
SOME REMARKS ON THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE C. P. U. S. A.

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THE twentieth anniversary of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. occurs at a moment of world and national crisis. At such moments advanced mankind instinctively turns to a re-evaluation of its history, of the road by which it came to the crisis facing it, in order the better to equip itself for the impending struggles which will determine future history. It is thus no mere formal duty if we, on our anniversary, turn our attention more seriously than ever before to a consideration of the history of our Party.

It was more than ninety years ago when Marx and Engels penned their famous phrase—"a specter hovers over Europe, the specter of Communism." Since that time Communism has grown into a world movement of decisive importance for every country. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has come to power in a federation of nations, one-sixth of the earth, has successfully founded the first socialist society, establishing an invincible stronghold in a hostile world, and is now proceeding to take up the tasks of the transition to communism.

The United States has been, for some generations, the land of the most advanced capitalist society. But for a long period the labor movement

lagged behind that of the other capitalist countries. This was especially true of the political movement of the working class, and of its highest expression, the socialist or communist movement. It is only in the last twenty years that there has been an American party expressly basing itself upon Marxian theory, and only in the last decade that this party has come to play a sustained and important role in the life of the country.

In approaching the task of working out a detailed and systematic understanding of the history of the U.S.A., of the labor movement, and of the Socialist and Communist movement, specifically of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., we have received a highly important stimulus and help in the recently-published *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*. This great book, the highest expression and epitome of the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, will more and more prove itself an invaluable guide to the mastering of the problems of American history also, in the course of mastering Marxist-Leninist theory in practice.

There is, of course, no cheap and easy parallel to be drawn between Russian and American history, whether of the country, of the work-

ing class, or of the Communist Party. Indeed, these two countries, despite most significant similarities and harmonies, seemed to stand at opposite poles of historical development over a long time. No, it is not in the mechanical translation of Russian experience to America, but in the mastering of the theory which brought the Party of Lenin and Stalin to its eminence of achievement, that the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* will serve the American working class.

This article is but one of the preliminary steps toward a full analysis and exposition of our history upon Marxist-Leninist lines. It is a series of suggestions, which must be submitted to the most searching examination, correction, elaboration, and confirmation, in the course of writing the authoritative history of our Party.

THE PRE-WAR LABOR AND SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

American labor has a long and rich history. Its militancy is comparable with that of any country. It made profound contributions to American democracy. It produced many powerful and selfless leading personalities, as well as great mass movements. Yet for many generations it lagged behind other advanced countries in political and intellectual development, and is only beginning to achieve its independence as a self-conscious and directing force in the national life. The full elucidation of these positive and negative features of the American labor movement, with the tracing of their historical roots, poses the central problem of working class and

Communist history in America up to the World War.

The pre-war history falls quite naturally into several distinctive periods. These may be briefly characterized as follows: (1) From the beginnings of trade union organization, in the 1820's, through the Civil War and Reconstruction period; (2) the Knights of Labor movement, its struggle with the rising American Federation of Labor, and its decline, through the 1880's; (3) the early American Federation of Labor, up to the turn of the twentieth century; (4) from the early 1900's up to the World War, the rise of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.), in 1905, the dominance of "pure and simple trade unionism" in the A. F. of L. (comparable to Russian "economism") symbolized in the Civic Federation, organ of collaboration between labor leaders and monopoly capitalists.

Socialist or communist development for these periods may be briefly described as follows: (1) Utopian socialist and communist colonization schemes and philosophies; the first beginnings of Marxian thought through German immigrants; (2) the struggle between anarchism and Marxism; the American groups of the First International; (3) the rise of the Socialist-Labor Party, and, in the West, the Social-Democratic Party; (4) the Socialist Party, split from the Socialist-Labor Party and amalgamated with the Social-Democratic Party, its rise as a mass movement under Debs, its crystallization around two conflicting tendencies, vaguely identified as "Right" and "Left" wing; the first mass circula-

tion of Marxian classic literature.

In the beginning of the modern organized Socialist movement in the U.S., its relations with the trade unions were close and harmonious. Even Samuel Gompers, who later became the traditional "socialist eater" as head of the A. F. of L., was trained in a Socialist environment, and for a time worked in harmony with the Socialists. Later, in the closing years of the nineteenth century, the Socialist-Labor Party entered into a disastrous factional struggle with the trade union leadership, under the inspiration of Daniel De Leon, on the issue of De Leon's demand for mechanical control of the trade unions by the Socialist-Labor Party, and for the party's direct representation in trade union councils. It was largely this issue that precipitated the split in the Socialist-Labor Party which gave birth to the Socialist Party of America, under the leadership of Hillquit, Debs and Berger.

But if the Socialist-Labor Party, under De Leon, had committed fatal mistakes of rigid, doctrinaire, sectarianism, the Socialist Party, under the dominating influence of Hillquit, adopted an equally disastrous policy of "neutrality" on trade union questions, a policy which liquidated the influence of the Socialist Party in the basic organizations of the working class. If Hillquit thought thereby to fill the gap between party and trade unions caused by De Leonism, he miscalculated. The Socialist Party attained a relatively stable influence primarily in those unions which it had been primarily instrumental in founding—the needle trades unions of New York, where the workers had

brought a socialist consciousness and training from their lands of origin, to a great extent from Russia.

This illustrates the contradiction which runs throughout the pre-war history of American working class political and trade union organizations. All efforts to develop a principled policy and leadership, based on class-consciousness and a vision of the historic mission of the working class, were wrecked by sectarianism, rigid and mechanical dogmatism, which quickly divorced the movement from the masses; the efforts to regain a base among the masses, and to deal with daily life in a realistic manner, quickly degenerated into unprincipled opportunism (which always remained narrowly sectarian) and the liquidation of the party as the true expression of the working class in its historical development.

Clearly, what was missing in the American working class and Socialist movements was the type of leadership which Marx and Engels had provided to the First International; which Engels gave to the first period of the Second International; which Lenin gave to the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (Bolsheviks), and to the Communist International; the type of leadership which Stalin has provided to the C.P.S.U. and the international movement after the death of Lenin. What was missing was the revolutionary theory, and the Party that embodies that theory, as founded by Marx and Engels and developed by Lenin and Stalin.

A characteristic of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, that dates from the Communist League of 1848 and the *Communist Manifesto*, and is the

hallmark of scientific socialism or communism, is the "struggle on two fronts," simultaneously against Right and "Leftist" deviations from the correct policy, against opportunist abandonment of fundamental principles for supposed "practical" advantages, and against sectarianism, against disdain of the daily small problems of the working class, against anarchist tendencies, and against revolutionary romanticism. Such "struggle on two fronts" against the two fatal sicknesses that attack all working class movements was never attained by the pre-war Socialist movement in the U.S., because it had not learned the lessons of European experience, and did not produce great enough minds to master and generalize its own experience. The pre-war Socialist movement failed for lack of Marxian theory, without which it is impossible to create the "new type of party" which is necessary for the realization of socialism, the greatest revolution of all history.

Of course, the Socialist Party did produce strong individual leaders, but they failed because they were not closely bound into a collectivity, based upon a deep common understanding and the profound faith to which it gives rise. Therefore, strong leaders tended to create divisions and factional tendencies, instead of the monolithic party unity that Lenin and his co-workers created. The problem of unity became a problem of unprincipled compromises between conflicting leaders, and of blocs of special interests. Thus, when the Socialist Party began to grow rapidly just before and during the World War, its ranks became a veri-

table Babel of confusion in ideology, and the stronger it grew in numbers the weaker it became in inner cohesion. It tended more and more to become a mere electioneering combination of the most disparate and ideologically conflicting groups and tendencies. That the Socialist Party, even in its heyday, produced not a single piece of literature of lasting significance is sufficient commentary upon the sterility of its inner political life, which is the inevitable consequence of lack of Marxian theory, the lack of any understanding of dialectical materialism in its dominant leading circles and party education.

Such was the condition of the socialist movement in America when the World War and then the Russian Revolution struck it with stunning force, transformed overnight the political situation in which it operated, and revealed the inevitable helplessness of any working class party in a revolutionary situation when it is not equipped with Marxism-Leninism. The old Socialist Party never recovered from the blow; the most it could contribute to history was to give birth, through a split forced by its dominant leadership, to the Communist Party, in September, 1919.

THE AMERICAN SOCIALIST PARTY AND THE WORLD WAR

The World War revealed the bankruptcy of practically all the European Socialist Parties, comprising the Second International, which fell apart at the first touch of war. Only the Bolsheviks, under Lenin's guidance, pursued a clear and consistent line. Recognizing the alignment as one of aggressive imperialism on both sides,

Lenin charted the course of "revolutionary defeatism" which led to the October Revolution of 1917. All other Socialist Parties became patriotic agencies of their governments, except those of Italy and the U.S., which adopted a formal course of opposition but in practice fell into confusion. There were, of course, groups within many parties (*e.g.*, Liebknecht and Luxemburg in Germany; Bulgaria, etc.), which approached Lenin's position, and which later contributed to the founding of Communist Parties.

The American Socialist Party did not attempt to answer the question of its war policy until 1917, in the same month the U.S. entered the war. In special convention in the city of St. Louis, it patched up a compromise resolution opposing American entrance into the war, but failing to indicate any line of action for the masses. The weakness of the St. Louis Convention was but the inevitable consequence of its whole history, the absence of a consistent Marxian theory, and indeed of any consistent ideology. Its opposition to the war remained without any serious influence upon the working class, nor indeed did it give direction even to the Socialist Party itself.

At least four distinct ideological currents combined to determine the anti-war resolution at St. Louis. The pro-war Socialists, headed by John Spargo (today a rock-ribbed Republican reactionary in Vermont); Chester Wright (then editor of the *New York Call*, Socialist daily, and since then in the personal service of Gompers and William Green); and William English Walling (shortly before a super-Leftist), had dramatically

made their exit from the Socialist Party under the direction of Gompers, without much influence among the Socialist Party membership. The St. Louis Convention, therefore, had no open pro-war influence to speak of. But the anti-war delegates were far from any unified opinion.

There was, first of all, the tendency of American isolationism, the middle-western Populist influence, which on purely empirical and separatist grounds, opposed American intervention. Secondly, there was a strong trend of Christian-Socialist pacifism, which later came to dominate the Socialist Party through the person of Norman Thomas. Thirdly, there was a pro-German influence, which, from long dependence upon the leadership of the German Social-Democratic Party, concluded that German victory would best serve the world Socialist movement. And, fourthly, by no means the dominant tendency, was the revolutionary socialist influence, striving toward but not yet clearly understanding the position taken by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in Europe.

Two outstanding figures in the Socialist Party tried heroically to lead their party into a revolutionary struggle against the war. They were Eugene V. Debs and Charles E. Ruthenberg. Just before going to prison for his anti-war struggle, Debs dramatically exclaimed, in a public speech: "I am a Bolshevik from the crown of my head to the tip of my toes." Ruthenberg later became a leading figure in the formation of the Communist Party and was its first General Secretary until his death in 1927; with him went most of those who actively fought against

the war. Debs, held back by his own lack of Marxian theory, isolated in prison and after his release by sickness, and repelled by the manifestations of "infantile Leftism" in the confused formative period of the Communist Party, never made the transition to the modern Communist movement, although by temperament and instinct he fully belonged with it.

The October Revolution in Russia brought a wave of mass enthusiasm among the workers and of rapid growth to the Socialist Party. The writings of Lenin began to appear in English, in imperfect and sometimes even distorted translations, but of a most profound influence. A period of intense study and furious discussions ensued. Theory became a matter of pre-occupation on the part of thousands and tens of thousands. Marxism was discovered by the American movement. A revolutionary wing took shape within the Socialist Party, quickly obtaining the allegiance of the great majority of its membership. The call for the founding of the Communist International appeared. The Left wing in the Socialist Party organized itself in a National Conference early in 1919. At first the Socialist Party leadership maneuvered with the issue; but, finally, under the influence of Hillquit, it took its stand against the Russian Revolution and against the Communist International. Abandoning all pretense of majority rule within the Socialist Party, it expelled the organizations representing the majority of the membership, right on the eve of the national convention called in Chicago. Thus, the split in the Socialist Party was forced by its leadership, and the Communist Party

was born in Chicago, on September 1, 1919, with little preparation, very chaotic organization, and a minimum of mature and tested leadership or program.

THE FIRST DECADE OF THE C.P.U.S.A.—
1919-1929

It is convenient to deal with the first decade of Communist Party history as a *single period*, because the entire ten years was dominated by the basic problem of the creation of a "party of the new type," basing itself on Marxism-Leninism, beginning the mastery of theory and its independent application to American problems and conditions.

Throughout these first ten years, the Party's development was hampered and distorted by alien and hostile influences working within its leadership. These influences, in the course of these years, finally crystallized into two definitely counter-revolutionary and anti-Communist groups. First was the Trotskyites, followers and adherents of Leon Trotsky, represented in the U.S. by James Cannon, Martin Abern and Max Schachtman. Second was the Lovestone group, followers and adherents of Bukharin, represented by Jay Lovestone, Bertram D. Wolfe and Ben Gitlow. It was not until 1928 that the Party gathered enough internal strength and cohesion to throw off the Trotskyite group; and 1929, when it cleansed itself of the Lovestone group. Until then, these two groups worked in a conspiratorial manner within the Party leadership, creating confusion and political deviations, organizing factional struggles, and keeping the Party in turmoil and separated from

the American masses and American life.

This decade covered the first two periods of post-war world history; first, the period of post-war crisis, upheavals and revolutions, up to 1923, and second, the period of temporary and relative capitalist stabilization, that continued until the outbreak of the great economic crisis of 1929.

In the U.S. the period immediately following the war was also one of deep disturbance and conflicts. Great strike movements took place, and serious political unrest swept the country. But the Communist Party was unable to play any decisive role as yet. It had not attained even the organizational unity of all important groups which declared their adherence of the Communist International. The "party of the new type" was as yet only an aspiration, a desire, something to be achieved, but it did not exist in concrete American reality. In September, 1919, at Chicago, the party had been "born as twins," known as the "Communist Party of America" and the "Communist-Labor Party of America"; the cause of this division was only incidentally ideological differences. Besides the general political immaturity of the movement, and the confusion prevalent at the time, the division must be ascribed primarily to the existence of the national group Federations, as the most powerful organizations among the expelled Socialist Party membership; the Federation leadership, forming the Communist Party of America, was quite rigid and doctrinaire in political and organizational questions, and repelled those forces which formed the Communist-Labor Party

of America, who were less politically educated but in closer contact with the broader American masses. Both groups were necessary to the formation of an effective Party, but neither had leadership sufficiently mature to solve the problems of unity at the moment. Both groups suffered seriously from "infantile Leftism" and revolutionary romanticism.

These "normal" difficulties were multiplied, and confusion was confounded, when the infamous "Palmer raids" of January, 1920, fell upon the infant parties like a thunderbolt. The first great modern "red scare" had swept through the ruling class, as a result of the great strike movements of 1919, which synchronized with revolutionary upheavals in Europe. Notwithstanding the almost complete isolation of both the infant Communist Parties from these mass strike movements—neither of them exercised any important influences either on the initiation or conduct of these strikes—the fear and wrath of the employers born of the strikes and the unstable world situation were all concentrated against the two young parties, which were identified with "foreign-born" and "alien" groups.

A gigantic scheme for mass deportation of all foreign-born Communists was hastily conceived, and launched by Attorney-General Palmer in simultaneous "raids" all over the country, timed at a common hour of the night, arresting thousands of known or suspected Communists who were torn from their families and thrown into immigrant detention stations for indefinite periods, subject to purely administrative handling. Although Labor Secretary Post, technically the

final authority on deportations, labored seriously to introduce some sanity and humanity into the problem thus created, the "red scare" hysteria whipped up by both Republican and Democratic politicians in the hope of capitalizing it for the 1920 Presidential elections, or at least with the idea of preventing the other side from monopolizing and using the "red" issue against them, overbore all liberal influences and counsels. Federal and state legislation and prosecutions multiplied. Not since the days of John Adams and the infamous "alien and sedition laws" (1796-1800), had anything like it been seen in America. It should be called to the attention of timid New Dealers that the Palmer "red raids" were not unconnected with the Republican victory in 1920.

The divided and unorganized Communist groups were scattered. All their immaturities and romantic tendencies were multiplied and emphasized by the official hysteria and persecution. They "went underground" to escape the constant harassment of "red raiders," and began a slow and painful process of secret gathering of the Party members, hidden away from the forces of persecution, as well as the almost totally inexperienced organizations knew how to hide, which turned out to be not very effective.

It is of tremendous significance that these terrific assaults could not destroy the Party. But there is little value in tracing the tortured experiences of the "underground" days through their details. What is important is that the indestructible elements of the Party existed and worked. The underground days ended

in 1922, when the Communists were brought together again in an open, legal, political party under the name "Workers' Party of America" (December 25, 1921), which also amalgamated the "Workers' Council Group" which had remained with the old Socialist Party until that time; as well as significant groups from the S.L.P. and the I.W.W., and, more important, the trade union groups around William Z. Foster, who entered the Party leadership.

The Workers' Party was the first united organization of the American Communists; it was a sharp break with the romantic "Leftism" of underground days, for which it accepted no responsibility; and it established the first American affiliation to the Communist International as a "fraternal" affiliate not subject to the organizational rules then being applied in the Communist Parties in Europe. (The "underground" parties had declared their adhesion to the Communist International but had not been accepted, due to their splits and immaturity). There has never been any formal change in this relationship between the American Party and the Communist International, the close relationship between which have not been based upon formal statutes and rules.

In making available the lessons of the broadest international experience, in the first place, the tremendous achievements of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which is successfully building the new socialist society embracing one hundred and seventy million population and one-sixth of the earth's surface, the Communist International has played and

continues to play a great role in the development of the Communist Party of the United States. It is precisely this education in internationalism which has enabled the C.P.U.S.A. to become organically American, rooted in the American soil and tradition, and understanding American problems and history in a deeper sense than they have ever been probed before. Both Lenin and Stalin, besides the contribution to the American workers made by their leadership of the Soviet Union, have by direct expression of opinions contributed inestimably to the mastering of American problems. Of this contribution I have written in more detail previously.

From the founding of the Workers' Party until 1929 was the period of the famous Coolidge-Hoover "permanent prosperity," the illusions of economic grandeur of American capitalism, the fantastic stock market and land booms, the erection of the great Tower of Babel that collapsed with such destructive effects in the crisis of 1929. Within the labor movement it was marked by the rise of illusions of the working class entering into partnership with capital, through labor banking, efficiency engineering (B. & O. Plan), profit-sharing, etc., while extension of the labor movement and the fight for better conditions was largely abandoned. Labor leadership was dominated by extreme reaction. The Communists were swimming against the stream; they found but few and unstable allies among labor organizations with whom it was possible to cooperate during that period. On the whole, with certain necessary reservations,

regarding short intervals, it was a period of isolation for the Communists, in spite of strenuous efforts to broaden the field of cooperative and united front action which was the declared policy of the Party from 1923.

In three fields of activity the Communists in this period made significant contributions to the labor movement and gained immense and invaluable experience. These were: the movement for industrial unionism (through amalgamation of the craft unions), various big strike movements that arose against and in spite of the reactionary union leaderships, and the political movement toward a labor or farmer-labor party. In the field of anti-imperialist struggle, and of struggle for Negro rights, the Party made constant efforts, which left their impress, and laid the basis for the permanent achievements of the next period.

The chief problem of the period, in the sphere of internal Party development, was that of transforming the Party from a federation of national group organizations to a uniform party structure uniting all its members in a centralized and democratic organization on a territorial sub-division basis. This problem, inherited from long years of a wrong organizational practice in the old Socialist Party, was a stubborn one, and proved amenable to final solution only with the cleansing of the Party from Trotskyites and Lovestoneites.

This whole period of Party development was distorted and slowed up by chronic factional struggles, originating in the leadership and spreading to involve the whole membership. Two major groupings crystallized,

forming around two main leading figures, Ruthenberg and Foster, which came to be identified by their names. The Ruthenberg group, on the whole, had experience and contacts mostly from the Socialist Party; the Foster group was, by and large, the most typical American, with the broadest mass experience and contacts, and was especially marked as practical trade union workers. Clearly, a healthy party development called for the fusion of these two groups, and not their crystallization as rivals for party leadership. But for a variety of reasons this did not take place. One contributing factor was the growth of objective difficulties, the apathy of the main labor movement, and the isolation of the Party. More important, however, was the sinister and hostile manipulations, within the two major groupings, of two small secret cliques, headed respectively by Cannon (Trotskyite) and Lovestone (Bukharinite). Every promising beginning of united collaboration of the main Party forces was always wrecked on their separate and joint conspirings. Until 1925 each operated through one of the main groups; at the end of that year they combined, at the climax of a factional struggle, jointly to seize a decisive place in the leadership independently; and on the death of Ruthenberg in 1927, Lovestone assumed his place through a system of unprincipled deception and combinations.

But the Party was far from being the mere passive victim of a little group of unprincipled leaders. Political education and mass experience had already, despite all negative features of Party life, gone so far that

no little clique could long dominate the main body of the Party. In 1928 the membership and leading forces so overwhelmingly repudiated the Trotskyites, that even Lovestone and his group found it expedient to go along in cleansing them from the Party. Some years after he publicly repented of that "moment of weakness," and apologized to the Trotskyites for it, when he was again making one of his periodical coalitions with them. The next year, 1929, Lovestone and some two hundred of his personal following were expelled from the Party, following the revelation of his project to seize control of Party property when he had been defeated in the Central Committee.

This was the period when the capitalist world was approaching the turning point of the 1929 crisis. The Soviet Union, preparing its First Five-Year Plan of socialist industrialization, had been forced to meet and defeat the attacks of the Trotskyites, and then that of the "Right" Bukharinites, and later the combined forces of both. Similar groupings took place throughout the world, including within the C.P.U.S.A. In America the issue took place on the estimate of the character of the period of Herbert Hoover, elected to the Presidency in 1928. Lovestone took over Hoover as his guiding star; he predicted that his regime would become known in history as the "Hooverian Age," corresponding to the "Victorian Age" of Britain, the time of unexampled expansion and prosperity. Bertram Wolfe wrote a programmatic article, entitled "A Program for Prosperity," based upon a supposed necessity for the Communist Party to adjust itself

to the "permanent prosperity" promised by Hoover.

Against this vulgar philistinism, the most active Marxian students in the Party raised the alarm, and pointed to the gathering signs that the Coolidge-Hoover boom was nearing its peak, and that its collapse would fully involve the U.S. in the impending world crisis. At the Sixth Party Convention, in March, 1929, Lovestone maintained himself in the leadership by unparalleled deception, assuring the Convention delegates that, whatever their individual opinions might be, he had the weight of Communist world opinion behind him, and the full support of the Communist International.

A few months later, when the Party learned of his deception, the same Central Committee elected at the Sixth Convention overwhelmingly repudiated him; when he tried to seize the Party property to override the Central Committee, the Committee expelled him and his followers from the Party. In October, 1929, a few days before the great stock market crash, the Central Committee met and adopted a resolution predicting the crisis, calling upon the Party and the working class to prepare for the life-and-death problems that would ensue. Before all the Central Committee members had time to return to their homes, the crisis had broken over the country.

THE MATURING OF A BOLSHEVIK PARTY —1929-1939

Entering the crisis period, the Party was basically united for the first time in its history. Its enemies were on the outside, not within its ranks, and the

Party sailed into the storms of the crisis boldly, beginning to gather its fundamental political experience that made it a factor in the national political life. The struggle for its basic clarification had left the Party, however, with but 7,000 members in 1929, of whom around 1,000 had been members since the beginning in 1919. It still carried a heavy baggage of sectarian practices and pre-conceptions, which it had to struggle against, and which it finally threw off only in the period of the Seventh World Congress in 1935, with the full development of the policy of the People's Front.

During the three years, 1930-32 inclusive, the Party was a major factor in two fields of mass struggle and organization, and participated in a third; it initiated the unemployed movement, it threw all its strength in support of the independent unions and their strikes that arose as a result of the complete passivity of the established trade unions, and it participated in the initiation and conduct of the veterans' bonus movement and the famous "march on Washington" in 1932.

The Party directly called and organized the national demonstration of the unemployed, on March 6, 1930, which brought a million and a quarter demonstrators into the streets of American cities. Up to that moment, the press and all other political organizations had united in denying the existence of any significant mass unemployment and suffering. These demonstrations smashed that pretence, and established the issue of unemployment in first place in national life; they gave rise to the first moves for independent organization of the

unemployed. At a Party Conference called in April to discuss the results of March 6, it was agreed that the Party could not continue directly to lead the unemployed, and the suggestion was thrown out that the unemployed should immediately proceed to organize themselves into Councils.

In July, 1930, the first National Conference of Unemployed Councils was held, which organized the struggle for relief in all the major centers of the country. The Unemployed Councils organized the great "Hunger Marches" to Washington in 1931 and 1932. These Councils continued for six years, until 1936, when they merged with all other similar organizations in the country, to form the present Workers Alliance of America.

Throughout 1930, the Party was discussing the demand for unemployment insurance. The A. F. of L. was openly opposed to such a measure, and no other organization took up the question seriously. Finally, early in 1931, the Communist Party itself formulated a Draft Law for a system of unemployment insurance, and secured its introduction in Congress by Representative Lundeen of Minnesota (Farmer-Labor), the same who, as Senator, is today voting on most major issues with the reactionary coalition in Congress. Around the Lundeen Bill, a broad movement arose in the trade unions, organized around the A. F. of L. Committee for Unemployment Insurance, which finally forced the A. F. of L. to reverse its former stand, and come out in favor of the principle of such insurance. The United Mine Workers was the first great trade union to endorse unemployment insurance.

It was, without doubt, the broad mass movements of the unemployed councils and for unemployment insurance, from 1930 to 1935, which laid the foundation for the New Deal measures of social security and relief.

From 1929 to 1933, despite the passivity of the official labor movement, strikes and organizing movements broke out more and more among the employed industrial workers. With the labor officials ignoring or sabotaging these movements, it was inevitable that independent unions should arise. These efforts were fully supported by the Communist Party, which used its influence to unite their forces in the Trade Union Unity League, established at a conference in Cleveland in 1929. The unions affiliated with this center conducted a very high proportion of all strikes of this period, trained a large number of trade union organizers, and established some stable organizations. Its membership, however, never rose above a quarter-million.

The T.U.U.L. had voted to associate itself on a world scale with the Red International of Labor Unions. However, its constituent organizations never acted on this affiliation, and it was cancelled formally in 1934.

In 1930, the Party began its historic work of penetration of the old South, always before that time neglected by the socialist movement.

With the beginning of 1933, at the depths of the economic crisis, the New Deal was inaugurated in the U.S., almost simultaneously with the rise of Hitler in Germany. The new period of wars for imperialist redivision of the world, already initiated in 1931 by the Japanese seizure of

Manchuria, had now definitely opened up for the whole world. In the first period of the New Deal, the Communist Party viewed it with the deepest suspicion, considering it but a camouflage for reaction. This suspicion was fed by the vociferous support of Wall Street to the President, and by the role of such men as General Hugh Johnson, of Blue Eagle fame, as head of the N.R.A., who did not hide his admiration of Mussolini nor his basic fascist tendencies. It was further strengthened by the concessions to monopoly capital, by the reliance upon dollar-devaluation as the basis for the first New Deal, and by the policies of restriction of production and destruction of commodities. Within the first New Deal phase, only the famous Section 7a, of the National Industrial Recovery Act, guaranteeing the workers' right of organization in unions of their own choice, clearly pointed the road of the further development of the New Deal; but even on Section 7a, there were two interpretations, General Johnson and Leo Wolman attempting to transform it into a means of fostering a semi-company unionism.

From 1933 to 1935, accompanying the economic revival stimulated by Roosevelt's policies, and assisted by the legal establishment of the right of collective bargaining, a great mass movement of trade union organization began. By 1934, this was already fundamentally changing the situation that had given rise to the independent unions of the T.U.U.L., and in 1935 the Communists joined full-heartedly in the movement to merge these independent unions into the A. F. of L., within which a militant wing was

arising of mass proportions. By the middle of 1935, these amalgamations had been largely completed. The trade unions were growing by some million new members. At the end of 1935, those forces in the A. F. of L. largely instrumental in the great forward movement, had united themselves in the Committee for Industrial Organization (C.I.O.), with the program to complete the organization of the mass production industries, which the reactionaries controlling the A. F. of L. Executive Council were attempting to halt.

Beginning with the Party's Eighth National Convention, in 1934, was launched our systematic campaign to revive American revolutionary traditions, and for rediscovery and re-evaluation of American history in general. This played an enormous role, not only in the further development of our Party, but for the whole country. The literature on this subject is so widely distributed, and of such recent date, that it is familiar to all our readers, and needs no detailed examination in this brief article.

Toward the last half of 1935, great realignments crystallized in America and on a world scale. The Soviet Union, having successfully established the collectivization of agriculture, and launched the Second Five-Year Plan, had begun to expose and destroy the conspiracy of the "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites," in the service of the fascist powers, that had culminated in the assassination of Kirov in December, 1934. Italy had launched its war to destroy the Ethiopian state. The Popular Front had been formed in France, and checkmated the first fascist attempts to dominate that coun-

try. Hitler had reoccupied the Rhineland with his military. The Soviet Union was actively cooperating in the League of Nations, while the fascist axis powers were withdrawing from it. In the United States, the "national unity" around the Roosevelt Administration had been broken, by the emergence of the *Liberty League*, representing Wall Street and the "sixty families," with a fierce assault against the President. The Communist Party, foreseeing a basic shake-up and realignment in the political life of the country, began searching for possible co-workers and allies, under the slogan, revived from former days, of the Farmer-Labor Party; and began discussions with the Socialist Party, which culminated in the big debate with Norman Thomas in Madison Square Garden.

The Seventh World Congress of the Communist International took place in the late summer of 1935. The historic report of George Dimitroff, placing clearly the perspective and tasks of the People's Front against fascism and war, for the Communists of the entire world, fitted with the utmost precision the situation of the United States. Our own Party's experience and line of development had contributed to the results of this Congress, and in turn were enormously stimulated by it. The Party made a tremendous step forward. A great historical turn had been made.

Early in 1936, the Communist Party officially participated in a national conference of Farmer-Labor Party forces, called in Chicago by the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota, under the leadership of the late Floyd B. Olson, Governor of the state,

who had played the dominant role in the rise of his party to power. That conference decided, with the concurrence of the Communists, that the situation was not ripe for launching a national Farmer-Labor Party, because the progressive and labor movements were inevitably going to support President Roosevelt for re-election in their overwhelming majority. The Communist Party, while retaining grave reservations toward Roosevelt, whose previous course had been at least ambiguous, agreed that the main task in 1936 was to defeat reaction at all costs, as represented by the Liberty League and Republican Party, and that its own course should be directed toward cementing general progressive unity, while maintaining its own complete independence. The Communist Party conducted its 1936 election campaign, organized at its Ninth Convention, under this general orientation, with considerable success, which won it a host of friends and sympathizers, and opened many doors to future collaboration with sections of broadest labor and progressive movements.

Since the purpose of these brief remarks on Party history are to relate the present period, which opens in 1935, with the origin, background, and early history of the Party, the outline of dates, events and issues may well conclude with 1936. This background will greatly deepen our understanding of the historic significance of the Party's Tenth National Convention in 1938, which resolved all unclarities, and in the new Party constitution fixed its character as the democratic party of the working class, continuing the best American tradi-

tions while preparing for the socialist future.

SOME GENERAL REMARKS AND
CONCLUSIONS

What is the picture we obtain from this review of the development of the Communist Party?

It is the process of gathering together a body of men and women who are in ever closer contact with and participation in the life and struggles of the masses of the people, voicing their demands and grievances, and pointing the road of organization and struggle by which alone these demands can be realized and grievances remedied; who are constantly making clear the inter-relation between the particular and the general, the local and the national, the national and the international, and deepening the masses' understanding of their world; who are persistently and systematically educating the masses in the nature of the future society and its inevitable rise, preparing the people for their next historic step forward in the mastery of their own life. The Party embodies all this; without the Party, there would only be so many individuals, with all their limitations, with little more significance than any other equal number of individuals. As the Party, working as a united whole, upon scientific principles, and drawing upon the accumulated wisdom of mankind, this collection of individuals multiply their power in geometrical ratio, and become a significant and inescapable national political force even while the Party is still quite small.

We have not the slightest desire to exaggerate the strength of our Party.

Indeed, we have recently been accused of belittling our strength, of desiring to hide it, for fear of frightening our enemies. Mr. George Sokolsky, who has carved out a highly remunerative career as writer and idea-man for employers' organizations, recently accused the Communists of having a truly enormous, even dominating, influence in the country, and hiding it by talking about how weak we are. But in truth, our course is to try to estimate our strength *accurately*, neither to exaggerate nor to underestimate it. We must not exaggerate it, for if we do we will surely undertake tasks beyond our powers of fulfillment, we will bite off more than we can chew. We must not underestimate it, because that will cause us to lag behind the current of history, to pass up our opportunities of achievement, to miss the boat. We must have *accurate knowledge* of our own strength as well as of the world about us and its historical development.

From this historical sketch we also see quite clearly that the Communist Party was not suddenly invented by some bright young man. It grew up out of years of struggle and experience, participated in by hundreds of thousands and even millions of people. Its building was an arduous and difficult task, and it is only well begun. On our twentieth anniversary we are only reaching our first hundred thousand members.

We are not at all satisfied with our rate of growth. But neither are we impatient. We know the deadly dangers of impatience and the desire to find historical short-cuts to our goal, of substituting wishful thinking for scientific objectivity. We have seen

what happened to the Socialist Party in the past few years, under the impatient and confused leadership of Norman Thomas, and we have no desire to emulate its rapid scattering of a once great political capital, like a drunken profligate getting rid of several months' wages in a single night. We are patient, but not self-satisfied; we know that Rome was not built in a day, and that the Party which will lead the American people to socialism must be tempered and tested in years of struggle. We set ourselves the task to win the respect and allegiance of the majority of the American people, as the precondition for socialism in our country. We have complete confidence in our ultimate success.

Many important phases of our Party's history have not been dealt with here, both strong and weak items in its work, because of the necessity of brevity and because they will be dealt with elsewhere. But even if only to mention, we must speak of the Party's role in the struggle for Negro rights; the Party's contribution to the rise of a great united mass youth movement in America; its contribution to hammering out a clear peace policy for the United States, and the creation of a mass movement in its support; the Party's leadership in the struggle against the threatening rise of intolerance, of a new "Know-Nothingism," of anti-Semitism, of anti-Catholicism, of anti-Negro cults; its leadership in the revival of the American revolutionary and democratic traditions in all their richness, purifying the conceptions of Americanism and of "the nation." We must mention the glorious history of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion in the fight for the Spanish republic, to

which our Party gave more than a thousand of its best sons who rest in Spanish soil. We must mention our growing collaboration with the Communist Parties and democratic movements in the Latin American countries and of the Philippines. These essential features of our Party, of fundamental importance, we can no more than mention here, to register that their role is an indispensable part of our history, for understanding our ties with the masses.

Nor would even the briefest review of our history be acceptable, that did not mention our Party's study of the agrarian problem, of its participation in the struggles of the farmers and agricultural workers, and of our basic programmatic task of welding the forces of the workers and toiling farmers to defeat monopoly capital; to which must be added the observation that this, as the weakest phase of our Party's work, is today the subject for special concentrated attention.

The Seventh to the Tenth Conventions of the C.P.U.S.A., taking place in 1930, 1934, 1936 and 1938, each made lasting contributions to the American working class and to our Party history. The Eleventh Convention in 1940 will register a higher point in Party history.

The history of the C.P.U.S.A. is, on its twentieth anniversary, the history of the creation of a Bolshevik Party within the stronghold of world capitalism, the history of the emergence of the American working class as a self-conscious force in American life, the history of the preparation of the American people for struggle against fascist world-conquest and imperialist war, the history of the first stage in preparing America for socialism.