
FOREWORD

THIS volume is a collection of reports, speeches and articles, written during 1936 and 1937. It is thus a companion volume and continuation of *Communism in the United States*, published in July, 1935, a similar collection covering the previous two years. The dividing line between these two volumes is the epochal Seventh World Congress of the Communist International and Georgi Dimitroff's historic report on the People's Front.

In this and the preceding volume, the development of Communist policy in this country can be followed through five years, the most eventful and pregnant with the future of any period since the Civil War. Together with the book, *What Is Communism*, written in 1935 and published in January, 1936, they cover all important developments of Communist policy in the United States during this period.

When my first volume was published, it met with a very mixed reception from the non-Communist critics. Curiously enough, the only reviews predominantly favorable were those of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, and of *The American Political Science Review*. The daily newspapers seemed at a loss how to handle it; the *World-Telegram* of New York, for example, thought it important enough to have a special article, but the anonymous "Staff Writer" was struck, above all, by the "contradiction" of the Unemployed Councils being also referred to as "Unemployment Councils," which seemed both to disturb and console the reviewer. The *Brooklyn Eagle* scribe, on the other hand, took a "serious" tone, concluding a long review with the judgment that "it is romantic in its fundamental approach." The "liberal" *Nation* turned the book over to an avowed Trotskyite, whose review proved beyond any doubt that my book was a collection of absurdities and contradictions unworthy the attention of any serious person.

Harold J. Laski of the British Labor Party and the London School of Economics, reviewed the book for the *New Republic*. He gave it the most intelligent treatment among all the non-Communist reviewers. Mr. Laski, however, writing immediately after the Seventh World Congress, reproached the book for not fully or sufficiently expressing the People's Front policy of that Congress; at the same time he accused it of "ignoring the time-factor as an element of the program involved."

Now Mr. Laski is a critic not to be lightly dismissed. I have given

his criticisms long examination, especially because their expressed motive—the desire for quick accomplishment of unity of all anti-fascists—is so sound and laudable. It is impossible for me to reply by asking him to name any other political group in America which produced anything half so valuable toward the desired end. Such a reply would be a rejection of his implied compliment that only the Communists are really expected to give the answers to the problems of the masses, and would constitute a refusal of the responsibility. Inasmuch as we Communists do accept responsibility, I must therefore accept his first criticism. It is true that, prior to the Seventh World Congress, we Communists of America were not fully conscious of the possibilities and necessity for the anti-fascist People's Front, even though we were struggling in that direction and made our own contribution to the Seventh Congress decisions. It is my hope that it will be impossible for any honest critic to make a similar criticism of the present volume.

As to "ignoring the time factor," it seems to me this charge applies against our critics rather than against us. Especially is this true of those like Norman Thomas, for example, who reflect more or less the influence of Trotskyism. These people specialize in such "devastating" arguments as the "exposure" of our "inconsistency" in fighting against the League of Nations at one time and later advocating cooperation with it; in opposing Roosevelt's policies and then later supporting them; in supporting independent trade unions at one time, later advocating their merger in the American Federation of Labor, and still later helping bring them into the Committee for Industrial Organization. In the opinion of such critics, it is sufficient to discredit both past and present policies to show that they were "contradictorily" advocated by one and the same person or group, without reference to time or circumstance.

Of such contradictions, the critic will find a rich crop in comparing the present volume with the first one, and even within the present volume alone. Far from wishing to hide such contradictions, it is the author's wish to emphasize them, to point out the constant movement of the Communist position in relation to particular issues, parties, groups and individuals. To trace this movement, this change, is the first condition of understanding the *line of policy* of the Communist Party, to see *where we are going*. To understand the laws of motion underlying such changes, is to grasp the fundamentals of dialectical materialism.

The world is changing most rapidly. The relationship of forces between the various class groupings in society is shifting from day to day. Political parties and programs are all, without exception, in a state of flux. Everything which lives and grows is changing; everything which decays and dies also changes, though in a different way.

It is only the petrified, the mummified, that remains the same through these days of feverish change. In the United States the single political phenomenon in which no essential change can be seen is the old but little-known Socialist-Labor Party (not to be confused with either the Socialist Party or Labor Party), which carries on the pure tradition of Daniel De Leon without so much as the change of a comma. But the "purity" and "consistency" of the Socialist-Labor Party have gained for it only the position of a sort of museum-piece and the role of a horrible example.

Our Communist policy represents a constant struggle to meet more adequately the problems of a rapidly changing world. Every step we make in this direction is a "contradiction" of the position from which we stepped. Far from wishing to hide these "contradictions," we would push them forward for the more serious student as the highest lesson we have to teach—the cause of change, its technique, its timing—the why, how, and when—in short, the process of history in the making and the role of political consciousness therein.

Examine, for instance, the change in the Communist attitude toward President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Today we are emphasizing that Roosevelt's programmatic utterances of 1937, when combined with the legislative program of the C.I.O. (his main labor support), provides a People's Front program of an advanced type, that the organization of the majority of the people for struggle to realize this program is the main road today to the creation of the People's Front. This is a profound change from 1933-34, when the Communists were in stubborn opposition to Roosevelt, the only vocal opposition. Between these two distinct positions, there was an intermediate one, that of 1935-36, when we found little to support in Roosevelt but when our main fire was directed against his enemies.

Norman Thomas, constantly though not consistently our critic, finds this course of the Communists intolerable and unprincipled, perhaps because it is in exactly the opposite direction to his own course. In 1933, when Roosevelt headed a national coalition (symbolized by the Blue Eagle of General Hugh Johnson) including the most reactionary and fascist-minded elements, Norman Thomas climbed on the Roosevelt bandwagon, which he proclaimed was headed straight for socialism with all its occupants, Wall Street and all. That was when the Communists intransigently opposed Roosevelt. When the du Pont family and Al Smith launched the bi-partisan Liberty League opposition to the President, that was the moment chosen by Norman Thomas to move away from Roosevelt into violent opposition, and later, in 1936, to establish friendly contacts with Alf M. Landon, candidate of the Liberty Leaguers. That same moment was the point when the Communists turned their main fire away from Roosevelt and toward his

enemies. And in 1937, when around the issue of reform of the Supreme Court, Roosevelt engaged in battle with the reactionaries on a wide front, Norman Thomas was the reliable echo of every Tory slogan raised against him; while the Communists came out in open support of the President, criticizing him only for not fighting consistently enough.

Here we have a record of fundamental and rapid change, on the part of Norman Thomas and his socialist groups and the Communist Party, as well as all other political groupings. But it is strange indeed to hear from Thomas and his friends the cry of "inconsistency" directed against the Communists; the charge applies equally to himself and all other groups, if to change is to be inconsistent. Of course, for adult political minds, it is no argument for or against the positions of either Thomas or ourselves that these positions have been constantly changing. The only serious questions that can and must be asked are: What has been the direction of the change, has it helped to unite the workers and the poor people and democrats generally against their worst enemies, or has it helped our worst enemies to divide us even more and thereby threaten to defeat us? The worst accusation that we, the Communists, place against Thomas is, not that he has changed, but that he has *changed for the worse, in the wrong direction*. He has not even been able, with such a line, to unite his own Party, but on the contrary has wrecked it; while we, the Communists, by our line helped to unite labor and the democratic front, and built our own Party as never before, uniting it more solidly than ever.

The decay of the Socialist Party in the past few years and the rise of the Communist Party furnish a neat test, even according to the pragmatic philosophy so dear to Thomas, of the relative validity of these two contrasted courses. The Socialist Party since 1932 dropped 90 per cent of its voter-followers, most of its leaders and membership, split into a dozen warring sects, and became completely isolated from the labor movement. In the same period, the Communist Party multiplied its followers, decisively surpassed the Socialist Party vote in the greatest city, New York (by three and one-half to one), registering 20 per cent of the total Labor Party vote; grew to 65,000 members (while the Socialist Party went down to 5,000) on a national scale, and became a recognized and powerful collaborator in the progressive labor movement which is rising upon such a vast scale. We can only regret that our past criticism of Norman Thomas' pragmatic philosophy seems to have knocked out his pragmatism without giving him any Marxism to replace it. If he had only retained some of his old pragmatism, and would begin to test policies by their results, we might have more hope, not that he would become a revolutionary socialist, but that he might at least join in building the People's Front against

fascism and war before our American fascists give him a post-graduate course in the dialectics of history in a concentration camp.

Some of our readers ask: Why polemicize against Norman Thomas? Is he so influential, or his Party so strong, that this is necessary?

The answer is, that the very fact that Norman Thomas is rapidly losing his influence and his Party is disintegrating, only goes to show how dangerous for the working class is the policy he follows. And the danger of this policy comes not from Thomas and his closest associates; they are largely victims of the disease and only half-conscious carriers of its germs. The real power behind it is the power of the class enemy, an enormous destructive power, which aims to break up and scatter the whole labor movement even as it breaks the Socialist Party. Its most malignant expression is found in the camp of the open Trotskyites, an international band of spies and wreckers in the service of fascism, who seek to carry into the labor and democratic ranks the slogans of the so-called "Anti-Communist Pact" which unites Hitler, Mussolini and the Mikado. We will be glad to hear the news when Norman Thomas and his Party break with this unholy alliance, and join all progressives in the fight to defeat its efforts to rule the world.

This book, like its predecessors, is in the broadest sense a collective product, arising directly out of the work of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and of its Political Bureau. To the degree that, in giving form and expression to this collective thought, I have been performing also an individual task, I must especially acknowledge a fundamental indebtedness to the stimulation and criticism of my wife, Raissa Irene Browder, whose help has far transcended the personal.

EARL BROWDER

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