

## RED TWILIGHT IN AMERICA

The decline of the Communist party in this country is well epitomized by the circumstances in which that group's national convention is now taking place here on the lower East Side of Manhattan. The suggestion of decay given by the modest physical setting of the convention is strengthened when one sees the relatively advanced ages of most of the delegates as they enter or leave the hall. The future would seem dim for any group which can draw so few young people to its most important meeting in many years.

On the pretext that it dares not endanger the jobs or freedom of individual delegates, the party has barred newspaper men from its deliberations, forcing the dozen or so reporters present to be cooped up in part of a small, dark corridor, waiting for handouts from the meeting place some yards away. In surroundings, atmosphere and morale a more vivid contrast with the quadrennial meetings of our two great national parties could hardly be imagined. But one can easily imagine the harsh words Communists would use if either of our two great parties treated reporters as the latter are being treated at this meeting.

But the Communist party is not so insignificant that Moscow dares permit it any independence. That Moscow would give orders, directly or indirectly, to the meeting was a foregone conclusion, but the crudity of the technique employed is perhaps surprising: the violent articles in the Soviet press these past weeks and the stern letter from Jacques Duclos of the French Communist party, the most Stalinist of all Communist groups in the free world. Already the course of the convention would seem to suggest that these orders from foreign masters have had their effect.

Yesterday's decision to maintain the Communist party as a nominal political party was a clear victory for Moscow's devoted followers here, Moscow having made its wishes in that regard clear late last year. Yesterday some "national Communists" such as John Gates continued desperately to try to square the political circle, to find ways in which an "American" Communist party could break out of its isolation.

One wonders why such men even make the effort. When even so fervent a past believer as Howard Fast has had to recognize that the Communist party is compromised beyond redemption, one might think that others of similar intelligence would see the same truth. For those Communists courageous enough to denounce Soviet murder in Hungary, Soviet anti-Semitism and the like, the logical conclusion should be clear: abandonment of that group whose only reason for being is to serve Soviet interests.

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