

The Proposed C. P. Changes

Questions asked by a 16-year-old boy about the meaning of the change in the Communist organization.

Editor, Daily Worker,

I am confused, very confused and I would like to have the situation clarified for me. I am a high-school student, 16 years of age and a steady reader of the "Daily."

I have been brought up in a home where the principles of Marx

and Lenin have been instilled in me. I believed them and I still do believe these ideas. In school I am known as "that Communist," and if I do say so, I was proud of that title!

Now what I want to know is why are we suddenly trying to conceal our beliefs by a sudden wave of name-changing. First it was the Y.C.L. Then the "International," the song of the workers and the toilers of the world that was sabotaged. Now it is the Communist Party that has been compromised. The Communist Party, the only organization that truly stood for the working man has relinquished the title it should now hold even higher and firmer. Probably some ultra-patriotic name will be adopted, thus forgetting all ideals concerning socialism, internationalism and class-consciousness. To tell the truth I'm puzzled and a little disgusted. Please answer this letter not by saying, "C'est la guerre!"

(Signed) ARTHUR D.

By Robert Minor

I am obliged to reply to this young man with the words that he doesn't want:

"C'est la guerre," Arthur—it is the war. And if anyone has told you that Marxism and Leninism are something aside and apart from "la guerre"—please think over my suggestion that you have been misled.

The very first thing that one must learn from Marxism is that this great scientific method deals not with imaginary situations, but with life itself, life in the form of living, breathing men and women and youths—here on this concrete earth.

If you, Arthur, are being diverted from a whole-hearted concern with the affairs that happen out in the big real world, to some pre-occupation with an imaginary world, then the influence, whatever it may be, is not Marxist, but anti-Marxist.

Where did you get the idea that to use the proposed name, "American Communist Political Association" means "to conceal our beliefs?" What do you think the word, "Communist" means? And if we change the word "party" to "as-

sociation," such a change will not "conceal" anything, but would make the name we use conform to the character of our Communist organization as it is and as it must function at present. It is proposed to make the change precisely for the sake of clarity. Who has deceived you, Arthur? In order to exercise our full strength in an enormous struggle, a struggle that will settle the fate of all mankind and civilization for an age to come, it is necessary that we discourage splitting of the vast majority of the people that supports the war, by avoiding the present use of the term "party" that is taken by custom to mean an organization seeking a separate electoral support.

But even if conditions were such that we found it inadvisable to use the term "Communist" in our name, it would not under all conditions be a matter of principle. For several years we did not use the name "Communist," but were called the "Workers Party," and during that time we made enormous progress in developing our character as a true Communist organization. But under present conditions it would not be wise to leave off our really descriptive name "Communist" and we are not doing so.

What was so confusing about the change in the youth organization? Can you deny that the change in the name of the youth organization resulted in an enormous increase of the organized cooperation of Communist and non-Communist youths who agree on the great decisive issue of support of the war that determines the fate of mankind? But, of course, the change in the youth organization was an act of quite a different character from the matter of the Party. It was not a question of a Marxist organization, but of a new type of non-party anti-fascist organization. And we are surprised that you, a boy of 16, brought up to respect Marxism, did not express any joy at its success.

And why the expression "ultra-patriotic"? Are you really under the impression that Marxism-Leninism rejects patriotism? And in this war? What Trotskyite has been lying to you, Arthur? Whoever told you that patriotism in a real sense is a violation of "ideals concerning socialism, internationalism and class-consciousness" is either very much confused or else deliberately espousing the cause of the worst enemies of all the best ideals of mankind.

Lenin condemned those who said the slogans of patriotism were "treacherous" under all conditions. He pointed out that the slogan of defense of one's country in a just war expresses simply one's "justification of the war." He added: "The only thing that can be 'treacherous' about it is that phillistines are capable of justifying any war by saying, 'We are defending our

fatherland,' whereas Marxism, which does not stoop to phillistinism, demands an historical analysis of every given war in order to decide whether that war can be regarded as progressive, as serving the interest of democracy or the proletariat, and whether it is in this sense a legitimate war, a just war, etc."

Marxism? During the American Civil War against slavery in the 1860's Marx did not respect any able-bodied men in our country who did not join the United States Army. If, for example, you had said in your letter that you hoped to join the United States Navy on your next birthday (when you will be 17), it would have been more Marxian than disparaging patriotism in a people's war.

Why did you, throughout your whole letter, Arthur, not commit yourself on the all-decisive question of this war—except with the dubious remark on "ultra-patriotism"? What sort of influence is it upon you?

And how does it happen that you speak of your fervent love for Socialism in so cautious a way as to avoid mention of the existing Socialism—the socialist state that is now in a struggle of life and death in a war toward which you forgot to take a position? Is this "Marxist"? "Leninist"? "Internationalist"?

What is it that has given the name "Communist" such high prestige as never before? The courage, the military skill and the terrible sacrifices in blood that have been made by the armies and people of the great new socialist state that has come into the world and has become a necessary ally for all liberty-loving peoples. And what did you say about this heroic socialist state and people? Nothing. Has someone been teaching you that "believing" in something unreal in your own head is all that you have to do in order to prove yourself worthy of being called by your schoolmates "that Communist"?

To be 16! And to have eyes that are open to the future! What could be a greater privilege when the bravest deeds of all time are being done and the whole human race is passing from adolescence of manhood! Don't sell this birthright for a mess of pottage, my young friend. It is true, you are confused, but so are many others, necessarily—for a while. And you can snap out of it if you are only 16.

We are glad you wrote to us, and hope you will take the rather stern words we have to use in truthfully answering you in the spirit of good will in which they are meant.

The next question to be answered in tomorrow's Daily Worker will be:

"If we are to have a long period of peace, why do we advocate universal military service?"

Answers
to
Questions