
From Propaganda Society to Communist Party: Pages from Party History, 1919-1925

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In his report to the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, Comrade Zinoviev¹ declared:

“I think it is quite clear by now that the Communist International, in its earliest years, in a number of countries, was only a society for the propaganda of communism without being aware of this itself. At the beginning, we thought we were very strong, but as a matter of fact, in a number of countries at that time we did not have Communist Parties, but only great propaganda societies.”

Later on, in the same report, he declared:

“In spite of all weaknesses, in spite of all shortcomings of our sections, we are now in a number of countries, no longer propaganda societies, but we have grown into a Communist Party and in part even into a mass Communist Party.”

Comrade Zinoviev made clear at the Fifth Congress, and this was emphasized still more strongly at the Enlarged Executive Committee of the Communist International, held last March, that there was still a third stage in the development of the Communist Parties, that is, the Bolshevization of the Communist Parties.

The three stages of development — propaganda sects, Communist Parties, and Bolshevized Communist Parties — are also the stages of development of the Communist Party in this country. If we examine the history of the Communist Party in this country, we will come to the conclusion that our Party has definitely left behind the stage of development in which it was a propaganda sect and that it has created a firm foundation of policies and tactics for its development as a Communist Party — even as a mass Communist Party — and that it now stands before those great tasks which will make it really a Bolshevik Party.

From the time of its organization in 1919, until the organization of the Workers Party at the end of 1921, was, roughly speaking, the period of existence of the Party as a propaganda sect; the period from the formation of the Workers Party until the Fourth National Convention which closed on the sixth anniversary of the formation of the Com-

munist Party, was the period of the development and growth, with some setbacks, into a Communist Party; the Fourth National Convention can be said to have definitely crystallized the policies and tactics which make our Party a Communist Party and also to have laid down the beginning of the program through which the first steps will be taken for the Bolshevization of the Party.²

The Period of the Propaganda Sect

The purpose of this article is not to present a detailed history of the entire development of the Party, but rather to deal with that important phase of its development which took place between the Third and Fourth National Conventions and in the Fourth National Convention. It is necessary, however, briefly to sketch the earlier years of the Party development in order to lay the basis for discussion of the last twenty months of Party history, and also to clarify what are the characteristics of the three stages of development of a Communist Party pointed out above.

The Communist Party came into existence in the United States, as elsewhere, in response to the ferment cause in the socialist parties by the Russian Revolution. It was the historical example, that is, the establishment of a proletarian state through an armed uprising of the working masses, the sweeping away of the old parliamentary form of government, the establishment of the new workers' government upon the foundation of the soviets, that drove into the socialist parties the wedge which split them into two sharply defined groups, those who pretended they could achieve a socialist society through forms wrung from the capitalist state and those who saw the only road to socialism, the overthrow of the capitalist state and the establishment of the proletarian state, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Communist Party organized in the United States in September 1919, clearly stated this fundamental difference in principle in the program it adopted. Its analysis of the development of the Socialist Party showed that reform-

ist socialism led to the betrayal of the workers and not to socialism. It considered the propaganda of this fundamental difference between the Socialists and Communists its chief task.

In the four months of existence as an open Communist Party which our "American democracy" permitted it,³ the work of the Party consisted almost entirely of propaganda to drive home this difference between Socialists and Communists in the minds of the workers. The government persecution towards the end of 1919 and the beginning of 1920 helped to accentuate this tendency on the part of the Party. The Party was attacked because it taught the workers that they could emancipate themselves from capitalism only through an armed uprising which would overthrow the capitalist state and establish a soviet government. After it was driven underground, the party considered it all the more its duty to continue this propaganda. This would have been all very well if the Party had understood how to connect the proletarian revolution with the immediate struggles of the workers, but it did not understand how to do this. It had no connections with the masses of workers and their immediate struggles. The Party existed as something separate and apart from the life and struggles of the masses. The way which it showed the workers to their emancipation was, to be sure, correct, but it had not learned how to cross the void between itself and the working masses and to lead them toward the way to which it pointed as leading to their emancipation. It had no program or policies for their immediate struggle. Its entire work consisted of pointing to the ultimate means of achieving the proletarian revolution. It was purely a propaganda society and as long as it remained such a propaganda society it could not establish its leadership and influence among the masses.

Development Toward a Communist Party

The struggle for the formation of the Workers Party and adoption of the program for work within the existing unions marked the beginning of the second period in the growth of the Party. Not that the formation of an open party in itself would necessarily transform the Party from a propaganda sect to a Communist Party. An open party can just as easily fall into a sectarian policy — as later developments of our Party show. The struggle for the open party, however, was an effort to create an instrument through which the Party could actually play a part in the everyday fights of the workers, establish its prestige and influence among them, and as such must be considered as one of the first steps away from the previous sectarian policy.

The first real development from a propaganda sect into a Communist Party came during the year 1922. The

Party members began to function of the trade union field as part of the Trade Union Educational League, and the influence of the Party began to develop in the struggles in the trade unions. The Party played its part in the miners' strikes and the railway shopmen's strike of that year. It learned to take up the immediate struggles of the workers and on the basis of these struggles to win support for its policies and to establish its leadership. It had learned that the workers' demands and struggles of the day are the starting point from which it must move them forward into more revolutionary action against the capitalist class and the capitalist state.

In June 1922, the Party formulated the statement of the application of the United Front tactic to the situation in the United States. It took up the slogan of the Labor Party which had developed a strong momentum among the workers and soon became the leader in the movement for the formation of a Labor Party. The Party made the attack upon the Bridgman Convention the means of widening its influence among the workers by initiating a united front defense.⁴ It met the government persecution of the foreign-born workers by the formation of Councils for the Protection of the Foreign-Born, thus extending its influence among the workers.

The fact that by July 1923, when the convention called by the Farmer-Labor Party for the formation of a Farmer-Labor Party was held, our Party could elect 200 delegates to this convention, mostly from the trade unions, and could take the leadership of the 550 delegates, representing over 600,000 workers, who were present at that convention — this fact was an indication of the progress the Party has made in establishing contact with the masses and becoming a Communist Party.

At the end of 1923, when the Third National Convention was held,⁵ the Party had seemingly cast off its sectarian past and was no longer what Comrade Zinoviev described as a propaganda society. It had sunk its roots deeply among the masses, it had won a place as the leader in the movement for a Labor Party. It had gained a strong influence in the trade unions through its fight for amalgamation. It had learned to make itself part of the immediate struggles of the workers, as in the case of Councils for Protection of the Foreign-Born. It was well on the road to becoming a Communist Party in contradistinction to the propaganda society which it had been.

The Third National Convention

With this brief preliminary survey of the past history of our Party in its struggle to become a Communist

Party, the ground is cleared for consideration of the development between the Third and Fourth National Conventions of the Party.

The Third National Convention adopted the policy submitted by the Party leadership which had guided the Party in its development along the correct Communist line. The theses and resolutions of the Third National Convention laid the basis for further development of our Party as a Communist Party. In the light of this fact we may well ask how it came to be that the Party was compelled to go through a bitter factional struggle, lasting almost a year, to prevent the Party again becoming involved in the morass of sectarianism.

The explanation is found in the grouping which developed within the Party itself. The sectarianism of the period of the Party history up to 1922 was a left sectarianism. The new sectarianism which threatened the Party came from the right wing of the Party.

The formation of the Workers Party at the end of 1921 had brought into the organization a membership making up a majority of the Party which had not passed through the experiences of the previous years. This group had held aloof from the Communist Party at the time of its organization in 1921, remaining in the Socialist Party or maintaining a separate organizational existence.

All of the Language Federations in the Socialist Party had been to a large degree national social organizations. Those Language Federations which joined the Communist Party in 1919 lost through the government persecutions the major part of the element of its membership which had joined them as social organizations. At least two-thirds of the membership of the Federations which joined the Communist Party in 1919 dropped out of the Party after the government raids, leaving within the Party only the conscious Communist elements.

This was not true of the Finnish Federation, the German Federation, part of the Jewish Federation, the Czechoslovakian Federation, and the Scandinavian Federation, all of which came into the Party only after the formation of the Workers Party. This group of the membership was still strongly under the influence of the Socialist traditions. Their attitude toward the main tasks of the Party was that the Party should devote itself to propaganda and organizational work. The drawing of the Party into the mainstream of the struggles of the masses in this country was criticized as "adventurism" and "maneuvering."

What has been said above was particularly true of the Finnish Federation, which composed at least one-third of the membership of our Party. Only a small part of this membership actually participates in the work of the Party in the class struggle. It has not yet broken with the pleasant

unruffled existence as part of a socialist organization, free from the duties, burdens, and work which are the lot of a Communist who actually carries on a Communist struggle.

At the Third National Convention, the Foster group, which had been part of the leadership of the Party and which had formed a separate group on the issue of our Labor Party policy after the Federated Farmer-Labor Party convention, secured a majority in the National Convention of the Party through the support of the right-wing sectarian elements described above.

Thus, while the Third National Convention adopted correct principles and policies, it placed in the leadership of the Party the group which had its support in the right-wing of sectarian elements. The result of this combination soon became apparent on the first occasion that the Central Executive Committee was faced with the necessity of formulating a policy to meet a new situation. It fell into sectarian errors. The tendency of the Central Executive Committee to coalesce with its support in the Party was irresistible, and the Party as a consequence was thrown into a new struggle, the struggle against the right-wing sectarian tendency of the Foster group by the Central Executive minority, which fought to keep the Party on the correct lines of development as a Communist Party.

The Issue of Trotskyism

The first question on which the influence of the right wing of our Party made itself felt was the attitude of the Foster group in the Central Executive Committee on the question of Trotskyism.⁶ Lore, who had been elected to the Central Executive Committee, telegraphed to the *Volkszeitung* that "the Trotskyites have won the Party."⁷ Lore was the leader of the extreme right of the Party. When the issue of endorsement of the Old Guard of the Communist Party of Russia came before the Central Executive Committee, the committee majority hesitated and vacillated.⁷ It first refused to publish an article endorsing the Old Guard because not sufficient information was at hand on the issues. It later voted down a motion submitted by the minority to endorse the Old Guard and adopted the proposal to print all material, and that the question of Trotskyism should not be made a factional issue in the Party. It was not until after the convention of the Russian Communist Party definitely condemned Trotskyism and after Comrade Foster returned from Moscow that the Central Executive Committee actually went on record endorsing the Old Guard against Trotsky. Even then Ludwig Lore voted against this endorsement.

We have in this question the first indication of the

tendency of the Foster majority of the Central Executive Committee to make compromises in the direction of its right wing support in the Party. The vacillation and hesitation to place itself on record on the issues of Trotskyism was due to the fact that it was exactly those groups in the Party which supported it and which were its basis in the Party which were infected by Trotskyism.

The Fight Against Loreism

Lore has been in consistent opposition to the policies of the Party from time of its organization. Even at the time of the formation of the Left Wing, Lore, together with Scott Nearing,⁸ led an opposition in the Left Wing and finally broke with it. Lore opposed the underground Party at a time when it was not possible to preserve the Communist movement organizationally in any other form than through an underground organization. Lore opposed the German Communist Party and the Communist International on the question of Levi⁹ and supported Serrati¹⁰ of Italy against the Communist International.

After the formation of the Workers Party, Lore opposed those policies which had as their purpose to take the Party into the movement of the workers and to establish its prestige and leadership through fighting with them in their everyday struggles. Thus Lore opposed the adoption of the first statement of the United Front policy of the Party, which included the Labor Party policy. Lore was opposed to the Party sending delegates to the convention of the "Conference for Progressive Political Action" in Cleveland in December 1922,¹¹ which was one of the maneuvers through which the Party gained prestige in relation to the Labor Party movement. Within the Central Executive Committee, Lore fought consistently to have the Labor Party built upon individual membership, thus making it a competing organization with the Workers Party and destroying it as an expression of the United Front. The views and policies advocated by Lore were Left Wing Socialist but not Communist views and policies.

The errors of Lore as an individual had been fought by the Central Executive Committee prior to the Third National Convention. At the Third National Convention, through his opposition to the Labor Party-LaFollette alliance, which was proposed by the convention these submitted by the Central Executive Committee, Lore had crystallized around himself the opposition to this policy. There developed within the Party a definite Lore group, not only opposed to the Labor Party-LaFollette alliance, but which was in opposition to the United Front tactic and maneuvering which the Central Executive Committee had applied

prior to the convention in order to draw the Party into the mass struggles of the workers.

The first test of the attitude of the new Central Executive Committee majority on the question of Loreism¹² came when Lore wrote an editorial on the Fifth Anniversary of the Communist International, distorting the entire history and policies of the Communist International. The Central Executive Committee minority demanded a statement from the Central Executive Committee repudiating this editorial. This the Central Executive Committee refused to do. This policy was in effect to protect Lore against the exposure and condemnation of his fallacious views.

In the struggle which followed on the question of Loreism, the Central Executive Committee majority manifested the same tendency, even after the first decision of the Communist International. It repeatedly refused to adopt proposals of the minority of the Central Executive Committee to expose Lore before the Party and to correct his erroneous policies. It was not until after the second decision of the Communist International categorically condemning Lore and directing his removal from the Central Executive Committee that the Central Executive Committee majority, composed of the Foster group, took a stand against Loreism.

This refusal to fight Loreism was another expression of the right-wing orientation of the Foster group, which could not take a stand against Lore because it was allied with Lore, particularly in New York City, where it depended upon the support of Lore for its support in the Party.

Liquidation of the Labor Party Policy

The decision of the Communist International against the proposed Labor Party-LaFollette alliance, while not based on the reasons for opposition to this policy on the part of the right wing Loreist group in our Party, strengthened this group. The decision of the Communist International was not based on opposition to such a maneuver in principle. In fact, the decision made clear that such maneuvers were permissible for Communist Parties. The decision of the Communist International was made on the basis of the situation of our Party, its degree of strength and ideological development, but not because the maneuver was incorrect in principle. However, the Lore group had opposed this alliance, and the fact of the Communist International deciding against it strengthened the Lore group. Both the majority and the minority of the Central Executive Committee had been declared in error on the Labor Party-LaFollette alliance and thus had burnt their fingers. This decision had the effect of driving the Foster Central

Executive Committee majority closer to the Lore group. The reaction of the Foster majority was to adopt a position in opposition to further maneuver, that is, to take a right-wing sectarian policy, as the safest course. The difference between the majority of the Central Executive Committee and the minority group was then indicated in the fact that the decision on the question of the Labor Party-LaFollette alliance had no such effect upon the minority.

With the defeat of the Party in the St. Paul Convention, compelling the Party to nominate its own candidates in the Presidential elections,¹³ came the test of the Central Executive majority.

The decision made in October in relation to the dropping of the slogan for a Labor Party in the AF of L convention, the statement on the results of the Presidential elections, and finally the thesis of the majority declaring against the continuance of the Labor Party policy, were expressions of the new right-wing sectarianism in our Party in full bloom.

The Foster group had declared that their policy was not opposition in principle to the Labor Party policy, but opposition under the then-existing conditions. It is true that the thesis of the Foster group contained the declaration: "We are not opposed to the Labor Party in principle." While this platonic declaration was made, the tone of the whole discussion in the Party was otherwise and the thesis itself declared in a section endeavoring to prove that advocacy of the Labor Party slogan was a right-wing deviation:

"The position taken by the comrades of this tendency is that the only way to crystallize independent political action of workers and poor farmers is through a Farmer-Labor Party, forgetting the existence of the Workers Party as the political class Party of the workers and poor farmers. These comrades also take the position that the only way to build a mass Communist Party in America is through a Farmer-Labor Party, thus enunciating a new principle that the Workers Party can never become a mass Communist Party except through organizing and working within a Farmer-Labor Party."

And further along in the same section we find a declaration that:

"This non-Communist conception of the role of our Party manifest itself particularly in the tendency to resort to all kinds of new political organizations, substitutes for the Workers Party, whenever an opportunity presents itself to appeal to masses of workers on concrete issues of everyday life."

These two quotations indicate clearly where the Foster group was drifting. The latter quotation is in essence a declaration against the United Front tactic. For, what do we seek to do in the United Front maneuver but to unite

existing workers' organizations for a common struggle on some particular issue? The declaration that the formation of such United Front organizations is creating substitutes for the Workers Party is of course pure sectarianism, for if the Workers Party carries on a correct Communist policy in relation to such United Front organizations, they will not be substituted for the Workers Party, but will be the means of building it, just as the Labor Party policy resulted in building up the Workers Party.

That the sectarian error of the Labor Party was not an isolated mistake was indicated by the fact that the Foster group made the same error in relation to work among women when it endeavored to liquidate the United Council of Workingclass Women as a competing organization to the Workers Party, and it made a similar sectarian error in proposing that the Party should make a nonpartisan relief organization a department of the Party itself.

The struggle which developed in the Central Executive Committee during the same period over the question of the Party's trade union work was part of the same general tendency of the Central Executive Committee majority. The struggles were over the questions of carrying on a campaign to win the trade unions ideologically for Communism at the same time that we carried on an election campaign, and against the overemphasis upon the election campaign. This issue arose in another form in relation to proposals to inject major political issues into certain trade union situations. The tendency of trade union work for the sake of trade union work and not for the purpose of building up the influence and prestige of the Communist Party goes with the right-wing sectarianism.

Later in relation to the conferences of the "Conference for Progressive Political Action" which were being held in various states and the national conference held in February 1925, the Central Executive Committee majority raised the slogan, "Boycott the CPPA."

Thus the circle was completed. We had been a propaganda society, we were again to be a propaganda society. We had fought our way from the status of propaganda society to that of a developing Communist Party playing its part in the struggles of the masses, entering into these struggles, and bringing leadership to them and direction along a Communist line. We had returned to the policy of "Boycott the CPPA," that is, boycott a mass movement of workers.

The Central Executive Committee majority elected at the Third National Convention through the support of a right wing sectarian group in our Party had coalesced with the right-wing sectarian group and had adopted the policy of this group as the policy of the Party. The Party was in danger of losing all that it had gained in developing itself as

a Communist Party. It was sliding down the road the Socialist Labor Party had gone, to become a self-admiration society living its life apart from the actual struggles of the workers.

The Struggle in the Party

It was this issue, whether we should retrace our steps toward sectarianism, or go forward in developing our Party as a Communist Party, that was at the bottom of the factional struggle in our Party during the past year. Happily, with the aid of the Communist International, the Party was returned to the right path. The decision of the Communist International swept away every shred of the sectarianism which had developed in our Party. It made clear why the Labor Party policy must be a major policy of our Party. It declared against a sectarian attitude in regard to work among women. It directed the Party to the right tactic in relation to trade union work, took decisive measures against Loreism within the Party. The Central Executive Committee minority, which had led the fight to develop the Party from a propaganda society to a Communist Party, succeeded, with the aid of the Communist International, in preventing the Party from again degenerating into the propaganda society which it had been.

The Fourth National Convention

The Fourth National Convention marked the close of the period of struggle to prevent our Party again degenerating into a propaganda society. It also marked the beginning of a new period in the history of the Party — the period of the Bolshevization of the Party.

The situation in the convention presented an interesting contradiction. All the resolutions outlining the policy of the Party for the coming period were unanimously adopted in the Parity Commission which worked out these resolutions. Still, there was a sharp factional division in the convention and the ten days of debate marked one of the bitterest struggles in the history of our Party.

The explanation of this situation is to be found in the year of factional struggle to keep our Party on the correct Communist line. The policy of the Foster group had been corrected through the struggle of the minority in the Central Executive Committee and the decision of the Communist International. The resolutions presented to the Convention stressed this corrected policy. It again put the Party on the road to development as a Communist Party. The debate on these resolutions dealt with the policies con-

tained in the resolutions as contrasted with the policies which the Foster group had presented previously. It was necessary to point out the errors of a sectarian character which had been made and to stamp these definitely before the Party in order that there might not exist a further possibility that such errors would again find support in our Party.

The relation of forces within the convention also contributed to sharpen the discussion and the factional alignment.

An analysis of the decision of the Communist International makes clear the aims of the Communist International in relation to our Party. This aim was to break the alliance which had existed between the Foster group in the Central Executive Committee and the right wing of the Party. This policy is clearly indicated in the sharp position taken by the Communist International against Lore and Loreism and its insistence on cooperation in the Party leadership between the two leading groups in the Party.

A realization of this aim of the Communist International has been seriously hampered by the tactics of the Foster group in the period between the return of the delegation from Moscow and the National Convention and was made impossible by its alliance with the right wing of the Party in the struggle for control of the National Convention.

The Foster group had suffered a defeat in the decision of the Communist International. Its main line of policy was declared to be incorrect by the decision. While the decision criticized the minority in relation to the Labor Party policy, the main line of the minority in this respect was upheld. Facing this situation, the Foster group endeavored to divert the attention of the Party from the political issues before the Party. In place of creating the opportunity for a thoroughgoing understanding of the decision of the Communist International, which would have raised the theoretical level of our Party, it sought to divert the whole struggle into a fight over petty organizational questions and sought to divert the attention of the Party from the meaning of the decision of the Communist International on Loreism through an effort to connect the minority, which had made a consistent fight against Loreism, with the Loreist group in the Party.

These efforts of the Foster group took the form of sending to all the Party branches the “nine points” circular containing charges and defense in relation to factional actions within the Party during the absence of the delegates in Moscow. It sent to the Party a statement in regard to the Needle Trades situation in which the minority group was attacked as supporters of the Loreist elements, and a similar statement in reference to Comrade Poyntz.¹⁴ To all of

these statements the minority group had been denied the opportunity to make a reply.

These activities of the Foster group were, to say the least, acts of bad faith in relation to the decision of the Communist International. They were efforts to divert attention from that decision and prevented the realization of the aim of the Communist International as plainly indicated in the decision, the unification of the Party leadership in a struggle against the right wing in the Party.

The election of delegates in the Party was another factor which laid the basis for a continuation of the struggle in the convention. The Foster group, as has been pointed out previously, gained this majority in the Third National Convention through the support of the right wing of the Party. The same situation developed in relation to the elections for the Fourth Convention. It was exactly those elements which are the right wing of our Party, the Finnish Federation, the Czechoslovak Federation, the Scandinavian Federation, part of the Jewish Federation, which formed the basis of the Foster group in the National Convention. In place of a unification of the leadership of the Party to fight for a correct Communist line¹⁵ and the Bolshevization of the Party, the Foster group followed the policy of a fight against the minority which had supported the correct policies and used the elements in the right of our Party as the basis of this struggle against the minority.

Formally, the Foster group won a majority of the delegates to the National Convention. In five districts, however, which form the greater section of the Party — Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland — the minority had won a clear victory, for it claimed the districts on the basis of contests before the convention. The decision of the contested districts against the minority by the Foster group, the rejection of its proposal that in New York, Philadelphia, and Cleveland the parity principle should be applied, was, for the minority group, a rejection of the policy of the Communist International and an indication that the Foster group would not bring about amalgamation of the leading groups in the Party but would continue an alliance with the right wing in the Party and as leader of this right wing would continue a struggle against the minority. It was this situation, the continuation of the alignment which had cause the sectarian errors and the factional struggle of the past year, the beginning of a clear delineation of a struggle between right and left wing in the Party, which was the basis of the severe factional debate and struggle in the Convention.

The intervention of the Communist International changed this situation and eliminated the danger of a consolidated right wing leadership in our Party. This intervention took the form of a cablegram addressed to the chair-

man of the Parity Commission, Comrade Green,¹⁶ reading as follows:

“Communist International decided under no circumstances should be allowed that Majority suppresses Ruthenberg Group because:

FIRSTLY — It has finally become clear that the Ruthenberg Group is more loyal to decisions of the Communist International and stands closer to its views.

SECONDLY — Because it has received in most important districts, the majority or an important minority.

THIRDLY — Because Foster Group employs excessively mechanical and ultra-factional methods.

Demands as minimum:

FIRSTLY — Ruthenberg Group must get not less than 40 percent of Central Executive Committee.

SECONDLY — Demand as ultimatum from majority that Ruthenberg retains post of Secretary.

THIRDLY — Categorically insist upon Lovestone's Central Executive Committee membership.

FOURTHLY — Demand as ultimatum from majority refraining removals, replacements, dispersions against factional opponents.

FIFTHLY — Demand retention by Ruthenberg Group of co-editorship of central organ.

SIXTHLY — Demand maximum application of parity on all executive organs of Party.

If majority does not accept these demands then declare that, in view of circumstances of elections, unclear who has real majority and that methods of majority raise danger of split and therefore Communist International proposes that now only a temporary Parity Central Executive Committee be elected with neutral chairman to call new Convention after passions have died down. Those who refuse to submit will be expelled.

This cablegram resulted in a bitter struggle and division in the ranks of the Foster majority over the policy to be pursued in the face of this second decision of the Communist International. The Foster group finally decided although the cablegram permitted them to take a majority of the Central Executive Committee, that in the face of a declaration by the Communist International that the Ruthenberg group was more loyal to the Communist International and nearer to its views, it could not take over the leadership of the Party. It proposed that a Central Executive Committee of an equal number of representatives from both groups in the convention be elected and this proposal was adopted.

At the first meeting of the Central Executive Committee, Comrade Green, the chairman of the Parity Commission, made the following declaration:

“Of course we have now a parity CEC, but it is not exactly a parity CEC. With the decision of the Communist International on the question of the groups in the American party there go parallel instructions to the CI Representative to support that group which was the former minority. If the CI continues to support this policy, that will always be the

case, that is, the CI Representative will be supporting that group and therefore although we have a nearly parity CEC, we have a majority and a minority in the CEC.”

With the support of the Representative of the Communist International, the majority of the leading committee of the Party was given to the Ruthenberg group. Thus again responsibility for the leadership of the Party was placed upon that group which had carried on the struggle against sectarianism and to develop our Party from a propaganda society into a Communist Party, and which during the past twenty months has carried on the struggle against the Party's again degenerating into a sectarian organization. This outcome of the National Convention is a guarantee to the Party that the struggle against sectarian errors has been finally won and that our Party will, with the support of the Communist International, go forward to new achievement in developing itself as a mass Communist Party.

Convention Resolutions

The resolutions adopted by the Fourth National Convention lay the foundation for such a development of the Party. In these resolutions, formulated in the Parity Commission under the chairmanship of the Representative of the Communist International, there is not a scintilla of sectarianism.

These convention resolutions must be studied by our whole Party, and the Party must be mobilized to transform the resolutions into actual living things in the work of the Party.

The major resolutions are those dealing with the general tasks of the Party, the Labor Party, and the trade union work of the Party. The Labor Party campaign must again become a major activity of the Party. It is not only to be a propaganda campaign, but the Party must again stir into life and movement the working masses in the direction of actual organization of the Labor Party. The mobilization of the workers for a political struggle for their class interests is the first requirement of the situation of the working-class movement in the United States. If our Party can aid in stirring into life and can crystallize as an organization a movement of hundreds of thousands of workers to enter the lists to fight against the capitalist parties, then we have made the first great step forward in the development of the American working-class and at the same time toward our Party becoming a mass Communist Party.

Closely connected with the Labor Party campaign is the work in the trade unions. Our Party was able to make substantial progress in this field in the past, but it never mobilized its whole strength for the trade union work. The

records show that only one-third of the Party membership are members of the trade unions. This situation must be remedied. It will be one of the first tasks of the Party to bring into the trade unions its whole membership and to mobilize it for action there. The trade unions are the greatest organized mass of workers in this country and offers the greatest possibility for Communist propaganda. Our work in the trade unions, under the slogans of the Labor Party, amalgamation, trade union unity, will create a solid foundation of Party influence among the masses.

In relation to the trade union work, the convention resolutions emphasize the part that organization of the unorganized will play in establishing Communist influence among the organized workers. Our Party must take up the task and make at least a beginning in the organization of unorganized workers. These workers will be largely the unskilled workers, most susceptible to Communist influence, and will form in the American Federation of Labor the counterweight to the aristocracy of labor which today dominates that organization.

The program for the struggle against imperialism, for work among the farmers, work among the Negro workers, and work among women, all outline concretely the tasks of the Party in special fields which have not previously received sufficient attention and which must from now on be taken up aggressively by the Party as part of its work going to the masses.

Bolshevization: The New Period of Development

The Fourth Convention has not only given our Party a program for its development as a mass Communist Party, but it has taken the initiative and laid the foundation for the Bolshevization of our Party.

The resolutions outlining programs for work among the masses are, of course, an important part of the program of Bolshevization. A Bolshevik Party is a mass party — a party which has its roots deep among the masses and influence their struggles, leading them into ever more aggressive fights against the capitalist class and the capitalist state power. A sectarian party cannot be a Bolshevik Party. The fight against sectarianism is therefore a fight for Bolshevization. In definitely cleaning its house of all sectarianism, the Party has cleared the way for Bolshevization.

The resolution of the National Convention for the liquidation of Loreism, which means a fight against all right-wing opportunist tendencies in our Party, represents another phase of the task of Bolshevization. In expelling Lore from the Party, in its disciplinary action against Comrade Askeli,¹⁷ in its declaration in reference to Comrade Poyntz,

the convention gave an expression of its earnestness and determination that the fight against Loreism is not a mere temporary struggle, but is to be carried on until every vestige of such tendencies is liquidated in the Party. In the attitude adopted by the new leading majority in the Jewish section convention in relation to the Loreist elements there is further indication that there will be no compromise on this issue. The Bolshevik Party must carry on a ceaseless struggle against opportunism, and this the Party will do.

The best guarantee that sectarianism will not again gain a foothold in the Party, and also a guarantee against opportunism of the Lore type, is the raising of the theoretical level of the Party. The work of educating the membership of the Party in Marxism and Leninism¹⁸ therefore becomes a vital part of the work of Bolshevization. The National convention has adopted a program for this work and the Central Executive Committee has already established an Agitprop Department so that this work will be given systematic attention in the future.

The reorganization of our Party on the basis of shop nuclei and street nuclei (international branches) is for the Party the greatest immediate transformation in the work of Bolshevization. We cannot become a Bolshevik Party as long as our Party is decentralized into eighteen language groups and exists in the form of language and territorial branches. The reorganization on the basis of shop nuclei is the basis of our becoming a mass party.

The existing Party organization belongs to the past. It was a Party organization existing outside of the working class in place of inside as part of it. The new Party organiza-

tion will create the organ for carrying out our program for work among the masses. The reorganization is the *sine qua non* without which we cannot make even the first step toward the Bolshevization of the Party. With the reorganization, a new Party will come into existence — a Party in close contact with the workers in the factories through its shop nuclei, a Party with fractions in every trade union and benefit society and cooperative — in a work, a Party that is so deeply embedded among the workers and the organizations of the workers that there is no power which can separate it from the working masses and prevent its influence and leadership from growing powerful among these masses.

Thus, through these actions of the Fourth Convention, there has opened the new phase of Party development, the period of Bolshevization. Our Party stands before tremendous tasks and great opportunities. In order that these tasks may be accomplished and to take advantage of the opportunities before it, the Party must be united for the work it has on hand.

The party has a correct program of activity. It has a leadership which has the stamp of approval of the Communist International as being the group closest to the views of the Communist International in our Party. We must now through actual work, through actual struggle, make our program a reality. The immediate future requires of every member of the Party greater sacrifice, greater service to the Party than ever before in its history. We have achieved the correct program, our Party leadership has shown in the past that it can put our program into action. Now the Party must work. •

Footnotes:

1. Grigori Zinoviev (1883-1936), member of the RSDRP from 1907 and of the Central Committee from 1912 until his removal in the faction fight of 1927, was at this time the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI). He also, along with Iosif Stalin and Lev Kamenev, was one of the leading three decision-makers in Soviet Russia following Lenin's death in January 1924. The 5th Congress of the Comintern, at which Zinoviev delivered the keynote address, was held from June 17 to July 8, 1924.
2. The 4th National Convention of the Workers (Communist) Party of America was held in Chicago from August 21-30, 1925. This convention returned the reins of the American Communist Party to the Ruthenberg/Pepper/Lovestone faction from the Foster/Canon/Bittelman faction.
3. Reference is to the coordinated mass raids which took place the night of January 1/2, 1920, resulting in several thousand arrests and the seizure of party offices and the records they contained. Denied the use of headquarters or the mails, warrants pending for the arrest of their leading cadres, the Communist Party of America and Communist Labor Party of America were forced underground in the aftermath.
4. The 2nd Convention of the unified Communist Party of America, held in Bridgman, Michigan in mid-August 1922, was penetrated by a police spy and then raided by the authorities for alleged violation of state "Criminal Syndicalism" statutes. Court cases tied to the affair dragged on for years.
5. Reference to the "Third Convention" in this article relates to the 3rd National Convention of the Workers Party of America, which was held in Chicago, Dec. 30, 1923 to Jan. 2, 1924. A 3rd (and final) Convention of the underground Communist Party of America had previously been held in April of 1923.
6. "Trotskyism" as an ideological construction was a product of the faction fight in the Russian Communist Party from the time of Lenin's death. It was a tool used by the Zinoviev/Stalin/Kamenev troika to isolate and defeat their leading competitor for the helm of the Soviet state. The ideological concept of "Leninism" dates from this same period.
6. Ludwig Lore (1875-1942) was a German-born textile worker

- who came to the United States in 1903. A life-long Socialist, Lore served as the Secretary of the German Federation of the Socialist Party up to the 1919 split and as well as editor of the venerable *New Yorker Volkszeitung*. In 1920, Lore was a member of the 3 member Editorial Board of the CLP publications *Voice of Labor* and *Communist Labor*. Later in 1920, Lore was sentenced to 5 years in prison as part of mass trial of the CLP leadership held in Chicago; he was freed by a pardon of the Governor after serving 10 days in prison. Lore later served as the National Executive Secretary of the German Federation of the Workers Party from 1922, and was elected to the Central Executive Committee of the WPA by the 3rd Convention. Lore was expelled from the Party for alleged right wing deviation in 1925, purportedly the leading exponent of an alien ideology called "Loreism." He wrote periodically for the liberal and left wing press after his expulsion from the Communist Party. Lore translated Hitler's *Mein Kampf* for an unexpurgated American edition in 1939.
7. By "Old Guard" of the Russian Communist Party is meant Zinoviev, Stalin, and Kamenev in their faction struggle against Trotsky.
 8. Scott Nearing (1883-1983) was a well-known left wing economist and writer who lectured at the Socialist Party's Rand School of Social Science from 1916-1923. He was a member of the Communist Party only briefly, first admitted in 1927. In his later years Nearing wrote a regular column for the non-party Marxist theoretical journal *Monthly Review*.
 9. Paul Levi (1883-1930) was a left wing German lawyer who came over to the Communist Party of Germany in 1919. He was for a time the German representative in the ECCI before being expelled from the German Party for opposition to its political line. After his expulsion, Levi returned to the Social Democratic Party of Germany. He ultimately ended his life by his own hand.
 10. Giacomo M. Serrati (1874-1926) was a prominent leader of the Italian Socialist Party and editor of its organ *Avanti* from 1914-1922. In 1924 he joined the Italian Communist Party owing to a split of the Italian Socialist Party.
 11. The Conference for Progressive Political Action grew out of a call issued by a committee representing the heads of the 16 railway unions. The organization sought to unite all progressive labor, farmer, and cooperative political forces of the country to elect progressives to Congress and the various state legislatures. The group held two Conferences in 1922, including the December gathering mentioned here. A major role was played in the organization by Morris Hillquit and other leaders of the Socialist Party. The group terminated itself in 1925.
 12. Note the similarity to the tactics used in Soviet Russia against Trotsky at this same time — the arbitrary creation of a loosely defined but thoroughly alien "-ism" to be used as an extreme epithet against factional opponents.
 13. Sen. Robert LaFollette (1855-1925) was a progressive Republican from Wisconsin who ran an independent progressive campaign for President of the United States in 1924. His entry into the race removed any chance for a new Labor Party to gain political "traction" in that year. The Socialist Party did not run a candidate for President in 1924, instead endorsing and working for the election of LaFollette. LaFollette and the Communists were bitterly at odds, however, making use of a similar tactic unthinkable. A somewhat inept attempt was made at establishing a (Communist-dominated) Farmer-Labor Party at a convention held in St. Paul, Minnesota in June of 1924. Utterly isolated, that group's nominee abruptly dropped out of the race after only a month and the Workers Party felt itself obligated to run its own nominee instead for President instead. William Z. Foster was the nominee of the WPA in 1924.
 14. Juliet S. Poyntz (1886-1937?), was the Nebraska-born daughter of a lawyer. Poyntz gained a Masters Degree from Columbia University and later served as Educational Director of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, 1915-19 as well as a researcher for the Rand School of Social Science. She joined the Communist movement in 1921; at the end of 1923 she was a delegate to the 3rd Convention of the WPA from the New York district. She was censured by name by the 4th Convention for having "persistently followed the policy of Loreism, which is a right wing deviation away from the line of the Communist International." The Convention Resolution demanded that Poyntz immediate cease supporting Lore. Poyntz later went on to work for Soviet espionage in the 1930s. She reputedly disappeared under mysterious circumstances during the Ezhovshchina in the USSR, 1937.
 15. Note Ruthenberg's use of the concept of a single correct "line" here, several years before the ubiquitous use of the term "General Line" in the Soviet Union in association with the industrialization campaign of the first Five Year Plan.
 16. "P. Green" was Sergei Gusev (1874-1933), the Representative of the Communist International to the American Party. Gusev (born Ia.D. Drabkhin) was a member of the RSDRP from 1896 and in 1923-25 was the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. Sent to the United States as CI Rep in 1925, Gusev worked for the rest of his life as a functionary in the Comintern, winding up as the head of the Anglo-American Secretariat of the ECCI.
 17. Askeli was a member of the editorial staff of the Finnish Communist paper *Tyomies*, based in Superior, Wisconsin. The 4th National Convention of the WPA in August 1925 unanimously passed a resolution blaming the "opportunist" tendencies of *Tyomies* on the "influence of Comrade Askeli," who was characterized as being "the consistent exponent of Loreist tendencies." Askeli was removed from his post on the editorial staff upon the direct orders of the Convention.
 18. Note early use of the term "Leninism," an ideological construct emerging as a byproduct of the faction fight within the Russian Communist Party after the death of Lenin.

Footnotes compiled by Tim Davenport, who also edited the text.

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