

The Tactic of Defeat

By Samuel Sillen

(This concludes a series of three articles)

AS a corollary of their defeatist thesis about World War III, Minton-McKenney take a completely negative attitude toward the United Nations, for example. They insist that "the United Nations, dominated by the United States in agreement with the subservient imperialism of Great Britain, has provided the ideal cover-up for the war-makers." (My emphasis.) They propose that Communists should formulate "sharp" positions toward the UN "unmasking the role this organization plays in fostering the drive to make our times an 'American Century' and so fostering World War III." (Note that the war has been temporarily suspended in this passage.)

Minton and McKenney speak of the UN as if it were the League of Nations which Lenin unmasked as a cover-up for the imperialists. But such an attitude toward the UN is infantile. It views the UN as an instrument for war rather than as an instrument for peace. Of course American imperialism attempts to advance reactionary programs through the UN, and of course it is the job of the American people in the first place to oppose such attempts to pervert the UN. But there is a profound difference between "unmasking" the UN and "unmasking" the imperialists.

ACTUALLY the Minton-McKenney program for "unmasking the role" of the UN would provide a great deal of comfort to the reactionaries who are attempting not to build but to weaken the unity and prestige of the international organization. The logic of such a position calls for the resignation of all the non-imperialist countries—a move that the fascists would find highly agreeable today. From a "left" viewpoint, Minton and McKenney would aid the anti-UN propaganda of the Hearsts and Sokolskys.

Similarly, our petty-bourgeois "revolutionists" attack the Communist Party for supporting an anti-monopoly, anti-fascist coalition. Their sneers at the term "pro-Roosevelt forces" give the key to their position on domestic politics, which is to wipe out any distinctions among the political groupings in the Democratic Party and to reject any alliance between the working class and elements in the middle classes. The logic of their position led them inevitably (in August) to attack not the candidates



of reaction but the progressive nominees on whom we can place no "reliance."

"Only those," wrote Lenin, "who have no self-reliance can fear to enter into temporary alliances even with unreliable people; not a single political party could exist without entering such alliances."

And the fact is that these phrasemongering self-appointed spokesmen for the working class have no self-reliance; that is, they have no confidence in the workers. They want to keep the workers "pure" even if that means suicide. They want to separate labor from its natural allies, its absolutely necessary allies in the fight against fascism and war.

THE triumph of reaction in November has emphasized the need to develop a new political party which will embrace workers, farmers, the Negro people, the progressive intellectuals, small businessmen. It has pointed up the need for an anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, anti-monopolist people's party. The building of a broad coalition is understood by everybody who wishes seriously to avert catastrophe, as opposed to the people who fatalistically accept catastrophe.

But what do Minton and McKenney call for? They "demand" a class-conscious labor party. They oppose the Communist conception of an effective anti-fascist coalition, and offer instead a technique for splitting the anti-fascist forces; for splitting the labor movement itself, which is not today prepared to accept a class-conscious—which can only mean anti-capitalist—party.

Here again the "left" merges with the program of reaction, which is to divide the enemies of reaction.

The "leftists" appear to suppose that in the movement toward socialism, one must not be "diverted," as it were, by the struggle against fascism. We do not have to repeat costly experiences in order to learn that this is not Marxism but suicide. It is in the concrete struggle against the developing fascist tendencies in this country that people will discover that it is the whole system of capitalism in decay that breeds fascism and war.

Every pressure of Big Business today is at work to drive the Communists into a narrow corner of American life, to divide the labor movement from its allies in other social strata. The Mintons and McKenneys, scared to death by the bourgeoisie, put on a brave front of revolutionary fervor while they in fact serve the interests of the enemy class. The Communist Party is fighting the fascists; the Mintons and McKenneys are fighting the Communist Party. The difference between Marxists and renegades reduces itself in practice to this.