

IN MEMORIAM: THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Born 1919 - Died 1937

Burial Services Performed by Earl Browder in Funeral Oration Delivered At Symphony Hall, Boston, September 19, 1937

By **BERTRAM D. WOLFE**

A communist party is nothing if it is not revolutionary. If it gives up as its aim the overthrow of capitalism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the proletarian revolution, there is nothing to distinguish it from a social-democratic party, a labor party, a populist party, from bourgeois democrats, liberals and reformists generally. Once it ceases to be revolutionary, it retains the name "communist" only to besmirch it. Once it ceases to be revolutionary, it ceases to exist. Dead men continue to bear the names they bore while living; they are corpses just the same.

By the above tokens, the Communist Party of the United States is no more. On September 9, 1937, after a lingering and painful illness, it died of bourgeois democratic illusions, vulgar reformist hallucinations and constitutional anemia, complicated by acute diarrhea of words and chronic constipation of thoughts. The last rites were fittingly pronounced by the combination doctor, coroner, preacher, and undertaker, Earl Browder, who killed it by his treatments, dressed it for the cemetery and pronounced its funeral oration at Symphony Hall, Boston. It is a sad and fitting fact that the cradle of the American bourgeois revolution of the past should be the final resting place of the party that once was dedicated to the making of the American proletarian revolution of the future!

Rooseveltian In Practise

"American democracy, as established by the Constitution and the victory of Jefferson in 1800, is in danger of being destroyed," said Browder, acting as preacher. Then, as coroner, certifying the deadness of the deceased, he added: "But it is not threatened by the commu-

nists nor by any vague proletarian dictatorship." Vague indeed, attenuated to the thinness of an astral body haunting the folds of "Old Glory" and prevented only by the tortured thought of a yet unburied hammer and sickle from leaving this earthly region altogether, for the limbo of the lost souls and eternal rest and forgetfulness. "Peace, peace, thou tortured spirit," said the melancholy Earl as he cast the hammer and sickle into the flames and released the ghost forever.

"I have no hesitation in declaring, for the Communist Party and its followers, that with the central thoughts and the direction of President Roosevelt's speech, we are in practical agreement and that, on such questions with which we disagree, these are not questions for immediate and practical solution." The Communist Party died of agreements with the ruling class party in power. It had reservations in theory but they do not make any practical, nor immediate difference. All differences with the New Deal in practice have disappeared. "When the corpse was buried," reads the police blotter, "certain of its theoretical effluvia and other possessions were left unclaimed and unburied in the ice house at the morgue." "These are not questions for immediate practical solution."

"Bourgeois Communism"

"In our generation," President Roosevelt had said two days earlier, "a new idea has come to dominate thought about government—the idea that the resources of the nation can be made to produce a far higher standard of living for the masses if only government is intelligent and energetic in giving the right direction to economic life."

We used to think that Marx had proved that the condition of the masses could not get better and better under capitalism, that there was an inevitable tho zigzagging tendency towards concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands and ever bigger wars and depressions and increasing misery and tyranny for the masses, so long as capitalism should endure. That and that alone made necessary a revolutionary party, socialism and the revolution itself. Therefore the Communist Manifesto, an ancient document which cannot keep up with "Twentieth Century (People's Front) Americanism" declared as early as 1847, when the communist movement had just been founded: "The immediate aims of the communists are the destruction of bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat."

But Browder believes with Roosevelt. "With this central thought of President Roosevelt's speech (the one just quoted above — B.D.W.) we declare our heartiest agreement. With every group or person which makes this thought the guide in formulating policy, we of the Communist Party can find an ever-growing basis for common action."

"What prevents this policy from being expressed in government action?" asks Browder. Will he answer: Capitalism—the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie thinly disguised in democratic forms—the inevitable tendencies of capitalist economy? Not Browder! No, Browder continues, "President Roosevelt answered this question correctly as follows:

"We have those who really fear the majority rule of democracy, who want old forms of economic

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and social control to remain in a few hands.'"

And, continues Browder to Roosevelt, "We communists declare our full agreement with this identification of the main enemy and the form of its threat against the people."

Your reporter stirred uneasily as, thru the recesses of the great hall, came the shadowy voice of the so long "obsolete" Communist Manifesto declaring: "There are certain bourgeois who want to redress social grievances—in order to safeguard bourgeois society." And these, the Manifesto calls apostles of "conservative or bourgeois socialism."

Dead Parties Make No Revolutions

Browder continues to reassure the President that his party will not trouble the bourgeoisie any more. We quote:

"The President then goes on to express a fear which we believe to be without ground, with which we disagree, and which we think is already disappearing from the minds of progressive Americans. He said:

"And we have those who are in too much of a hurry, who are impatient of the processes of constitutional democracies, who want utopia overnight and are not sure that some vague form of proletarian dictatorship is not the quickest road to it. Both types are equally dangerous."

Have no fear, says Browder, accepting the President's characterization of the revolutionists:

"The impatient ones among the masses, those who want to jump to utopia overnight, can have no power except the power of large numbers, and numbers they can get only if the majority of the people should come to feel that they have been betrayed by their progressive and democratic leaders, or if those leaders should prove themselves incapable (nothing to do with the nature of capitalism, just a matter of personal incapacity—B.D.W.) to produce a far higher standard of living for the masses. Only produce constantly that higher standard of living, even show only a consistent and effective fight for it, and all fear of the impatient masses can be laid aside as unreal." Browder is counting, it seems, on the belief that, with the C.P. out of business, no other group or organization will engage in the task of proving to the masses that given the nature of capitalist parties, such a fight cannot be "consistent"; that, given the nature of the capitalist system, such a fight cannot be "effective" and that only socialism can give the masses a "constantly higher standard of living" and solve the problems of war, depression, unemployment, and exploitation, which beset them all the days of their life.

Perhaps you think that this reporter is stretching it, that Browder is not really so ignorant of Marxism or of Leninism—which is "twentieth century Marxism"—nor so vile in his misrepresentation of it. But Browder comes to our aid, by being ever more explicit:

"The progressive program is not revolutionary nor communistic. . . . It can all be achieved under capitalism—if the progressives rally to the people for a real battle to achieve it."

Watchdog of Counter-Revolution

"Proletarian dictatorship," continues Browder, "can become a practical order of the day in America only if President Roosevelt's promise of a higher standard of living under the present system is defeated or betrayed. We of the Communist Party are prepared to cooperate with everybody who will help to win that higher standard of

living for the masses.

"The Communist Party repudiates, now as in the past, all theories of proposals looking toward a forcible imposition of socialism or any utopia (how easily he falls into the language of the enemies of socialism!—B.D.W.) upon the majority of the people. . . . If there should arise in America anything similar to the situation in Spain, where the democratic republic, while repulsing the fascist invasion, was stabbed in the back by the 'uncontrollable extremists'—a minority of the anarchists and the Trotskyist P.O.U.M.—Then we, like our brothers of the Spanist Communist Party, would be in the forefront of the struggle to suppress such extremists, who are really agents of fascism, and render them harmless."

Now the secret is out! Even with bluff and bombast and padded figures, the Communist Party of the United States claims only 50,000 members, but it is already offering itself to the ruling class as the party of counter-revolution, as the murderers of the future Nins and the crushers of the future struggles for a proletarian dictatorship in the United States! In Spain it has tasted blood and, while the proletarian dictatorship is not on the order of the day at present, it considers its offer as an instrument of counter-revolution to fight against the proletarian dictatorship; and against the proletarian revolution, as a practical matter to be pledged in advance! A pledge against the

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The "Crimes" of P.O.U.M.

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3. The possession of photographs, documents, telegraph codes, etc., in the P.O.U.M. offices is not and never was a criminal offense. Every political party has such material. Like all of the other workers organizations in Spain, the P.O.U.M. raised its own militia and armed them to the best of its ability for the struggle against fascism. Being a military as well as a political organization, it necessarily had such material in its archives.

4. Nor were its efforts to obtain arms in any way illicit. And the only way it could obtain such arms was by purchasing them abroad, necessarily involving the sending of money and valuables to France and elsewhere.

5. The "foreign elements" with which the P.O.U.M. had "secret (!) relations" were the foreign revolutionaries fighting in the anti-fascist forces in Spain as well as the revolutionary socialist and communist organizations in Europe and America. And the same is true of the "meetings outside Spain," they were conferences of revolutionary workers organizations.

6. The very decree under which the P.O.U.M. leaders are now being accused was issued on June 22, 1937—that is, after the arrest of the accused (week of June 19) and certainly after the alleged commission of the "crimes" charged against them. In other words, the P.O.U.M. leaders are to be tried under an ex-post-facto law, a gross act of judicial tyranny by those very standards of liberal democracy which the Stalinists pretend to hold so sacred, something expressly forbidden in that sacrosanct document so precious to the Daily Worker, the Federal Constitution.

7. Even from the indictment, it is clear that the only real "crime" charged against the P.O.U.M. is that it is the party of the proletarian revolution.

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revolution is already "upon the order of the day."

Where Is the Class Struggle?

What more can we say? The interminable funeral oration leaves us speechless and miserable. Not a word about the role of classes and class struggle and class society. "The people" and the "progressives" and "Thomas Jefferson," and not a word of Marxism in the entire speech, a speech made to a communist convention of the State of Massachusetts! Even Jefferson and Madison knew enough to think in terms of classes, and not merely in terms of good capitalists and bad "economic royalists." Even they knew that the fight with the "royalists" was over, but this twentieth century American peanut politician does not.

To many a new party member today, the voice of revolutionary socialism comes as an alien voice. "Among all classes that confront the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is really revolutionary. The lower middle class, one and all, fight the bourgeoisie in the hope of safeguarding their existence. . . . They therefore are not revolutionary but conservative, nay more, they are reactionary. . . . If they ever become revolutionary, it is only because . . . they are forsaking their own standpoint to adopt

more profit and to infuriate the public against unionism. Every wage increase for workers increases purchasing power.

Labor must reply to the attempts of the employers to destroy its freedom and power thru incorporation and other laws by making every American cognizant of the highway robbery which is fundamental to American business today, by exposing the fraud of employer propaganda, by exposing the conspiracy to destroy free labor unionism, by building a more powerful C.I.O.

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that of the proletariat."

If we were to say that, we would be denounced as "extremists," "POUMists," "Trotskyist-Bukharinist-German-Japanese-wrecker-spies," or perhaps—oh fearful fate—"Lovestoneites." The quotation just cited is the first page of the Communist Manifesta. And, on the last page, we read: "Communists scorn to hide their views and aims. They openly declare that their purpose can only be achieved by the forcible overthrow of the whole extant social order. Let the ruling class tremble at the prospect of a communist revolution ("We communists quietly and calmly tell the president that he has nothing to fear from us."—Earl Browder) Proletarians having nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Proletarians (the very word has been lost in the People's Front shuffle!—B.D.W.). Proletarians of all lands unite!"

From the party of workers united front, to the party of People's Front; from the party of class struggle to the party of class collaboration; from the party of the proletarian revolution to the party of the counter-revolution. The Communist Party of the United States is dead. In Boston, in Symphony Hall, with Earl Browder pronouncing the funeral oration, it was indecently buried. It is only pity for the years we spent in trying to build it and for the misguided proletarians who still follow it and try in vain to give revolutionary interpretations in their own fashion to these counter-revolutionary, anti-Marxist, anti-communist speeches, it is only pity for the wasted years and effort and sacrifice and loving devotion, that prevents our rejoicing that it has so openly certified its death as a revolutionary party and left us a little freer to carry on the work for which the Communist Party of the United States was founded. Browder has pledged himself to counter-revolution. We take this occasion to pledge ourselves anew to the proletarian revolution as the only real road to "a peaceful, happy, prosperous and free America."