

The Party of Lenin and the People's Front

(Speech Delivered at the Lenin Memorial Meeting, Madison Square Garden, January 20, 1936)

By EARL BROWDER

FRRIENDS and comrades, it is twelve years since Lenin died. With each passing year his name grows brighter, his words and his work gain greater authority among the toiling masses of every land. Twenty years ago his name was almost unknown to the broad masses outside of Russia; today all the great names of that time have dimmed and disappeared. There are no people so benighted today as to do honor to the names of the great men of 1916, whether it be the name of a capitalist statesman or a reformist labor or Socialist leader. Since 1917, all reputations have crashed—except those who welcomed the great upheaval which created a new world under the leadership of Lenin, except those who identified themselves with Lenin and his historic work.

On this twelfth anniversary of his death, Lenin's name shines with an especial luster through the whole world. Today we can speak, without any exaggeration, of the final and irrevocable victory of the Socialist society founded by Lenin. Today, when capitalist society condemns tens of millions to enforced idleness, to starvation alleviated only by a miserly and diminishing dole, the Soviet Union, fruit of Lenin's genius and Lenin's Party, blossoms forth in a Socialist prosperity unprecedented in the history of the world. Social security, a guaranteed well-being for all, has been made a reality in the Soviet Union, at a moment when the rest of the world, ruled by finance capital, groans under the agonies of the crisis, of growing insecurity, of reaction and fascism, of the feverish preparation for a new imperialist war.

Today, more than ever before, the greatness of Lenin lives in the world Party of the international proletariat—the Communist International, the International at whose head stand the great Stalin, leader of the world proletarian revolution, and the helmsman Dimitroff, tried soldier of Bolshevism—the international Party, which has produced such valiant leaders as Ernst Thaelmann, true son of the German proletariat, whose name will be remembered long after the leaders of the hangman regime of Hitler and Goering will be forgotten. Our proletarian honor demands that we leave no stone unturned to rouse the entire population of the country in

behalf of the unconditional freedom of Ernst Thaelmann, and his fellow anti-fascist prisoners. The Party of Lenin stands today in Italy at the head of the growing forces of revolt against the war-maker Mussolini. It fights against the Japanese oppressors and war makers. It already leads tens of millions in the Soviet territory of China, and is rapidly advancing towards a people's revolt against the Kuomintang hangman's regime in China.

Today the genius of Lenin is universally acknowledged, even by our enemies. But it is not so universally understood. As it happened with Lenin's teachers, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, so those who have fought and now fight most fiercely against Lenin's Party often try to invoke the authority of Lenin's name for their confusionist or reactionary attempts. Lenin himself best described this when, speaking of Marx, he said:

"During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes have visited relentless persecution on them and received their teaching with the most savage hostility, the most furious hatred, the most ruthless campaign of lies and slanders. After their death, attempts are made to turn them into harmless icons, canonize them, and surround their *names* with a certain halo for the 'consolation' of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping them, while at the same time emasculating and vulgarizing the *real essence* of their revolutionary theories and blunting their revolutionary edge. At the present time, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the labor movement are cooperating in the work of adulterating Marxism."

Today, Lenin's words on Marx apply fully to Lenin himself. But history does not merely repeat itself. Today the adulterators of Lenin's teachings, not least the Trotskyites, those dogs who bark after the locomotive of socialism, have a more difficult time. Lenin left behind him a victorious revolution, headed by a steeled and tested Leninist Party—the Communist Party and the Communist International. Lenin's place was taken by his best student and co-worker, who with incomparable wisdom, clarity, and boldness, carried on Lenin's program to its final and irrevocable victory—our present leader who has taken his place unchallengeably beside Marx, Engels, and Lenin—Joseph Stalin.

LENINISM GUIDES THE WORLD WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

Lenin's fight against the imperialist World War, the fight for peace, led directly to the fight for socialism, to the victory of Soviet power. In the midst of war and capitalist collapse, the Soviet power dedicated itself from its first moment to the struggle for peace and socialism. From the October days of 1917, Lenin's program has guided the Soviet Union and the revolutionary movement of the whole world. That is why the Soviet Union is today such a power-

ful force on the side of peace; that is why its peace policy, rallying the masses, the colonial peoples, and the smaller nations, has even been able to utilize that "den of thieves", the League of Nations, as an instrument, even if weak and unreliable, to impede imperialist world war.

Developing the theories of Marx in the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolutions, Lenin was by no means a vulgar pacifist or neutral in relation to war, as some people who quote Lenin nowadays would like it to appear. He declared that the international working class movement had to be defeatist in relation to both sides of the World War, because both sides were dominated by imperialist war aims, and victory for either side would necessarily result in imposing that imperialism upon the rest of the world. The workers and the toiling masses as a whole stood to gain only through the defeat of their own governments. Like Marx, Lenin always examined each war situation concretely. He was not neutral; and in each war, where the interests of the oppressed masses, or of national liberation, could be definitely identified with one side, he called for support of that side.

Lenin organized and led the wars to save the Soviet power from the series of interventions. The policy of Stalin, which confronts the fascist war makers, not only with the unarmed mass movement of the toilers in the capitalist world, but with superior military force on the part of the Soviet Union, *rallying around it all other nations interested for the moment in resisting this fascist aggression*, is a Marxist-Leninist policy. It corresponds to the needs of the workers of every land. Our interests also demand the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union in the face of threatening imperialist war.

Lenin always abhorred the grandiloquent revolutionary phrase, which only served to cover up a practical retreat from the central question of the day, as a face-saving gesture. One can imagine with what blistering scorn he would have greeted the demand that now comes from reformist sources, that the Soviet Union should at this moment withdraw from the League of Nations and that it should alone proceed with sanctions against fascist Italy—a course which could only result in a blockade of the Soviet Union instead of Italy and would help those now trying to create a wide coalition for war against the Soviet Union. It is important to use this occasion to point out the dishonesty of that demand, which pictures the Soviet Union as helping Italy make war on Ethiopia. How slanderous this charge is can be revealed with a few figures of 1935 trade as compared with 1934. Instead of increasing, like the trade of the United States and even of England (which supposedly is in direct conflict with Mussolini over Africa), Soviet-Italian trade

declined by one-third. The much talked of oil trade dropped by more than two-thirds—at the moment when oil trade from the United States was skyrocketing. It is clear that the Soviet Union, without making any gestures of isolated action, was actually supplying Italy in 1935 with much less than she had supplied her during the year before the outbreak of hostilities. The peace policy of the Soviet Union is a Leninist policy, that means: an effective policy, not a policy of gestures, but a policy of getting results.

Lenin always urged American revolutionaries to study the specific problems and revolutionary traditions of our own country, and to use them for the socialist revolution. He opened for us the rich revolutionary treasures of American history. Lenin organized the first demonstration for Tom Mooney that caused Wilson to cancel his death sentence.

Today, when we utilize the special position of the United States, which gives rise to the mass demand for “neutrality” as a means of keeping out of a new imperialist war, it is undoubtedly in the tradition of Lenin, to direct this mass demand toward measures which really obstruct war and war preparations, while combatting those theories of “neutrality” which are used by Hearst, du Pont, the Liberty League, and all the militarists, as a cover for new imperialist war-maneuvers. It is in the tradition of Lenin to welcome and make the fullest possible use of the revelations of the Nye munitions investigation for the education of the masses. The Nye Committee has roused the anger and hatred of the most reactionary forces of the country, who are trying to shut off these revelations of how we were duped and tricked into the last war. Following Lenin, we must rouse such a mass demand for the continuance of these investigations and for the full publication of their findings (many of the most important documents are still kept secret), that if the Committee is really cut off, the whole country will understand the reason—that such crimes against humanity are hidden behind those closed doors because our rulers are afraid of a revolution should they be disclosed. Lenin always emphasized the importance of getting into the imperialist secret archives; he himself did the greatest work in this field, with the publication of the tsarist secret archives regarding the World War.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LENIN'S WRITINGS FOR THE SOCIALIST WORKERS

To those workers in the Socialist Party who are breaking with their reformist past, who are trying to find the road to a revolutionary policy, we offer the help of the teachings of Lenin. It is one of the most hopeful signs of the seriousness of their movement that they are beginning to read Lenin, and even to quote him.

True, they often quote him without full understanding, and try to accuse us Communists of abandoning Lenin just at the moment when they are beginning to study and adopt Lenin's line. But Lenin wrote a special pamphlet for people in just such a stage of development, called, "*Left Wing Communism—an Infantile Disorder*", which will help them to get over this. We have also provided them with a rich treasure of Lenin's writings, many volumes, which we were not fortunate enough to have in the formative years of our Communist Party. We are sure that the Socialist workers will seriously study Lenin, apply his teachings to their own problems of the day, and thus rapidly move toward the united front with us, and eventually toward organic unity of all revolutionary Socialists in a single Party.

Fully in the spirit of Lenin was the whole work of the great Seventh World Congress of the Communist International. Basing itself upon the mighty achievements of socialist construction in the Soviet Union, and upon the bankruptcy, now completely revealed, of the reformist path of the Second International, the Seventh World Congress has placed the world labor movement fully upon the road toward achieving a united front against capitalism, and a mighty people's front against fascism and war.

The central slogan of today in the United States—For a Broad Mass Farmer-Labor Party—as the medium for such a united front, and for the people's front in its broadest aspects, proceeds directly out of the teachings of Lenin. Sometimes our new friends from the Socialist Party reproach us for being "too broad" in our efforts to make the Farmer-Labor Party a real mass people's party; they call on us to "return to Lenin". Let us recall, however, the words of Lenin written thirty years ago. After pointing out that Bolshevism "has justly fought and continues to fight against the bourgeois-democratic abuse of the word, 'people'", that "it absolutely insists on the need for the complete class independence for the Party of the proletariat", Lenin then said:

"But it divides the 'people' into 'classes', not in order that the advanced class may become self-centered, or confine itself to narrow aims and restrict its activity so as not to frighten the economic masters of the world, but in order that the advanced class, which does not suffer from the half-heartedness, vacillation, and indecision of the intermediate classes, shall with all the greater energy and enthusiasm fight for the cause of the whole of the people, at the head of the whole of the people."

We Communists in the United States take upon ourselves this same task, to fight for the cause of the whole people, at the head of the whole people. That is our conception of the Farmer-Labor Party which we exert all our energy to help bring into existence, together with all progressive forces of the country,

Already we can see the line of the Seventh World Congress taking shape among the masses in this country. Lenin's teachings live and grow in the mass movement for united action against fascism and war, for the protection of the interests of the people. We see it in the growing movement for a Farmer-Labor Party. We see it in the great movement for industrial unionism, headed now by the Committee for Industrial Organization, for the organization of the basic industries, and for a more powerful and militant trade-union movement. We saw it in the past weeks in the great Congress Against War and Fascism in Cleveland, where representatives of over 3,000,000 people, including those of over 600,000 trade unionists, gathered around a fighting program. We see it in the movement for the protection and liberation of the Negro people, such as the move for the coming National Negro Congress and the broad united front defense of Angelo Herndon and the Scottsboro Boys. We see it in the Leftward strivings of the members and followers of the Socialist Party, which move, even if slowly, toward a united front with the Communists, as part of an ever-broader united front. We see it in the amalgamation of the student organizations into the new and significant American Student Union. We see it in the great American Youth Congress, which is sweeping into its orbit the youth masses of all progressive tendencies throughout the whole country. We see it in the stirrings of the farmers' organizations, under the blows of the Supreme Court decisions and the continued disasters of the crisis. We see it in the unification of all the most important mass unemployed organizations, now in process of being completed. We see it even among the broadest strata of the impoverished city middle classes, who move to unite their efforts with the workers and farmers. We see it in the great movement for Unemployment, Old Age and Social Insurance, around the Frazier-Lundeen Bills now before Congress. These, and a hundred other evidences, show that the policy of Lenin, expressed in the Seventh World Congress, arises out of the deepest needs of the masses of the United States and the whole world.

LENINISM THE GUIDE FOR THE LIBERATION OF ALL
OPPRESSED PEOPLES

Lenin taught the Communist Party to fight uncompromisingly for the Negro people, for their full social, economic, and political equality—for their complete liberation and their right to self determination. Our Party carries out the policies of Lenin and Stalin for the liberation of the colonial and colored peoples who are doubly oppressed by imperialism. The Communist Party fights for the Negroes, not only in the United States, but wherever they are

people against Italian fascism. All oppressed peoples receive the support of the Communists who thus carry out the program of Lenin and his world Party. That is why the Jewish people in Germany, who are the victims of the fascists, find the Communists are their firm allies; and wherever anti-Semitism raises its ugly head, the Communists are in the forefront of the battle to destroy this manifestation of capitalist oppression and degradation.

The supreme contribution of Lenin to human progress, a contribution which has been further developed and perfected under the leadership of Stalin, was the creation of that indispensable and central instrument of the working class—the Communist Party.

The basic concept of the Communist Party was already fully expressed in 1848 by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*. Let us recall the words of that historic document:

“The Communists are distinguished from other working class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

“The Communists, therefore, are, on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

“The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement.”

Lenin achieved the goal thus laid down by Marx and Engels. To understand the scope and swing of Lenin's work in this respect, we need but read his words in the crucial years of 1903 to 1906. It was in this period that Lenin spoke the following words:

“In wartime, recruits must be trained directly during military operations. Therefore, comrades, adopt the new methods of training more boldly! Organize more boldly more and more new units, send them into battle, recruit more of the working youth, extend the usual framework of all Party organizations, from committees to factory groups, trade unions and students' circles! Remember that every moment of delay in this task will play into the hands of the enemies of Social-Democracy [now, Communism]; for the new streams are seeking immediate outlets; and if they do not find Social-Democratic channels, they will rush into non-Social-Democratic channels. Remember that every practical step in the revolutionary movement will inevitably and unavoidably teach the young recruits

Social-Democratic science, for this science is based on an objectively correct estimation of the forces and tendencies of the various classes; for revolution is nothing more nor less than the break-up of old superstructures, and the independent action of different classes, each striving to erect the new superstructure in its own way. But take care not to degrade our revolutionary science to the level of mere book dogma, do not vulgarize it by despicable phrases about the tactics-process, organization-process, by phrases that condone confusion, vacillation and lack of initiative. Give more scope to every variety of enterprise by the greatest number of groups and circles of all kinds, and bear in mind that, apart from our counsel and regardless of our counsel, the relentless march of revolutionary events will keep them to the correct course. It was said long ago that in politics one often has to learn from the enemy. And in revolutionary movements, the enemy always compels us to draw correct conclusions in a particularly instructive and speedy manner."

These words of Lenin could very well have been written especially for the Communist Party of the U.S.A., so well do they fit our own problems today. These words are the key to the task of building our Party, on which depends the speed and extent of progress in all fields of struggle against reaction, for a new social order.

Everywhere today, even those who do not yet agree with the full Communist program increasingly realize that it is the participation of the Communists in their progressive work which above all else makes it living, vital, growing and powerful. All the more, then, should we, who know the full significance and power of our Party, understand the necessity to build it, to build it as Lenin taught us.

We call upon all class-conscious and advanced workers to join our ranks. There is a place for each, which you alone can fill. By joining the Communist Party you are joining the only revolutionary party, the only united party of action. You raise yourself higher to where you can see further and clearer; you join hands in a circle which transforms individual weakness into collective power; you bind yourself ever closer to the broadest masses. You become one of those described by our great and wise Stalin, when he referred to our International Party in the following words:

"We Communists are people of a special mould. We are made of special material. We are those who comprise the army of the great proletarian strategist, the army of Comrade Lenin. There is nothing higher than the honor to belong to this army. There is nothing higher than the title of member of the Party founded and led by Comrade Lenin. It is not given to all to be members of such a Party. It is not given to all to withstand the stress and storm that accompanies membership of such a Party. Sons of the working class, sons of poverty and struggle, sons of incredible deprivation and heroic effort—these are the ones who must first of all be members of such a Party. That is why the Leninist Party, the Communist Party, at the same time calls itself the Party of the working class."

(Excerpts from Comrade Browder's Lenin Memorial Speech delivered at Symphony Hall, Boston, on January 26, 1936)

WHAT a clear proof of the correctness of the Communist policy was given us last night by the speech of Al Smith, at the American Liberty League dinner in Washington! Just as Hitler in Germany sailed under the banner of socialism, Al Smith uses the sacred name of liberty to the same purpose.

This Liberty League is the greatest threat to American liberties today. Its organizers and contributors are headed by the munitions-makers, the du Ponts, who made 1,000 per cent profits out of the last World War, who smash trade unions, who finance reaction everywhere. Morgan is its guiding genius. Al Smith is its mass leader, to give the "democratic" face; Father Coughlin and Hugh Johnson are its come-on men.

It is full of joy at the Supreme Court decisions forbidding forever all social legislation in the interests of the workers and farmers. It wants to make permanent the present condition of big profits for big capital and deep poverty for the masses.

A FARMER-LABOR ANSWER

Al Smith said last night, as the keynote of his speech: "I am in possession of supreme happiness and comfort."

From this beginning he argued that the conditions and institutions which produced his supreme happiness and comfort should be protected against all change.

Let us make a concession to Mr. Smith. Let us agree that every one who has that same supreme happiness and comfort shall line up with Smith and the Liberty League-Republican-Hearst combination. Let all the millions whose happiness and comfort have been shaken and even entirely destroyed by the crisis and depression, by capitalism, line up on the side of a Farmer-Labor Party. That would be the best answer to Smith-du Pont-Morgan-Hearst. That would mean a workers' and farmers' government in the United States. That would mean opening of factories. That would be Al Smith's disaster, which he says would mean Moscow, red flag, the International.

Al Smith should not so lightly identify Washington, the stars and stripes, with the Supreme Court powers to throw out all social legislation. Because the people of America are going to smash that power of the Supreme Court, and Al Smith may persuade them that they must, to accomplish that necessary task, set up Soviets in America. And that would be too bad—for Al Smith and his friends.

COMMUNISTS GUARD RIGHTS

But we do not give the American flag and Americanism to Al Smith. He claims the Stars and Stripes, but uses it only to cover up the black flag of piracy of Wall Street which he represents. We Communists always have the American flag at our meetings to remind us of those words of the Declaration of Independence which Smith wants to forget:

"Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends (life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness), it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such forms as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

ROOSEVELT RETREATS

There are still many people who say: Yes, that is right, but you go too far when you attack Roosevelt also, when Smith attacks him. After all, they say, a Farmer-Labor Party may get only a few million votes, and that might be just enough to defeat Roosevelt and elect a Liberty League man.

To this argument we must say: Roosevelt is in full retreat before the Liberty League. He can't fight and run away at the same time. He roars like a lion and acts like a rabbit. That is because talk is cheap, but action in the Democratic Party is controlled by the solid South of Scottsboro, by half-fascist Democratic Illinois, by California, where McAdoo works with Republicans to smash the maritime unions, by Indiana where a Democratic governor has had the militia on duty for six months now, breaking strikes. Roosevelt's promises, the New Deal policies, are all in the ash-can already. No new promises he can think up will have any hope in them for the workers and farmers.

BUILD THE FARMER-LABOR PARTY NOW

No, we need something really new, the independent power of the workers and farmers, against the capitalists. Yes, that is what Al Smith said he feared most, the alignment of class against class. Al Smith fears this because it would break up the present game in which his capitalist friends can stand at the head of both parties, and say: take your choice; heads we win, tails you lose. But when it becomes class against class, then we workers and farmers are the overwhelming majority. Then we win hands down.

That is why we fight for the united front; that is why we insist upon the need to build the Farmer-Labor Party now, in 1936.