

IX. TO THE PEOPLE WILL BELONG THE VICTORY

I AM very happy to be able to speak this evening and to take part in this commemoration of the anniversary of the death of our great leader, Lenin.

Lenin taught us much. Very often we forget how much of the understanding that we have of the world about us, of the struggles that are taking place, we owe to the teachings of Lenin. How often we forget that if we can look upon this turbulent and chaotic scene of American social and political life and make some meaning out of it and see ahead what is coming, we must thank the teachings of Lenin for that ability. And it is well that we have these meetings every year to remind ourselves of that great source of wisdom, and to remind ourselves that although Lenin died, Leninism lives, and that Lenin left a worthy successor who is continuing the work which he did with brilliant success, that great pupil and continuer of Lenin, our dear comrade Joseph Stalin. The international working class movement—the communist movement of the world—that can produce such leaders and teachers can never be defeated.

One of the outstanding characteristics of Lenin and Lenin's best co-worker is this—they never allow themselves to be carried away with the joys of victory, and in moments of sharp struggle or defeat, they never get panicky, they never get excited, they never whine. The more difficult the moment, the more steadfast and steel-like and cool they stand in the midst of the storm until, with the great rising mass movement, they not only ride the storm but control the storm and bring the ship of the working class to port.

Today, I received on your behalf the sentence against our movement. I consider it a great honor. At the same time, carrying our appeal from this court of the ruling class of America to the people of America, we must warn the people that this verdict of this case is only one incident in the drive of the American ruling class toward war, and especially in converting the present imperialist war into war against the Soviet Union. In this court today I was prohibited from speaking, except within the limits that were laid down by the judge. I observed those limits which he laid down, even though in the observation of those limits I was constantly coming into collision with them. But what was it that the judge wanted above all to prevent me from speaking about in that court? The one thing above all that was prohibited from even being whispered there was the motive of the prosecution. A great deal was said about the motive of the defendant. But in order to discuss the motive of the prosecution, we have to get outside the courtroom. And while we still have this privilege of discussing outside the courtroom, let us make the most of it. It is not enough to say in a general way that the motive of this prosecution lies in the general campaign of our ruling class to prepare our country for war. That is true. We have to concretize it a little, a good deal more than that.

Since last summer, the powers that be have been preparing their drive against the Communist Party, and we have been warning that this was only the opening gun of the drive against the whole labor movement and against American democracy. Up until last summer this drive was being carried on outside the Administration of the Federal Government and was directed in the first place against the New Deal Administration. Since last August, a great change has come about. The drive is carried on through the Administration because the New Deal lamb has lain down with the reactionary lion. Unity has been achieved. The lamb has been eaten and the lion stands now in the robes of the Administration carrying out the policies of a generally united American bourgeoisie—united on the program to scrap the progressive social legislation of the New Deal, to revise the budget in favor of the economic royalists and against the people, to cut down on all the social services and unemployed benefits and all the money saved

thereby, by this economy at the expense of the people, to dump into a great program of war preparations.

That's what's happened—a great shift of class forces and the crystallization of a great drive in a particular direction against the living standards of the people, against their civil rights and against their peace.

Up until the last months in which this change has taken place, the Communists were supporting the New Deal against the reactionary camp of the Republicans and the anti-New Deal Democrats. So long as the camp of reaction found any obstacle in the New Deal camp, we supported it. But when peace was made with the economic royalists, they could not carry us along with them. The whole progressive democratic bloc was broken up. We Communists were a part of that bloc. We never were officially recognized, of course. We were the poor relations, even though Governor Lehman of New York occupies his position instead of Thomas E. Dewey on account of the votes of the Communist Party. But we were a part of the progressive bloc that protected New Deal legislation against the assaults of the reactionaries before it was broken up by the surrender of the New Deal leadership and their passing into the camp of their former opponents. When these gentlemen thought that they could use the support of the Communists, we became almost respectable. Never quite respectable. Almost. They knew us then. They knew almost everything about us. One thing they did not know about us. They did not know that they could not handle us as servants when they betrayed the cause of the people. When we were in agreement on protecting New Deal legislation and a peace policy, these gentlemen were very glad to receive our support, as long as we did not make too much noise about it.

When the Governor of Michigan in 1938 was deserted by his own political machine and faced a stiff fight with the Republicans without a machine behind him, he was glad to get the support of the Communist Party in conducting his campaign for re-election. He will not deny it. He is a God-fearing man. He would not lie about it. He would not deny he had long intimate conferences with Communists as to how best to conduct his campaign for governor. But he lost his

election by a 2 per cent of the vote. We were not able to win the election for him. And he was a hero only for one campaign. After he was defeated, he saw a great light. He became convinced he had made a great mistake when he had failed to heed the advice of some of our "best families." He demonstrated he had learned his lesson and would be a good boy thereafter. And there was opened up the prospect for him to retire to the most exclusive old men's club of America. But before he could do that, he had to present certain guarantees. He had to present some "head on a charger" according to the ancient tradition. He had to seal his bargain, metaphorically speaking, with the blood of the associates who had tainted his past. That is one of the smaller angles to the sentence in the Federal District Court today.

Well, we never wasted any time weeping about those who have deserted from the fight, and surrendered to the enemy and entered into their service. As a matter of fact, we never had many illusions about these people. We had read our Marx and Lenin and had understood that while sections of the petty bourgeoisie and some of the bourgeoisie may occupy progressive positions in certain historic moments—and when they do, we join forces with them for that moment against the reactionaries—we knew it is in the very nature of these class forces that they cannot follow a consistent position from one year to another, for any long period, and rarely can occupy a consistent position from month to month except when they are solidified and led by their most reactionary section.

And that is what is taking place today. The trial today is the opening gun in a great campaign to curb and harness the labor movement. It belongs along with the campaign to scrap and hamstring the National Labor Relations Board, along with the war and hunger budget in Congress, and along with the campaign to "get" labor leaders, which is now broadening out. How rapidly this campaign is developing in our country we can note if we remember that a few months ago the newspapers never threatened any labor leaders except the C.I.O. But reading the *World-Telegram* editorial this afternoon—the leading editorial—it is directed to William Green and it says: William Green, your name is on the list too. You come next. Well, that's only according to the

well-known laws of class struggle. The only people who are surprised are the people to whom Marxism-Leninism is a closed book. If we want to be able to understand and to a certain degree to foresee events we must study the science and history of the workers, of the great masters of the science of history, which is the science of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin. Yes, these temporary associates of ours in the democratic progressive bloc had gathered rather tentatively around progressive New Deal measures for a certain historical period. These former associates of ours don't need us any more. What use are we to them now? When they were fighting for social betterment, well, they not only needed us to round up the people for these things, they even needed us often to help them draft their speeches. They didn't know how to do it. They don't need us for these things any more. They are not making that kind of speeches and they don't want to rouse the masses. In the days when they did want to rouse the masses, we had the peculiar experience with them that we had to restrain them. They were ultra-leftists, and very often we had to warn them that that kind of tactics is not good—you had better lay off of it. We were a sobering and restraining influence upon them. Just as now they need a sobering and restraining influence from another direction.

That instability arises out of the very class nature of these people; constantly torn by contradictions, they have interests here and interests there, and they cannot be reconciled. The daughter-in-law may be married to a munitions family and there is a contradiction to it if we have a peace policy. Another member of the family may have entered the employ of their once greatest political rival. These contradictions have to be reconciled some way and the family and national unity have to be re-established some way, and how can it be done?

Well, a very touching unanimity is being built up now. But it is a unity that's directed against the welfare and peace of the people of America. And the more rapidly we shout this from the housetops of the country, the less painful and difficult is going to be the road which our country will have to travel in the stormy days ahead.

Yes, peace has been made between the economic royalists and their former chief critics. No more do we hear these glowing speeches which

arouse the hope and enthusiasm of the masses of the people. Today the new hero, the new inspiration, the symbol of this unity is the figure of Alexander Hamilton who is edging out Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson made the great mistake of being carried away by enthusiasm for the French Revolution.

These are the things that show the road that is being prepared for our country by the gentlemen who occupy positions of power. These are the things that are threatening disaster for our people. The people will be asked to pay, but that's nothing compared with what they will have to pay unless we begin to get the expression of an answer to these things. How can we let the gentlemen in the seats of power know what the people are thinking and feeling? At this moment, unfortunately, the only organized expression of this is the Communist Party, and we are still quite small, weak. We must build our Communist Party faster and stronger than ever, and build our *Daily Worker* more and more, stronger than ever—because the *Daily Worker* is just like air for us today; without it we cannot breathe. But we must not be content with that. We must organize, find ways of giving expression to that great broad mass—the majority of the people who are not with us as Communists yet, but are absolutely at one with us to stop the reactionary campaign in this country, to bring back a social budget instead of a hunger budget and to keep us out of war. The majority of the people are with us in that.

We can and we must go to the people of America. On this message we don't want the monopoly of the effective struggle for peace. We will go to the people with this message and will organize around it—with out party—a great mass people's peace party, a social party, a party of a social budget instead of a hunger budget, a party of peace and prosperity for the people. That is what is needed now.

The people are going to march forward—and to the people will belong the victory.

Speech at Madison Square Garden, New York City, January 22, 1940, to honor the memory of V. I. Lenin on the Sixteenth Anniversary of his death.