
PARTY BULLETIN

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1. Trade Union Seniority and Negro Employment -
Adopted by P.C. July, 1945

 2. Questions to Italian Comrades and Their Answers.
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This bulletin should have been sent out just before the Active Workers Conference. Due to the fact that we were overburdened with mimeo work at that time it was delayed.

Unfortunately, after the Active Workers Conference, when we re-organized our office, this bulletin was once again delayed due to lack of forces.

We can only assure the comrades that this unpardonable delay will not occur again.

For members only

issued October 29, 1945

The following position on the question of Negro employment in relation to seniority was adopted by the Political Committee as a matter of general policy. It is sent out to the Party as a guide in dealing with this question.

Trade Union Seniority and Negro Employment

I. The seniority system is one of the bed-rock gains of the trade union movement. It protects the jobs of all workers; white and black alike. It is a bulwark for the unions against the so-called "merit system of the employers. It protects the union against the infiltration of anti-union elements into the plant.

II. While Negro workers as a group have less seniority than the white workers as a group they say that "the Negro is the last to be hired and the first to be fired", is only a superficial statement of the situation.

1. Many Negroes have seniority e.g. in the steel and coal industries.
2. Many Negroes have acquired seniority in the new wartime industries.
3. Many Negroes have seniority in segregated and semi-segregated departments and buildings.

III. Thousands of Negroes have been won to support of trade union principles, principles, practices and traditions. They will not support the agitation for super-seniority for Negroes. These are the "advanced" Negro trade unionists. Among these are Negro union officials, shop stewards and shop committeemen.

IV. The ratio principle of retaining Negroes on the job is related to proposals such as the demand that Negroes be hired in proportion to their ratio in the general population, thus violating the demand for equality and pegging Negro employment irrespective of the number of Negroes available for employment or seeking employment.

V. Super-seniority will in all probability prove abortive in practice and inimical to the development of friendly relations between Negro and white workers. In the case of mass lay-offs particularly, the problem before the union will be far larger than the question of seniority; it will be a question of mass reemployment or the question of not closing a whole plant. To arouse the white workers against the Negro workers in a situation where there are mass lay-offs would achieve nothing in a practical way but would create a disastrous situation in the relations among the workers in the plant and union.

VI. White workers have not yet been won to the acceptance of Negro equality in the plant and union. There are and have been many instances where the local has failed to support the seniority rule where Negro workers were concerned. To demand in the concrete situation that they accept super-seniority for Negroes is only to lay the basis for making the struggle for Negro equality more difficult. Furthermore such a proposal is made to order for Negro and white demagogues, anti-union elements in both groups and all those who want to sow discord in the labor movement.

If such discord should break out in the plants and locals it will overflow to the outside and lay the basis for inter-racial disturbances of all sorts. It is significant in this connection that during the last riots in Detroit none of the disturbances took place in the unions or around the plants where some measure of working class solidarity had been developed.

VII. We must take the stand that there must be no discrimination against Negroes in the plant and union. There must be equality in hiring, firing and lay-offs. This has not been achieved yet in the labor movement.

VIII. Super-seniority would disorient white and Negro workers away from the main problem and the struggle around the slogan of JOBS FOR ALL.

IX. The NC takes the position that the task of the Party is to win the workers to the acceptance of Negro equality in the plant and union.

X. The NC takes the position that the Party must consider what is good for the trade union movement as a whole and in the long run. 2. to win the workers to acceptance of Negro equality in the plant and union. 3. To the Party Reconversion Program. 4. To independent political action.

XI. The NC rejects the proposal of super-seniority and supports the practice of seniority now prevailing.

Adopted by P.C.

July 16, 1945

EDITORIAL NOTE

The belated publication of the document which follows, for which the Editorial Board of the Bulletin owes the author and the readers an apology, requires an explanatory introduction.

Some time last year, the party assigned a comrade, X, the task of carrying out a purely technical mission in Italy. No political or organizational task was assigned to this comrade, view primarily of his brief membership in the organization, and therefore, of his lack of experience in political situations and inadequate political knowledge and understanding.

The simple technical mission was carried out by comrade X to our complete satisfaction. However, it appears that the comrade, in spite of explicit instructions, either did not understand the limitations of his assignment or felt that he could proceed beyond these limitations on his own decision. As a result, he inflicted a gross disservice upon the party, the effects of which we continue to feel to this day.

On his own, personal initiative, and without the foreknowledge or permission of the party, he put before a small group of Italian comrades a series of questions to which he received a series of answers - both of them making up the document which is published below.

The questions, as is evident from reading them, could have no other result than to misrepresent our party's position and to discredit it in the eyes of the Italian comrades. This result is precisely what the questions accomplished. The utterly false impression created about our party's position, coming as it did from an "authoritative" source, that is, from a member of our party could not but contribute to the political confusion which has hampered the development and effectiveness of the Italian section almost from its birth.

One of the most glaring and inexcusable distortions is committed on the question of our alleged position toward the Italian Committee of National Liberation, i.e. the bureaucratic committee of the bourgeoisie, the social democrats and the Stalinists, which our party, presumably, considers "progressive". The question is asked for the purpose of eliciting from the Italian comrades a "refutation" of our "standpoint." Up to this time, not a single opponent of the party, not even the Cannonites who are so little concerned with scruples about an exact presentation of our views, ever dared charge or even imply that we favored supporting Croce-Nenni-Togliatti. We had to wait for this charge to come first from one of our own party members, who evidently considers that his party comes not first, but second.

Most of the party members are acquainted with the consequences of this irresponsible and disloyal procedure. The documentary material on this score appears in the August, 1944, issue of the New International. One of the comrades who attended this "questions-and-answers" session, Peck, after hearing the "authoritative" voice, drew the indicated conclusions. He attacked our party in the organ of the British section, the Socialist Appeal, opening his letter with the statement that "I have just heard the Shachtmanite position on the national question," (heard it, that is, from the unauthorized, irresponsible and misrepresenting statement of Comrade X)

The Political Committee of the party was therefore compelled to instruct the National Secretary to address a letter to the British section denouncing Peck for his gross misrepresentation of our position. With a loyalty toward party members which comrade X might well have shown toward his party, but did not show, the letter to the British did not say a word about the person who was not one whit less guilty of distorting and discrediting the position of his own party, although a few words would not have been out of place against a comrade who contributed so irresponsibly to the deterioration of the good relations we had been building up between our party and the Italian section.

The Political Committee did not take any disciplinary action against Comrade X. In any serious revolutionary organization, as is amply shown in the history of the movement, such an utterly thoughtless and pernicious procedure, especially when followed in the course of a mission which, while technical, was highly important, would have been punished by the sternest disciplinary measure at the command of the party. In this case, however, the Political Committee refrained from even proposing any measures only because of the extreme brevity of the comrade's membership in the movement, his complete lack of political and organizational experience, and because of the fact that he was himself the victim of a factional situation in the party and of a crude factional miseducation. The Committee merely decided, following the public attack on the party by Peck, to communicate the facts briefly, on September 5, 1944, to the branch to which comrade X belongs.

Meanwhile, the author of the "Questions" to the Italian comrades having insisted (as is, of course, his right) to the publication of his document in the Internal Bulletin, it is published herewith.

M.S.

QUESTIONS TO ITALIAN COMRADES AND THEIR ANSWERS

1. Were there soviets in Italy? Where?

While the full story of the two major general strikes in Northern Industrial Italy is not yet known, word has reached the Bolshevik-Leninist Group of Naples from comrades in the north that workers occupied the factories, and soviets were formed on two different occasions in Milan, Turin, and Genoa - the first was during the great popular demonstration following the abdication of Mussolini, in which the workers of these cities went on general strike, and paraded with slogans and proclaiming the Social Republic. The second was following the armistice of Badoglio with the Allies, at which time the workers of Milan and Turin occupied the factories and resisted the efforts of the Germans to detain them. Although both appearances of the soviet form were short-lived, they clearly signified the intention of the proletariat to fight the Germans with its own class weapon - the strike and its own class organ - the soviet. In Naples, four days before the Allies entered, the working class, answering a call of the anti-soviet parties, formed workers' militias, and forced the Germans to withdraw from the city, after bloody street fighting. The sole governing authority became the Military Committee of the Partisans, who arrested the fascists and were prepared to deal with the Allies as the ruling authority in Naples. The Allies, however, ignored its existence, and releasing fascist officials from prison, recognized them as the legitimate authority. Although this committee assumed no functions of government, it could not be properly called a soviet, but because of its overwhelming proletarian composition, as well as its support by the working class, it could have developed into a soviet, or a Neapolitan commune. This evolution was prevented by the Allied occupation. At present, factory committees exist in the industrial cities of the north, closely connected with each other, which can serve as the basis for soviets in the next revolutionary crisis.

2. Was there a revolution in Italy? How would you describe the events just prior to and after the overthrow of Mussolini?

There has been no revolution in Italy. There was, however, a revolutionary situation, which was artificially prevented from maturing by the presence of the German imperialist army. By the summer of 1943, Italian fascism had reached a domestic crisis. The cost of the war, now in its third year, the acute shortage of food and other necessities, the destruction of factories and homes by aerial bombardment, had already made the war unpopular, and in March, 1943, a series of general strikes convulsed the nation. Fascism as a popular movement had disappeared, and Mussolini appeared as a hated head of a police regime, which was blamed for the crime of bringing Italy into a war which she could not win. As the needs of the German military machine grew, the Nazis intervened directly into the economic and political life of Italy, and became transformed, in the minds of the people, into foreign invaders.

The bourgeois, frightened by the general strike, increasing desertions and surrenders of the Italian Army, feared a general uprising, in which the people would put an end, not only to the Mussolini regime, but to the existence of capitalism itself. In addition, the bourgeoisie became convinced the Germans could not win the war, and the ruling class was ready to disassociate itself from a cause already doomed.

Line 14 should read as follows: "answering a call of the anti-fascist parties, formed workers' militias and , , , ,"

By the end of July, 1943, the bourgeoisie became convinced that only drastic action could save the capitalist regime. A "palace revolution" was carried out, and the military dictatorship of Badoglio succeeded the fascist dictatorship of Mussolini.

Seeing in this the opportunity to rid themselves at last of the monarchy and the oppressive capitalist class, as well as the German occupation, and to end the war, the masses surged into the streets, demonstrating for the abdication of the king, for an end to the war, for a Social Republic, and a workers' government. But flags were flown, the underground movement came into the open, and a series of strikes swept Italy, with the formation of soviets in Milan and Turin. The prospect of social revolution frightened Badoglio and the capitalist class, and they moved swiftly, with the aid of the Germans, to curb the masses. Political activity was prohibited, demonstrations and strikes outlawed, and the press gagged. In the North, the Germans forced the workers back into the factories.

3. What is the perspective of the vanguard in Italy? Does it see a "democratic period" ahead? Should it be for the "national liberation,"? Does it consider the ousting of the Germans in the north as its main task? Should its slogan be "national liberation"? Does it consider the "national liberation" movements progressive?

The perspective of the vanguard in Italy is to carry on the class struggle regardless of its effect upon the military struggle. We are for the establishment of the soviet power in Italy. And will fight whichever enemy is the greatest obstacle to its establishment. In German occupied Italy we would oust the German oppressor by a workers army, at the same time expropriating the Italian bourgeoisie, creating a workers' dictatorship to prevent the reestablishment of bourgeois rule in any form. In Allied Italy the chief enemy is Allied imperialism, allied with the Italian bourgeois state power. Our program is still for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, thereby achieving national liberation by the formation of the Socialist republic. At no time can the slogan of national liberation be first on the order of the day, but rather the slogans of independent class action against the bourgeoisie.

The establishment of the bourgeois democratic state cannot be regarded as a necessary stage to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The political demands and aspirations of the Italian proletariat have passed beyond the framework of bourgeois democracy. The working class remembers that it failed to carry out its revolution against its bourgeoisie in 1919, and has paid for this failure by 22 years of fascism, and a second imperialist war. It is determined that this time it will follow the example of its Russian brothers in 1917 and end the rule of the capitalist class completely, expropriate private property, and establish the workers republic. The period of fascism did not becloud or lessen class antagonism but rendered them more acute and to the working class the bourgeoisie and the fascist power became synonymous, and it clearly understood that to destroy fascism it would be necessary to destroy its social roots, the capitalist system. Thus it was that the popular demonstration after the fall of Mussolini was accompanied by socialist slogans directed against the bourgeoisie, who had grown rich under fascism. The sharpening of the class struggle in Italy has made it impossible for the bourgeoisie to maintain its rule except for the occupation by allied troops, plus the collaborationist policies of the re-

formist leadership of the proletarian parties.

3. Does it consider the "National Liberation" movement progressive?

The only "national liberation" group is the Committee of National Liberation. The Committee of National Liberation is not a popular mass movement in any sense of the word, but is a purely formal agreement between the reformist heads of various parties, both working class and bourgeois in composition, for the purpose of class collaboration with the bourgeois regime. It has no support among the masses, and no independent existence. It is not possible, for instance, to belong to the "Committee of Liberation" as such. One can belong only to one of the parties who compose it. Of these parties the strongest membership and influence are the Socialist and Communist Parties. The working class in general has neither faith in, nor support for, the Committee of Liberation, and does not trust the collaborationist policies of the party leaderships, but supports the Communist and Socialist because of their revolutionary traditions, and for lack of a genuine revolutionary party to follow in their stead. The slogan of "national liberation" in Italy is not used to awaken and inspire the masses, but to disorient them, to exhort them, in the name of the "fatherland," and other patriotic slogans, to postpone their revolutionary activity until after the war. "The National Liberation" movement therefore, is an agreement between the bourgeois parties and the working class parties to restrain the masses, to postpone the revolution. It is therefore aimed against the social revolution, and is pure and simple social patriotism. In Italy the revolutionary socialists have nothing in common with the "Committee of National Liberation" and regard it as a shameful betrayal of the working class, inspired by Stalinism, which can lead only to their further disorientation and helplessness before bourgeois counter revolution.

4. How do you see the vanguard party created? Does it see a "democratic" period ahead?

The existing vanguard in Italy does not have as its perspective an extended period of bourgeois democracy. The mood of the masses alone would make such a period impossible. The class relationships in Italy have reached a point where the workers are consciously hostile to any regime which would be based upon the economic or political supremacy of the bourgeoisie. It is only the presence of the military forces of Allied imperialism plus the artificial separation of Northern Italy from Southern Italy, that has prevented the working class from attempting to take complete power in a proletarian revolution. It is inevitable that as soon as the workers no longer fear this allied military might, there will be a revolutionary onslaught by the masses, to expropriate the bourgeoisie and to institute workers power. This revolutionary movement of the workers may take one of two paths: 1. Establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, through workers soviets, or 2. A temporary period of dual power, which must resolve itself either in the revolutionary dictatorship, or the reinstatement of the military dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. It is the task of the vanguard in Italy to create the mass Bolshevik-Leninist Party, in opposition to the false collaborationist policies of the reformist leadership of the Communist and Socialist Parties, and their participation in the Committee of Liberation, and to raise high the banner of revolutionary socialism for the revolutionary conquest of state power by the proletariat. It is our task to expose the "democratic" slogans of Stalinism and to raise the slogans of

class struggle, adamant opposition to capitulation or collaboration with the bourgeoisie, and orientation to the seizure of power by the proletariat. In this we voice the sentiments of the Italian proletariat. We look toward the October Revolution as their example to follow, the revolution whose principles it is our duty to resurrect and expound. We are not a sectarian group, we do not reject on principle struggle with any mass organization for democratic demands, but always we fight for these demands on the basis of independent action by the proletariat, against any form of collaboration with the bourgeoisie, and preserving our own organization and theoretical independence.

5. Does it (the vanguard) not need a "democratic" interval perhaps - before it has the strength to play an important role? Will not a revolutionary period - a soviet period - maturing too soon find a weak vanguard too powerless to prevent the defeat of the soviets and the crushing of the vanguard itself? Should we therefore not stress the democratic and national liberationist slogans rather than the soviet-revolutionary Socialist United States of Europe slogans so that we can have a democratic breathing space for the creation of a mass, genuine and tested vanguard party?

It is not the task of the vanguard to hold up the processes of history. We cannot call for soviets or order them to disperse at will. Logically, if we are too weak to prevent the defeat of the soviets it is because we have not yet sufficient hold upon the masses, in that case, how can we expect the masses not to form soviets simply because we may believe the time is not yet ripe. The mere creation of soviets would attest to the readiness of the proletariat for the seizure of power, and the development of a revolutionary struggle, and to orient the masses toward the correct road, the correct strategy of revolution. Without our leadership, the soviets are doomed to failure. The only way for us to gain leadership of the masses is for us to make clear that we are the only party which stands for the soviet power, and against collaboration and subservience to the bourgeois state. The reality of the approaching period is that it is a period of proletarian revolution. We must orient ourselves to the strategy and tactics of such a period - to proclaim our faith in "bourgeois democracy" and "national liberation" would be to seriously compromise us in the eyes of the masses, and lose for us all influence among the working class.

6. The Old Bordigists functioned as the "Spartacus" group during fascism and had a certain amount of influence among the masses. Bordiga himself has disappeared, and is politically dead. Their position has always been against collaboration, for the socialist revolution.

Today, they have no organized party, but recently have begun to publish a paper "Pensiero Marxista" and to function as "Marxist Centers." Their movement in "liberated" Italy centers about Naples, and they have between 300-400 active members, and the circulation of their papers approximately 2250 in this area. Their activity has up to now consisted of mostly theoretical propaganda among the proletariat and membership of radical parties. Their membership is proletarian in composition. At the present time, we are working toward unity with the Bordigists on the basis of our programmatic agreement. To that end a conference has been called for July 8th. Since we have found no important difference in political program, unity will probably take place