

kept appealing as such to the Jewish voters. . . . The man had not changed, the line had.

Like many saintly men, Amter could be cruel and revengeful to people holding different views. In 1942, with Russia and America in the war, he denounced Norman Thomas as a "Fifth Columnist and a Spearhead of Fascism," and demanded that the government take measures against him and other Fifth Columnists.\*<sup>432</sup>

Amter died in 1954.

### **JACK STACHEL, THE ORGANIZATION MAN**

The organizational key-man of the party in the late 20's and 30's was Jack Stachel. He has come out rather badly in some of the writings of former Communists who dealt with him in the factional struggle. But the full measure of the man could not be taken in the 20's.

Of all those who entered the Communist movement as foot soldiers, Stachel's way to leadership was the most rapid. He did not inch his way to power in the party; he grabbed it with both hands.

Stachel was born in Austrian Poland in 1900, of a poor family. He came to this country at the age of nine. After finishing public school, he supported himself by peddling in the daytime, while continuing his studies in evening high school, which he graduated.

Stachel joined the CP in 1924. The functionary who made out his application remembered a little episode: Immediately after signing the form, Stachel asked to be assigned as a speaker on one of the street corners. The functionary, amazed at his eagerness, replied, "Wait a little while, until you get acclimated in the party." But Stachel impatiently insisted on speaking the same evening.\*<sup>433</sup>

Young, unknown, without any outward sign of being above the average, Stachel could not gain attention in the party. He begged to be attached to the Young Workers League. There his talent for organizational maneuvering and his shrewd judgment of men were quickly revealed. He joined the Ruthenberg faction, and helped to line up a majority of the YWL for the faction. A couple of years later, he wound up a representative of the YCL in that faction. From there his rise in the party was rapid. He soon emerged as the right-hand man of Jay Lovestone. The latter planned the factional

strategy and Stachel was the chief executor, which involved much shady work.

Stachel's real opportunity came after the Lovestone people were out, in 1929. He knew the party more intimately than the members of the triumvirate, and was a more skilful politician by far. And when the reins of the party were handed over to Browder, who was still less acquainted with the party membership—and the latter with him—Stachel became indispensable in all inner-party matters.

Intimate knowledge of the party does not explain entirely Stachel's speedy climb. No one, even in his most generous impulse, would credit the Communist leadership with brilliancy or originality. Compared with other radical groups in the recent past, the CP lacked men of distinction at its top. By and large, Communism had no need for men of fresh thought.

However, the ramification of the party's activities in the 30's taxed the ability of the leadership beyond the normal requirements of the past. Within the frame of the general directives from Moscow there was wide scope for strategy and daily decision. And here Stachel's balanced mind and keen insight came to the fore. One might add that while the Robert Minor's and Roy Hudson's at the top were largely valueless, the party possessed quite a number of competent people in the second layer of leadership, men like William Schneiderman, Johnny Williamson, Sam Darcy, Carl Winters, Jacques Steuben and others.

As the party grew and began a massive penetration of labor, government offices and the middle classes, the organizational apparatus of the party gained tremendous importance. The situation demanded not merely keeping abreast of the expansion, but staying one step ahead of it. One contact brought another; one position led to another. Holding together the threads of the multiple phases of the movement was largely the job of Jack Stachel. Browder was pre-occupied with brushing and polishing the CP to make it presentable to the American people, and Stachel was the keeper of the organizational keys. At various times, he was head of the trade union and the organization departments of the party and its executive secretary.

Stachel successfully conducted the behind-the-scenes negotiations with the Militants, in 1936, which actually amounted to boring from within the SP. And it was not his fault that the purges in Russia, begun in the same year, had their sobering effect on the

more aggressive Socialists and undermined the chances of a United Front between the two parties.

The party was a natural vehicle for Stachel's acute intelligence. He would behave on all occasions as a good Communist ought to, but he was not belligerent or arrogant; rather a conciliator, and a crafty one at that. And persons having trouble in the party would often come to him for advice and help. Not one for a mass appeal, or a party front man, Stachel was in no way a menace to Browder. This goes far to explain why the two could work together closely for so long a time.

Stachel's power in the party shrank greatly when Foster assumed the leadership, after Browder's ouster in 1945. Stachel, who had opposed Foster's policies for some time, was removed by him as the head of the important trade union department of the party.

Stachel was among the first string of Communist leaders to be tried and sentenced in 1949-1950. He was released with the others the summer of 1956. He has been heard of very little since then.