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Questions and Answers

Q. What, in your opinion, is the reason for Hitler's latest atrocities against Jews and Catholics, and how should America answer these pogroms?

A. The Nazi pogroms are among the direct results of the Munich Pact which opened the flood-gates of reaction over Europe and the world. After Chamberlain and Daladier enthroned Hitler over Europe, saving him from a threatening collapse, all the innate vicious criminality of fascism was given free play. America's answer must be made with the understanding that these pogroms are not only an offense to human decency, but represent a threat to the national interests of the United States. They are directly connected with the Chamberlain plans for a "Munich" settlement for Spain. A Republican Spain is a bulwark against fascist penetration of Latin America. But a Franco Spain, puppet of Hitler and Mussolini, is one of the keys to fascist conquest of our Southern neighbors, and the encirclement of the United States, particularly since the Munich Pact has neutralized the British navy. Our president, to the applause of the entire country, gave the first part of the only kind of answer that Hitler can understand, when he withdrew the American Ambassador from Berlin. A next step that seems logically called for, is to apply existing legislation to counter Hitler's economic warfare against us by an embargo, which should be applied also to the Far Eastern end of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis, stopping our shameful help to the Japanese crimes in China. American surplus foods to feed Republican Spain would do much to halt Hitler's drive in Latin America and also help solve a domestic

problem. And United States policy at the Lima Conference clearly should be directed toward setting up an impregnable wall against Nazi aggressions in the Western hemisphere. That, briefly, seems the immediate minimum called for by the national interests of the United States, as well as by all considerations of decency and human solidarity. Of course, our country should assume its full responsibility to meet the emergency of caring for the refugees from the Nazi horrors.

Q. What do you consider to be the significance of the Lima Conference of nations in the Western hemisphere?

A. The chief significance of the Lima Conference will be its demonstration of solidarity of the Americas against fascist aggression. To achieve this end fully, it needs to demonstrate a further unfolding of the "Good Neighbor Policy" of President Roosevelt, in contrast with past examples of bad neighborliness which left suspicions of "Yankee imperialism," that Hitler manipulates to his advantage. We need have no illusions about the democratic character of many Latin-American governments (including that of Peru itself), but even so a Pan-American front against the Munich Powers and Japan is the first condition needed for raising Pan-American democracy to a higher and more effective level. The United States has the opportunity to give leadership, primarily to the peoples of the Americas, but also to the peoples of the whole world. World fascism is advancing only because the world democracies have been retreating; and the democracies are retreating because the United States, representing half the potential power of the world, has not taken a decisive stand to organize the world against the war-makers. Lima can become the starting point of such a positive peace policy, with the United States finally assuming her proper responsibilities. I believe that all Americans should support every step in such a direction. Let us hope that Lima will be fruitful in this sense.

Q. What effect has the persecution of minorities abroad upon the position of the Jews, Catholics and Negro people in the United States?

A. As I see it, the effect is two-sided. On the one hand, Hitler's medieval policies, enormously intensified over anything seen in the past, has stimulated similar forces in the United States, which are reviving on a large scale the old and shameful traditions of Know-nothingism, the American Protective Association, and the Ku Klux Klan, of anti-Negro, anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic agitations, which are more widespread and more poisonous than ever. But at the same time, world events are awakening the people of the United States to the danger of these obscurantist and reactionary cults to the very existence of American democracy. When fascist spokesmen abroad are able to point out these reactionary forces within the United States, and claim them as their own blood brothers and allies, then it is much easier to arouse the conscience of America against these abuses. Thus the advancement of Negro rights, to bring the benefits of our Constitution to the fifteen million Negro Americans at long last, becomes a more practical task for the whole nation. The recent Conference for Human Rights in the South is a sign of this national awakening. And of course Congressman Martin Dies has found a "Communist conspiracy" in that Conference, as he has found in the whole New Deal, following the formula of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis, which calls itself the "Anti-Communist Alliance." We Communists appreciate the compliment, when Mr. Dies gives us credit for everything progressive in our country, but modesty and truth compel us to disclaim the laurels. There are millions of progressive Americans; in fact they constitute a majority, while we Communists are still a very small minority indeed, and are effective today in our country's political life only because we staunchly support every sign of progress that we find anywhere, whatever its political label.

Q. Do you agree with the estimate of the press that the recent elections indicated a repudiation of the New Deal and a conservative trend in American politics?

A. No, I cannot agree with the newspaper and Republican interpretation of the election results. Of course, it would be foolish to deny that the reactionary camp gained new positions of power, and dangerously strengthened themselves. But they accomplished this by a flank attack, avoiding in most cases any head-on collision with the New Deal. Wherever this main issue was clear, the progressive forces won a decisive victory. But when we see that most of the reactionaries won by promising all things to all men, the Townsend Plan with its 24 billion dollar annual budget, simultaneously with decreased taxes and a balanced budget, then the reactionary victory reveals not a reactionary trend among the people, but the contrary, a demand for further advance, which is manipulated by Republican demagoguery. But the reactionary demagogues are sowing the wind, and the crop may well be a whirlwind, if they are successful, which will be unpleasant for conservatives and liberals alike. The hope for orderly progress in America is the exposure and defeat of the threatening alliance of reactionary demagoguery with the crack-pot lunatic fringe of the people's movement for social security and democratic progress.

Q. What do the election results reveal of the strength and influence of the Communist Party in our country's political life?

A. The Communist Party showed a growing influence, although still that of a distinctly small fraction of the population. Our growing vote is based upon our loyal and very practical support to all other progressive political trends without distinction of party label. We Communists helped to build the united progressive and democratic front everywhere, and collaborated with Republicans as well as Democrats and third-party and labor groupings, wherever there was any possibility

of a broad unity of all forward-looking people against the reactionary camp. We are learning how to take our place within the traditional American two-party system, which seems to have much vitality yet, even though the real two parties now cut across all the old party labels, and can be more realistically identified as the New Deal Party and the Anti-New Deal Party. The Communist Party has no illusions that our country is prepared to vote upon our ultimate program for the socialist reorganization of the United States. Only the reactionary forces push forward the issue of Communism or socialism, which they wish to represent as identical with the New Deal. We of the Communist Party declare that not socialism or Communism is the issue today, but the real and burning issue is whether the majority of the people can unite in time to save democracy, progress, and peace, from the advancing threat of reactionary dictatorship, which will drag America to fascism and war. And our Party is growing because it demonstrates that it is one hundred per cent on the side of the majority of the people.

Radio interview over Station WOL, Washington, D.C., November 27, 1938.