

XI. SHALL IT BE WAR?

MR. DREISER has eloquently expressed what millions of Americans are thinking tonight.* These are the thoughts which unite the Communist Party at this moment with these millions. The all-important question before our country is this: Shall America be plunged into the catastrophe of the imperialist war?

Candidate Willkie has charged that Roosevelt is leading us into the war. That is true, terribly true. The great majority of Americans want to stop this course. But it is also true that each and every step Roosevelt has taken in this direction has received the blessings of Willkie. Are the American people such political children that we shall believe that the selfsame policy with Roosevelt leads to war while with Willkie it will maintain peace? But war is the result of policy, not of mistakes of individuals. And it is policy that is dragging our country swiftly into this war.

The two leading candidates have made it impossible to choose between war and peace by choosing between them. Roosevelt has proved in action that he is rushing America into war. He is restrained for the moment by the imminent election, in which the voters would strongly resent any war moves at this moment. Indeed, we may expect some spectacular "peace gestures" this week, for the one purpose of pacifying a suspicious people. But his course is fixed, and Roosevelt will go "full speed ahead" once he has his mandate.

But Willkie has pledged himself to follow the same path. Once entrenched in power. Willkie will drive ruthlessly forward the

* Earl Browder was introduced to the radio audience by Theodore Dreiser who spoke from California.—Ed.

program of imperialist reaction and war which Roosevelt drives forward ruthlessly now. There is but this small difference between them: Roosevelt is already in the driver's seat all set to go, while Willkie wants to occupy that same seat. To choose Willkie might mean, at most, to gain that time occupied in changing drivers, a few weeks or months at best. Truly a miserable choice for the sovereign American voters!

The radical remedy needed for this situation is a Labor Party. This is now too late for the November 5 balloting, but it is not too early to speak for it for future elections, assuming that all elections will not be abolished once the country gives a "mandate" for war. For this election only the Communist Party offers a channel for the Labor Party vote, for a clear alternative policy of a reasonable, realistic, rounded-out peace policy for America.

That is why Democrats and Republicans joined in violently and illegally driving the Communist Party off the ballot in twenty-four states. They want to leave the protest vote no place to go, no way to vote except for war. In Ohio and Illinois especially, where our Party is strong, they took our ticket off the ballot by force and fraud, in fear of the great anti-war vote which it would certainly have registered.

In New York, we have the shameful spectacle of Boss Flynn, campaign manager for Mr. Roosevelt, openly boasting that the Communist Party would be kept off the ballot, to force its vote to go to Roosevelt, and then the courts obediently carried out his instructions; this is done in the face of a fourfold compliance with legal requirements of petition signatures, and in face of the fact that the Communist Party only lost its permanent place on the ballot because in 1938 it withdrew its candidate for Governor in favor of the Democrats, barely saving the state thereby from going Republican and electing Thomas E. Dewey. They pay us for that help by driving us off the ballot altogether. A terrible and sinister blow against free elections, when minority parties, any party, is wiped off the ballot by high-handed administrative edict, by deprivation from jobs, relief, and old-age pensions, by threats of concentration camps,

by trumped-up prosecutions and imprisonments, like the sending of the West Virginia farmer, Oscar Wheeler, to prison for fifteen years for gathering signatures to the Communist petitions. Every country that has lost its liberties in these past years has started on the downward path by such suppressions of the Communist Party. What happens to us today will happen to all other oppositions tomorrow.

To voters in those states where the Communist national ticket has been taken from the ballot, I cannot offer any alternative among the other minority parties. In such states we can make no recommendations for President, but only urge the highest possible vote for Congressional and local peace candidates. Norman Thomas is a futile and dangerous muddlehead, whose chief objection to the war is that he wants it to be directed also against the Soviet Union. Other minority parties make no pretense of answering the problems of the day.

In this dilemma of political disfranchisement, each individual voter is thrown back upon his own conscience, to choose between the primitive expedients of (a) the excessively difficult "write in" vote; or (b) abstentionism which violates his instincts to action; or (c) the choice between two evils both of which every fiber of one's being calls to repudiate.

It is a hard choice, where the Communist Party is not on the ballot. All the more reason, therefore, where it is possible to do so, to roll up the biggest possible vote for peace, for security, for free elections, for civil rights, for jobs—by casting your vote for the candidates of the Communist Party.

Speech delivered over the network of the Mutual Broadcasting Company, October 29, 1940.