

December 14, 1957

To the National Committee
Communist Party, USA

Dear Comrades:

We are concerned because of the continuing and deepening crisis in the Communist Party. The promises and hopes which were to develop from the 16th Convention have not come to pass. There has been no progress in overcoming our isolation from the American scene. Rather the cleavages and contradictions have become wider and sharper while the Party is daily being reduced by further losses.

It is not our aim at this time to assess all the reasons for this state of affairs. This will come in time.

We are concerned rather with the path ahead for ourselves both as part of the Party and as individuals. We do not care to see any further fragmentation and dispersal of broad groups of Marxist and socialist-minded forces in whom there is concentrated two and three decades of intense devotion, loyalty, effort and experience in the cause of socialism.

In view of the above, we declare:

1. We want to help bring about socialism in the United States.
2. To achieve that aim, we wish to study and organize, making use of the rich experiences of the working class and peoples of all countries, and more especially of those who have achieved socialism or are marching to it. But we also hold that an American Party of Socialism can successfully solve the problems before it only if it thinks and acts independently on the basis of its own good judgment.
3. We consider the theories worked out by Marx, Engels, Lenin and more recent leaders as summarizing the best experiences of the workers and peoples of the world in the struggle for socialism. We further consider that the deepest study of the American scene is required so that the lessons summarized by the teachers of other countries can be creatively and correctly interpreted and applied to the problems of the United States.
4. We believe that the main danger in arriving at a correct program and policies for an American way to socialism comes from a continuing and ever-sharpening dogmatism and sectarianism which seeks to reduce the Party to a shell of those who are "pure" in their isolation, preferring to live by the book and to study our country through foreign eyes.

So far, we may seem to be saying nothing that was not stated in one way or another by the 16th Convention. But the blunt truth is that the forward-looking decisions of that convention have been hamstrung by those in the leadership who never agreed with them and said so, with an able assist from those who have followed a path of conciliation and compromise with the former — all under the slogans of unity and the need to struggle on two fronts.

5. Therefore, in the present specific Party situation, we reject as double talk a program of struggle on two fronts. We feel that under this type of program, the Party is being driven to destruction. We feel that the main problems derive in the first place from the deep isolation of our movement from the main strata of the people, and above all the working class and Negro people, as well as from the continuing inability of the Party to deal with those problems.
6. We further reject the concept that there are two extremes in our Party at this time -- the right and the left -- and that what is needed is "unity" a struggle against both "extremes", and studied avoidance of basic issues under the cloak of that "unity". This kind of "unity" is a mask for opposition to change and leads back into the camp of dogmatism and doctrinarism. Under this type of program, the majority of the Party which favored basic changes has been forced out.

We feel instead that the issue is more truly between the overwhelming desire for change in our ways (even though there are overstatements and excesses) and the most bitter, unyielding, and determined resistance against such change. This is more truly the basic issue in our movement at this time, and nothing must be allowed to cloud it.

7. We are more and more convinced that the convention action of seeking any and all avenues for unity with forces who have left our Party as well as other Marxist and socialist groupings is one of the major means by which an important move forward can be made. We are convinced that the hostility to and battle against this concept is a major reason for the sharp Party crisis; it being crystal clear now that this proposition is being buried by those who resist any change.

Having thus reached the crossroads, we further declare that we will continue to try to exhaust all possibilities within the Party, recognizing at the same time that we can no longer have any illusions. Possibilities for change appear to grow less and less with each passing day.

At this late hour, only a number of sharp and serious steps by the National Committee would be convincing evidence of a decisive change. Among such steps would be included:

- a. A forthright repudiation of the characterization of our convention as revisionist by foreign parties.
- b. An equally forthright rejection of the proposition that the cause of the present Party crisis is revisionism.
- c. Public reaffirmation of the policy of "fighting side by side with all who struggle for Socialism and seeking to cooperate with all socialist-minded Americans to achieve Socialism" (Preamble to Party constitution) -- and working to implement that policy at every point as a major Party task.
- d. An open letter to the comrades who have left our Party which would be frankly self-critical of our slowness in carrying out the convention decisions. Such a letter should express the hope that these people will in their own way attempt to overcome the fragmentation of experienced Marxist cadre which has already taken place, and convey the willingness of the Party to assist in this wherever it is acceptable and in whatever form is possible (i.e. study groups, forums, clubs, and or any other avenue in which people can continue to study and work together with or without the participation of present Party members)

- h. A frank statement that a regrouping is necessary, inclusive of those who have left as well as those who remain in the Party, legalizing discussion along these lines, and expressing the need for finding ways of carrying it out in the near future — coupled with the taking of actual steps to do so.
- i. Taking a number of immediate organizational measures that will help move the Party in the above direction including:
 - Shifting of staff personnel to eliminate obstructionists to such change.
 - Making the present structure of the Party more flexible so that membership in the present type of Party club is not necessarily a requirement for adherence to the organization.
 - Moving the national office to Chicago forthwith.
 - Steps to bring into line any Party organization that defies the line of the National Convention.
- g. Opening a discussion of a Party program in an atmosphere of free discussion and with an approach in keeping with the decision of the convention on the need to think through our problems on the basis of the most careful study of the American scene.
- h. Instructing all national sub-committees and bodies of the Party, and most especially the Educational Committee and "Political Affairs", to develop policies and material supporting and implementing the policies and spirit of the 16th convention.
- i. Regular and frequent issuance of a real discussion bulletin in which the views of the membership can be expressed.

Only such a series of actions and more along similar lines affords any hope of halting further losses and disintegration and of realizing whatever possibilities for change still remain in the Party.

Signed by:

Bob B. - West Adams	
Bebe - Boyle Heights	
Ada - Boyle Heights	
Celeste - Zapata	
Dan - Western	
Dorothy - Echo Park	
Elizabeth - Miranda Smith	
Elizabeth - Echo Park	
Frank Carlson - Boyle Heights	
Frank Spector - Echo Park	
Henry Steinburg - Valley 22	
Joe - Valley 22	
Eppy - Miso, Industrial	
Lil C - Boyle Heights	
Lois Newman - San Gabriel	
Lou B - Building Trades	
Mort Newman - Miso, Industrial	
Phil - Western	
Ruth L - Boyle Heights	Sophie - West Adams
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