

YOUNG WORKER

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C. E. RUTHENBERG

THE loss which the American working class movement, and the Communist movement have sustained thru the death of Comrade Ruthenberg can only be measured in connection with the historic events of the last fifteen years, in which Ruthenberg was a central figure. The void which Comrade Ruthenberg's death has caused will be felt most acutely at a time when the working class of this country is engaged in great struggles, when he will be needed most.

Comrade Ruthenberg was a leader. He led not only in times of peace, but also in times of strife. He was not one who flashes across the horizon like a rocket, and is gone. He was not one of those who swims along with the stream. There were many occasions when he had to fight almost alone against the big majority—but it is exactly on such occasions that leadership is demonstrated. It is the duty of a Communist leader to lead, and not to follow. It is very easy to go along with the stream—but it does not require a leader to do that. And by this test, Ruthenberg was a leader.

Ruthenberg has played a dominant role in the working class movement in this country for the last fifteen years, and on every occasion where it was a question of leading in the right direction, Ruthenberg was in the forefront. In 1912, when the leadership of the Socialist Party made desperate efforts to become respectable, Ruthenberg took the lead in the fight against the Hillquits and Bergers and for the integrity of the principles of Revolutionary Socialism, and against the watering of the party with liberal doctrines and petty bourgeois membership. In 1917, when the United States entered the imperialist war, when the official leadership of the American labor movement went over part and parcel to the bourgeoisie, when large sections of the already liberalized Socialist Party turned social-patriots, Ruthenberg led the fight against the war, against betraying the working class and for the preservation of the Revolutionary principles of Socialism. In 1919 when the official Socialist Party had reached the final stage on its downward journey and turned its back on Revolutionary Socialism, Ruthenberg was the leader in the fight to break the masses away from the traitorous leaders and for the formation of a party which would really fight for the interests of the workers—the Communist Party. Ruthenberg was the tie which connected all that was best in the Socialist Party before the war with the Communist movement.

When the raids and the war hysteria came, when to declare oneself a Communist meant long jail sentences, lynchings, persecution; when many a comrade buried his principles and left the movement, Comrade Ruthenberg continued to be the leader of the revolutionary workers. Neither jail, nor threats, nor raids could daunt his courage or weaken his devotion to the cause of the workers.

We, the youth, have inherited a rich heritage from Comrade Ruthenberg. Ruthenberg was the only Socialist leader in America who carried on a real struggle against the war. Like Liebknecht, he was persecuted by the government and hated by the right wingers within the movement because of this activity. When the Socialist Party met in convention in St. Louis to consider its attitude toward the war, Ruthenberg took the lead in the demand for a clear-cut declaration against the war, and the manifesto which he drafted was adopted against the vacillation, hesitancy and even opposition of the leadership of the Socialist Party. While this resolution was filed by the Party bureaucracy and forgotten after the convention, Comrade Ruthenberg carried out its instructions in spirit and letter. He was the only one who actually led the masses of the working class in the fight against the war, and the demonstrations which he organized and led in the city of Cleveland will be remembered for ever by the revolutionary working class. For his activity against the war, he was arrested and imprisoned, but the faith that the working class possessed in him was not thereby destroyed, and upon his release, he polled 27,000 votes out of a total of 100,000 as candidate for Mayor, at the time of the worst war madness. The revolutionary youth of this country will take up the struggle where Ruthenberg left off. In the spirit of Ruthenberg we will fight till we too have earned our right to be counted amongst those who have been genuine fighters for the working class.

Ruthenberg is dead. But we do not weep. For the cause for which Ruthenberg fought still lives and grows. The Party which Ruthenberg founded will continue to carry on the struggle for the workers. The place left vacant by Ruthenberg will be taken by thousands of workers who will join the Party to carry on the work, and by thousands of young workers who will join the League to fight against militarism and war as Lenin, Liebknecht and Ruthenberg taught us to.

Long live the Communist Youth movement of America.

Long live the Communist International and its American section the Workers (Communist) Party of America.

Long live Communism.

—Herbert Zam.