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# Why I Left the Communist Party

by J.T. Murphy

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Nobody leaves a party to which he has given 12 years of his life without serious reason. The violence of the denunciation of myself should at least cause every decent-minded individual to ask what I have to say about it.

The answer is simple. I refuse point-blank to declare publicly, in terms which I cannot accept, that I am wrong on a question of policy.

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I was the first in the dock in 1925 to be asked to leave the Communist Party under threat of imprisonment by Mr. Justice Swift. I led the refusal. I refuse today to be coerced by the Political Buro of the Communist Party by threat of the publication of the denunciation of my *Communist Review* article.<sup>1</sup> Further, I decline to accept diversion of the discussion from the questions I had originally raised.

The Secretariat of the Party has withheld from the Political Buro my letters of March 10, 17, and 27. They all bear upon the question of the “fight for work and the relation thereto of the demand for credits to the Soviet Union,” and of the way in which the “revolutionary way out” should be presented to the workers. Instead of discussing this subject as a whole, the Buro concentrated upon one paragraph in my *Communist Review* article. It

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<sup>1</sup> *Communist Review* was the CPGB's monthly theoretical magazine, akin to *The Communist* for the CPUSA. At issue was an editorial written by Murphy for the April 1932 issue of that magazine, over which he was accused by others in the leadership of the CPGB of having formulated a new theory.

became perfectly clear to me that the Buro would mobilize the Party against me on this single item. Well, I resigned rather than be put down in this fashion.

I wrote to the Secretariat of the Party, following a speech by Mr. Pike in Parliament on March 10, urging a discussion on policy. On March 17, Mr. Pike wrote a letter to the *Sheffield Independent* to which I replied. I showed this letter to [Harry] Pollitt and [William] Rust; both agreed that it was an “excellent reply.” But it was not published by the *Independent* nor by the *Daily Worker*. I then wrote the leading article in the *Review*.

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On March 24 I received a letter from Pollitt which astounded me. It challenged the whole issue of the “fight for work,” stated that “we cannot bring forward the slogan of credits for the Soviet Union as a concrete Party slogan,” and transformed the whole presentation of the “revolutionary way out” of the crisis into a phrase to be used as a stop-gap when we have nothing else to say. He argued as if I had urged that the question of credits for the Soviets should become the whole program of the Party instead of one immediate demand among many.

What this actually means is that, brought face to face with a difficult situation, instead of studying it to see exactly what demands can set the workers in motion against the ruling classes, we have to tell them to go to the PAC and wait for the revolution — as if the revolution were not the product of continuous day-to-day struggle in the fight for bread and work against the capitalist class!

For example, we have to tell the Clyde engineers that it is very wicked of the shipping companies and the government to prevent the order for 26 Soviet ships coming to the Clyde, but do nothing to force them to rescind this decision. For if they did, they would be “solving the market crisis of capitalism!” Besides, “now is not the time to bother about orders of this description, for we are in the war period.” “If we demand credit for Soviet trade, then we are committed to demanding credits for every other country,” and “if we demand credits for the Soviet Union, then we are telling the workers that it is only the credit system that is wrong.” This is

the line which flowed from Pollitt's argument in his letter and the Political Buro's discussion. I cannot subscribe to such nonsense.

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I have never suggested that Soviet trade will solve the market crisis of capitalism. On the contrary, my letters repudiated such a suggestion. The Communist Party has turned the questions of trade and credits into material for exposure and the capitalists, but not into political questions of positive struggle. It deplors what the government does, but refuses to demand the rescinding of its decisions.

I am sneered at because I said that British workers engaged on Soviet orders are working on the Five-Year Plan. I am well aware that they are wage-workers for the capitalists. But so are those who are producing munitions for Japan. So are those who are transporting them. Shall we tell these workers that it makes no difference what they turn out or transport, that they are mere wage-workers, uninterested in anything other than their wages and conditions? If so, there will be no stoppage either of production of transportation of munitions. I believe it is important to tell the workers of the significance of the jobs they are doing, that it would be far preferable to the producing the Soviet ships than cruisers for the war on the Soviet Union. The one is for the Five-Year Plan; the other for blowing it to blazes.

We are not working on the British Five-Year Plan. We can only do that after the British revolution. Nor is this revolution just around the corner. Hence the fight to work on Soviet orders is part of the fight for Soviet construction instead of for imperialist war production.

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Finally, about the disputed paragraph. This reads:

It is not enough to shout "Defend the Soviet Union," "Stop the Transport of Munitions." We must do more. We must advance the demand for credits to the Soviet Union. We must fight to work on the Five-Year Plan of Socialist construction.... The more the daily life of the working class of this country becomes integrated with the industrialization of the

Soviet Union, even through bourgeois channels, the most difficult it will be for the British government to sever relations....

But bind the struggle for bread and work close to the fate of the Soviet Union, the country of Socialism in construction, until the working class of this country feels and realizes more and more that its fate and the fate of the Soviet Union are inseparable.

This is fighting against the war. This is waging the class war as decisively as the waging of a strike.

About this paragraph I was prepared to make the following statement publicly:

The line of the article is wrong in the following respects: It makes the question of the fight for credits for the Soviet Union the main line of the fight against war on the Soviet Union. This is wrong because, on the one hand, it is impracticable, and, on the other hand, which is more important, politically false, because it gives the impression of the possibility of continuous peaceable parallel existence of the two worlds of socialism and capitalism. To create such an illusion at a time when a whole series of facts point in the opposite direction is a serious error.

My article is also wrong in giving equal valuation to the winning of Soviet orders as to strikes. I agree entirely that another "Jolly Roger" action today is of far greater importance than the placing of any Soviet orders. Indeed, it is not a comparative value which should be made, for it may be necessary to wage a strike in order to get such orders. As a matter of fact, the whole question of relations, both political and trade relations, between capitalist countries and the Soviet Union, depend upon class relations and not upon diplomacy.

I then proceeded to defend the position as outlined in this letter. This was rejected. All attention was concerned upon the one paragraph.

The slanderous and violent attacks, full of lying imputations and distortions of my views and motives, are indications of the triumph of hysteria in the Communist Party leadership. The fact that, within a few hours of the appearance of the *Daily Worker* article, resolutions equally denunciatory began to pour in without a single person asking if I had anything to say, and before it was possible to become acquainted with the issues which had been

raised, is an indication of the unthinking, automatic way in which the Party machine operates and churns out its approval of resolutions — a process against which I have continually fought.

I suppose it will go on. Very well. One thing is certain. It won't build a Communist Party, and it won't help to unite the working class to fight war or anything else. Nor will it drive me into the camp of the counter-revolutionaries. I have no desire to fight the CP and no intention of spending further time replying to the slanders which its leaders are uttering in their anger because I refuse to be coerced into the acceptance of views I do not agree with.

The task before all of us today, in face of the war situation and the threatened intervention against the Soviet Union, is to mobilize the sum total of the social forces against the war-makers and the government of war and starvation. The working class is in the foreground of these forces, and united working class action on every political and economic issue on the class war front is essential. To the best of my ability and opportunity available, I shall work in this direction.

*Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport*

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