

PART II

THE CRISIS IN THE AMERICAN LEFT

Among no Western Marxist parties did the revelations in the Krushchev report rouse more vigorous reaction than in the United States Communist Party. The membership of the American party exploded in a tempestuous revolt against long repressed dissent and disillusionment. The Krushchev revelations acted as a catalyst providing an impetus to an unprecedented critical discussion within the party. Anti-party and anti-Soviet accusations were voiced along with attacks on Marxism-Leninism as a mumbo jumbo. The leadership and the membership called for a more "American" approach in the party. Some members have even urged the party's dissolution.

Indeed, the party is in a *decisive* crisis. "The party is at the most critical juncture of its development," declared Fred Fine, a national committee member, writing in *The Worker* (July 1, 1956). "It is at a crossroads which can lead to its becoming an impotent sect. Furthermore, there is among the membership a confusion and lack of confidence in the party that go far deeper than anything I have seen in over twenty years of experience in the party." Since 1945 the party has lost eighty-five per cent of its membership, and the decline is continuing.