

*THE OVERESTIMATION OF THE DANGER OF  
FASCISM*

The official party position during the last decade was that American monopoly capitalism was nearing its convulsive stage and that its most reactionary section was determined to muzzle all dissent, intensify its oppression of the Negro people, outlaw the Communist Party, curb the trade unions and nullify traditional American liberties.

The Draft Resolution declares that "the errors made by the Party in estimating various phases of the struggle against the war danger also influenced its judgment of the fascist menace, particularly in relation to attempts to outlaw the Party. This took the form of overestimating the scope, level and tempo of the process of fascization under way generally. Our evaluation also tended to equate the attempted outlawing of the Party with fascism."

As a result, many on the left spoke as though fascism were already on the way and claimed that the American political scene bore resemblance to the early phase of nazism in Germany.

With hindsight, it may be argued as in the Draft Resolution that this interpretation of American development was erroneous, failing to consider the maneuverability of American capitalism or the strength of American democratic traditions and institutions. Analogies with German fascism may now seem to have been mechanical and incomplete.

It is now asserted that these miscalculations created an atmosphere of panic in the American Communist Party.

But panic on the left was not provoked by the left's overestimation of the fascist danger. It resulted rather from the McCarthyite "overestimation" of the "Communist danger"—the multiplying arrests, deportations, jailings, FBI harrassments—the thickening atmosphere of war hysteria and the actual similarity of these events to pre-fascist developments elsewhere.

Nor is it proper to speak of American democratic traditions abstractly as though they were a band of knights automatically entering battle whenever civil liberties are imperilled. These traditions are asserted in struggle. Numerous liberal, church, middle and workingclass groups



resisted the onslaught of McCarthyism and blocked this American brand of fascism.\*

But the present claim of an overestimation of the fascist danger implies an underestimation of the courageous participation of the Communist Party and the impact of its resistance to McCarthyism upon millions of Americans. It was their exemplary struggle and heroic sacrifices that inspired the resistance of other Americans.

The Communist Party manifested its devotion to American traditions in the interminable legal battle it conducted and is still conducting for the maintenance of rights guaranteed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Persecuted minority groups frequently develop an inordinate sense of inferiority, coming to regard themselves as they are depicted by the enemy. Some American Marxists have fallen victim to such masochistic moods. Everything done in the past seems to have been based on error.

Thus Norman Schrank writes of "the futility of Times Square meetings, where we substituted the Party for the masses, where we developed a caricature of a United Front. It was vanguardism, leftism, that cut our ties with the masses."

Would Schrank deny the contributions of all isolated radical minorities in history that stood firm in their convictions and finally sparked great popular movements?

\*It is not wholly correct to attribute the defeat of McCarthyism to the efforts of the American people and to American traditions alone. This defeat was closely connected with the defeat of the Pentagon "war now" party. The bankruptcy of that party resulted from the sobering effect the Soviet development of the H-bomb had upon the more lucid elements of the American ruling elite. Indeed, it was not respect for American democratic traditions nor simply their concern for the peace sentiments of the American people that impelled the Cadillac cabinet to send Eisenhower to Geneva, but their recognition of the change in the world relationship of forces.

Would he dismiss "Peekskill" and the defense of the Rosenbergs as "futile"?

On the other hand, no one has succeeded in demonstrating that Communist ties with the people could have been maintained during the ferocious cold war repression if the Party had not engaged in "vanguardism," or if it had been less vociferous concerning the danger of war and fascism.

Indeed, whatever support and sympathy the Party enjoyed among liberal and bourgeois circles was due to its steadfast, "vanguard" resistance to these dangers. Communists correctly convinced many Americans of the ominous similarity between American and German reaction and of the danger to peace and democracy in the outlawing of the Communist Party.

#### *NEW LOOK AT THE AMERICAN ECONOMY*

During the Depression years and during the brink-of-war McCarthyite period, Marxists tended to the belief that United States capitalism followed the same dynamics as other capitalist nations. In times of boom and prosper-