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Lenin and America

WE are meeting tonight on the fifteenth anniversary of the death of Vladimir Ilich Lenin. All humanity felt the deep shock of that great loss. In the fifteen years that have passed, the influence of this greatest teacher and guide has grown, has deepened, has permeated the life of the peoples of the whole world.

Not every American understands what an intimate influence Lenin was in his lifetime upon the life of the United States. Yet it is a fact that the Communist Party of the U.S.A., which was born and lives in the tradition and teachings of Lenin, is one of the most universal subjects of discussion in the whole political life of the country.

One of America's outstanding citizens emerged from prison only a few days ago. Tom Mooney's liberation from San Quentin prison after twenty-two years is one of the greatest victories of a rising democratic movement of the American people. But Tom Mooney would have been hung by the neck until he was dead in 1917, except for the intervention of Lenin. Russian workers under Lenin's leadership, demonstrating before the American Embassy in Petrograd in 1917, under banners bearing the slogan "Release Muni," brought about the intervention of President Woodrow Wilson and the commutation of Mooney's sentence from hanging to life imprisonment, making possible the long twenty-two year struggle that finally ended in victory two weeks ago.

Woodrow Wilson appointed a commission of inquiry on the Mooney case, headed by Mr. Felix Frankfurter, now Justice of the Supreme Court. Justice Frankfurter has told how he

took up his task knowing nothing of the case, not knowing who was Tom Mooney or even what were the charges against him. But Lenin knew about Tom Mooney. Lenin acted on his knowledge. And as a result of Lenin's close connection with America, his intense interest in America, his correct ideas about America, the President of the United States appointed Mr. Frankfurter, whose investigation convinced him and the President that Lenin's intervention was a justified one.

When the solemn and dignified United States Senate had before it the nomination of Mr. Frankfurter to the Supreme Court last week, its Committee called upon him for a direct answer to the question whether he is or had ever been a member of the Communist Party. Perhaps this strange and curious question sprang from some vague recollection of how the Mooney case had intertwined Lenin and Frankfurter and Woodrow Wilson in the fabric of history. Perhaps its inspiration was from that member of the Dies Committee who, informed of the nomination of Frankfurter, exclaimed, "It might as well be Harry Bridges or Earl Browder." That classical remark was not merely a brilliant revelation of the Dies Committee's reactionary politics and theory, it was also an unwitting tribute to the rising power of Labor, symbolized by the name of Harry Bridges, and of the living vitality of Lenin's thought in America, symbolized by my name as spokesman for the Communist Party. According to the logic of the Dies Committee, the fact that the nomination of Frankfurter was confirmed unanimously by the Senate, is sufficient proof that that august body has become merely another agency of the followers of Lenin, of the Communist Party.

Need I assure you that we Communists do not accept the Dies Committee estimate of our strength? We are quite sure that we do not control the U. S. Senate, or the American League for Peace and Democracy, or the American Youth Congress, or the American Student Union, or the Southern

Conference for Human Welfare, or the American Federation of Labor, or the Congress of Industrial Organizations, in spite of all the evidence of the Dies Committee and its more than curious array of investigators, experts, and witnesses. Nevertheless, there is some profit in digging deeper into an analysis of the meaning of such fantastic charges.

When the eminent Congressman Thomas of New Jersey, second in command to Martin Dies, exclaims that the names of Frankfurter, Bridges and Browder all mean the same thing to him, and that thing something to be stamped out and destroyed; when the U. S. Senate finds it necessary, at least for its own peace of mind, to put the direct question to Mr. Frankfurter whether he is a member of the Communist Party and to listen to witnesses who claim the President himself is a "Red"—some conclusions inevitably flow from these facts. They provide the most brilliant proof of the teachings of Lenin—and they prove that the Communist Party of the U.S.A. is faithfully applying those teachings. Lenin taught us to identify ourselves with all the active forces of progress in our country, to help to unify and lead them, to isolate the reactionaries and prepare their defeat. We must be accomplishing something in that direction to earn such vicious hatred from the reactionaries like Dies, Ham Fish, Thomas, Garner and company. When the U.S. Senate is not sure from examination of the public record whether Mr. Frankfurter is not a member of the Communist Party, but must put the question to him direct, the worthy solons prove, and make it a matter of public record, not that Frankfurter is a Communist, but that the Communist Party is so completely and effectively supporting progressive and democratic politics identified with Mr. Frankfurter's name and public life, that the Senators do not find it inconceivable, not beyond practical possibility, that a man of his caliber and role might give an affirmative answer to their question. And finally, they give their unanimous approval to

this man for life tenure in the Supreme Court, although they find his record and character not inconsistent with the suspicion that he might be a member of the Communist Party. Never before has the Communist Party received such an overwhelmingly conclusive confirmation of its full citizenship in democratic America.

Further, is it possible that the dignified Senate would have found it possible to ask such a question if the nominee had been Carter Glass, or Burke, or Alf Landon, or Vandenberg, or Garner, or Hoover? Clearly, impossible! Such a question to such men would be so ridiculous that not even a Senator could ask it! And a Senator would consider it indelicate to question such gentlemen about their sympathies with Hitler. That fact also is significant enough to point out and emphasize.

It is because the Communists are equipped with the theory of Lenin, are imbued with Lenin's spirit, that is why our Party has come to exercise an influence far beyond its numbers, which are still relatively small.

Lenin always insisted upon facing reality, he was the uncompromising foe of utopianism and wishful thinking. It is with this Leninist attitude that we Communists guard against any exaggeration of our Party's influence, that we guard against placing immediate tasks which are not matured. We know that the very broad influence exerted by our Party is not a sign that the American masses are ready to build socialism in our country now, as an immediately practical task. It is the guiding thought of everything we do to prepare and educate the masses for socialism, and to lead them to its realization when they are ready. But nothing is farther from our minds than any abortive attempts of a small minority to impose its will upon the masses. We base ourselves completely upon the democratic masses, upon the working class and all toilers who comprise the overwhelming majority of the people, and we set no tasks that the masses are not themselves to be the

moving and decisive factor in accomplishing. We are first and last democratic in this most fundamental sense. And it is only because we have made this point unmistakably clear that we are steadily growing in numbers, and even more in influence, even though we are still a small fraction of the population.

This growth has been facilitated by the fact that the United States, although the land of the highest developed capitalism, has many affinities with the Soviet Union, the land of socialism where Lenin's ideas have entirely triumphed. The two countries are similar in their broad expanse of territory, in the problems of the conquest of nature, of harnessing their enormous natural resources for the benefit of their peoples. This created many common national characteristics which, even before the destruction of the tsarist autocracy, had brought about a friendly attitude of the two peoples toward each other, an intense interest in one another between the American and Russian peoples, a feeling of kinship that surmounted all barriers.

Since the rise of the new socialist government out of the ruins of the old tsarist Russian Empire, since the Soviet Union has transformed that formerly backward land into the economically most advanced country in the world, with the single exception of the United States, the affinities, the common interests, the sympathies, between the peoples of the two countries have grown by leaps and bounds. And the political development of the world, with the rise of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo war-alliance of fascism which threatens the destruction of all civilization, predetermines with the inexorability of natural law an historic collaboration. Both are threatened by the same enemies, both have a national interest in peace and orderly relations between nations. It is clear that neither can fully realize its own destiny without the friendly collaboration of the other.

It required the genius, the deep insight into the laws of

history, of Lenin to foresee this development many years ago. But today the world situation makes it so clear that the Communists are no longer alone in recognizing that history itself has prepared and demands the collaboration of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. as the price of saving the world from catastrophe. The most farsighted and advanced representatives of all classes in America recognize this fact and move, even if hesitantly as yet, toward its realization.

The most reactionary groups and interests also recognize it, and their spokesmen conduct a hysterical struggle to prevent its realization, to block the road of history. They do everything they can to hide from the masses the natural and necessary friendship and collaboration between the two great countries which alone can realize the vital national interests of both, while serving the international interests of all toiling humanity. They cry out against us, the Communists, that we are agents of a foreign power trying to get America to sacrifice its own interests in favor of the Soviet Union. But such hysterical jingoism quickly reveals its true face, when we see that it must also proclaim American isolation in the whole world, the retreat of America before the threatening advance of world fascism, the surrender of point after point necessary for any ultimate defense, in short, when they demonstrate that they are American duplicates of Premier Chamberlain, and want to follow his belly-crawling journeys to Berchtesgaden, Godesburg, Munich and Rome. They are already potential traitors to America; they welcome the world conquest of the fascist powers, and propose to do what they can to assist it. That is why they reject the collaboration of the U.S. with the U.S.S.R.

Defense against the aggression of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo war alliance has now become a life-and-death issue for all the rest of the world, including the United States. And defense today involves armaments, although armaments is not the sole

answer, as some seem to think, nor even half the answer. But an unarmed people in the world of Hitler aggression is the predestined victim of fascist conquest. The United States, with the rest of the world, must choose between uniting the anti-fascist and democratic forces for common defense—a defense by arms in the last analysis—or submitting to fascist world conquest.

The overwhelming majority of the American people are convinced of this. The Communist Party of the U.S.A., for the first time in its existence, has come to the conclusion that it is necessary to take a positive attitude toward armaments, because it cannot refute the reasons that lead the American people to the same conclusion. At the same time, we warn the people, that a correct attitude and policy, to give American leadership and co-operation in uniting the peace forces of the world, are worth more than a doubled navy as a defense factor. A correct peace policy is the only thing that will make armaments a real defense.

In this we follow Lenin's line on war and peace, on national defense, which never was pacifist, and which always insisted upon the necessity to study each situation concretely, and not take up a dogmatic position.

What nonsense it is for the United States, however, to give attention only to increasing its navy and air force, while continuing policies which help make bigger armaments necessary! What criminal stupidity it is for the U.S. to help Hitler and Mussolini put their puppet in power in Spain, by the unneutral embargo against the Spanish republic and the unneutral Neutrality Act! We are actually helping to create the fascist menace to Latin America which has our government in such an excitement of worry! We are actually supplying Japan with the means of subjugating China and closing the entire Far East to American interests, which has already become so insolent as to threaten to smash the American navy if we dare

to fortify the island of Guam! The heroic Spanish and Chinese peoples are fighting our battles for us. We are denying our help to them while we help their enemies. If they lose, the U.S. will surely be faced with the terrible reality of war or surrender. Under such circumstances, before armaments contribute anything at all to our security, we must lift the embargo from Spain, scrap the Neutrality Act, give aid to Spain and China, and proclaim our readiness to co-operate with all who resist fascist aggression—including the Soviet Union—and then armaments will begin to have some sense. Then the American people can wholeheartedly support the admirable and courageous declarations of President Roosevelt, because they will have dissolved the fatal contradictions now existing between these declarations and the criminal help being given to the fascists.

It is not only the Communists who have changed their attitude to armaments. If that were so, we would question whether we are correct in changing. We find the proof of our correctness in the realignment of all major class forces on this issue. Wall Street has suddenly become pacifist! Herbert Hoover is the main spokesman for disarmament and proclaims peace to all the world including Hitler and Japan—but not the Soviet Union. The Republican Party suddenly discovers that our President's attitude on foreign affairs is a disturbing factor in world affairs and threatens the peace of America. One and all, they have become converts to the Chamberlain policy of "appeasement," but without Chamberlain's concurrent policy of rearmament; where Chamberlain secretly sabotages rearmament, our own reactionaries come out publicly against it. It is the democratic mass movement of the people that demands today an unyielding foreign policy against the war-makers, and armaments to back it up, while the whole reactionary camp is moving swiftly toward open defeatism, pacifism and disarmament. They are moving toward treason, following the foot-

steps of the Federalists in Jefferson's time, of the Whigs of the time of Andrew Jackson, of the Copperheads of the time of Abraham Lincoln.

We are not surprised by these sudden changes in the position of the main class forces in the United States on such vital questions. In fact, we expected them. We were prepared for them, because we had studied Lenin, and from Lenin we had learned to dig deep down into the laws that govern political development of classes and nations. And thereby we had found our own place quickly and precisely in this political development.

We of the Communist Party have played a leading part in the current movement of popular thought toward the re-discovery and revaluation of American history. Today it is well to recall that it was Lenin who gave our thinking its impetus in this direction, when he wrote his famous "Letter to American Workers," calling our attention to the great revolutionary traditions of our country, to 1776 and 1861, and to the tremendous influence they wield in the whole world. All thinking Americans are today more interested in studying and understanding their own history than for many generations past. Allow me to mention, as symbols of this awakening to history, the presentations of Lincoln and John Brown on the stage, in plays that excel not only in artistry, but in depth of understanding of our present day in relation to the great periods of the past. Or the recent motion pictures regarding Andrew Jackson, both of the periods of the Battle of New Orleans and of the Presidency; while these pictures left much to be desired politically, they were contributions in the main stream of American thought. And of books, we now have a growing stream of them, with the quality steadily improving. Even the reactionaries and fascist-minded ones are re-writing American history, coming out openly with the Trotskyist thesis that Aaron Burr, the infamous traitor, was the real hero of the American Revolution. But the re-discovery of American his-

tory gives small comfort to the reactionaries, while it strengthens and enthuses the camp of democracy and progress—for example, the speech of President Roosevelt not long ago, on Jackson Day.

President Roosevelt is a conscious defender of capitalism. He has not the slightest inclination toward socialism, toward the Communist solution of the ills of America. Yet our President's courageous revival of the best democratic traditions of American history, in bold defiance of world fascism and of the reactionaries at home—including those in the President's own party—and in rejection of the cowardly appeasement policy of Chamberlain and Daladier, has furnished an extraordinary demonstration of the profound genius of Lenin's analysis. Those circles of the reactionaries, of monopoly capital and its agents, who burn with furious hatred of the President, to whom the people give enthusiastic support, and even incite violence against him, furnish an even more remarkable proof of the correctness of Lenin's ideas. It is the blind hatred of the reactionaries against the democratic mass movement in support of the President and his policies, that is leading these gentlemen, who always claimed to represent "the nation," rapidly toward open treason to the nation, to open support of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo alliance, and to its encroachments upon American national interests.

The pre-war socialist movement of the United States was weak in Marxian theory, and especially Lenin's contribution was a closed book to it. That is why the old Socialist Party never succeeded in steering a course that avoided the Scylla of opportunist compromise of socialist objectives, and the Charibdis of sectarian contempt for immediate mass struggles for a better life. It was one of the results of the victory of Lenin's ideas in the Great October Revolution that Marxism was again brought to life in America, enriched and deepened by Lenin. It was Lenin's clear and penetrating thought which

showed the vanguard of the American working class, which took all that was best in the old Socialist Party and united it with all the other streams of advanced thought in the American labor movement in founding our Communist Party almost twenty years ago, how to find the clear channel of a true revolutionary policy between the rocks of right opportunism and leftist sectarianism.

It was Lenin's direct influence, continued and deepened by Stalin, which brought the American working-class vanguard, organized in the Communist Party, to its present degree of maturity in which it is able to be the staunchest and most clear-headed builder of the democratic front of the people against reaction, fascism and war, and at the same time, the most effective pathfinder to the socialist future. It is Leninism, organically growing on American soil, which has begun to realize in some degree for the American people the heroic perspective opened up for the world by Dimitroff at the Seventh World Congress.

In the present world crisis, when the fascist war-makers with their reactionary allies throughout the world threaten to destroy all the fruits of human progress painfully accumulated through the ages, the American people are rallying for the great impending battles, preparing for big storms. In these preparations for times of trial, they find inspiration and support in their own great revolutionary traditions, in the heroic examples of the Spanish and Chinese peoples, and in that great fortress of peace and progress, the Soviet Union. The American people are finding their way, step by step, in the light of the teachings of our great Lenin, to the united front of all forces of progress to meet and solve the immediate issues of the crisis.

It remains a fact that the great masses of the American people are still not understanding the final and complete solution of capitalism's crisis in the socialist revolution, in the transfer of the national economy into the possession of the

nation's toilers, in the abolition of exploitation of man by man. They still seek for the democratic path within the limitations of the anti-democratic framework of a decaying capitalist system. Therefore the road ahead is by no means a broad, clear highway. The experiences of the struggle for the democratic solution of the immediate problems, enlightened by persistent teachings of the Communists who participate loyally in the mass struggle, and by the glorious example of the Soviet Union—these factors alone will finally bring the full teachings of Lenin to the American workers and toiling masses, and thereby bring the final victory of socialism.

In the immediate situation of our country, and of the world, the first and major task is to weld the firm unity of the working class with the democratic majority of the people against fascist aggression and world conquest, and to unite America with the peace forces of the whole world.

In the living and strengthening mass movement toward a better life, toward peace and international order, we can truly say that the spirit of Lenin lives in our country and exercises a growingly decisive influence. In that fact is the promise of fruitful co-operation between the democracy of America and the socialist democracy of the Soviet Union. In that fact is the guarantee of the defeat of world fascism. In that fact is the guarantee of a new era of human progress.

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