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**Doxey A.
Wilkerson**

**THE NEGRO PEOPLE
AND THE COMMUNISTS**

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About the Author

DOXEY A. WILKERSON, author of this pamphlet, is a native of Kansas. He is a graduate of the University of Kansas, and has pursued further graduate studies at the University of Michigan.

He served as Chairman of the Department of Secondary Education at Virginia State College between 1927 and 1935; as Associate Professor of Education and Director of Summer School at Howard University between 1935 and 1943; and as Education Specialist of the Office of Price Administration during 1942-43, while on leave from Howard University.

Among many other positions of leadership, he has served as Research Associate of the President's Advisory Committee on Education, on the editorial staff of the *Journal of Negro Education*, on the National Advisory Committee on W.P.A. Education Program, on the executive boards of the National Negro Congress, as Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers, and as Vice President of the International Labor Defense. He is widely known as an author and lecturer.

In June, 1943, Mr. Wilkerson joined the Communist Party and assumed the post of Educational Director of its Maryland State organization. He writes a weekly column entitled "Toward Freedom" for the *Daily Worker*, and is at present lecturer at the Jefferson School of Social Science, in New York City.

The Negro People and the Communists

By Doxey A. Wilkerson

FOR more than three centuries the Negro people have been fighting for freedom. Progress toward that goal is now more rapid than at any time during the past seventy years. We will continue our fight until every trace of Jim Crowism has been wiped off the face of America. And we will win—far sooner than many people think.

This people's war against fascist enslavement has stimulated and strengthened democratic liberation movements throughout the world. In the onward march of mankind which destruction of our fascist enemies will surely accelerate, the Negro people of the United States will rise to their full stature and dignity as citizens of the country they have done so much to build and defend. *Full democratic rights shall be ours!*

I. Allies of the Negro People—Past and Present

THE NEGRO PEOPLE have always needed, and have always had, friends and allies among their white fellow-countrymen. Even during the dark days of slavery, when our forefathers organized and carried through hundreds of revolts against slave oppression, when tens of thousands of slaves ran away from bondage to the freedom of the North—even then, we had invaluable friends and allies. Harriet Tubman's "Underground Railroad" could never have become a glorious escape-route to liberty but for the active assistance of the white Abolitionists with whom she worked.

Civil War and Reconstruction

The Civil War occurred in a period (strikingly like that of today) when the liberation of the Negro from slavery became necessary to save the nation as a whole from destruction. Then the Federal Government itself, led by Abraham Lincoln,

became the most powerful ally of the Negro people in their struggles for freedom. The slaves were freed and armed, endowed with citizenship, and extended the right to vote and hold office. During that period, in the words of the immortal Frederick Douglass: "Events more mighty than men, eternal Providence, all-wise and all-controlling, have placed us in new relations to the government and the government to us."

The period of Reconstruction following the Civil War was a bright and promising moment in the long struggle for democracy in the southern states. The landed slave-masters of the Confederacy were removed from power. Truly democratic state governments began to emerge from a whole series of people's constitutional assemblies. State systems of free public schools, along with other democratic social measures, were for the first time introduced in the South.

These were truly revolutionary social changes for the Negro people, and fulfillment of the principles of constitutional democracy for the people as a whole. They were made possible only through the close cooperation of the Negro people and their allies. The impelling events of history had created a new and powerful democratic coalition of the people, consisting of the freedmen, the poor whites (who formerly were severely oppressed by the slave system), and the zealous and fighting Abolitionists from the North. Black men and white set out together to build democracy in the South.

Betrayal and Defeat

Then came the fateful elections of 1876, when the Republican Party deserted the Negro people and betrayed the democratic revolution which the forces around Lincoln had won. The former slave-masters of the Confederacy were restored to power. Ku Klux Klan terror and the organized spreading of "white supremacy" propaganda were used to separate the Negroes from their allies. As a result, the forward march of democracy in the South was checked and reversed. An era of semi-feudalism took its place.

In the long, oppressive decades which followed the withdrawal of Federal troops from the South in 1877, reaction again became thoroughly entrenched in power. Negroes were disfranchised, intimidated, and forced back into a caste-like status which was but little different from that of slavery. The masses of poor whites, likewise, were deprived of their lands, disfranchised, and removed from effective participation in government. The new democratic people's governments and systems of free public schools ceased to exist.

Moreover, democracy in our nation as a whole suffered directly from this triumph of reaction in the South. For example, our national Congress became saddled with a long succession of southern reactionaries whose political crimes against the American people are made possible by the poll-tax disfranchisement laws of the late 19th century period.

In unity with powerful allies the Negro people had moved forward to greater freedom, and democracy for the people as a whole was advanced. However, when separated from their allies, the Negro people were defeated in their struggles for greater freedom, and democracy for the people as a whole was severely retarded. *This is a fundamental lesson of history which we Negroes and all other democratic Americans must now come more fully to understand.*

Role of the Communists

Communists have always understood this need for Negro-white unity better than any other group in society. It was Karl Marx, father of scientific socialism, who during the Civil War pronounced the famous dictum: "Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded."

The power of the Soviet Union today in hurling back the mighty war machine of German fascism comes largely from her thorough elimination of race-hatred and the development of fraternal relations among her varied national groups on the basis of complete equality.

In its struggles for the working class of our country, the Communist Party has always understood that the achievement of Negro rights is fundamental to the welfare of the people as a whole. That is why the Constitution of the Communist Party declares:

"It shall be the duty of Party members to struggle against the national oppression of the Negro people; to fight for complete equality for Negroes in all phases of American life, and to promote the unity of Negro and white toilers for the advancement of their common interests."

Consistent with its fight against Negro oppression, the Communist Party threw its whole resources into the struggle to prevent the "legal lynching" of the Scottsboro boys during the early 1930's. On numerous other occasions, the Communists' struggles for Negro democratic rights have commanded the attention of the entire nation. Recall, for example, the Herndon case; the 1932, 1936 and 1940 campaigns for the election of James W. Ford, internationally famous Negro leader, to the Vice Presidency of the United States; the militant struggles of the white and Negro unemployed during the early days of the depression; the struggles in the trade unions for equal employment opportunities for Negro workers; the recent victorious campaign for the election of the outstanding Negro leader, Benjamin Davis, Jr., to the New York City Council.

The Daily Worker and *The (Sunday) Worker* have been hammering away incessantly, day in and day out for twenty years, interpreting the achievements of the Negro people to the nation, and rallying white and Negro workers in united struggles for the achievement of Negro rights and the strengthening of democracy for the people as a whole.

The consistent record of uncompromising struggle for Negro democratic rights is strikingly reflected by the following statements of Earl Browder, General Secretary of the Communist Party:

In 1932: "White chauvinism [*i.e.*, anti-Negro prejudice] is the main enemy, against which we must conduct an intolerant war of extermination, against all its forms, open and concealed,

a war of political extermination." (*The Communist Position on the Negro Question*, Workers Library Publishers, Third Printing, 1934, pp. 5-6.)

In 1936: "We Communists have always had as one of our main jobs the fight against discrimination in the trade unions and elsewhere, against Jim-Crow lynching and brutality and against every kind of oppression by the white ruling class of this country." (*What Is Communism?* Workers Library Publishers, 1936, p. 139.)

In 1937: "Through our battles for Negro rights in a thousand places, through the Scottsboro and Herndon cases, we have earned the epithet from the Ku Klux Klan elements of being the 'Negro Party.' We are proud of that, because we know that only thus can we be truly the White Workers Party." (*The People's Front*, International Publishers, 1938, p. 247.)

In 1942: "We dare not, on pain of humiliating defeat in this war, rest complacently on the present status of the Negro citizens of the United States. We must, as a war necessity, proceed to the systematic and relentless wiping out of every law, custom, and habit of thought, which in flagrant violation of our Constitution enforce an unequal status between Negro and white citizens of the United States." (*Victory—and After*, International Publishers, 1942, p. 91.)

In 1944: "One cannot reconcile himself even temporarily to the Jim Crow system, to the poll-tax, to anti-Semitism, and the principle of exceptionalism directed against Communists, without thereby surrendering the basic strongholds of democracy to the fascist enemy within and without. . . . On these issues we are in principle intransigent, uncompromising, irreconcilable." (*Teheran and America*, Workers Library Publishers, 1944, p. 36.)

The Communist Party has deeply influenced the thinking of hundreds of thousands of white Americans, especially in the ranks of organized labor. It has won increasing numbers of allies for the Negro people.

New Allies in the People's War

Now, in this period of world struggle against fascist enslavement, new friends and allies come forward to champion the cause of Negro freedom. The President of the United States creates an unprecedented governmental agency—The Committee on Fair Employment Practice—to break down Jim Crow barriers to full Negro employment in war industries. His recent message to Congress calls for an Economic Bill of Rights “under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all—regardless of station, race or creed.”

The Atlanta Conference of southern white liberals extends the hand of friendship to the Durham Conference of southern Negro leaders. The editor of an influential Richmond, Va., daily newspaper calls for the abolition of Jim Crow seating arrangements on street cars and buses—and gets an overwhelmingly favorable response from the public.

In the trade unions of our nation, especially in the great, democratic, industrial unions of the C.I.O., new bonds of comradeship are being forged between black workers and white. The power of organized labor is being thrown ever more frequently and effectively toward extending the democratic rights of the Negro people.

So it is with many other patriotic Americans. They have come to see that the extension of democracy for the Negro people is again essential for national survival. During the 1940's, as during the 1860's, the freedom goals of the Negro and the survival goals of the nation have become inseparably merged. *Both must now move forward together.*

Thus it is that many new friends and allies, learning the basic lesson of this period of our history—the necessity for national unity—now emerge as vigorous champions of democratic rights for the Negro people. Many more will learn this lesson in the period ahead, and the Communist Party will be their most conscious and effective teacher.

II. *The Negro's Wartime March Toward Freedom*

SOMETIMES WE NEGROES become overwhelmed and discouraged by the thousands of racial discriminations which still exist. This is because we lose sight of the most important fact about our society. It is not fixed, but is in process of flux. It is changing—*changing rapidly*. One by one, the traditional bonds of racial discrimination are breaking.

Just look at the trend during the past two and one-half years of this people's war:

Hundreds of thousands of Negro men and women are earning good wages in industrial plants from which they have traditionally been barred. Thousands more hold Federal jobs where none but a white face was seen before. Despite repeated reactionary attacks against the F.E.P.C., President Roosevelt continues to defend and support this fighting agency for democratic employment opportunities. For the first time in history, another agency of our government—the War Labor Board—has decreed that the wages of white and Negro workers must be equal.

Despite still existing discriminations, our Negro soldiers are fighting for their liberty in every branch of the armed services—and they are distinguishing themselves with heroism, as has been true of Negro soldiers in every one of our nation's wars. A Negro holds the post of Brigadier-General. White and Negro soldiers—even in Georgia—pursue *together* their studies for officers training on a basis of complete equality. In the United States Merchant Marine, Liberty Ships bearing the names of famous Negroes are sailed by mixed white and Negro crews under the command of Negro captains. Even the United States Navy now admits Negroes into the ranks of fighting seamen and trains them as officers.

More than this, traditional Jim Crow lines in public places are tending to break down, even in the South. Steps are taken toward the entrance of Negroes into organized baseball. A Negro journalist is appointed for the first time to the post of White House correspondent. Twenty national Negro organizations unite in a manifesto declaring their support

of the war and the independence of Negro voters as a political force. A Negro Communist is elected to the City Council of New York.

These are but part of the changes taking place in the relations of our people to the rest of the nation. Besides, the trend is bound to continue—because it must. The continued freedom of the nation as a whole demands it.

Let us cast aside our unwarranted discouragement. Let us enter with full vigor and confidence into the common struggle for the freedom of our nation and the liberation of our people. The world is changing progressively before our very eyes.

III. The Democratic Perspective of Teheran

THE HISTORIC CONFERENCE of Teheran has tremendously advanced the perspective for liberation of the Negro people, for extending the wartime trend toward full democratic rights on into the peace which will follow.

The capitalist states of Britain and America are now firmly united with the socialist country, the Soviet Union, in "complete agreement" on measures for "destruction of the German forces" and establishment of a just and enduring "peace which will command good will from the overwhelming masses of the peoples of the world." Precisely those three nations which represent the greatest concentrations of military, economic and political power in the world have now agreed to "work together in the war and in the peace which will follow."

They reached this agreement because of historic necessity. They have the will and the power to carry it out. And they will carry it out, because there is no other way to victory, and to peace "for many generations."

The Threat to Teheran

But the progressive goals of Teheran must be fought for. They can be achieved only through vigorous struggle to defeat the military and political forces of fascism, both abroad and here at home.

There is a powerful clique of American pro-fascists and imperialists who are doing everything in their power to save Hitler from decisive defeat. They want to substitute a policy of "negotiated peace" for the Anglo-Soviet-American policy of "unconditional surrender." They want to preserve fascist governments in Germany and the rest of Europe in order to prevent the democratic upsurge of liberated peoples throughout the world which the destruction of fascism would surely bring.

This pro-fascist, imperialist clique consists of the most reactionary section of American monopoly capital. Its chief political spokesman is Herbert Hoover. It has adherents in both major parties. Its main propaganda channel is the Hearst-McCormick-Patterson newspaper axis. Its immediate goal is to seize control of our government in 1944.

Should this defeatist cabal emerge triumphant in the 1944 elections, their ultimate plans for our nation would immediately become clear to all. They would reverse the progressive foreign and domestic policies of the Roosevelt Administration. They would disrupt the Anglo-Soviet-American coalition and destroy the democratic perspective of Teheran. They would seek to lead our nation along the path which Hitler tried for Germany—conquest of foreign markets through military aggression abroad. But first, in order to keep the people from upsetting their plans, they would try to establish an oppressive, fascist regime here in America.

This is why the coalition of defeatists which now exercises leadership over Congress is doing everything possible to disrupt the war effort and delay victory. This is why they seek to destroy price control and undermine the war economy. This is why they run roughshod over the President's requests for sufficient taxes to finance the war. This is why they oppose poll tax repeal. This is why they resort even to disfranchising our fighting men in the armed forces as a means toward stealing the 1944 elections.

These American defeatists fear a quick and decisive Allied victory, because they know it would blast their dream of a fascist America moving toward the imperialist domination of

the world. They want a long, drawn-out war, because this would give Hitler time to rally and to make a successful bid for a "negotiated peace." They want to leave fascist regimes virtually intact in Europe, and thus to strengthen the forces of reaction in America and throughout the world. They are implacable foes of the policies of Teheran.

Unity in Support of Teheran

In order to achieve the democratic perspective of Teheran there must be the fighting unity of all the progressive forces of our country—now and in the period of post-war reconstruction. It must be an all-inclusive unity, representing the entire democratic camp, firmly welded together in support of the Roosevelt policies of Teheran, struggling to defeat those pro-fascist forces in our nation which now seek to delay victory and to establish a reactionary, imperialist peace.

What combination of forces is necessary to assure that the power of our nation will be used to carry out the agreements of Teheran?

First, the pro-Teheran coalition must include the organized labor movement, now over 12,000,000 strong. The trade unions, despite some of their reactionary leaders, are by far the strongest and most consistently democratic force in the nation. *Second*, it must include those sections of "big business" (monopoly capital) which support President Roosevelt. They want to achieve the democratic perspective of Teheran because they know that the only hope for operation of their expanded industries after the war is on the basis of lasting peace. *Third*, the pro-Teheran coalition must include the small business groups, the farmers, and the great mass of patriotic Americans through their church, fraternal, civic and other organizations.

These are the democratic political forces which now must be welded together to win the 1944 elections and guarantee that our nation will continue along the progressive course which was charted at Teheran. It calls for the collaboration

of progressives in both major political parties. *For or against Teheran*—this is now the crucial determiner of political alignments.

Teheran and the Negro

The urgent necessity for this democratic coalition of national unity in support of Teheran advances enormously the perspective for the attainment of Negro democratic rights.

The pro-Teheran coalition sorely needs the active political collaboration of the Negro people. Unless Negro citizens are brought quickly and fully into the democratic national front, the victory of the anti-Teheran forces in the 1944 elections looms as a very real threat, indeed, imperiling the whole new perspective before the world. Thus it is that new and powerful allies continue to move forward to champion the cause of Negro democratic rights. They must—and will—come increasingly to understand that on this basis alone can they win the support of the Negro masses in the life-and-death struggle against pro-fascist reaction.

The Negro people also need the assistance which the pro-Teheran coalition can give in the struggle for Negro democratic rights. It would be fatal for the Negro to make common political cause with the pro-fascist advocates of a long, drawn-out war and an imperialist peace; these are the deadliest enemies of the Negro people. Nor can the Negro win his freedom alone; in isolation his defeat would be assured. Thus it is that the Negro people should move toward close political alignment with the democratic coalition in support of Teheran. They will find that along this path alone lies the goal of Negro freedom.

The trade unions are more and more fighting for Negro democratic rights—on the job, in the community, and in state and national legislatures. Thus alone can the progressive leadership within the unions win the active support of Negro unionists in the struggle against factionalism and reaction within the ranks of organized labor. Thus alone can the unions win the collaboration of the Negro masses in the developing programs of labor political action.

Negro trade unionists should also assume their share of the responsibility to recruit increasing thousands of their Negro fellow workers into the ranks of organized labor. They must attend union meetings and take an active part in the programs of their locals. Especially must they rally to the support of the progressive leadership within the unions. Thus alone can Negro workers protect and extend their wartime gains in employment. Thus alone can they secure their jobs against the threat of wholesale Negro lay-offs when the time for personnel cutbacks arrives. Thus alone can they strengthen the labor movement for effective struggles to realize the democratic perspective of Teheran.

The Negro people must give vigorous and overwhelming support to the Roosevelt Administration in the 1944 elections. They must vote to return the President to the White House for a fourth term, and to elect a pro-Teheran Congress with which he can work. Thus alone can the Negro people protect the many democratic rights which the Roosevelt Administration has fought to secure. Thus alone can they guard against the very real threat of a fascist America—in which the Negro people would be forced back into a slavery far worse than their forefathers ever knew.

It is apparent that the pro-Teheran coalition of national unity is the political combination in which the Negro people naturally belong. As it grows in unity and strength, the Negro people will move ever more swiftly toward the attainment of full democratic rights.

IV. Strategy for Victory and Freedom

IT IS CLEAR that the basic interests of the Negro and the nation as a whole, both in the war and in the peace to come, are now the same. Each depends upon the other. Many white and Negro Americans still have not grasped this fundamental truth. But they will learn; the events of this period will force them to learn. And those of us who do understand have a responsibility to influence the thinking of our fellow-men—and to move them to fight for progressive policy.

The Negro's Stake in a Quick Victory

We must combat the false and reactionary doctrine that a prolonged war would advance the cause of Negro freedom.

The fact that the Negro people are, indeed, moving rapidly toward the goal of full democratic rights has led some among us into the disastrous error of hoping for a long, drawn-out war. They argue: "If the war is now advancing the cause of Negro freedom, then more war should bring more and more freedom to the Negro people." They pray: "Lord, don't let this war end too soon."

There is a deceptive and dangerous fallacy in this argument. It is Hitler and Tojo and their collaborators in our country—and they alone—who would profit from a prolonged war. Moreover, if their program were to prevail, the wartime gains of the Negro people would be engulfed and destroyed in the onrush of American fascism.

Then, too, just think of the added human misery which a long, drawn-out war would bring. It would mean many more years of fascist murder and slaughter of additional millions of men, women and children. It would mean the further destruction of homes and factories and villages and cities. It would mean years before our sons and fathers and sweethearts in the armed forces could return home.

Away with this "long-war" talk among the Negro people! Nothing is more revolting to our humanitarian ideals. Nothing would more surely defeat our aspirations and struggles for full democratic rights.

The goal of Negro freedom lies along the road to a quick victory and the achievement of Teheran. Let nothing deflect us from our true course.

What Lies Behind "Pacifist" Propaganda

We must beware of the increasing "pacifist" propaganda which seeks to bring the Negro people into opposition to the win-the-war policies of President Roosevelt.

In many places this "pacifist" opposition to all necessary war

measures is closely tied up with the well-financed "Peace Now" movement, which advocates that we stop the war at once and "come to terms" with Hitler. They call for an immediate "negotiated peace"—without victory, the effect of which would be to leave the oppressive and dangerous Nazi-fascist regime virtually intact.

Much of this stop-the-war-now propaganda has recently been exposed as the handiwork of Hitler's agents on our home front. They are playing the game of fascism—and know it. However, there are some sincere religious "pacifists" who misinterpret the teachings of Jesus. They fail to see that there can be no possibility of Christian brotherhood unless we carry this just war through to a decisive victory and destruction of the most powerful forces of evil our world has ever seen.

Whatever its source, the effect of this "peace now" propaganda is the same. It strengthens Hitler and the forces of reaction throughout the world. It weakens the democratic progressive forces, whose military triumph alone can bring a just and lasting peace for all mankind. It plays right into the hands of the worst enemies of freedom for the Negro people or for the nation as a whole.

Anyone who truly wants to help win full democratic rights for the Negro will throw his full force behind this just war to destroy the fascist enemies of our people and our nation. By this test let us decide who are our true friends.

Dangers in "All-Negro" Struggles

We must be alert to the danger of certain "all-Negro" movements which purport to fight for Negro freedom, but whose main purpose is to divide the Negro people from other progressive forces in the country, and especially from the friendly Roosevelt Administration.

The Negro people must organize and struggle more than ever for democratic rights. Certainly there is an important role for all-Negro organizations to play in that struggle. But let nothing isolate us from our natural allies, the broad, democratic coalition of pro-Roosevelt forces which are now strug-

gling to achieve the perspective of Teheran. Nothing would be more disastrous for the cause of Negro freedom.

The crying need of this period is the closest possible collaboration of all progressive white and Negro Americans to achieve our common goals of victory and a democratic peace. Such Negro-white unity is not only more possible because of the conditions created by the war; it is also more necessary.

Let us avoid the pitfall of "anti-white" propaganda and forms of struggle. Let us also fight against the vicious anti-Jewish and anti-Communist propaganda which is being spread among us. Such divisive forms of propaganda serve but to strengthen our enemies by isolating us from our friends.

Four Essentials of Correct Strategy

In our struggles for full democratic rights:

Let us always make clear our unconditional support of the war effort of our nation. Let there never be the slightest doubt about the genuinely patriotic character of our Negro-freedom movements.

Let us intensify our fight for specific objectives—especially for equal job opportunities and for civil rights. Let us demand these democratic rights, not solely on the grounds of justice and fair play, but primarily on the broader grounds of national security. Let us always point out that the extension of democratic rights for the Negro is now essential for the safety of the nation—which, in all truth, it is!

Let us struggle, not alone for "Negro rights," but also for those larger progressive goals of the nation as a whole. The fight for effective price control and rent control, for subsidies, for a realistic tax program, for the soldier vote, for abolition of the poll tax, for the fullest possible use of war-manpower, for the election of a pro-Teheran Congress and President in 1944—all of these struggles profoundly affect the course of the war and the nature of the peace to come. Necessarily, therefore, they are basic to the fight for Negro freedom.

Let us forge the strongest possible unity among the Negro people themselves, and between the Negro people and their

natural allies in the progressive white population, especially in the organized labor movement. Petty organizational rivalries and factionalism must be put aside. Anti-white, anti-Jewish, and anti-Communist propaganda must be fought against as the deadly tactic of reaction to divide, and thus to weaken and defeat, the progressive unity of the people.

To summarize:

1. Unequivocal support of this people's war of national survival and liberation.
2. Increasing demands for Negro democratic rights, as a requirement for victory and a just and lasting peace.
3. Vigorous support of the win-the-war policies of the Roosevelt Administration—especially in the 1944 elections.
4. Unity of the Negro people; and firm alignment with the progressive national front for victory, with the broad democratic coalition for carrying through the agreements of Teheran.

This is our necessary strategy for victory and freedom. This is the program which the Communist Party advocates in order to extend and strengthen democracy for the Negro people and for the nation as a whole.

V. The Communist Party

THERE HAVE BEEN SO many lies and slanders about the Communists—repeated a thousand times in the press, radio, schools and churches, that most Negroes and other Americans have been given an entirely distorted picture of the nature of the Communist Party and its role in our national life.

But this situation, too, is changing. Just as our country is at last beginning to learn the truth about our much-slandered ally, the Soviet Union, so are Americans coming better to understand and appreciate the Communist Party.

Increasing thousands of our fellow-citizens are coming to join and work with the Communist Party. They recognize the special contribution which Communists are making to

strengthen the pro-Teheran coalition of national unity—for a speedy victory and a just and enduring peace.

What Is the Communist Party?

The Communist Party is devoted to the welfare of the American working class, and to the welfare of the great masses of our people. Its ultimate goal is to convince the working class and the nation as a whole that the fundamental and necessary solution of our basic social problems lies in the building of socialism in America.

However, when our nation turned its policies and resources to the struggle against fascist enslavement and destruction, the Communist Party put aside all advocacy of a change to socialism "for the duration of the war," and directed all its activities toward strengthening national unity for victory over our Axis enemies. Recently, because of the new democratic perspective opened up by the Declaration of Teheran—and the serious threat to our country from the pro-fascist opponents of Teheran on our home front—we have extended this policy on into the period of post-war reconstruction.

Emphasizing the Communist Party's complete devotion to strengthening the pro-Teheran coalition of national unity, the National Committee of the party has proposed to the National Convention (which meets in May, 1944) that it change the electoral status of the party, voluntarily renouncing the hard-won right to run Communist Party candidates for election to public office. Moreover, in keeping with this general policy and the proposed change in electoral status, it is also recommended that the name of the Communist organization be changed to something like "American Communist Political Association." These proposals are now being discussed by members of the party throughout the country, and they are meeting with almost unanimous approval.

Thus, in this period of national crisis, the Communist Party has put aside all partisan interests of its own, even its historic advocacy of socialism. Our sole practical program during the war and on into the peace which will follow is to strengthen

the democratic camp of national unity in support of the policies of Teheran.

The Communist Party consists of thousands of neighborhood clubs (or "branches") throughout the nation, working with their fellow citizens to hasten victory and guarantee a just and lasting peace. These Communist clubs are led by democratically elected officers, and they hold regular membership meetings in their respective neighborhoods. Interested non-Communist citizens are invited to attend these meetings.

The Communist clubs in a given community combine to form a city or county Communist Party. City and county organizations in a given state (sometimes more than one state) combine to form a district Communist Party. These various district Communist organizations are what constitute the Communist Party. At its head is a National Committee, and its supreme authority is the National Convention.

The Communist Party is an American organization. Its policies are determined through full and democratic discussion, extending all the way from neighborhood clubs on up to the National Convention.

This, in brief, is the nature of the Communist Party—its purpose and its organizational form.

Why I Joined the Communist Party

I joined the Communist Party in June, 1943, after some sixteen years of challenging professional experience—chiefly on the faculties of Howard University and Virginia State College. I then put aside my academic pursuits and accepted full-time employment as the Educational Director of the Communist Party of Maryland and District of Columbia. These actions came as the logical and impelling next steps in a series of life experiences and convictions which pointed inexorably toward that end.

For many years I had observed the effective work of the Communists in fighting for Negro democratic rights and in helping to build a strong labor movement. On numerous occasions I had come to know and collaborate with members

of the party who were active in progressive movements in which I was engaged. I had given serious study to the science of Marxism. I had kept informed about the remarkable advances in democracy and economic security which socialism had brought to the various peoples of the Soviet Union. I had also studied and kept abreast of the program of the Communist Party.

I became convinced years ago that the program of the Communists offered the most fundamental and correct approach to the problems of the Negro people, and also to those broader social objectives for which I and progressive organizations with which I was associated had long been fighting. This conviction made it inevitable that, *at some time*, I would join and devote my energies to the Communist Party.

I joined the party *when I did* because of a powerful urge to render maximum service to the winning of the war. It became increasingly clear that this great liberating war would tremendously accelerate the social progress of the Negro and all other freedom-loving peoples. It was also clear that the Communist Party had more completely subordinated its own special interests to all-out and effective promotion of the war effort than had any other civilian organization in the country.

Having learned to respect and admire the Communist Party years before, and having passed the age of military service, I joined and accepted full-time employment with the party last summer because I was convinced that therein lay the opportunity for my maximum civilian contribution toward victory and the building of a truly democratic peace.

What I Found in the Communist Party

My decision to join and work for the Communist Party has been fully justified by my experiences during the past eight months. At no previous time in my adult career have I found more complete expression for the social ideals which long ago became driving forces in my life.

In the first place, I found in the party a warmth of fellowship which is unparalleled in any national organization of comparable size. Negro and white, Jew and Gentile, youth

and age, man and woman, professional and worker—all are bound together by close personal and political ties which make of them genuine “comrades.”

Second, I found in the party a group of citizens who are more alert to the social, economic and political problems of the day—and *more eager to do something about them*—than any other group with which I have been associated. Whether the issue be price and rent control, subsidies, soldier vote, poll-tax repeal, racial discrimination, federal taxes, the Polish border question, the 1944 elections, the colonial question, or the agreements of Teheran, I am sure that the typical Communist industrial worker understands it better than the typical college or university professor. This is no exaggeration; I know both groups.

Moreover, Communists feel personally responsible to participate in organized efforts to resolve our social issues progressively. Nowhere have I found a more conscientious and zealous group of fighters for social progress. And they get results, on both the local and the national fronts. Few Americans appreciate the extent of their indebtedness to the Communists.

Third, I found ample justification for Earl Browder's statement that “the party is an immense educational institution.” A vast and constantly growing body of literature flows to party members throughout the country. Everybody studies—not only the immediate social and political problems of the day, but also the basic theory of social change. It is the common goal of all Communists to master the science of Marxism-Leninism. Herein lies much of the explanation for their social effectiveness.

Fourth, I found an organization whose leaders and members are thoroughly devoted to principle. The needs of the masses of people and of our nation are the controlling determiners of policy and program for the Communist Party.

This is why, once our nation turned from the imperialist policies of Munich, the party put aside every other interest—even the advocacy of socialism—and devoted its entire resources to the cause of victory in this people's war.

This is why, at every major turning-point in history, the party allows no dogma to prevent whatever reformulation of policy is demanded by the new situation.

I have found in the Communist Party an indispensable weapon of the people in their struggles against reaction. I am confident that increasing numbers of my fellow-men, once they understand the true nature of the party, will join with me in promoting its valuable service to the nation.

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