
AMERICA AND THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

BY EARL BROWDER

IT WAS inevitable that the rise of the Communist International in 1919 should find one of its points of support in the United States. This was predetermined by the character of our country, as the most advanced capitalist land with the largest industrial working class; by the composition of its population, a large proportion acutely conscious of its origin in other lands, and therefore international-minded; and by its whole history, which from 1776 onward was intertwined in the main stream of international development, outstandingly exemplified by the correspondence between Karl Marx, for the First International, and the administration of Abraham Lincoln.

A HISTORIC SURVEY

The large majority of the membership of the Socialist Party was internationalist in its sympathies and responded to the victory of Leninism in the October Revolution, and to the call of the First Congress of the Communist International on March 2-6, 1919. The American Socialist and labor movements had always had close connections with the First and Second Internationals. But the stubborn resistance to the post-war rebirth of the

International by the old opportunist leadership of the Socialist Party brought about the birth of the Communist Party of the United States as a split-off from the Socialist Party, while the political and organizational immaturity of the movement caused its division at birth into two parties (Communist Party and Communist-Labor Party), which were finally united only two years later.

The infamous repressions of the Palmer raids and deportations of 1920 broke up the normal development of the Party until the end of 1921, when its scattered forces were drawn together and emerged in the Workers' Party of America with Charles E. Ruthenberg at the head, uniting the best members, leaders and traditions of the old Socialist Party. Four years later the name was changed to Workers' (Communist) Party, and in the Sixth Convention, March, 1929, to Communist Party of the U.S.A. These formal dates roughly coincide with the main periods of economical and political developments in the world, and in the United States, and serve to mark the main periods of development of the Communist Party.

The period of the post-war crisis of the capitalist world, which to some extent involved the U.S., was the time

of the gathering of our forces into a Party able to begin the systematic study and application of Lenin's teachings in the national and world situation. That was the period of the consolidation of the workers' power in the Soviet Union, the defeat of its armed enemies within and without, and the beginning of its economic reconstruction.

The period of partial and temporary stabilization of the capitalist world, after the post-war crisis, in which capitalism regained the pre-war level of production, reflected in the U.S. by the Coolidge "prosperity," was a time of relative stagnation in the American labor movement, during which the Communist Party gradually hammered out its first elementary Leninist leading personnel and mastered the basic principles of Leninism, a period distorted and prolonged by a protracted and fierce factional fight, the roots of which sprang from the hostile and alien groups of Trotskyites and Lovestoneites then within the Party, and expelled finally in 1928 and 1929. That was the period of the Soviet Union's reconstruction of economy above the pre-war level, the beginning of socialist industrialization, leading into the First Five-Year Plan and collectivization of agriculture.

The period of the renewed world crisis of capitalism, beginning with the stock market crash in the U.S. in the last half of 1929, and leading to the rise of world-fascism and the beginning of the second imperialist world war, marked the beginning of the steady political and organizational growth of the C.P.U.S.A., year after year, up to the present; it is a period

of firm consolidation of Party unity based upon proving in practice the profound lessons of Lenin's and Stalin's teachings; it is a period of unprecedented rise of the labor movement and of the united and people's front. This is the period of the gigantic strides forward of the Soviet Union, the completion of the foundations of socialist economy, the tenfold multiplication of production, and the historic realization of the socialist democracy of the new Stalinist Constitution.

These are the great landmarks of the history of the twenty years since the founding of the Communist International, which rise before us as we review this interval of time so rich in experience, so crowded with world-changing events, as to challenge comparison with centuries of pre-war history. It is with this background always in mind that we should study the relations between America and the world Communist movement crystallized in the Communist International.

REFUTING THE "ORDER FROM MOSCOW" SLANDER

The professional "Red-baiters" and anti-Communists have never ceased to spread the idea, in a thousand variations, that the American Communists are some sort of automatons or puppets operated by strings from Moscow and speaking as phonograph records for some mystical "foreign body"; this fantastic conception they have symbolized in the formula "Orders from Moscow." This slanderous attack is particularly spread today by the Dies Committee and its agents, and by all supporters of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo "Anti-

Comintern Alliance" of war-makers.

Because this slogan is the chief ideological instrument of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis, in its war against all democracies, the task of refuting it and unmasking its true significance becomes not merely the narrow Party concern of the Communists, but an urgent necessity for the whole camp of democracy.

The Red-baiters become sarcastic about the "sudden change of attitude" when on June 29, 1938, I presented a formal statement for the Communist Party, before the McNaboe Committee of New York State, declaring:

"The Communist Party makes its own decisions, it has never received orders from Moscow or anywhere else, and if it did receive any such orders it would throw them in the wastebasket."

But this is not something new, and was not a changed attitude in any way. It has always been the position of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., and this position has always characterized the relationship between the Communist International and the C.P.U.S.A.

As an important confirmation of this fact, which needs to be brought to the attention of all democrats and progressives who have been frightened by the Dies Committee, let me cite the words of Joseph Stalin, spoken in 1927 in reply to a question put by a delegation of American trade unionists (non-Communists) who were visiting the Soviet Union. Stalin said:

"The assertion that the American Communists work under 'orders from Moscow' is absolutely untrue. There are no Communists in the world who would agree to work 'under orders' from outside against their own convictions and will and contrary to the requirements of the situation. Even if there

were such Communists they would not be worth a cent. Communists are bold and courageous, they are fighting against a host of enemies. The value of a Communist, among other things, lies in that he is able to defend his convictions. Therefore it is strange to speak of American Communists as not having their own convictions and being capable only of working according to 'orders' from outside.

"The only part of the assertion that has any truth in it at all is that the American Communists are affiliated to an international Communist organization and from time to time consult with the central body of this organization on one question or another. But what is there bad about this? Are the American labor leaders opposed to an international workers' center? It is true they are not affiliated to Amsterdam [the International Federation of Trade Unions; since then the A. F. of L. has affiliated to the I.F.T.U.—E.B.]; not because they are opposed to an international workers' center as such, however, but because they regard Amsterdam as being too radical. (*Laughter.*)

"Why may the capitalists organize internationally and the working class, or part of it, not have its international organization? Is it not clear that Green and his friends in the American Federation of Labor slander the American Communists when they slavishly repeat the capitalist legends about 'orders from Moscow'? Some people believe that the members of the Communist International in Moscow do nothing else but sit and write instructions to all countries. As there are more than 60 countries affiliated to the Comintern, one can imagine the position of the members of the Comintern who never sleep or eat, in fact, do nothing but sit day and night and write instructions to all countries. (*Laughter.*)"*

This quotation confirms that my statement to the McNaboe Committee contained the long-established position of the Communists of all

* Published in the pamphlet, *An Interview with Stalin by the American Trade Union Delegation*, 1927, and in *Leninism*, Vol. I, by Joseph Stalin, pp. 383-84, International Publishers, New York, 1933.

countries, that there was nothing new in principle in my declaration, nor was there anything opposed to general Communist views on this question.

OUR INDEBTEDNESS TO LENIN, STALIN
AND DIMITROFF

Having cleared this question out of the way, the much more important point remains of the nature and direction of the influence which the Communist International has exercised in the development of the C.P.U.S.A. Communists are the last to deny that influence; we have learned the most profound lessons from our affiliation to the Communist International, and above all are American Communists indebted to the individual contributions of three men, Lenin, Stalin and Dimitroff. It is this above all that I would discuss.

Lenin's writings during the World War reached American Socialists only in a fragmentary and sometimes distorted form. Despite this, they were the decisive factor in bringing together the Left wing which later founded the Communist Party. With the victory of the Russian Revolution, Lenin's thoughts began flowing to us more completely and directly, and furnished the main theoretical guide of the formative days of our Party. With the establishment of the Communist International in March, 1919, Lenin personally devoted many long hours of most painstaking educational work with the American delegates who visited Moscow. In the midst of the most pressing problems of state, of an enormous country struggling with heart-breaking problems, Lenin found time for long and intimate con-

versations with Americans. And what was always the main theme of these conversations? I have gathered information from a dozen sources which all agree in the main.

Lenin gave most of his attention, talking with Americans, to asking innumerable questions and making comments on the answers. Thus he was never *talking at* but instead *drawing out* his visitors. By his questions he directed attention to what he considered the most important problems. By a thousand questions on conditions of labor and life, and on the labor movement, he taught that fundamental lesson that no one could be a serious Communist who was not *immersed* in the daily life of his own people, in this case the *American* people. His constantly reiterated question, "Why do you not have a daily newspaper?" and his incredulous and quizzical attitude to all answers that tended to exaggerate the difficulties in the way of such a project were really the genesis of the *Daily Worker*, which was born in the very week in which Lenin died.

His intimate knowledge of the fundamentals of American development always astonished American visitors; it was only after his death that we learned of his book on American agriculture, the first really scientific study of the American agrarian question, as distinct from its separate parts, ever written. He was fully acquainted with the deep connections of Marx and Engels, and the First International, with America, and had a profound understanding of the world-historical importance of the Revolutionary War of 1776 and the Civil War of 1861-65; unfortunately for us,

he was not able, during the years of his own life, to impress this sufficiently upon the visiting American comrades for this understanding to take root and grow in the American Party, and it is only in the last few years that we have awakened to the rich revolutionary content of American history which Lenin was trying to point out to us. From these brief characteristics, it is clear that Lenin was always bringing us *closer to America*, closer to the working class and people of our own land, closer to our own nation and the treasures of its history. And that is not the least of the reasons why rapidly growing masses of Americans learned to love Lenin and to follow him; and why with every passing year Lenin's spirit grows stronger in our country.

Stalin's intimate political and spiritual collaboration in the solution of the problems of growth and consolidation of the American Communist movement came fully to our consciousness in 1929. That was a year of climax of factional strife, threatening the disintegration and destruction of our Party, in which the anti-Party and essentially anti-Communist groupings of Trotskyites and Lovestoneites had played the principal role. It was the calm wisdom, incisive analysis, and unanswerable, devastating criticism of errors and unprincipledness wherever they showed themselves, contained in two short speeches by Stalin in the discussions of 1929, that closed the formative period in the history of our Party, setting it firmly and unitedly upon the road to become a mass Party, a Bolshevik Party.

Stalin's fraternal opinion in the form of two speeches of 1929 about

American problems takes a permanent place in the history of our Party, which first placed squarely the historic international role of our Party, without the full understanding of which no one can claim to really understand this history. Moreover, Stalin taught our Party the meaning of the Leninist style of work, the necessity of combining Bolshevik zeal and devotion to the working class with "American efficiency" which is "an antidote to 'revolutionary' phrasemongering and fantastic invention." And this, too, is not the least of those many reasons for the universal confidence and love felt by all American Communists for Stalin.

Dimitroff became for the American Communists a decisive influence, quite inevitably, through his glorious achievement in turning the "Reichstag Fire Trial" into a world-condemnation of the Nazi incendiaries themselves, and defeating them in their own courts by his brilliant and sterling Leninist-Stalinist abilities. With the historic Seventh World Congress, and Dimitroff's world-historic contribution of the united front of the international proletariat and of the people against fascism, he became not only in general a decisive influence, but in a most intimate sense an intellectual collaborator and a spiritual inspiration in the American Communist movement. Dimitroff has become "ours," one of the fundamental facts in our life, his thought as essential to our political life as the air we breathe is to our physical life. The helmsman of the Communist International is the living embodiment of everything we trust, admire, and love in Lenin and Stalin.

BETTER INTERNATIONALISM MEANS
BETTER AMERICANISM

It is most emphatically clear, therefore, that when we contemptuously repudiate the conception of "Orders from Moscow," slander of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis and its agents everywhere, we affirm with equal emphasis our closest comradesly union with the greatest spirits of the international Communist movement, and with our millions of comrades in other lands, who are united in the Communist International. Because we are becoming every day *better Americans*, we are also becoming *better internationalists*; because we were internationalists we were able to become Americans in the truest and most profound sense. We have revived on a higher plane the great traditions of internationalism, which was always the most living core of the American revolutionary tradition, as exemplified in the great figures of Jefferson, Paine and Franklin.

Never before have the international spirit and outlook been more vitally necessary for the very continued existence of our nation as an expression of human liberty and progress.

The Rome-Berlin-Tokyo war alliance is threatening to engulf the whole world outside the impregnable stronghold of the Soviet Union.

Great Britain and France, under the domination of monopoly capital, continue the suicidal policy of "appeasement" and surrender before the fascist axis, which not only endangers their own national existence, but already presents a direct threat to the Americas.

The heroic resistance of the Span-

ish people to the fascist invasion, and epic struggle of the people of China against the invasion of Japanese fascism, are the only active defenses now being put up that keep the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis from turning full attention to Latin America.

Among the great powers, only the Soviet Union has pursued a firm, consistent policy of intransigent resistance to the fascist world offensive, and of active help to the attacked and threatened people.

Among the capitalist democracies, only the United States has assumed an attitude which gives promise, if consistently developed, of creating another great world center of organized resistance to fascist world conquest. But this promise can be realized only if the United States policy is built upon a consistent world-view, taking into consideration *all* the active and latent forces of a world democratic front.

It is one of the historical functions of the American Communists, which we can perform best because of our organic connection with the world movement, through the Communist International, to contribute to bring the U.S. fully into the world democratic front by making our people world-conscious, by creating a clearer understanding that the national security of our country is most intimately bound up with the fate of world democracy and peace. From the time of Marx and Engels this has been a conscious goal of Communists. It is worth while to recall the words of Marx, contained in the Inaugural Address of the Workingmen's International Association (the First International) on September 28, 1864:

"If the emancipation of the working class requires their fraternal concurrence, how are they to fulfil that great mission with a foreign policy in pursuit of criminal designs, playing upon national prejudices, and squandering in piratical wars the people's blood and treasure? It was not the wisdom of the ruling classes, but the heroic resistance to their criminal folly by the working classes of England that saved the West of Europe from plunging headlong into an infamous crusade for the perpetuation and propagation of slavery on the other side of the Atlantic.

"The shameless approval, mock sympathy, or idiotic indifference, with which the upper classes of Europe have witnessed the mountain fortress of the Caucasus falling a prey to, and heroic Poland being assassinated by, Russia, the immense and unresisted encroachments of that barbarous power, whose head is at St. Petersburg, and whose hands are in every cabinet of Europe, have taught the working classes the duty to master for themselves the mysteries of international politics; to watch the diplomatic acts of their respective governments; to counteract them, if necessary, by all means in their power; when unable to prevent, to combine in simultaneous denunciations, and to vindicate the simple laws of morals and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals, as the rules paramount of the intercourse of nations.

"The fight for such a foreign policy forms part of the general struggle for the emancipation of the working classes." *

This thought has always been a basic guiding line of followers of Karl Marx since it was uttered, to the extent that they understood their Marxism. Lenin developed it to its climax in the great October Revolution, which took its origin largely in "the fight for such a foreign policy," in the fight for "peace without annexations and without indemnities." Stalin has further developed it in the firm and

consistent peace policy of the Soviet Union, which is supporting in every way the democratic peace forces of the entire world against the robber ways of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis. Every nation, every class, every party and every individual leader in the world is choosing today between surrender to the war-making alliance on the one hand, or the stern defense of the policy enunciated by Marx in 1864 on the other hand.

There can no longer be any doubt that the great majority of the American people have chosen to "vindicate the simple laws of morals and justice" . . . "as the rules paramount in the intercourse of nations." In the fight to realize the will of the people on this issue, upon which the fate of the world depends, the Communists will be in the front ranks of the most effective fighters, because they are worthy members of the Communist International, worthy followers of Marx and Engels, and of their best continuators, Lenin and Stalin, and because they are thereby also the best representatives and continuators of the great traditions of Franklin, Paine and Jefferson.

On the twentieth anniversary of the Communist International, we repeat the words of Stalin on the occasion of Lenin's death:

"In departing from us, Comrade Lenin bequeathed to us the duty of remaining loyal to the principles of the Communist International. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will not spare our lives to strengthen and expand the union of the toilers of the whole world—the Communist International."*

* *The Founding of the First International*, pp. 38-39, International Publishers, New York.

* Joseph Stalin, *The Lenin Heritage*, p. 15, International Publishers, New York.