

## **Book Reviews**

### **HISTORY OF THE C.P.U.S.A.**

*History of the Communist Party of the United States*, by Wm. Z. Foster. (600 pp. International Publishers, New York; Collet's, London. 48/-). THOSE who have read Marx on 'The Civil War in America', or the letters to Sorge by Marx and Engels will appreciate what Foster has to say about their keen interest in American affairs in his *History of the Communist Party of the United States*. There are many lessons in this great book which I hope will reach out to, and be taken to heart by active members of the Labour Party and members of the Communist Party.

It is pathetic to hear such wretched creatures like Messrs. Morgan Phillips and Noel Baker spout out nauseating twaddle about 'progressive capitalism' in America. They are only now repeating what the petty-bourgeois leaders of the Socialist Party of America were trying to put across before the First World War. In the 1912 election Roosevelt, not Franklyn D., but he of the 'big stick', came out with his 'Square Deal' programme. 'Walling for example, . . . said that "Certainly the socialist platform did not go any further than Roosevelt's unqualified phrase that 'the people' should control industry collectively." Both the Socialists and the LaFollette progressives complained that Roosevelt stole their thunder'. (Page 119). How easily were these timid petty-bourgeois place-hunters captivated by a phrase. With the rapid industrialisation that followed the Civil War, American capitalism made great advances. It had many advantages all of which are brought out very clearly in this history.

But this advance enabled it to make considerable concessions to a limited section of the workers, while ruthlessly exploiting and brutally bludgeoning the unorganised masses. Gunmen and thugs, whole armies of them, were used for this purpose. 'Progressive capitalism'. Its history is red with the blood of the martyred working class. The American Federation of Labor (A.F. of L.) had no interest whatever in these unorganised masses. Theirs was a close corporation of craft unions, most of which, not all, were prepared to take full advantage of their less fortunate brothers. The leadership of the A.F. of L. is riddled with graft and corruption, the top leaders having salaries that place them in the same social class as ordinary millionaires. This corruption of the A.F. of L. leaders and their opposition to any effort to organise the great masses of workers in the big monopoly undertakings led to the formation of various forms of dual unionism. Outstanding amongst these was the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) The militancy of this union under the leadership of Big Bill Haywood and our own George Hardy, played a great part in preparing the way for the great union organising that was to come later on. It took the form of the Committee for Industrial Organisation (C.I.O.) The original committee was composed of representatives of the coal-miners, textile, ladies' garment, men's clothing, printing, oil-field, cap and millinery, and metal miners unions. Terrific mass strikes all over the United States prompted the action of these unions. But the A.F. of L. leaders, Green, Wall and Co., who had used every means to sabotage and wreck the strike organisations, now took action

against these unions and expelled them from the A.F. of L. One million members thrown out. It shows the length to which trade union agents of the imperialists will go. John L. Lewis, Philip Murray, and Sydney Hillman were amongst the principal leaders of the new movement. They gave a warm welcome to the Communists who were indefatigable workers. The service our comrades gave in the building of the C.I.O. was one of the greatest factors in its success. When Lewis resigned the presidency, Philip Murray succeeded him. The reason for Lewis resigning was really ludicrous. He supported Willkie against Roosevelt in the 1940 election and declared that if Willkie wasn't elected he'd resign as president of the C.I.O.; which he accordingly did on Willkie's defeat.

For several years the relations between the C.I.O. and the Communist Party were good. Murray and Carey played at being progressive. Carey even went as a member of a C.I.O. delegation to the Soviet Union and came back with a very fine report particularly of the great part the Soviet trade unions were contributing to the building of the new society. Following the Second World War the C.I.O. joined up in the World Federation of Trade Unions. The A.F. of L. kept out and from the start set itself the task of disrupting this world-wide organisation of the workers. With the passing of the Taft-Hartley Act and the intensification of the witch-hunt Murray and Carey ratted and went swinging over to the right. Then following the example of the A.F. of L., with the same gangster methods, they expelled seven progressive unions and used the full power of the machine, to browbeat and crush

any attempt at criticism. An appalling story that—of Murray and Carey—but all too common in the corrupt atmosphere of Yankee capitalism. Murray is head of the steel-workers union in Pittsburgh, but neither he nor any of his associates on the Executive are, or ever were, steelworkers. They have been able, at any rate until recently, to keep any actual steelworker off the leading committee of the steel workers' unions. Following the sharpening of the American drive into Europe the C.I.O. representative Carey and the British representative Deakin walked out of the World Federation and under the guidance and leadership of the A.F. of L. set up what they are pleased to call the International of 'Free' trade unions.

The American capitalists through the Marshall Plan, have got control of Britain and Western Europe. 'Toe the line, or we stop supplies' is their attitude towards these satellites. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the leaders of the A.F. of L., having spent millions of dollars corrupting trade union leaders in Western Europe in an attempt to disrupt the progressive union, should, at a recent meeting of the 'Free?' trade unions, reply to a complaint from the Belgians, 'Shut your gob' (to use Lawther's inelegant expression) 'or we stop supplies'. Deakin would be present at that meeting and would sit entranced listening to Mr. Green and when his chance came at the Labour Party Conference, up he jumped, and with typical Yankee presumption ordered the delegates to 'Toe the line or——'.

Through all the terrific struggles of the American workers the Communists gave loyal assistance and suffered more than their share of

hard knocks. In the building of the party many serious obstacles had to be overcome. Sectarianism and opportunism as a carry-over from the earlier socialist parties and continual vicious attacks from the government. De Leonism, as expressed through the S.L.P. (Socialist Labor Party) created a school of sectarians who seriously handicapped the political development of the American workers. Equally harmful has been the demagogic opportunism of the petty-bourgeois leaders of the Socialist Party of America. Foster traces in a masterly way the effect of these tendencies in the general movement and particularly in the earlier years of the Communist Party. For attacks from the government consider this:

This growing employers offensive hit the Communist Parties (there were in the early stages two parties) with full force in the infamous Palmer raids at the end of 1919.

On October 16th of that year the police pushed into the C.L.P. (Communist Labor Party) headquarters in Cleveland and arrested the Party leadership, and on November 8th in New York, 700 police invaded mass meetings celebrating the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, seizing several hundred workers. But these raids were only dress rehearsals for the big outrages yet to come. Suddenly during the night of January 2nd, 1920, the department of Justice struck nationally, in 70 cities, dragging workers from their homes, slugging them and throwing them into crowded gaols, often without proper food and toilet facilities. (Pages 174-5)

That's just a sample of what goes on

in the land of 'Progressive Capitalism'.

This conception of Progressive Capitalism appeared in another form under Lovestone—he espoused the theory of 'American Exceptionalism'. It was a different kind of capitalism, free from slumps and crises. He was expelled from the party in 1929 and is now the complete renegade. In 1929 American capitalism plunged into an economic crisis that shook and shattered capitalism throughout the world. But despite this lesson Browder succeeded in winning the majority of the party to a new form of Exceptionalism. In Britain we got very little information about the actual theory Browder was putting forward. The Teheran agreement had put an end to class war. Henceforth workers and capitalists would join hands and march along together in never-ending harmony. He had proposals for expanding the capitalist market. 'I am quite willing', he said, 'to help the free enterpriser to realise the forty-billion dollar market that is required entirely and completely by their own methods' (page 423). Then intelligent capitalists would double the wages of the workers. By these means, markets and doubled wages, crises would be eliminated. 'If', he declared in a speech at Bridgeport, Connecticut, on December 12, 1943, 'J. P. Morgan supports this (pro-Teheran) coalition and goes down the line for it, I as a communist am prepared to clasp his hand on that and join with him to realise it'. (Page 424)

Foster, himself, strongly opposed this line of Browder's that led to a temporary liquidation of the party. This section is worth special study in view of the treacherous role of Tito and the corruption of the Yugoslav Communist Party.

An outstanding part of the History is the gradual development within the party of a full understanding of Marxism-Leninism in relation to the negro question. Many weaknesses in connection with this all-important problem for the American people had to be overcome within the party and Foster follows them through in really fine style and reaches this conclusion:

Socialism in the United States will wipe out the monstrous Jim Crow system. The Negro people, for the first time will enjoy the dignity and happiness of full equality in every sense of the word; economic, political, social. (Page 567).

In the meantime the heavy battle for negro rights goes on. More and more the negro people assert themselves and strike back at the various forms of white supremacy. In all these struggles the Communist Party participates. And then the great campaign for the Peace and the scathing exposure of the Wall Street warmongers and its 'Executive Committee' (as Marx named the government of the United States) and in particular the party's exposure of the crimes being perpetrated in Korea. All this has brought a new wave of hatred against the Communist Party. So once again it is ferociously attacked by the whole power of the capitalist state. Foster completely smashes the allegations of 'conspiracy' and 'violence'. Here is a very fine passage:

The fundamental difference between the Communists and the Right Wing Social Democracy (and its Browderite variant) is

not that the Social Democrats want to establish socialism by peaceful means and the Communists want to achieve it by violence. Instead the difference is that everywhere the Social Democrats have abandoned Socialism altogether and are committed to an indefinite perpetuation of the capitalism system; whereas, the Communists have shown conclusively that, in line with the democratic will and interests of the workers they are the ones that are resolutely leading the peoples of the world to socialism.

The danger of war is great, the onslaught on the party, rather the terror directed against it, is terrific, but Foster has no doubt of the outcome. He refers to the great brother parties in the Soviet Union, China, Czechoslovakia, Poland and elsewhere and concludes his History with:

The Communist Party in the United States works and grows in the spirit of these Communist Parties. It knows that, living up to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, it will one day lead the American working class and the nation, even as it is now the best representative of their interests. Nor can all the power of arrogant capitalist reaction balk the C.P.U.S.A. from fulfilling this historic role. (Page 572).

As I opened, so I close. I hope all active members of the Labour Party and all members of the Communist Party will read this latest splendid work of our good comrade, William Z. Foster.

WILLIAM GALLACHER.