

# A Communist Milestone

## The Fourth Convention of the Workers Party of America

By Max Shachtman

THE revolutionary party of the working class is not born with its full vigor, strength, and ability. It develops and reaches maturity only with years of struggle against unhealthy elements and tendencies within its ranks; its arms and mind are steeled and sharpened in the crucible of fiery battle against the enemies of the proletariat; its leadership is built and made firm by test and by the experiences and errors and victories of the workers throughout the world. With the knowledge of its tremendous historical role it aids in the task of leading the masses to their triumph by consciously improving the quality of its revolutionary mettle.

The fourth national convention of the Workers Party of America which meets this month is a milestone in the development of an American Bolshevik party. It is to be held after two highly important gatherings of the Communist International: the fifth world congress and the sessions of the enlarged executive, which considered the bitter defeats of the revolutionary movement in 1923 and their causes, which reflected the crystallization of the sharp struggle for the liquidation of the perils of the right-wing deviations and ultra-left errors on an international scale, which laid down a detailed line for the building of mass Leninist parties in a period of the temporary and partial depression of the revolutionary wave in Europe and its rise in the "backward" parts of the world.

The American party convention is taking place at a moment which follows a period of intense internal discussion and strife over various political differences which will, with

the fraternal aid of the Communist International, result in a consolidation of Communist forces in this country and a greater clarity and definitiveness of political line, more solid theoretical conception and practical pliability.

The delegates will gather at a time when American imperialism is rushing madly towards world domination over the bodies of millions of weaker peoples in all corners of the earth, and the convention will be confronted by a situation where it will proclaim its revolutionary task of transforming the swiftly approaching world war into a civil war of the proletariat against the ruling class. America, no longer the relatively isolated nation of some fifty years ago, is now a power of the first magnitude and has its far-flung financial interests which a well-knit military machine stands ready to defend and widen at a moment's notice. And a Communist party in this country must put in the forefront of its problems that of combatting imperialism which places under the yoke of slavery the people of the colonies and semi-colonies, which prostitutes broad sections of the aristocracy of labor at home, drags ever broader sections of the working class down to the level of colonial slaves, and sacrifices the flower of the proletariat in its conflicts with other imperialist powers: war.

This is not the only problem of the Workers Party. There are many others which are in many respects unique in the international Communist movement. We are relatively the most decentralized of the Communist parties of the world, with our cumbersome apparatus of language federations and social-democratic form of territorial branches which

can be remedied only by a determined ideological campaign for the re-organization and further organization of the party upon the basis of shop nuclei, along with actual organizational measures to accomplish the aim of a Bolshevik party rooted in the shops and mines. Thus we shall have the means whereby a party can be built composed primarily of the workers in the heavy, basic industries: the miners, the steel workers, the metal and machinery workers and the like.

But shop nuclei by themselves do not make a Bolshevik party. To become the party of the masses, to represent their interests in every single strike, lockout, in every progressive movement in the trade unions, to lead and fight for their bread and butter needs every day, to broaden and intensify every issue that affects the workers, to increase their political mass consciousness—to become, in short, the recognized leaders of the aspirations and desires and struggles of the workers is the aim of the party. To become the champion of the interests of



the millions of brutally oppressed Negroes and to secure an alliance with or the neutralization of broad strata of the poorer sections of the farmers is another condition for victory.

Lenin pointed out that a Communist Party also carries on a consistent theoretical struggle for the purification of its ranks from hangovers of the social-democracy which formed the first reservoir from which most Communist parties drew their strength. In the United States this struggle takes the form of a campaign to eliminate the ideology of Loreisun. This does not mean only a struggle against those who avow themselves of Loreist tendencies but also against those who actually express or represent these tendencies while formally repudiating any connection with right-wing deviations. As Bukharin pointed out: many comrades who raise their hands in holy terror at being associated with Trotskyism and vehemently assert their opposition to it, nevertheless follow a purely Trotskyist policy in the peasant question, for example. The building of Leninist circles in the ranks of the party, the creation of a body of functionaries who are well-trained in the doctrines of Leninism, the Bolshevikization of the press and all the other instruments of the party is a guarantee against the development of new or old deviations from the line of the Communist International. Especially is theoretical training—at which there is often a tendency to laugh—imperative for the development towards a Bolshevik organization.

Numerous other problems will be before the convention. The intensification of work in the trade unions and the building of a network of fractions within them, a task which the Communist International places at the top of the list for the American party, the problem of the campaign for the labor party, anti-militarist agitation, agrarian work, work among the Negroes and a dozen other questions will have their place on the agenda.

We all recognize the difficulties we face. In a country with such little revolutionary tradition, with numbers of workers eating at the second and third tables of the imperialist banquet and scorning the reds, with other millions poisoned against their own interests by the amazing propaganda machine of the bourgeoisie which is the most cunning, brutal and powerful in the world, our task is surely not an easy one. Ourselves numerically weak, we are faced with a united front ranging from the old reactionary parties of capital, through the "progressive" movement, the most conservative (that is putting it mildly!) trade union bureaucracy of them all, and a host of lesser opponents in the Socialist movement together with a number of petty renegades, like Mr. Salutsky, without whom we breathe more freely.

But we have great progress to record and a known future to strive for. We have built our party from the best elements of the old Socialist and Socialist-Labor parties, and from the I. W. W., as well as from previously unattached proletarians. We are the quintessence of the revolutionary forces of the past. Our movement has been through its underground existence and forced its way again into the open, making itself a factor in the trade unions, on the economic and political field, a factor which is reckoned with by even those who wish to be blind.

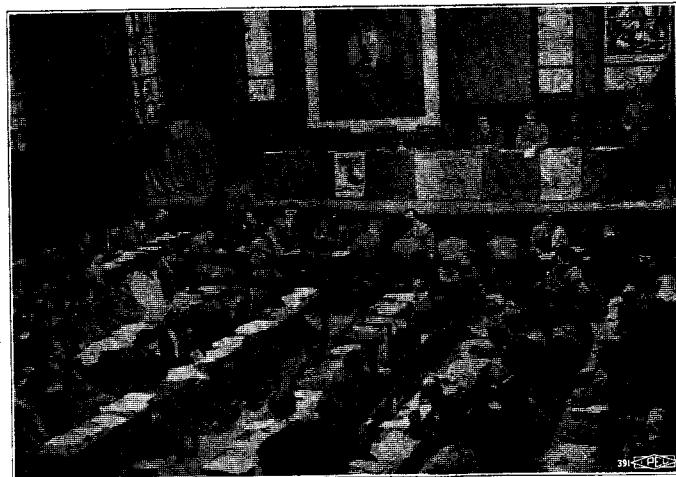
The Socialist Labor Party sits in its dusty attic re-reading and misunderstanding De Leon. The Socialist Party adds a fresh betrayal of the working class to its black record every day, lives in the reflected glory of its more successful brethren in Europe and hopes for the day when it too may crown its infamy by active counter-revolution. The revolutionary blood of the I. W. W. is being drained by anarchist and syndicalist misleaders. The Workers Party stands out as the recognized party of the class-conscious, militant revolutionary workers of America, gaining in prestige and numbers and following. We have a growing Communist movement in the younger generation, the Young Workers League.

Our enemies may yap at our heels and gain small comfort from our internal struggles. Our struggle for clarity and correct principles and tactics in our own ranks is open, and we carry it on without secrecy so that the workers may see that we seek always the right road to working-class revolution and understand that it is in the interests of the proletariat that we so determinedly draw a balance to our past activities and set ourselves firmly against the "priggishness, smug self-content and conceit" which are so typical of the social-democracy.

Our convention goes forward with the enthusiasm and faith which is inspired by the Russian revolution and the growing power of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. We are determined in the knowledge of the inevitable victory of the oppressed. We follow the leader of the toilers of the world, the international of revolution which strikes terror into the heart of the bourgeoisie, the Communist International. We gain new revolutionary fervor to fan the flames of discontent until it blazes as the funeral pyre of the ruling class.

Hail to the Workers Party!

## While Police Watched Outside



BRITISH COMMUNISTS IN CONVENTION

Police watched all avenues to head off the special representatives of the Comintern, but the latter quietly slipped by the "bulls" and greeted the convention amidst a thunderous ovation.