

## CHAPTER X

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
AND NATIONAL UNITY

UNQUESTIONABLY the Democratic Party, which is the administration party, gathering over twenty-seven million votes in the 1940 elections for President Roosevelt, is the chief factor in the matter of national unity, in so far as political parties are concerned. It not only retains the backing of a great national majority but it also furnishes the chief political foundations for the wartime administration, the most important organizational strongholds and rallying centers for the broadest national unity. At the same time, however, it must be noted that the Democratic Party contains within itself some of the most damaging Fifth Column forces, that by its reliance upon the "solid South" of poll tax and "white superiority" it is resting upon a dangerously rotten foundation, and that it is honey-combed with defeatist and appeaser elements busily conspiring behind the scenes against an all-out drive for victory in the war.

The most important single factor in the Democratic Party is, of course, the man who is Commander-in-Chief of the potentially strongest nation on earth, and thereby one of the most important factors in the world situation—President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In the period of fatal confusions, from the end of 1939 to the first half of 1941, I have spoken and written many bitter words of criticism against President Roosevelt. Since

those words are, at this moment, being recalled as obstacles in the way of complete national unity, I am forced to deal with them again, at a time when I would much prefer to devote myself exclusively to the present necessity of strengthening the hands of our Commander-in-Chief for the tasks of this historic moment of crisis. Therefore, I perforce must review the past in order to establish a perspective which will help disarm those enemies who desire for one or another special reason to perpetuate the old confusions into the present.

From early in 1936, American Communists developed a positive appreciation of President Roosevelt and his role in the world-wide struggle against Nazism. Our earlier suspicions against him, because of the late General Hugh Johnson's dominant role with his half-baked fascist ideology, had been dissipated by Johnson's dismissal from his position as advisor to the President and head of N.R.A. We were further stimulated by the emergence of a clearly defined anti-Roosevelt movement of a fascist-Nazi character in the Liberty League. In 1936, as the Communist candidate for the Presidency, I conducted a campaign designed to help build up Roosevelt's vote rather than that of my own party, because of the thinly disguised fascist character of his opposition, which we considered the main danger to our country.

In 1937, the Communist Party was the only national political organization of any kind which unitedly supported President Roosevelt. The issues of that year were: the fight about the Supreme Court, and the President's Chicago speech advocating "quarantine of the aggressor nations." The President's own party deserted him on both issues, and even the liberals deserted him on the "quarantine" issue, which was the issue of "collective security."

In 1938, American Communists were among the most aggressive and consistent supporters of the President. Within this support, for the first time in three years, we had to include a sharp note of criticism against his abandonment of the Spanish republic, and against allowing his lieutenants to claim for him "credit" for the Munich betrayal.

In 1939, American Communists strengthened their support of the President. On September 1, when the war broke out, our National Committee was meeting in Chicago, with 650 members and delegates from 48 states, the central object of its deliberations being how to help elect President Roosevelt for a third term.\* As late as September 11, our party addressed itself to the President offering him its support.

In October, 1939, we came out in opposition to the President against the hostile attitude rising in Washington toward the Soviet Union. We considered this a mistake disastrous to the national interests of our own country. And when Washington actively supported Baron von Mannerheim, Hitler's present willing vassal, the break between American Communists and the President became complete for eighteen months. The very moment when Churchill and Roosevelt joined in that great turn which reversed the anti-Soviet policy, and took the road which has resulted in the mighty construction of the United Nations, American Communists were in the most energetic support of the President again.

That is the record. I do not wish at this time to argue again the merits of the old disagreements, on either side. It is sufficient for this argument to establish the fact that American Communists since 1936 subordinated their own

\* See Earl Browder, *Unity for Peace and Democracy*, New York, September, 1939.

special program to the support of the domestic and international policies of President Roosevelt, seeing in them the only hope of orderly and peaceful development of our country and the world. When we broke with the President, it was on a principled disagreement as to which direction lay the true interests of the United States. When this disagreement was wiped out by history, by events, we resumed our consistent and effective support of the President.

I hope and believe that most of those who read this book will be people who believe that "support for President Roosevelt" is an essential guiding slogan for our country in finding its way through this war and world crisis to victory and a peoples' peace. Roosevelt is our national Commander-in-Chief, and victory is possible only by upholding his hands and defeating the obstructionists and Fifth Columnists who are his domestic enemies. The test of whether a person or group has been a real supporter of the President, or whether the support is only the formal lip-service of "war converts," is one which appeals to the common sense of millions of people, and is widely applied, with much justification. This review of the record of American Communists on this issue is offered to the general reader as a part of our credentials certifying those common points of agreement upon the basis of which we can profitably discuss the still unsettled problems of national unity for victory.

For us, then, to discuss the problems of national unity, of world policy, or of the Democratic Party as a central factor, from the starting point of the leading role of President Roosevelt, is neither difficult nor "abnormal." The difficult and abnormal period, for us, was that in which the most unfortunate chain of events had thrown us for a time into the position of a "minority opposition."

But enough of this ancient history! Our discussion in this chapter is centered on the Democratic Party in relation to national unity.

That which Nicholas Murray Butler said of the Republican Party, that there are millions of Republican voters but no party, could be said with equal truth of the Democratic Party—except for the unifying role of the President which, operating across all party lines, is felt with especial force among traditional and nominal Democrats of all tendencies because he was elected as a Democratic Party candidate.

The Democratic Party is a tradition inherited from past political struggles. It is a federation of regional interests. It is the channel for newly rising democratic currents among the masses. It is a vested interest of professional political machines. It is an instrument of monopoly capitalism. It is a pioneer of enlightened social and economic policies. It is all these conflicting things, and more—but it is a party only in that special sense, known in this form only in the United States, in which a tradition and name continues formally a unity long departed from real life. The living issues of the day are not fought out between the Democratic and Republican parties, but within both of them. Democratic Party politics are thus the most complex imaginable, and their handling one of the most abstruse and complicated arts. That is why professional politicians speak of Roosevelt admiringly as the "Old Maestro," the only man in two generations able to impart coherence of a sort to that bundle of contradictions known collectively as the Democratic Party.

The deepest and most glaring contradiction is that between the Democratic Party in the North which finds its main mass support in the industrial working class, more



and more organized in trade unions and influencing the party, and a "solid South" Democratic Party which is predominantly so reactionary, so medieval in mentality and spirit, as to be almost beyond the comprehension of the rest of the country. This "solid South" Democracy is the most powerful influence in Congress and the government, excepting only the President himself. It is exceedingly self-conscious and self-confident, not to say arrogant; it considers itself the real leader of the country, and it is quite adept in forcing its will upon the rest of the country. It is a degenerate modern caricature of the old South of the Revolution and fifty years after, which gave our country most of its leading statesmen of that time.

This "solid South" is so completely at variance with every enlightened political thought which President Roosevelt has come to symbolize that it is one of the modern mysteries of politics how it ever came about that this South is a chief pillar of the Roosevelt national administration and its power.

Recently, I had the opportunity to study the "solid South" from the inside for fourteen months. Never before had I been permitted so much as to stay overnight on Georgia's soil; the leading newspapers boast about how for years they had forcibly prevented my public appearance in that state. This time I went in with all the powers of the Federal government protecting me, and I resided behind the protective shelter of high walls, with hundreds of guards. It was therefore possible for me to study Georgia, the heart of the "solid South," at leisure and in safety—a rare situation. Here are a few of my observations:

The people of Georgia are typical of America, an admirable and lovable people, politically indistinguishable from those of any other state I have known. Their state

is backward and obscurantist because the people are excluded from public life, which is the monopoly of a closed corporation of professional politicians. This monopoly maintains itself principally by two mechanisms, the poll tax and "white supremacy"—the oppression of the Negroes as an "inferior race." The poll tax automatically excludes most of the poor people from the franchise, both white and Negro. The "white supremacy" is written into the Georgia constitution and laws. Any one who questions the supreme validity of this doctrine is ganged-up on and driven out of public life, considering himself lucky if he escapes with his life. Since every reasonably intelligent and decent person does, in his heart, question the validity of "white supremacy," he carefully avoids any public responsibility which would put him on the spot and force him to express himself. Thus the monopoly of the stupid and venal is guaranteed in Georgian government and public life.

A startling example of this process took place while I was in Georgia. The whole country has heard about Governor Talmadge's "purge" of the state universities, the arbitrary removal of a number of educators on the charge that they were "conspiring" to break down the state's laws prohibiting coeducation of white and Negro. All America, outside the "solid South," was shocked by this "purge." But I must admit that I was even more shocked by something else, which the country generally missed entirely—and that was the defense of the accused educators. They went before Governor Talmadge and pleaded that they were unjustly accused, that they agreed fully with the Governor's doctrine of "white supremacy," and therefore they should be acquitted. In short, they lied themselves blue in the face, for they are intelligent men, and they could not possibly agree with the lynch leader mind of

Talmadge. They acted just like Northern liberals when dragged before the Dies Committee on the charge of "communism." And the inevitable result is that the Talmadges rule with a rod of iron, for they are at least bold and frank in their medieval policies, while their opponents are timid, cowardly, hypocritical, and dishonest in a mean and picayune way. And such is the foundation of politics in the "solid South."

This poll tax, "white supremacy" political machine controls most of the key positions in Congress. Senator George of Georgia was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, until the obvious impossibility of handling foreign relations through such a person forced his shift, but recently, to the even more powerful position of chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, where at least he does not deal directly with the colored peoples abroad whom he stigmatizes as "inferior." Our Senate Foreign Relations Committee is still, however, graced with such figures as Senator Reynolds, who openly proclaims his sympathy with the racial doctrines of Hitler, and fraternizes with pro-Nazis. The poll tax Representatives are even more vulgar and shameless in their reactionary attitudes than their more polished colleagues of the Senate. Martin Dies is typical of the breed. They are bold and ruthless men like those who put Adolf Hitler at the head of the German nation. And like Germany, Georgia is dotted with prison camps—with many of the wardens being men who began their careers as convicts in those same camps, usually for manslaughter or murder. Hardly a week passes without one or several convicts being killed by their guards. The condition of the state is marked by illiteracy, crime, violence, poverty. And in Georgia is the type of poll

tax "white supremacy" Democratic Party that dominates Congress.

Only in the past few years, since the trade unions have begun to enroll a mass membership in the South, and since national public opinion has begun to turn its spotlight now and then on some of the dark spots there, has there been a slight break in this somber picture. There is a movement of enlightenment and progress stirring through the South, among white and Negro populations, that reaches down to the grass roots. And already it has found spokesmen, worthy ones, in public life. I will mention a few, even at the risk that Martin Dies and his kind always denounce as "Communists" those for whom I speak a kind word. Senator Claude Pepper has displayed a progressive mind and independent spirit that augurs a new day coming in the South. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black has been outstanding in his services to his native South as well as to the nation, in boldly challenging the dominant Southern medievalism. Dr. Frank Graham, president of the University of North Carolina, has built up over years and under most discouraging conditions a powerful center for diffusion of civilization and culture in those benighted regions, helping to make it possible for decent men to begin to speak in public without endangering their lives. Many lesser names could be mentioned, but perhaps I should not endanger the careers of men not yet fully equipped to withstand the inevitable charge of being "reds" or "fellow travelers" that results from being praised by a Communist. For it is still almost as dangerous in the South as in Germany to be under the charge of being a "red" or a Communist.

This reactionary "solid South" has long been the "old man of the sea" riding the shoulders of the Democratic



Party Sinbad. The Democratic Party can never be an effective instrument of the people until this poll tax "white supremacy" machine is pried loose from its local power which gives it decisive leverage in the nation.

Under the conditions of the present war, which can only be won as a Peoples' War of National Liberation, this "white supremacy" section of the Democratic Party becomes something more serious than an obstacle to progress; it is a positive menace to the war effort, an undermining influence against the United Nations, a destroyer of the confidence of our Allies toward the United States, an obstruction to the war policies of the President, a menace to the national existence of our country, an obstacle to victory.

At the very moment this is being written, newspapers report that the governors of Georgia and Alabama have refused to furnish war supplies to the United States Army because our nation's policy demands that supplies be manufactured under conditions which exclude all discrimination against workers on account of race, creed, or color. They demand that the nation's policies be made to conform to the South's "white supremacy" doctrine.

At the very time this is being written, poll tax Congressmen have made a "filibuster" against a bill providing that citizens in the armed forces of the United States be allowed to vote without registration in their native states. They are determined at all costs to keep the majority of their citizens, especially the Negroes, from exercising the right to vote at all, even if they are in the armed service of the nation at war.

Can the Democratic Party build the unity of the nation for victory in this war as long as it allows such policies to be followed in its name?

And can the United States lead the 29 United Nations

to victory, in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, when key positions in its government are held by men who openly proclaim and practice the doctrine that the "colored" races are inferior, to be held in subjection to the "white race," when a majority of the population of the United Nations are of the "colored races"?

These issues cannot be evaded or glossed over. It is not a contribution to national unity to be silent about them. This is not something that can be postponed in the interests of national unity for victory, for this is of the very essence of democracy, and the remedy of these profound abuses a *precondition for victory*.

This issue of the poll tax "white supremacy" Democratic Party machine in the South is the dominant question in the Democratic Party and its relations to national unity and the war. It is the irrepressible issue. The necessity to solve this question during the present war is the price our nation pays for having left unfinished the work of Abraham Lincoln. For this whole problem is nothing more nor less than the remnants of chattel slavery, too long smugly tolerated by a complacent nation deeply enamored of a temporary material prosperity and grown disdainful of the deeper morality in public questions.

The central problem of the Democratic Party is thus the question of winning that party, in its entirety, to the policies of Roosevelt and the Atlantic Charter, to give it a local and state leadership which applies those principles to the entire life of the nation. While that problem is not exclusively of the South (witness Senator Wheeler and others), it is above all in the South where the problem is so deep and acute that it threatens not only the life of the Democratic Party and its national administration but

endangers the very life of the nation. The Democratic Party must be won to democracy. And that is a problem not alone for Democrats, but for the nation.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM— SOME SPECIAL PROBLEMS

WE HAVE BEEN discussing the problems of national unity on the assumption that, in its political aspects, it must be achieved through the dominant two-party system. We have rejected as impractical for the war period any general readjustment or regrouping of the party structure in our national political life. We have further assumed that the Communist Party, from whose standpoint this book is written, will continue its role in this period essentially as a minority party, however much or little it may grow, and that its contribution will be chiefly to deepen the political thought of the nation.

This does not dispose of the question, however, since new problems of pressing immediacy arise which are not answered even in general outline by our argument thus far.

The winning of national unity is a struggle *within* the two major parties, and a struggle *between* the two parties when and where the forces of national unity dominate one party while the opponents of national unity dominate the other. So far we have concentrated our attention on the struggle within each major party. Now, what happens in the struggle *between* the parties themselves?

Where the forces of national unity dominate *both* major

parties in a given state or locality, it must be our duty, as of all who follow this main line of reasoning, to do everything to help soften the sharp edges of antagonisms between those who agree in substance but are divided formally, and transform them into a co-operative rivalry as to who can most effectively serve the nation and its unity.

Since we are dealing with a *struggle*, however, there is no automatic guarantee of victory, and certainly no likelihood of victory in both parties in all states and localities. The appeasement, defeatist, and Fifth-Column elements, and all those who place their own special interests above those of the nation, are strong and active. In most states and localities they will probably dominate one or the other of the major parties and will fight for power. In such case, it is clearly the duty of those who place national unity for victory above all else to rally their forces around the one party where their point of view prevails.

But if the reactionaries and enemies of unity can win in one party, there is also the possibility they can win in both. Baron von Killinger's famous "Memorandum" platform for the Fifth Column definitely put forth such a directive for the capture and utilization of both major parties. And there is not the slightest doubt the effort is being made.

In New York State there is a typical example of this problem. The anti-Roosevelt, anti-unity forces control both major party tickets in the elections, and thus control the biggest state in the Union regardless of which party wins the election in November.

It seems clear that the New York Republican Party is definitely under the control of the Hoover-Landon-Vandenberg machine which nominated Thomas E. Dewey for Governor. The followers of Wendell Willkie made an