

I. PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

It was Abraham Lincoln, representative of the best American tradition, who expressed a fundamental principle of social progress when he uttered these immortal words:

The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relationship, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations and tongues and kindreds.

In these words, uttered in 1864 in accepting honorary membership in the Workingmen's Association of New York, Lincoln adopted as his own the same fundamental thought which Marx and Engels had embodied in the historic *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, with its concluding slogan: "Workingmen of all countries, unite!"

The principle of international solidarity that was brought into world history by the modern labor movement and incorporated in the First International is not only not in conflict with the traditions of this country, but is an inseparable part of the most heroic chapter of American history. The International Workingmen's Association (the First International) was founded in the very struggle of the European working classes, and came into existence on the impetus of their struggle to prevent the destruction of the United States of America by European intervention in 1863-64 in the American Civil War on behalf of the slave power. It was the profound understanding of Lincoln of the inseparable connection of the modern labor movement with the life and development of the democratic current of history that enabled the greatest of American Presidents to welcome the proffered aid of the First International and its Communist

founders, Marx and Engels, whose inspiration and active organizational work brought about the great mass movement of British labor that prevented the intervention by the British navy that had been planned by Lord Palmerston and approved by the British cabinet and monarch. There is no conflict between the international solidarity of labor and the interests of the American nation; and those who try—though in vain—to eliminate the ineradicable internationalism of American labor are reactionary enemies, not only of labor, but of democracy and of the American nation itself.

Since Lincoln's time, this fundamental idea has gained almost universal acceptance. Today, in America, even the reactionary leadership of the American Federation of Labor must at least pay lip service to this principle, in its paper project of a Pan-American Federation of Labor under its direction, and in its formal affiliation to the International Federation of Trade Unions. Even the anti-internationalist Socialist Party of Norman Thomas finds it necessary to maintain its affiliation to the Labor and Socialist International, the "Second International."

The petty bourgeoisie itself was deeply influenced by the growth of internationalism, as is witnessed by such organizations as Rotary, Masonry, Kiwanis, and so forth. The Catholic Church has made its deepest appeal in the United States precisely upon the basis of its claims to universality, to transcending all national boundaries; and the Evangelical churches competed in this field, with their foreign missions, the international Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. and similar efforts.

There are various expressions of internationalism, some, progressive and revolutionary; others, of all shades of conservative and reactionary character. But there is only one consistent and complete internationalism today, and that is *proletarian internationalism*, the internationalism founded by Marx and Engels, and brought to its great, historically decisive victories under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin.

The best poets sang of "The brotherhood of man, the Federation of the World," as the highest social aspiration. This fundamental

internationalism has always been at the heart of the best American tradition. This "Americanism" in its best manifestations has always been consciously in opposition to narrow nationalism and chauvinism. Internationalism is woven into the very fabric of American society and its history. From Thomas Jefferson, the passionate partisan of the French Revolution, and Thomas Paine, whose motto was: "The world is my country; to do good is my religion"; through Abraham Lincoln, and down to the modern labor movement; from Lafayette, von Steuben, Kosciusko, Pulaski, Schurz, Weydemeyer, down to the first draftees of the peace-time conscription of 1940—*internationalism* has always been an outstanding characteristic of Americanism.

It was as the inheritor of this great American tradition, as well as of the proletarian internationalism of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, that the Communist Party of the U. S. A. has from its birth lived and moved in the spirit of internationalism. It was in this great tradition that our Party was associated with, and finally affiliated to, the Communist International, that association of all the national Communist parties of the world.

Today we are faced with a law, but recently passed by Congress and signed by the President, the so-called "Voorhis Blacklist Act," which attempts by legalistic indirection to outlaw this principle of internationalism by placing intolerable penalties and burdens upon its organizational expression.

It is to consider the problems this Act raises for the Communist Party, and for this question alone, that our Special Convention has been called together.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE VOORHIS ACT

The Voorhis Act comes as no surprise to us. It has an ancient, even if dishonorable, ancestry; it is nothing new in its essentials; it follows the established pattern of repression which the Party of Privilege and Reaction has used against the masses since the closing days of the eighteenth century in every great period of crisis, down to the present.

In the United States, the "family tree" of the Voorhis Act begins with the "Alien and Sedition Laws" of the Adams Administration, 1796-1800, which were directed against the rising Jeffersonian democracy. Jefferson became President in 1800, through the fight against these repressive laws, and against the reactionary social forces which raised these laws as their weapon against the people. The rising forces of democracy were denounced as "seditious," and their inspiration and leadership as "alien"; Jefferson was pictured as an "agent of the French Jacobins," while "French gold" was supposed to furnish the means of his struggle, and wonderfully enough in the light of today, the Society of Tammany in New York, one of the original "clubs" that organized Jefferson's rise to power, was denounced along with all its fellows as a "seditious conspiracy," directed by revolutionists abroad, by "foreign agents."

But the "Alien and Sedition Laws," inspired by Alexander Hamilton, the evil genius of the Adams Administration, failed to halt the march of history. The party of Jefferson came to power all the more surely and completely through its struggle against these laws, and the party which sponsored these laws, the Federalists, rapidly degenerated into cliques of traitorous conspirators, really agents of a foreign power, and disappeared from history with the stamp of treason indelibly upon it.

All modern versions of the "Alien and Sedition Laws" take their pattern from the Cologne Communist Trial, of the middle of the nineteenth century, with its chief figure, the infamous Police Chief Stieber, jobber in the forged evidence of provocateurs—the original Martin Dies—to prove a non-existent "international conspiracy"; from the France of the adventurer, Louis Napoleon, and Thiers; and from the "Anti-Socialist Laws" of the Germany of Bismarck.

The basic theory formulated and worked out in detail, and clung to ever since without change by the Party of Privilege and Reaction, is that the rise of labor as a political power within each nation is a "seditious conspiracy," always fomented by an "alien power" and the work of "foreign agents," the proof being the international character of the modern labor and Communist movements.

This theory reached its most complete development in the hands of Hitler, and by him was made the instrument whereby the British, French, and American bourgeoisies were enlisted to build up his power from nothing to where he felt able to challenge them all in a bold bid for world supremacy. Such is the depth and universality among the world bourgeoisie of the fears and the ideology behind the Voorhis Act.

One of the spiritual ancestors of the Voorhis Act was Allen Pinkerton, the man who was MacLellan's stool pigeon against Lincoln. This early ideologist of modern red-baiting against the labor movement put it bluntly and crudely when he wrote:

... Trade unions of every name and nature are but a relic of the old despotic days. . . . For years, and without any particular attention on the part of the press or the public, animated by the vicious dictatorships of the International Society, all manner of labor unions and leagues have been forming. No manufacturing town or city has escaped this baleful influence.

More immediate predecessors of the Voorhis Act were: the "Espionage Act" of 1917, under which Eugene Victor Debs was sent to prison; under which Victor Berger was deprived of his seat in Congress and sentenced to a long prison term, with others; under which Bill Haywood and scores of the I.W.W. leaders were convicted in mass trials and sentenced up to twenty years. Further, in the post-war years, there was the plague of "criminal syndicalism" laws in the states, under which occurred the Chicago and Bridge-man Communist cases, shamefacedly dropped during the "prosperity period" of the middle twenties; the Palmer "red-raids" and deportation hysteria of 1920, of which all decent Americans have been profoundly ashamed ever since. Of the same "family tree" was the expulsion of the New York Socialists from the State Legislature, an outrage which brought forth in protest even such a conservative as Charles Evans Hughes, then a prominent corporation lawyer and late Republican candidate for President against Wilson, and now Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Finally, to come to the latest period, the Voorhis Bill is the American application of Hitler's "Reichstag Fire Trial" of Georgi Dimitroff at Leipzig. It is the codification of all the assaults legal, illegal, and extra legal, which have been made during the past year against the Communist Party and its leadership, by the Roosevelt Administration—an Administration which over previous years had gladly accepted Communist aid and support, which held power in New York only by that margin of votes cast for them by the Communists, and which solicited the continuance of such support even as late as July, 1940! It is an inevitable expression of policy by a bourgeoisie, and its leading party and President, which has set its course, stubbornly and reckless of consequences, into the very vortex of the imperialist war for the redivision of the world, against the will of labor and the vast majority of the American masses.

This is the historical background, this is the "family tree," of the Voorhis Act, which has now become "the law of the land."

PROVISIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE VOORHIS ACT

Under the mask of identifying and regulating organizations having a criminal character or tendency (for which no new laws are conceivably necessary, all crimes being fully covered by existing laws), the Voorhis Act reaches its real object when it brings under its penalties and provisions all organizations "subject to foreign control," and then defines such "foreign control" as inclusive of any affiliation that reaches beyond the boundaries of the United States. The Communist Party is not under any form of foreign control, but it does have international affiliation, and thereby is classified by this Act as under "foreign control."

From the clear provisions of the Act, then, *every organization* which has any affiliation in another country is subject to its provisions and penalties. A list of such organizations would include, first of all, the American Federation of Labor as a whole, with every affiliate, for the A. F. of L., in addition to its branches in Canada and connections in Latin America, is an important affiliate to the International Federation of Trade Unions, the so-called "Amsterdam

International." It would not include, curiously enough, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.), except those of its affiliates which themselves have branches in Canada. It would include the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and other ex-soldier organizations, practically all of which have international tie-ups. It would include the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the Young Hebrews, the Zionists, etc., for while religious organizations are specifically exempt, such social and political organizations with religious colorings and tendencies are not. It would, of course, include the Socialist Party, the Social-Democrats and smaller political groupings. It would include Rotary, Masonry, Kiwanis, various sport and cultural organizations, including the Amateur Athletic Association, philatelic and numismatic associations, all of which are not purely scientific in the narrow sense. A very broad net, indeed, is cast by the Voorhis Act.

Is such a big haul, as here indicated, the immediate object of the Act? No, indeed not. Such complete imitation of Hitlerism is not practical for the moment; that is only the "poetry of the future." The chief, if not the only, immediate objective of the Act is the Communist Party. How, then, will its broad and all-inclusive net be manipulated to catch this one little fish and let the big ones through?

The answer is found in the provision which places every question of the application of the Act at *the discretion of the Attorney General*. The act in practice applies *to no one and to no organization*, unless and until the Attorney General, in his discretion, so proclaims. Absolute and unrestrained power is conferred upon the Attorney General to decide who comes under the provisions of the Act, when, and in what manner. There is not even any pretense of judicial review, except as to application of penalties. How the discretion of Attorneys General is exercised in such questions, we already have received ample demonstration during the past fourteen months.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the Communist Party would in the beginning be the chief if not the sole object of attention:

only later would the broad mass organizations feel the direct blows of the Act. This conclusion is also borne out by our observation of what has happened in other lands; the fate being prepared for the people is always first inflicted upon the Communists.

Now, when the Attorney General has exercised his discretion and applies the Act to a particular organization, what are the consequences? Here, again, the Act in application is just as flexible as the discretion of the Attorney General; it can be a mere formality, or it can run whatever gamut of severity may be imagined. At the Attorney General's discretion, it may require the designated organization and its officers to file with the Attorney General a complete list of names and addresses of each and every *member and supporter*, the address of every meeting prior to its occurrence, complete accounting of all money gathered and used directly or indirectly in furtherance of the organization's work, copies of every item of printed or mimeographed material issued or inspired by the organization or its officers. These provisions apply to every unit of the organization and every official, from the top down to the smallest local branch or committee. Each and every separate instance of failure to comply with the discretionary demands of the Attorney General renders each and every person responsible therefor subject to imprisonment for a term up to five years, and a fine up to \$5,000.

Clearly it is impossible for any organization subjected to the provisions of this Act to operate at all except with the *benevolent discretion* of the Attorney General of the United States. Any organization brought under its provisions would be absolutely at the mercy of that official. It would first of all have to establish, by its own action, such a blacklist of its members and supporters as Martin Dies has been working on for years, at the disposal of all its worst enemies. Secondly, it could not, even if it wished, furnish every report that might be required of it, without halting all normal operations of the organization, and would therefore automatically be subject to a pyramiding of penalties *at the discretion of the At-*

torney General. All of which is merely a masked form of outlawing such organizations as may be chosen by administrative edict.

The Voorhis Act is therefore an extreme example of the most vicious and oppressive Exceptional Laws. Under its smooth camouflage lie the sharp claws of fascism. It is the most dangerous blow yet dealt at the remnants of American democracy. It is an attempt, under cover of war hysteria, to outlaw that principle of internationalism which Abraham Lincoln said was the strongest bond of human sympathy outside of the family, a principle which flows out of the deepest loyalty to the masses of our own nation, and which is put so truly and beautifully in the following words of Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee*:

You see, my kind of loyalty was loyalty to one's country, not to its institutions or its office holders. The country is the real thing, the substantial thing, the eternal thing; it is the thing to watch over, and care for, and be loyal to; institutions are extraneous, they are its mere clothing, and clothing can wear out, become ragged, cease to be comfortable, cease to protect the body from winter, disease, death. To be loyal to rags, to shout for rags, to worship rags—that is loyalty to unreason, it is pure animal; it belongs to monarchy, was invented by monarchy; let monarchy keep it. I was from Connecticut, whose Constitution declares: "that all political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority and instituted for their benefit; and that they have at all times an undeniable and indefeasible right to alter their form of government in such manner as they may think expedient."

Under that gospel, the citizen who thinks he sees that the commonwealth's political clothes are worn out, and yet holds his peace and does not agitate for a new suit, is disloyal; he is a traitor. That he may be the only one who thinks he sees this decay, does not excuse him; it is his duty to agitate anyway, and it is the duty of others to vote him down if they do not see the matter as he does.*

HOW CAN THE COMMUNIST PARTY MEET THE VOORHIS ACT?

Under present conditions it is impossible for the Communist Party to operate under the provisions of the Voorhis Act. An

* Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, p. 107, New York, 1917.

intensely hostile Administration, which already has not hesitated to go outside the law to try to crush us, can certainly not be expected to exercise its arbitrary discretion with the slightest leniency. The courts will be debarred by the Act from exercising any restraining influence, even assuming an independent and freedom-loving judiciary, which is a bold assumption today, for *the single and admitted fact of international affiliation* removes all judicial discretion and makes administrative discretion absolute. The only way judicial relief could be found at all would be through attacking the constitutionality of the Act. While the Act is clearly unconstitutional, the possible establishment of that fact by judicial process, up to the Supreme Court, after some years, offers not the slightest hope of relief in the critically important period just ahead.

Henry Ford and Tom Girdler, with many others of their kind, are able calmly to defy the most definite and constitutional laws of the land over many years, do it successfully, and be rewarded with rich, fat Government contracts and swollen profits. It would be somewhat over-optimistic to expect that the Communist Party could ignore the Voorhis Act with even the smallest fraction of the success that attends Ford, Girdler & Co. in defying the labor laws. To ignore or defy the Voorhis Act will in all probability result in the same sort of outlawing and hunting down of Communists, which in France was done directly without any camouflage as the prelude to the shameful and catastrophic capitulation of that country to the Nazi invasion.

If the time comes when the American people and the American Communists cannot avoid going through an American variant of the French tragedy, we Communists of the New World will not flinch from the test. We can feel calmly confident that we will uphold the high honor of proletarian internationalism in the spirit and tradition of our national heroes, Jefferson, Paine, Lincoln, Debs, Ruthenberg, Haywood, and the higher spirit and tradition of our international teachers and exemplars, Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, of the Russian Bolsheviks, of George Dimitroff, of the Spanish, Chinese, German, French, of the best Communists of all the

world. American Communists will always have the qualities necessary to keep the name of our country high on the international honor roll.

Does the Voorhis Act represent such a definitive fascization of America that it leaves the Communist Party no choice but capitulation or being considered illegal? That it may be made to represent such a development, by administrative edict, is clear. But a careful examination of the question will cause us to withhold such a conclusion until it is forced upon us.

First, we have witnessed the example of England where, after more than fourteen months of war and several months of horrible bombardments from the air, the Communist Party of Great Britain still functions as a legal party, with a member of Parliament, Willie Gallacher; the war hysteria has not overwhelmed it into illegality, despite all the restrictions of wartime under a bourgeois government. While it is true that the American bourgeoisie is more hysterical, more jittery, than the British, even with the war three thousand miles away and our country still "non-belligerent," yet we may still keep the door open for possible restraining influences to operate, to keep America from the full measure of fascization which threatens. We are not forced to anticipate illegalization of our Party in the immediate future from general considerations.

Secondly, as to the Voorhis Act itself, it has the peculiarity that it avoids the direct attack upon political opinions, principles and teachings, in so far as anything applying to the Communist Party is concerned. We are not advocates of force and violence, we are not foreign agents, we are not under any foreign control—nothing whatever in the Voorhis Act brings the Communist Party under its provisions except the single fact of *international affiliation*—our formal adherence to the Communist International as an organized part of a world party.

This affiliation is the formal organizational expression of the principle of proletarian internationalism, a principle to which the life of every Communist is unconditionally consecrated. For this principle we will whenever necessary gladly give our lives, for it is

that which gives life meaning, makes it proud, heroic, worth living, the only guarantee for the whole future of humanity.

Can we consider taking the step of dissolving the formal, official affiliation of the Communist Party of the U. S. A. to the Communist International as the only way to avoid immediate practical illegalization of our Party under the Voorhis Act? Must we defend this concrete organizational expression of our fundamental principle in the same unconditional, uncompromising way we defend and always will defend the principle itself?

Our National Committee has been giving its most profound and heart-searching thought to this question. If such a step should be in any way a surrender to, or a strengthening of, any tendencies to surrender or weaken among the broad membership of our Party, we would reject the step of disaffiliation at once, without hesitation. If such a step should cause us to waver, to vacillate, in the carrying of the full message of proletarian internationalism to the broadest masses of American workers, we would condemn it out of hand without further thought.

Proletarian internationalism, the development of a common understanding of their problems of life and peace by the workers and toiling masses of every country, overriding all national boundaries, and out of this common understanding the forging of common and interrelated policies and action—this is the only road out of the bloody catastrophe of the imperialist war, this is the only way to peace, this is the only road to the future for humanity.

Can the Communist Party of the U. S. A. fight most effectively for this principle under the conditions of a continued, though harassed and precarious, legality, bought at the price of a temporary and unwilling dissolution of the immediate and present international affiliation with our brother parties in the Communist International? Or can we fight most effectively by defying this shameful, reactionary, and unconstitutional law and accept whatever consequences may flow from such a course?

Our National Committee has called this Special Convention to put the question before the supreme authority of our Party. At our

Eleventh National Convention you delegated full power to the National Committee, or to its Political Committee, to make any change in the Party Constitution that might be required to defend the legality of the Party. This question is so vital that we decided not to exercise this authority without putting the question again to a fully representative convention.

The National Committee submits to you, for your decision, a definite recommendation:

That the Communist Party of the U. S. A., in Convention assembled, does hereby cancel and dissolve its organizational affiliation to the Communist International, as well as any and all other bodies of any kind outside the boundaries of the United States of America, for the specific purpose of removing itself from the terms of the so-called Voorhis Act, which originated in the House of Representatives as H. R. 10094, which has been enacted and goes into effect in January, 1941, which law would otherwise tend to destroy, and would destroy, the position of the Communist Party as a legal and open political party of the American working class;

That the Convention denounces the Voorhis Act as harmful and destructive of the democratic rights of the people, as designed to coerce the people into submission to the entry of the United States into the imperialist war, and as a part of the sweep of fascization over the capitalist world;

That the Convention pledges the Party to work untiringly to secure the repeal of this law, to the end that labor and our Party shall be secure and unmolested in its sacred rights of international affiliation of all workers, which in the words of Lincoln express "the strongest bond of human sympathy outside of the family relationship";

That the Convention reaffirms the unshakable adherence of our Party to the principles of proletarian internationalism, in the spirit of its greatest leaders and teachers, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, which offer the only road to the future for suffering humanity;

That the Convention formally and officially declares that the Communist Party of the United States is responsible for no political document, policy, book, article, or other expression of political opinion, except such as are issued by itself, through its regularly constituted leadership,

on the basis of the Eleventh National Convention deliberations and decisions, and of this present Special Convention;

That the Convention does now select a sub-committee to consider the Constitution and By-Laws of the Communist Party of the U. S. A., as adopted at the Tenth National Convention, and bring back to this Convention its recommendations for such amendments, changes, or deletions, which shall most effectively express these basic decisions in such Constitution and By-Laws.

Report to the Emergency National Convention of the Communist Party, New York, November 16, 1940.