism", and "preserving bourgeois democracy"--everything, in short, except building socialism. I buried these misgivings, however, the way ninety per cent of the thinking membership buried them--namely, by saying to myself, "This talk of preserving democracy is a mere stratagem useful for propaganda purposes". The leaders of the party know what they're doing, they know what hokum this "defending democracy" is. It's just clever politics, that's all! During three years I have slowly come to the realization that party members have been shouting "defend democracy" so long that they are actually coming to believe it themselves.

What an anomaly! The spectacle of the CP defending "bourgeois democracy", i.e. a state entirely controlled by the bourgeoisie and which the bourgeoisie is perfectly willing to tolerate as long as it "works" and does not encroach on their interests is enough to keep Comrade Lenin writhing in his tomb. And what is even a bigger joker, albeit a more tragic one, is the fact that when this democracy does collapse, the bourgeoisie uses the very antagonism of the working and middle classes to it to crush them still further i.e. fascism. Who can deny that Hitler's road to power was paved in a large measure by workers who felt that the "democracy" of the Weimer Republic had given them only unemployment and starvation, and that anything was better than this model "democracy". Still I am told that the German CP uses as the basis for its underground propaganda the idea of a "return to Weimer", another "democratic republic". Put yourself in the place of a German worker. You are offered a return to Weimer--with its inflation period, its Versailles Treaty, its confiscatory taxes, its rock-bottom scale wages, unemployment, and yes, its Storm Troopers and its Hitler--for that is where all Weimers must lead. Would you try it?

I buried my misgivings on the Popular Front with that old saying, "the proof of the pudding....." and observed the Popular Front in practice in France where it has most chance to succeed. Do you recall the wild enthusiasm of all the liberal people when the Socialists and Communists won such a sweeping victory in France, and when Leon Blum took office with their support and that of the Radical Socialists? Do you recall all the talk of a "bloodless revolution" and your own sneaking feeling that perhaps a shift in class power without a civil war could be accomplished, do you recall how hundreds of thousands of Paris workers poured out of the factories and marched thru the streets with clenched fists ready to smash the fascists forever? Then do you recall the slow disillusionment of the

following months, the insipid social legislation, the 20% wage rises followed by 30 and 40% price rises, the cleansing of the army and navy of fascists (removal of three or two prominent outspoken stooges), disarming of the fascist forces (raids on one of De La Rocque's clubs and confiscating two revolvers) and the hanging and one other shadow boxing contrivances "to deal a death-blow to fascism". And then these minor failures culminating in the greatest betrayal in all of France to aid Spain by the French Popular Front pleased the Fascist well--aiding France with one hand and checking the indignation of the French workers at this betrayal with the other hand. And how long do you think the French Popular Front will last with Franco in power? Already the Pondulum has started to swing back. Yesterday the Socialist Bloc, today the Radical Socialist Chautemps, tomorrow the centrist Laval, and finally the Fascist De La Rocque or Doriot. But it will always be the Bourgeoisie in control. The Popular Front is only fancy window dressing.

I voiced some of my misgivings on these and other questions--wildly. Frankly I was a little bit afraid. Everytime I opened my mouth I heard the terms "Trotskyism" or "Leftism" or "Counter-Revolutionism" flung around with such abandon that I sometimes thought there must be something in me to have such vile doubts. And then I saw Socialism undeniably being built in the Soviet Union at that time and since the Soviet Union supported the CP I felt that despite its mistakes the CP was the only possible builder of world socialism.

But during this past year, especially this summer, events occurred in the Soviet Union which have finally convinced me that the only role that the Comintern can play in the working class movement today will be that of the tombstone of world revolution. The first Moscow Trials left me skeptical. The second more so. Indeed I knew very few Communists who have not had some misgivings with regard to their veracity. But the mass slaughters during the summer convinced me that a gigantic Stalinist bureaucracy is growing in the USSR and there is a growing revolutionary, not counter-revolutionary opposition to this bureaucracy. Stalin has said "The final victory of socialism has been achieved". Tell me, what is there about socialism--that glorious new society that is to uplift and ennoble the human character, that causes men who have given the best years of their lives in struggling for it, who have won the battle, whose talents have been rewarded with the highest possible positions--what is there about socialism which causes men to turn fascist, plot the destruction of their country and fellow comrades? What reward could have possibly induced Tukachevsky, military hero of the entire USSR, and the seven other highest generals--all Civil War heroes--to sell their country to Japan and Germany? What could have induced Radek, Bukharin, Tomsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, in short all of Lenin's Central Committee except Stalin to have turned fascist? And hundreds more are admittedly being shot by the Soviet government on similar charges. And why is Bela Kun, leader of the Hungarian insurrection of 1919 held in prison on charges of fascist plotting? Truly, soviet socialism must be a horrible mess if it breeds so many fascists. What would you think if it were said that the Vice-President of the U.S. and the whole cabinet were Japanese spies? And that half of the governors were imprisoned and shot on similar charges? And that the army and navy heads were Japanese agents?

Briefly then, the choice before me is this: I can either abandon all faith in Socialism as a vice-ridden, corrupt, criminal producing, fear-maintained and unworkable nightmare, or abandon the idea that Stalinism can be synonymous with Socialism. I prefer to do the latter.

To fight for Socialism, to combine sincerity, singleness of purpose, theoretical and practical correctness of policy, and internal democracy, all the necessary qualifications of a truly revolutionary party, I have decided to join the Young People's Socialist League, the Fourth Internationalists.

Comradely yours,
 Morton P. Sherman