

AMERICAN COMMUNISTS TRY FOR COMEBACK AS A PARTY

Admitting Their Past Mistakes, They Now Will Use United-Front Technique

By MURRAY SCHUMACH

Leaders of the American Communist party will gather today at national headquarters in downtown Manhattan to plan a comeback from political isolation as part of an over-all strategy to exert significant influence in all important aspects of American life.

The Communist party says it has between 20,000 and 25,000 members, as compared with a peak of 100,000 in the Thirties.

There is no longer a single Communist labor union in the United States, though a few unions that profess to be non-partisan are strongly flavored by Communist theory. The party's so-called front organizations that remain are ineffectual. The Smith Act makes it illegal to advocate violent overthrow of the Government. In sum, the Communist party admits it is out of the "mainstream" of national existence.

The Core of Party

The Communist party, though weak, still is organized along the same lines as in the Thirties. The lowest admitted level is the party club, which recruits on a community or shop level. Several clubs—the number varies—comprise a section. County organizations are made up of sections and state organizations of county units.

By indirect election—though the party demands direct election of the President of the United States—delegates are chosen for the national convention. The national committee is chosen at the convention. At the top of the party is the general secretary of the national committee. He is selected in theory by the convention, but usually on recommendation of the national committee.

Anti-Communists in a position to know the party's operation say the core of the Communist organization is its cellular structure. A Communist cell, say these non-Communists, may have as few as three members. Communist officials say the theory of their cells is a myth.

The major purpose of the Communist party these days is to work for a "united front." Its method is limited by its current anemia to infiltration of the American labor movement, de-

spite the official ban on Communist unions by the A. F. L.-C. I. O.

Apart from its numerical shrinkage, the Communist party has been weakened by serious doctrinal differences. In a draft resolution for its convention next February, the party's national committee—over the dissent of the national chairman, William Z. Foster—has confessed a number of ideological errors.

It was wrong, says the 23,000-word resolution, in believing war inevitable; in predicting imminent economic crises in the United States; in the narrowness of its sectarianism that placed dogma before reality.

The party was wrong, says the committee, in accepting without question the infallibility of the Soviet Union and in denouncing, without investigation, anyone who dared question Moscow's behavior. The national committee claims socialism can be attained by peaceful means; the party must be democratized internally and re-examination is in order of "Marxist-Leninist theories."

This mea culpa attitude is a reflection of the extent to which American communism has been shaken by the denigration of Stalin by his successors. Some important Communists claim the party had begun to have serious doubts as early as 1952, which grew as the organization shrank.

New Idol Awaited

It is taken for granted by some in the Communist party that some leaders who urged too avidly the dogma now considered "error" may have to be sacrificed, or shelved.

Whether the errors of omission and commission of the resolution signify any important change in the Communist party is subject to strong disagreement. Eugene Dennis, the Communist party's general secretary, says the resolution "proposes far-reaching changes in our program."

However, a leading anti-Communist says the American Communist party still is taking orders from the Soviet Union and that even its confessions of error are part of the Russian international desire for a "united front."