

# The Workers' Party of America

By Israel Amter.

The history of the revolutionary movement of America is a story of inner conflicts, of persecution by the Government and constant struggles to gain contact with the working class and organize it for the fight against the capitalist class and for control of State power.

When, in December 1921, the Workers' Party was formed out of the Communists who withdrew or were expelled from the Socialist Party in 1919, and other Left elements that remained in the S.P. for a longer period, the Communists eagerly entered the Workers' Party, using it as an instrument to carry out the instructions of the Communist International to penetrate the masses.

The Communists lacked experience in this kind of work. What they had learned in the Socialist Party and the I.W.W. did not avail them much. Here was a party whose function was not merely to propagate a new idea and carry on an election campaign to secure the election of Socialist candidates, but a party that was to enter into the daily struggles of the workers. A party that regarded the trade unions as among the most powerful weapons that the workers possess and therefore as organizations that they, as Communists, must enter and seek to revolutionize.

But a year of experience has taught the Workers' Party how to manoeuvre in the unions, how to conduct Communist work in the multifarious organizations of every description that exist in America, owing to the composition of the population. The many nationalities in the United States have created their social clubs, sick and death benefit organizations, cooperatives, singing societies etc., which are the centers of life among these nationalities. These organizations have grown into tremendous bodies, exercising great influence. The Communists have conducted their work within these organizations with splendid results, as may be noted in the relief work for Soviet Russia, for the defense of the W.P. movement, and in the Michigan raid in August.

This work has been done despite the reaction that reigned in the country. But this reaction affected not only the Communists and the militants in the trade unions. The conservative workers have felt the arm of the law, the club of the policeman and the revolver of the private guard. The vicious attack on the working class of America through the Daugherty injunction opened the eyes even of Samuel Gompers, who declared that the railroad kings did not need an attorney, for the "Attorney General of the United States is acting as their attorney". This also demonstrated to the workers that their open and bitter enemy is the capitalist government. The result was open opposition to the administration, and the defeat of the Republican Party at the last elections.

True, this was not a conscious revolt against the capitalist system. The workers of America are still far from class-consciousness. Despite his intemperate attacks on the government and his denunciation of the capitalist regime, Samuel Gompers was able to return to his general eulogy of things as they are, and to the usual appeal for harmony between labor and capital, without the workers recognizing the treachery of his ways.

But a growing instinctive solidarity of the workers, brought the Communists close to the trade union movement. The Communists pointed out the reasons why they, the Communists, had been and were being attacked, and that the militant workers were being attacked for the same reason—for conducting a fight against the greedy capitalists. The result has been greater sympathy between the Communists and rank and file of the labor movement.

The last convention of the Workers' Party served to settle two questions: the conflict within the Party, and the determination of the work among the masses. In view of the agenda that the Executive Committee presented to the Convention, it was realized that the Workers' Party was to become the leader in most of the revolutionary work that a Communist Party has to perform. It was seen that it was only a question of time and circumstance as to when the Workers' Party would be the sole revolutionary organization within the country. Thus was settled the internal struggle. The deliberations of the convention showed that the party had become a unit.

December 25, 1922 was the beginning of a new era in the revolutionary movement of America. Although the 50 delegates present represented a party weak in membership—about 20,000—they were inspired with a fervor to do the important work that confronted the Party.

The Party adopted a Communist Program. Although the Party had called itself a communist party, the program of the year before was most unsatisfactory. It was an attempt to create a document that would express communist doctrine and yet protect the young party from molestation if not suppression, by the authorities. The Program of this year is fully in keeping with the requirements of the Communist International, and contains a keen analysis of American "democracy", the greatest fraud in any country of the world. It is a realistic document and deals with the problems confronting the workers.

The Communist International recognizes but one section in any country. The Workers' Party of America is that section in America. The Workers' Party left no doubt in the mind of friend or foe as to its relation to the C.I. Its program states clearly: "The leadership in the international struggle which inspires hope in the hearts of the workers of the world and arouses fear in the capitalists of every country, is the leadership of the Communist International. The Workers' Party declares its sympathy with the principles of the Communist International, and enters the struggle against American capitalism, the most powerful of the national groups, under the inspiration of the leadership of the Communist International".

This was a program that could not but weld together all the revolutionary groups in the country. The Executive Committee of the Workers' Party had sent delegates to the IV Congress, who were recognized by the Communist International. The WP was taking its place among the communist parties of the world.

But the convention realized that only practical work to transform ideologically and organize the militant, revolutionary and radical workers, would be of any use to the revolutionary movement.

The violent attitude of the United States government in the recent strikes had fully revealed the necessity of the Workers of America acting independently on the political field. The question of the Labor Party was an urgent one. Although a few of the delegates and some of the membership of the Party could not understand the role of the WP in the Labor Party, it was pointed out clearly that the very creation of the Labor party is a vital one for the WP. The Labor Party will be a most

fruitful field for the propaganda of the WP. The WP will form the left wing of the Labor Party, and within the Labor Party will carry on its work for revolutionizing it.

The convention emphasized the necessity of permeating the trade unions with Communist ideas. The trade unions of America are to a great extent under reactionary leadership. Not only are the leaders men of no perspective, but like all reactionaries, they are bureaucrats who seek power but refuse to lead the workers into the struggle against the capitalists, because it means suffering. The fight for control of the trade unions is on. The Workers Party endorses the principles of the Red International of Labor Unions and cooperates very closely with the Trade Union Educational League.

The formation of the left wing in the trade unions, and the fight for the amalgamation of craft unions into industrial unions, depend upon the ability of the WP membership. Despite all impediments, the Communists have acquired great influence in the unions and today are the most intrepid and far-sighted leaders that the American movement has.

The difficulty of the Party's work in the unions is increased manifold by the polyglot membership of the Party. Of the nearly 20,000 members, only 1,500 to 2,000 are English-speaking. All the others speak and understand English to a greater or lesser extent, but work chiefly among workers of their own language. When it is realized that the Party has members speaking 18 languages, most of whom are organized in federations of their specific language; and that trade union meetings are conducted primarily in English, one appreciates the difficulties that the Party has to overcome. In addition, the entrance fee in some unions is quite high; in others, the "books are closed" which means that the union will not accept any more members in order to have job control, i.e. a monopoly of the work.

The overwhelming majority of the United Mine Workers are foreign-born; this is also true of the workers in the needle trades, the packing industry and steel industry. There are masses of foreign-born workers, organized and unorganized, in the transport industry. The task of the Communists will consist in organizing the foreign-born in close cooperation with the American-born and naturalized elements and thus create a united front of the working class.

Already the Chicago Federation of Labor, the Minnesota State Federation of Labor, the Farmer Labor Party, and the Trade Union Educational League have consented to cooperate with the Workers Party. The leaders of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers have given their approval. There is no doubt that, either from above or from below, through the rank and file of the trade union movement, there will be created a widespread movement among the alien population of the United States.

The Communists have taken a realistic view of the problems before them. The workers are beginning to understand that the Communists are also workers, and that they are being attacked because of their militancy and courage. These two qualities are highly rated in America. As unflinching fighters, the Communists will push into the front rank and strike terror to the hearts of Samuel Gompers and his crew.

## IN SOVIET RUSSIA

### The Tasks of the Russian Communist Party

The 12th Party Convention on April 15, 1923.

By G. Zinoviev.

I.

"What is the new economic policy of the Bolsheviks—evolution or tactics? Thus has the question been formulated by the followers of the party of the "Smena Vekh" (that section of the bourgeois emigrants which has aided the Soviet government of late years from national motives. Ed.)

The enemy tells the class truth by pointing out the danger threatening us. The enemy endeavors to render the danger inevitable. Therefore the greatest attention must be devoted to the question: Who will be the actual victor?"

Lenin.

The words of comrade Lenin are particularly applicable at the present juncture, when we are approaching the 12th Party conference of the CPR, and when our Party must once again sum up the progress made during another year.