“Reach the Millions!”: Political Pamphlets and the American Communist Movement 1917-1945

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Pamphlets have for centuries been a popular medium through which rebellious and subversive ideas could be disseminated to the masses, yet the role of pamphlets in modern society has been under-appreciated by scholars. As this thesis will demonstrate, there exists a wealth of pamphlet material produced and distributed in interwar America which offers particular insight into pamphleteering as a medium for political activism, education and dialogue.

As well as tracing the historical development of the pamphlet from the invention of the printing press, this thesis examines the thousands of pamphlets produced between 1917 and 1945 by the communist movement as well as by those who fought to counter the influence of communism in America. By looking particularly through the lens of the pamphlets of the Communist Party of America in particular, the thesis assesses how the Party grappled with the concept of ‘Americanism’ and the influence of the Soviet Union. It explores how the Party's changing policies were conveyed to both members and the American public through these pamphlets, and how they impacted the wider radical movements such as the women’s and black liberation movement. Conversely, the thesis’ examination of the pamphlets of anti-communist organisations offers us a new perspective into the ideologies and tactics of those fighting radicalism.

This close examination of the vast range of political pamphlets produced during this period offers a wider and new insights into the broader political and social developments during the polarised inter-war years in American history while also highlighting the continuities with earlier historical periods in the role and purpose of the pamphlet form itself.

Acknowledgements

I must first thank my supervisors Mercedes Aguirre and Sue Currell, who gave me the opportunity to carry out this research, and whose individual expertise, as well as their constant encouragement and support, has been invaluable to me. It has been a joy and a privilege to work with you both throughout this project.

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Staff at New York University's Tamiment Library supported me in working through the many boxes of pamphlets and ephemera in their tremendous collection. The Catholic University of America, too, were exceptionally accommodating and helpful when exploring their pamphlet collection. Thanks also to the staff at the Library of Congress for their support (particularly when I kept on getting lost in the library's many winding halls). In particular, I'd like to thank Alison from the Prometheus Research Library in New York, who went above and beyond to help me to discover many of the beautifully preserved pamphlets

in the library's collection and to point me in useful directions for my research. I'd also like to thank Meirian Jump and the Marx Memorial Library, who were a pleasure to collaborate with and whose John Williamson Collection served as inspiration in the early days of my research.

I owe a great debt to those archives and libraries who maintain the various digital collections which provide open access to innumerable pamphlets which have been vital to this research. Of course, these were especially useful from 2020 onwards when unable to travel to archives and libraries during the pandemic. These include Florida Atlantic University's Political & Rights Issues & Social Movements Collection, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, and Alabama Department of Archives and History's Textual Materials Collection. I would especially like to thank Tim Davenport and all others who help maintain the phenomenal Marxist Internet Archive, which provides a prodigious collection of digitised pamphlets, magazines and newspapers. Thanks also to Patricia Polansky of the Social Movements Collection at the University of Hawaii and to the staff at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam for scanning numerous pamphlets for me.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my mum and dad, to whom I owe absolutely everything, to Rach for being my best friend, and to Ben for keeping me grounded.

Of course, any mistakes throughout the thesis are entirely my own.

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Abbreviations

AALD	American Alliance for Labor and Democracy
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AFL	American Federation of Labor
ADS	American Defense Society
APL	American Protective League
BI	Bureau of Investigation
CP	Communist Party
CPI	Committee on Public Information
CPUSA	Communist Party of the United States of America
DWP	Daily Worker Publishers
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FSU	Friends of the Soviet Union
ILD	International Labor Defense
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
NCF	National Civic Federation
NCLB	National Civil Liberties Bureau
NCWC	National Catholic Welfare Council
NSL	National Security League
NYLN	New York Labor News Company
SP	Socialist Party
SLP	Socialist Labor Party
SPS	Socialist Publication Society
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
TUEL	Trade Union Educational League
YCL	Young Communist League

Introduction

This thesis began with a project at the British Library, which entailed tracking down and collating the hundreds of American political pamphlets published between 1917-1945 that the Library had acquired over the last century. Very quickly, hundreds of pamphlets were found, covering subjects including but not limited to women's liberation, civil rights, anti-war and peace movements, the Jewish diaspora, the labour movement, immigration, civil liberties and freedom of speech, and religion. Many pamphlets include striking illustrations and photography. It soon became apparent that the majority of political pamphlet literature being produced in America at this time was produced by socialist and communist organizations. Of the total 634 pamphlets gathered, over 150 titles were published by the official publisher of the Communist Party of America (CPUSA); a figure which more than doubles when including those publications by the Communist-allied and affiliated organisations. This means that around half of the British Library's holdings of American political pamphlets published during this period were produced by or in association with the official Communist Party. Pamphlets from rival socialist and communist groups also feature prominently in the collection, as well as a substantial number of pamphlets by anti-communist organisations. The library's holdings, however, make up only a fraction of the thousands of pamphlets produced and disseminated during this time, and exploring other archives and collections in both America and Europe helped to fill in gaps and build up a story of the pamphlet in interwar America.

Thus the pamphlets themselves led the trajectory of this thesis: through the process of collecting them, common themes and prominent issues made themselves apparent and

more questions about the historical role of the pamphlet itself arose. Yet it was surprising, considering the quantity and quality of pamphlet literature found at the Library, to discover that very little had been written about the pamphlet and the role that it played in twentieth century life.

For the purposes of the thesis, a pamphlet can be defined as a minor publication ranging typically between 4 and 100 pages, quarto-sized or smaller. It is usually constructed with cheap paper and never features a hardcover, making it lightweight and malleable enough to allow ease of widespread distribution and concealment when necessary. While newspapers covered numerous issues in short articles and essays, and books delved into issues in great detail which required more disciplined reading, the pamphlet sought to explain one topic or idea through accessible language in order to persuade the reader of the righteousness of a particular cause. Pamphlets have a unique versatility of genre, using various techniques—such as poems, dialogues, catechisms, and art—to communicate their message. They are also historically a polemical, antiphonic form of publishing, whereby a pamphlet would be written as a retort to another, which would then warrant further pamphlets in response, and sometimes resulting in what was known as a 'pamphlet war.' Historically, however, defining precisely what constitutes a pamphlet has been problematic, largely due to its versatility of size, shape and genre, and this will be discussed in further detail in the first chapter of this thesis.

This thesis aims to demonstrate the important role of the pamphlet in modern American society, to examine how its unique historical role as a medium of persuasion, rebellion, and even counter-revolution not only persisted into the twentieth century but flourished at a

time of intense political polarisation in America. As Shukla Sanyal has argued in her 2014 study of revolutionary pamphlets in colonial Bengal, pamphlets 'tell us how different political actors understood and interpreted those events and how they aimed to intervene to influence their course. … [They] provide us with a feel of the particular political moment as no other genre of print can.'[1] Beyond this, pamphlets can also illustrate how outside political and societal structures and pressures influenced and restricted these movements and how they engaged the public. Historian Bernard Bailyn would beautifully articulate in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967) how his prior study of political pamphlets helped him to gain a greater understanding of the political development of the Revolution:

> The pamphlets include all sorts of writings—treatises on political theory, essays on history, political arguments, sermons, correspondence, poems—and they display all sorts of literary devices. But for all their variety they have in common one distinctive characteristic: they are, to an unusual degree, explanatory. They reveal not merely positions taken but the reasons why positions were taken; they reveal motive and understanding: the assumptions, beliefs, and ideas—the articulated world view—that lay behind the manifest events of the time. As a result I found myself, as I read through these many documents, studying not simply a particular medium of publication but, through these documents, nothing less than the ideological origins of the American Revolution.[2]

The period between 1917 and 1945 was a tumultuous and polarised period for both America and the rest of the world. Globally, this was a period marked by world war, socialist revolution, and the rise of fascism, while America grappled with increasing radicalism and industrial unrest, the formation and growth of the Communist Party, and the

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[1] Shukla Sanyal, *Revolutionary Pamphlets, Propaganda and Political Culture in Colonial Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2014), 13.

[2] Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1967), 3.

impact of the Great Depression. Such uncertain and volatile times lent themselves to the proliferation of pamphleteering.

For the American Communist Party and the radical organisations which preceded it, pamphleteering was a cheap, accessible way of communicating with members, sympathisers, and the general public. Yet the changes in the production, design, authorship, and rhetoric used in pamphlets throughout the 1920s and 1930s reflected the changes in the Party's internal politics as well as external pressures, from the government crackdowns of the First Red Scare to the power struggles within the Communist International (Comintern). Likewise, the nature of the anti-communist pamphlet also shifted according to their material circumstances; from the government-aligned, patriotic anti-radical pamphlets of the First World War, to the pamphlets of more fringe groups which began to promote conspiracy theories influenced by the rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s.

Literature Overview

Though regularly used by researchers as historical sources, study of the pamphlet itself remains relatively scant. However, through examining pamphlets of differing locations and historical periods to this thesis, a number of researchers have shown how the study of pamphlets can be of huge benefit for researching and understanding the political programmes of organisations and movements. Bailyn's edited collection, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1776* (1965), features seventy-two pamphlets which demonstrate the integral role played by pamphleteering in the Revolutionary Era. Alongside the work of Shunka Sanyal and Bailyn, other valuable works exploring the historical role and impact of pamphleteering include the work of Craig E. Harline, Harvey Chisick and J.

Harvey Bloom, while Herbert Pimlott's article 'Eternal ephemera' or the durability of 'disposable literature' considers the pamphlet in a contemporary context, comparing it with the development of online communication.[3] Joad Raymond's *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* is a particularly accomplished work on the details of early pamphlet history down to its etymological quirks.[4]

Scholarly works on the general history of publishing have been helpful in building a framework in the understanding of the role of the pamphlet throughout history. Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin seminal book, *The Coming of the Book* (1972), is a outstanding work which offers a clear and comprehensive history of the development and influence of the book, while Elizabeth Eisenstein's influential *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979) gives detailed insight into the impact of the creation of the printing

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[3] Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987); Harvey Chisick, 'The pamphlet literature of the French revolution: An overview,' *History of European Ideas*, 17:2-3 (1993), 149-166; J. Harvey Bloom, *English Tracts, Pamphlets and Printed Sheets: A Bibliography* (London: W. Gandy, 1922); Herbert Pimlott, 'Eternal ephemera' or the durability of 'disposable literature': The power and persistence of print in an electronic world,' *Media, Culture & Society*, 33:4 (2011), 515-530.

[4] Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

press.[5] Both are considered classics of their respective fields and help to contextualise the pamphlet's role in the history of print.

There are a few notable scholars who have offered perspectives on the development of radical publishing at the turn of the twentieth century. Jason D. Martinek's 2012 book *Socialism and Print Culture in America, 1897–1920* provides an account of the evolving 'print culture of dissent' developed by American socialists in this period, and weaves this into the wider detail of the changing practicalities of publishing and the reading habits of Americans. However, Martinek emphasises the limitations of publishing and questions whether the Socialist Party's focus on publishing was to its detriment.[6] Meanwhile, Alan Ruff's history of the left-wing American publisher Charles H. Kerr and Company, *We Called Each Other Comrade* (2011) details the development of a key player in this 'print culture of dissent,' from its nineteenth-century beginnings as a Unitarian publisher to its quieter post-war years.[7]

Literature on interwar Communist pamphleteering specifically is scarce, with the exception of work by Trevor Joy Sangrey and Carl Burgchardt. While providing some much-needed

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[5] Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800,* Translated by David Gerard (London: Verso, 1997); Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and cultural transformations in early-modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[6] Jason D. Martinek, *Socialism and Print Culture in America, 1897–1920* (New York, NY.: Pickering & Chatto, 2012).

[7] Allen Ruff, *"We Called Each Other Comrade": Charles H. Kerr & Company, Radical Publishers* (Oakland, CA.: PM Press, 2011).

insight into the use of pamphlets in the American communist movement, both these authors are above all scholars of rhetoric rather than historians. Burgchardt's article, 'Two Faces of American Communism,' in particular fails to offer adequate context of the Communist movement and its history, which could have offered far more depth of understanding of the role of these pamphlets. This results in broad, sweeping and unhelpful statements, such as 'communist rhetoric was unappealing to the public because the inescapable demands of communism were unappealing to the public.'[8] Sangrey on the other hand, specifically examines the pamphlets of the Communist Party and its affiliated organisations that dealt with the 'Black Nation Thesis'—the Communist call for black self-determination in the Black Belt, as well as the infamous Scottsboro Trial. In doing so Sangrey does manage to convey a better historical account of how pamphlets fit into this movement as tools of protest and to challenge conventional discourses on race, sex, and class.[9] Unfortunately, though, Sangrey's recurrent description of CPUSA pamphlet material as 'productive fiction' to describe the organisation's concept of liberation from racism and sexism is problematic. In doing so, Sangrey, intentionally or not, presents these liberation movements as naïve pipe-dreams, and fails to understand the materialist underpinnings of the Communist Party ideology. Though many Americans certainly may have viewed the end of lynching and Jim Crow as 'fantastical,' Communists certainly did not ground their view of liberation in such an

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[8] Carl R. Burgchardt, 'Two Faces of American Communism: Pamphlet Rhetoric of the Third and the Popular Front' *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 66 (December 1980), 375-291.

[9] Trevor Joy Sangrey, 'Productive Fiction and Propaganda: The Development and Uses of Communist Party Pamphlet Literature' Schreiber, Rachel (ed.), *Modern Print Activism in the United States* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013); Trevor Joy Sangrey, '"Put One More 'S' in the USA": Communist Pamphlet Literature and the Productive Fiction of the Black Nation Thesis,' Doctoral Thesis, UC Santa Cruz (2012).

abstract way.[10] As Mark Solomon articulates in *The Cry Was Unity* (1998), Communists sought liberation for African Americans because 'the oppression of blacks was an essential element in preserving the system and had to be combated with unprecedented passion as an indispensable requirement for achieving social progress.'[11]

As such, there remains much scope for a historical examination of the role of CP pamphlet literature, and a wide range of works on the American Communist Party have been consulted to contextualise the hundreds of pamphlets which were studied for this thesis. Traditionally, the debate within American Communist historiography centred around the question: Was the CPUSA merely a puppet of the Soviet Union and the Comintern, or was it an authentic expression of American radicalism? Theodore Draper's work adheres to the former, and despite his anti-communist position, *The Roots of American Communism* (1957) and *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (1987) remain compelling and well-written histories of the Communist Party.[12] Historians of the latter persuasion, often regarded as the 'New Left,' have produced important works on grassroots organising and culture. However, these historians, which include Mark Isserman, Michael Denning and the aforementioned Mark Solomon, downplay or deny the influence of the Comintern on the Party's functions

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[10] Sangrey, 'Productive Fiction and Propaganda,' 135.

[11] Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1938* (Jackson, MS.: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), xviii.

[12] Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York, NY.: Vintage Books, 1986) and *The Roots of American Communism* (New York, NY.: Viking Press, 1957).

and have a tendency to romanticise the Party during the Popular Front.[13] However, Robin D. G. Kelley's seminal *Hammer and Hoe*, in which he examines the work of Alabama Communists, offers a more balanced perspective:

> Of course the Alabama cadre dutifully followed national and international leadership, just as Birmingham NAACP leaders jumped at every directive handed down from their executive secretary Walter White. Local Communists cried out for direction, especially after wrestling with vague theoretical treatises on capital's crisis or on the growing specter of fascism. Though they knowingly bucked national leadership decisions on a few occasions, local cadre tried their best to apply the then current political line to the tasks at hand. But because neither Joe Stalin, Earl Browder, nor William Z. Foster spoke directly to them or to their daily problems, Alabama Communists developed strategies and tactics in response to local circumstances that, in most cases, had nothing to do with international crises.[14]

Kelley, too, is particularly critical of the Party during the Popular Front, viewing it as partly responsible for the Party's decline in Alabama. In a similar vein, more recent work by historians Jacob Zumoff and Bryan D. Palmer have offered new, more nuanced perspectives on this traditional historiographical dichotomy. Their research highlights the challenges faced by international communism, changes in the Soviet leadership, and how this would impact the direction of the American Party. Zumoff has emphasised the need to discern between the influence of the early, Leninist Comintern and the later, Stalinist Comintern. Zumoff rejects the idea of 'Americanism as counterposed to Comintern guidance,' and instead shows how the early Leninist Comintern in fact pushed the American Party to Americanise. This was motivated at the time by a genuine revolutionary ambition, Zumoff

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[13] Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party during the Second World War* (Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982); Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996).

[14] Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill, NC.: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), xxix-xxx.

asserts, 'because without understanding American history or society, it would be impossible make a revolution there.'[15] Inversely, as historian Bryan D. Palmer explains, as the Soviet Union and the Comintern succumbed to political degeneration by the late 1920s:

> the forces of the international left faced not only the resolute opposition of global capital and its considerable power, vested in nation states and their militaries as well as the widening material and ideological reach of hegemonic capitalist markets and cultures, but also the constraining defeatism of leaderships, structures of power, and political orientations committed, in their Stalinism, to anything but world revolution.[16]

These transfigurations of international Communism did not necessarily negate the positive work of CPUSA members, nor did it mean members had no mind of their own. Yet as the Party's pamphlets help to demonstrate, the trajectory of the Party was above all dictated from the top-down; in some cases this could help guide the Party, but increasingly it could also undermine such grassroots work.

In exploring the backgrounds of those organisations producing anti-communist pamphlets, the work of M. J. Heale, Nick Fischer and Jennifer Luff have been particularly helpful.[17] In

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[15] Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism¸ 1919–1929* (Boston, MA.: Brill, 2014), 5-11.

[16] Bryan D. Palmer, 'Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,' *American Communist History*, 2:2 (2003), 144.

[17] M. J. Heale, *American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy Within¸ 1830-1970* (Baltimore, MA.: John Hopkins University Press, 1990); Nick Fischer, *Spider Web: The Birth of American Anti-Communism* (Chicago, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 2016); Jennifer Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism: Labor and Civil Liberties between the World Wars* (Chapel Hill, NC.: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

Anti-communism in Twentieth-century America: A Critical History, Larry Ceplair presents the often fanatical anti-communism in America in the first half of the 20th century as a movement lacking any coherent ideology. Instead, he argues that it was formed of various uninformed beliefs about what Communism was which easily penetrated American anxieties. Anti-communism at this time was, essentially, a continuation of the 'nativism' of the nineteenth century. Ceplair stresses that this anti-communism was primarily driven from the top-down; elites encouraged and directed economic and social anxieties towards anti-communism and away from themselves. This thesis' interrogation of anti-communist pamphlets certainly reinforces this, demonstrating how anti-communist pamphleteering was controlled from the top-down and sought to exploit fears and concerns of the public. Yet Ceplair suggests that anti-communism was a largely irrational, dogmatic endeavour, and underplays the impact of the Bolshevik revolution on the psyche of the American ruling class.[18] As will be explored, the pamphleteering efforts by these organisations demonstrate that many who perpetuated anti-communism viewed the Revolution and Soviet Union as an existential threat.

Fischer's work on the interconnectedness of the anti-communist movement in America is particularly helpful and he explains how 'fear of communist subversion spurred a massive expansion in the prestige and power of surveillance organizations and related bureaucracies during the inter-war years.'[19] This dovetails with Roy Talbert's investigation of the evolution of America's military intelligence services between 1917-1941, and Joseph

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[18] Larry, Ceplair, *Anti-communism in Twentieth-century America: A Critical History* (Oxford: Praeger, 2011)

[19] Fischer, *Spider Web*; Nick Fischer, 'The Founders of American Anti-communism,' *American Communist History*, 5:1 (2006), 69.

Bendersky's later work on anti-Semitism in the US Army—a particularly salient look at the relationship between institutionalised anti-semitism and anti-communism.[20]

There has also been a recent flourishing of studies of gender in American culture and in right-wing organisations and institutions; Erica J. Ryan's *Red War on the Family* is a particularly interesting study into the anxieties of Americans of the potential impact of radicalism upon traditional American family life. It is a detailed work, which demonstrates the intersection of cultural elements of right-wing Americanism with ideological anti-Communism.[21] Other such works on anti-radicalism among American women can be found in the works of Kim E. Neilson and Kirsten Marie Delegard.[22]

Though none of these works focus on the role of pamphlets, they help to contextualise the hundreds of pamphlets which have been observed over the years of research for this thesis, and provide ways to understand and read them. In doing so, these works help to bring the pamphlet to life and offer new insights into their histories.

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[20] Roy Talbert, *Negative Intelligence: The Army and the American Left, 1917-1941* (London: University of Mississippi Press, 1991); Joseph W. Bendersky, *The "Jewish Threat": Anti-Semitic Politics of the U. S. Army* (New York, NY.: Basic Books, 2000).

[21] Erica J. Ryan, *Red War on the Family: Sex, Gender and Americanism in the First Red Scare* (Philadelphia, PA.: Temple University Press, 2015).

[22] Kirsten Marie Delegard, *Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States s* (Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Kim E. Nielson, *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Antifeminism, and the First Red Scare* (Colombus, OH.: Ohio State University Press, 2001).

Chapter Overview

Chapter one traces the historical development of the political pamphlet from the invention of the printing press through to the early twentieth century. It discusses the way in which the pamphlet format acquired a unique character within publishing, offering a versatility and accessibility which made it a popular format for rebellion and attracted the ire of authority. It discusses how pamphleteering became recognised as an American tradition through its role in the War of Independence, how the publishing of the Communist Manifesto marked a turning point for the radicalism of the pamphlet, and how the pamphlet press would become more coordinated towards the end of the nineteenth century in tandem with the growth of the American labour movement. Left-wing publishers such as Charles H. Kerr and Company, the Socialist Labor Party's New York Labor News Company, and the Industrial Workers of the World served as lynchpins in the modernisation of the political pamphlet in America, and would pave the way for those of the Communist movement that followed.

Chapter two explores the development of the Communist Party's pamphlets and pamphleteering campaigns from its beginnings in 1919 to its heyday during the Popular Front era of the mid- to late-1930s. The pamphlet became an important part of the Party's interconnected network of literature, and the growth of its publishing efforts reflected the evolution of the Party itself. It is considered how political developments both within and outside the Party affected its pamphlet campaigns, and how decisions about pamphleteering were made and changed in the Party.

Chapter three examines the advent of the American Communist Party's Popular Front period slogan 'Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism,' and how the Party's shifting conception of 'Americanism' was conveyed in pamphlets into the early 1940s. While early American Marxists grappled with applying theory to the particular conditions of American capitalism and how they should communicate with American workers, the transition to the Popular Front saw the CPUSA drape itself in the American flag and promote itself as the patriotic heir of the American Revolution.

Chapter four builds upon some of the themes of the previous chapter to address how the Popular Front era in the Party resulted in a dramatic change in its discussions of women, the family and sex in its publications. It is also discussed how the changing internal policies on sexuality and abortion in the USSR were represented in CPUSA publications and how these may have impacted on women and homosexuals in the Party. Both chapters three and four seek to demonstrate that the Party's ostensibly patriotic American values were ironically an adaptation to the changing policies of the Soviet Union and the Comintern, and were part of a wider abandonment of Marxist principles.

The final two chapters are dedicated to exploring the scope and impact of anti-communist pamphleteering. Chapter five explores how both government-sponsored organisations and patriotic groups used pamphlets following the advent of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, and how the work of these organisations helped to lay the groundwork for more aggressively patriotic groups in the 1930s to build a movement sympathetic to Nazi ideas and tactics. Chapter six also discusses anti-Communist pamphlets of the 1930s, but specifically analyses those of Catholic publishers in the United States. It explores how

Catholics saw exhibiting their anti-communism as an opportunity to demonstrate the Americanism of the Church, but that their pro-Franco campaigns during the Spanish Civil War potentially put this at risk.

Although the focus of this thesis is pamphlets and pamphleteering, examination of other Party literature—especially newspapers and magazines—is used throughout due to their intertwined relationship with pamphlet production and distribution, and the thesis aims to shed light on the nature of this network of literature, particularly with regard to the 'woman question' in chapter four. Through close examination of the vast range of political pamphlets produced during this period, this thesis seeks to offer new insights into the broader political and social developments during the polarised inter-war years in American history, while also highlighting the continuities and disparities with earlier historical periods in the role and purpose of the pamphlet form itself.

Ultimately, this thesis will demonstrate the hitherto under-appreciated role of the pamphlet in the political battlegrounds of the interwar period. It will illustrate the uniqueness of the pamphlet as a publishing format not only in its versatility but its propensity for radicalism and the polemical dialogue it fosters. It will reveal how, perhaps more so than in previous centuries, pamphlets served as a creative, educational space for radicals in the twentieth century. They could, at the same time, form part of highly coordinated campaigns led by grassroots movements, or led from the top-down by an organisation's leadership. Much like the pamphlets of previous centuries, they could strike fear into the hearts of the powerful figures and institutions which they rallied against, but they could also be inversely

appropriated by these institutions and reactionaries who recognised the pamphlet's usefulness as a form of propaganda.

1.

The History and Radicalism of the Political Pamphlet

> The pamphlet is the most effective instrument of propaganda in the modern world. ... The reason is evident; the pamphlet is written for the man in the street. It tells him what he needs and how to get it. … They know little about the author, but because he penetrates their wants, they believe that he is good. Those who would never think of continuing the reading of a book will read a pamphlet. Since it is short, the pamphlet capitalizes on a brief attention span; and, since it is written to the average reader's level, it is interesting.
>
> - Monsignor John M. Wolfe in a circular letter to the priests of the Dubuque Archdiocese, c. 1937.[23]

The emergence of the printing press and the printed book in late fifteenth century Europe marked a turning point in the exchange of knowledge and ideas. In *The Coming of the Book*, Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin succinctly summarised the extent of print and publishing's impact on the world:

> [M]ore than a triumph of technical ingenuity, [it was] also one of the most potent agents at the disposal of western civilization in bringing together the scattered ideas of representative thinkers. It rendered vital service to research by immediately transmitting results from one researcher to another; and speedily and conveniently, without laborious effort or supportable cost, it assembled permanently the works of the most sublime creative spirits in all fields. … Fresh concepts crossed whole regions of the globe in the very shortest time, wherever language did not deny them access. The book created new habits of thought not only within the small circle of the learned, but far beyond, in the intellectual life of all who used their minds. In short … the printed book was one of the most effective means of mastery over the whole world.[24]

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[23] Cited in Eugene P. Willging, *The Index to American Catholic Pamphlets*, Volume I (St. Paul, MN: Catholic Library Service, 1937), 1.

[24] Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, 10-11.

The pamphlet emerged out of the proliferation of the printing press as a quick and cheap method of disseminating political and religious tracts, and would greatly contribute to the rapid spread of information during the early modern era.[25] In fact, in the words of print historian Elizabeth Eisenstein, '[b]efore the day of the clamouring newspaper, the Pamphlet was the leader of popular taste.'[26]

The pamphlet proliferated at times of crises and controversy, and 'pamphlet wars' would erupt between rival political and religious groups.[27] By the late seventeenth century it had arguably become the most important public print medium in England, France, and the Netherlands, and it is estimated that around 22,000 were in circulation in London alone between 1640 and 1661.[28] Even the preeminent historian E. P. Thompson remarked in *The Making of the English Working Class* that 'the most interesting writing in the 1790s, … is in the pamphlet, rather than periodical form.'[29] By the nineteenth century pamphlets had played significant roles in igniting and influencing numerous wars and revolutions, from

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[25] Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1:133n, 174, 261.

[26] A. F. Pollard (ed.), *Political Pamphlets: Selected and Arranged* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench Trubnor, 1897), vi.

[27] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 8, 16-17.

[28] Pascal Verhoest, 'Pamphlets, Commodification, Media Market Regulation, and Hegemony: A Transnational Inquiry into the Seventeenth-Century Print Industry in England, France, and the Netherlands,' *Media Industries Journal,* 3:1 (2016), 34.

[29] E. P. Thompson, *The Making Of The English Working Class* (New York, NY.: Pantheon Books, 1963), 834.

the English Civil War to the French and American Revolutions.[30] As Joad Raymond has suggested, this was a time when 'pamphlet controversy was closely bound with the political future of the kingdoms.'[31]

Though pamphlets have been used extensively by historians to research the early-modern era, there is very little research on the role and nature of the pamphlet *itself*; as Pascal Verhoest puts it, for many historians 'mass media history only really starts with the advent of the newspaper industry.'[32] There is even less research available on the distinctive development and role of the pamphlet in the twentieth-century, which might lead one to believe its significance is largely confined to the early modern times. However, on the contrary, pamphlet publishing continued to have considerable influence on political discourse into the twentieth century, punctuated by the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, which laid the foundations for the radical pamphleteering of the late-nineteenth and twentieth century.

This chapter will summarise the historical significance of the political pamphlet in the early modern era, the progression of radical pamphleteering into the nineteenth century, and explore the early development and controversies of the pamphlets of the early American socialist movement which would pave the way for the modern polemical pamphlet of twentieth-century America.

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[30] Richard Newman, Patrick Rael and Phillip Lapsansky (eds.), *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest Literature¸ 1790-1860* (London: Routledge, 2001), 2.

[31] Raymond, P*amphlets and Pamphleteering*, 6.

[32] Verhoest, 'Pamphlets, Commodification, Media Market Regulation, and Hegemony,' 34.

What is a pamphlet?

'To ask "What is a pamphlet?" is rather like asking "What is a dog?",' mused George Orwell in 1948. 'We all know a dog when we seen one, or at least we think we do, but it is not easy to give a clear verbal definition, nor even to distinguish at sight between a dog and some kindred creature such as a wolf or a jackal.'[33] Indeed, still today, whether one looks towards researchers, librarians, or government organisations, it is clear that there is little consensus on the bibliographical definition of the pamphlet, and this could certainly impact its accessibility to researchers and could be at least partly to blame for the relative lack of scholarship on pamphlets.

The word 'pamphlet' can be traced back as far as the 14th century, and offshoots such as the noun and verb 'pamphleteer' and even such terms as 'pamphlet war' began to appear in late sixteenth century Europe.[34] A 1706 edition of *New World of Words*—the first English-language dictionary—simply described the pamphlet as 'a little stitch'd book'. This was modestly expanded upon by *Johnson's Dictionary* in 1755, which defined the pamphlet as 'a small book, properly a book sold unbound, and only stitched.'[35] Limited definitions such as these allow for the diversity of the pamphlet and its various manifestations, but they can also result in confusion with other similar print media such as leaflets, brochures, letters, manuals etc. However, more precise definitions can be equally problematic. For example,

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[33] George Orwell, 'Introduction,' in George Orwell and Reginald Reynolds (eds.), *British Pamphleteers Volume One: From the Sixteenth Century to the French Revolution* (London: Allen Wingate, 1948), 7.

[34] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering,* 17.

[35] Randy Silverman, 'Small, Not Insignificant: a Specification for a Conservation Pamphlet Binding Structure,' *The Book and Paper Group Annual*, 6 (1987), 111.

the official UNESCO definition of a pamphlet, established in 1964, describes a pamphlet as 'a non-periodical printed publication of at least 5 but not more than 48 pages, exclusive of the cover pages, published in a particular country and made available to the public'.[36] Though this definition was created for the purpose of helping UNESCO member states to compile statistics on book production, its assertion that pamphlets can be neither periodicals nor longer than 48 pages is extremely restrictive and rules out a great number of texts which would otherwise have been certainly recognised as pamphlets.

Though there are, on average, fewer pages to be found in a pamphlet than in a bound book, historians generally agree that page numbers are not a reliable indicator.[37] If one *were* to merely analyse the physical properties of pamphlets, it may be more beneficial to focus on the book's overall size and binding. Pamphlets are typically in *quarto* (a sheet folded twice) or sometimes *octavo* (a sheet folded three times) format, and can be unbound, bound by a thread and needle (either stab stitched or saddle stitched) or, in more modern publications, a metal staple stitch. Pamphlets do not have hard covers; at most, a thin, light, malleable cardboard will distinguish the cover from the contents, but usually

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[36] *Records of the General Conference, thirteenth session, Paris, 1964: Resolutions* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1965), 144.

[37] 'Historians who have worked on this literature often note the brevity of the genre, but generally prefer the imprecise but sensible view that length is not a sufficient criterion for identifying pamphlets, and include book-length works when this is warranted by style or purpose.' Chisick, 'The pamphlet literature of the French revolution…,' 149; 'Size is hardly a criterion of what is, or what is not, a tract or pamphlet. Such a definition, if adopted, could be only artificial. Some authorities would impose a limit of eight pages, some of fifty, some of more or less, but common sense is perhaps the best rule.' Bloom, *English Tracts, Pamphlets and Printed Sheets,* 7-8.

will be made of the same paper as the contents of the pamphlet. This, importantly, makes them far more lightweight and pliable than a typical book. Yet a definition based on physicality alone does not suffice, and a number of historians such as Craig E. Harline and Harvey Chisick have rightly argued that the pamphlet's defining features, aside from being print matter, are to be found in its purpose and functionality.[38]

More informative and detailed than a leaflet or flyer, but more succinct and direct than a book, pamphlets aim to stimulate conversation and allow the reader to engage with sometimes substantial, complex topics in a relatively concise and accessible way. Indeed, it was common for speeches to be printed as pamphlets, but vice-versa, pamphlets would be read aloud and discussed in public spaces—cafés, clubs, street corners and squares. This could bring new life to pamphlets, and also allowed the illiterate and semi-illiterate to engage in political discourse. As Chisick noted, it is important that historians 'abstract themselves from the ordered calm of the libraries where they consult pamphlets and to think of them in their original noisy and bustling context'.[39]

Pamphlets could be 'greyly official, firmly putting the record straight, or the literary equivalent of a flare or tracer, lighting up the public realm with intense debate,' writes historian and librarian Matthew Shaw.[40] They also offered a unique versatility of genre, as

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[38] See Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* and Chisick 'The pamphlet literature of the French revolution.'

[39] Chisick, 'The pamphlet literature of the French revolution,' 155.

[40] Matthew Shaw, 'Pamphlets and Political Writing,' in Ann-Marie Einhaus and Katherine Isobel Baxter (eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to the First World War and the Arts* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 278.

authors could make use of and combine essentially any literary style they wanted to communicate their message; they could be satirical, or made up of a series of poems, songs or allegories, a dialogue or a play in verse. They could be embellished with illustrations, or —into the twentieth century—with photography.[41] Whichever genre was utilised, the purpose of the pamphlet was predominantly to rouse the reader to a cause.

Certainly, the pamphlet has historically been a polemical text—'littérature du combat,' as Marc Agent put it—in which the author intends to convey to as many readers as possible a message which is at odds with orthodox or hegemonic ideas.[42] As Bernard Bailyn wrote, pamphlets were 'aimed at immediate and rapidly shifting targets: at suddenly developing problems, unanticipated arguments, and swiftly rising, controversial figures.'[43] Making money is usually a secondary concern, as their primary purpose is to rally the public to a specific cause.[44] With this in mind, they would also often be written in the vernacular so as to increase their appeal to the masses. Indeed, Elizabeth Eisenstein has highlighted how

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[41] See Regina Boot, 'Reshaping Arguments: how political ideas transcend borders. A case study of political thought during the Dutch Revolt.' Masters Thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam (2012), 13.

[42] Marc Agent, *La Parole paphlétaire: Typologie des discours mondernes* (Paris: Payot, 1982), 9. Agent also notably does not include number of pages as a defining trait of the pamphlet in his study.

[43] Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 12.

[44] There are certainly numerous cases where pamphlets were used for commercial purposes and fundraising; for example Charles H Kerr & Co.'s Pocket Library of Socialism and Haldeman-Julius' Little Blue Books, as is discussed further down. Nevertheless, these were still produced with an overall intention to spread certain ideas.

sixteenth century Protestant reformers 'unwittingly pioneered as revolutionaries and rabble rousers' through their pamphleteering 'aimed at readers who were unversed in Latin'.[45]

The low production costs of pamphlets meant that they could be printed quickly and in large quantities—far more than a typical book at the time—which allowed for quick responses to political events or publications from rival pamphleteers.[46] Moreover, their slight bulk meant they were easy to transport and distribute, as well as easy 'to slip into a jacket or top pocket'.[47] They did not require the more complex subscription-based system of distribution that periodicals often entailed—they could instead be easily sold through book shops, street vendors, and ambulant retailers.[48] Though some pamphlets could be obtained free of charge, they were typically sold for a few pennies. Being cheap to produce and easy to disseminate in large quantities made pamphlets the ideal medium for those in society who found themselves without political power, often to spread radical and rebellious ideas.

Often attracting the ire of the powerful, the pamphlet's lightweight and discreet size also made it elusive enough to evade authorities. As such, the number of pamphlets entering circulation would often proliferate during times of censorship.[49] France, England and

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[45] Eisenstein, *The printing press as an agent of change,* 304.

[46] Verhoest, 'Pamphlets, Commodification, …,' 36.

[47] Shaw, 'Pamphlets and Political Writing,' 278.

[48] Chisick, 'The pamphlet literature of the French revolution,' 150; Verhoest, 'Pamphlets, Commodification, …' 36. This is not to say that pamphlets *couldn't* be part of a subscription; as is discussed further down, some publishing houses did offer such a scheme for their pamphlets.

[49] Chisick, 'The pamphlet literature of the French revolution,' 150.

Germany were all attempting to ban pamphlets in the mid-sixteenth century, only to see them multiply:

> In France so many pamphlets were issued in support of the Reformed religion that edicts prohibiting them were promulgated in 1523, 1553, and 1566. In Germany the pamphlet was first used by the leaders of the Protestant Reformation to inflame popular opinion against the pope and the Roman Catholic church. Martin Luther was one of the earliest and most effective pamphleteers. The coarseness and violence of the pamphlets on both sides and the public disorder attributed to their distribution led to their prohibition by imperial edict in 1589.[50]

Economic crisis toward the end of the century turned publishing into a much more exclusive industry which was primarily concerned with generating profit. Febvre and Martin summarise these changes in France as such:

> Publishing was in total subjection to authority. Originality was shunned, and new works, which by now were usually in the vernacular, were not favoured. … Writers and scholars no longer gathered in printers' houses or workshops but in the literary salons of high society, or in the libraries of the aristocracy, at the invitation of learned librarians and under the patronage of powerful individuals, or even in monasteries.[51]

As a result of this exclusivity, poor writers and publishers instead resorted to 'printing some pamphlet or other,' wrote Febvre and Martin. Around a century later in France, political and religious crises led to many printers fleeing the country, 'where they printed vitriolic pamphlets intended to do as much damage as possible to the King who had driven them into exile.'[52]

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[50] 'Pamphlet,' *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 9, 2012. URL : https://www.britannica.com/art/pamphlet. [Date Accessed: 26 January 2021]

[51] Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book,* 153.

[52] *ibid.*, 156.

It is perhaps, then, no wonder that the pamphlet was frequently condemned as being unreliable, vulgar, and associated with slander or scurrility.[53] The word 'pamphlet' and its spin-offs were often used pejoratively, even being used at one point as a synonym for a prostitute in the early sixteenth-century. 'This may have coloured the name for a cheap book, available to any in return for a small payment', writes Joad Raymond.[54] A stereotypical pamphleteer was 'an idle exploiter of the credulous vulgar,' and by the mid-seventeenth century they would be seen as 'greedy and malicious.'[55] Raymond further highlights that a cognate term for pamphlet was 'libel':

> The term, derived from the Latin *libellus,* a diminutive of *liber*, meant a small book, but it already carried connotations of defamation, stronger than those associated with the pamphlet. … *libelle* [in French] described broadsides or quarto pamphlets that offered popular commentary on politics …[56]

Of course, pamphlets certainly *could* be scurrilous and vindictive, but many could just as well be relatively highbrow and offer more detailed analyses than other literary outputs.[57] British literary magazine *The Athenaeum* noted in 1830:

> Pamphlets seem to have been altogether overlooked by the literary caterers for the public. A moment's consideration will show their importance. Pamphlets are the only living things in literature—it is in pamphlets that all great questions are usually discussed—they speak intelligibly from and to the people--they are the Public Complete Letter Writer. A well-selected series of pamphlets would be, beyond all doubt, the best *materiel*, if not the best history, of this country.[58]

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[53] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 8.

[54] *ibid.*, 8-9.

[55] *ibid.*, 10-11.

[56] *ibid.,* 20.

[57] Orwell asserted that pamphlets could be 'more detailed, serious and 'highbrow' than is ever possible in a newspaper or in most kinds of periodical.' See Orwell, 'Introduction,' 15.

[58] 'Pamphleteer,' *The Athenaeum,* 27 November, 1830, 745

The pamphlet's predominantly negative reputation was not necessarily fuelled by the pamphlet's occasional unreliability or vulgarity, but by its subversive nature and the threat it could pose to institutional power.

Pamphlets were a discursive medium; as Shaw put it, pamphlets could represent a 'cacophony of dissenting voices.'[59] Bailyn described how pamphlets often arose out of a chain-reaction of polemics; 'strings of individual exchanges—arguments, replies, rebuttals, and counter-rebuttals—in which may be found heated personifications of the larger conflict.'[60] So, although the pamphlet may in the first instance be used as a medium for spreading dissenting ideas, they could be inversely used as tools of reaction, and it was common for rulers, authorities and governments to appropriate the pamphlet to spread their own message to counter subversive literature with their own propaganda. For example, when in 1588 numerous inflammatory pamphlets criticising the Anglican Church were published under the pseudonymous name Martin Marprelate, 'Ecclesiastical authorities decided to fight fire with fire,' writes Pascal Verhoest, 'and produced their own pamphlets as a counter,' resulting in a pamphlet war.[61] This was not unusual throughout the life of the pamphlet: from the British colonial pamphlets produced as a response to American revolutionary pamphlets in the eighteenth century, to U.S. government-sponsored 'red-baiting' pamphlets in the twentieth century intended to undermine the influence of

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[59] Shaw, 'Pamphlets and Political Writing,' 278.

[60] Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 12.

[61] Verhoest, 'Pamphlets, Commodification, ...,' 34.

socialist and communist organisations, pamphlets could be as useful for combatting dissent as they were in fomenting it.[62]

The Pamphlet in America

The pamphlet's propensity to provoke controversy and subversion continued beyond early modern Europe, and would go on to play a significant role in the development of the United States. No historian has done more to highlight the pivotal role of pamphleteering in the lead up to the American Revolution of 1776 than Bernard Bailyn. In *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* and his edited collection of pamphlets, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution¸ 1750-1776*, Bailyn demonstrates how pamphlets were used to present 'much of the most important and characteristic writing' of the Revolution, thanks to its 'peculiar virtues as a medium of communication' which allowed the author to 'do things that were not possible in any other form.'[63] He summarises:

> Expressing vigorous, polemical, and more often than not considered views of the great events of the time; proliferating in chains of personal vituperation; and embodying to the world the highly charged sentiments uttered on commemorative occasions, pamphlets appeared year after year and month after month in the crisis of the 1760's and 1770's. More than 400 of them bearing on the Anglo-American controversy were published between 1750 and 1776; over 1,500 appeared by 1783. Explanatory as well as declarative, and expressive of the beliefs, attitudes, and motivations as well as of the professed goals of those who led and supported the Revolution, the pamphlets are the distinctive literature of the Revolution.[64]

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[62] For further research on the British colonial pamphlets in America see Thomas R. Adams, *The American Controversy: A Bibliographical Study of the British Pamphlets About the American Disputes¸ 1764–1783: Volume I: 1864-1777* (New York, NY.: Bibliographical Society of America, 1980).

[63] Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution¸* 10-11.

[64] *ibid.*, 14.

By far the most celebrated pamphlet of the revolutionary period was *Common Sense*, written by Thomas Paine in 1776, in which he clearly and effectively articulated the aims of the colonists seeking to build a nation independent of Britain. The pamphlet was an immediate success and reached a vast range of readers, selling around 500,000 copies within its first year of publication alone—representing approximately one in every five Americans.[65] As Russel L. Martin writes, prior to *Common Sense,* many pamphlets in America were being written for well-educated upper-class men, often used Latin words and phrases, and were overly concerned with legal argumentation.[66] Paine, however, as his contemporary Isiah Thomas explained, was able to capture the 'common language' necessary to convince the wider American public and to 'democratize the Revolution.' 'The cause of America was just,' Thomas declared, 'it was only necessary to state this case in a clear and impressive manner, to unite the American people in its support.'[67] Accordingly, *Common Sense* sparked profound public debate, and dozens of editions were reissued both in America and Europe.[68]

Common Sense helped to solidify the pamphlet and pamphleteering as a major part of America's political culture, but there were also less publicised ways in which

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[65] Evan E. Carlson, 'Outrageous Pamphleteers: A History of the Communication Company 1966-1967,' MA Thesis, San José State University (2012), 64.

[66] Russell L. Martin, 'Publishing the American Revolution,' in Scott E. Casper, Joanne D. Chaison and Jeffrey D. Groves (eds.), *Perspectives on American Book History: Artifacts and Commentary* (Boston, MA.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 104.

[67] Isiah Thomas cited in *ibid.*

[68] Andrew Robertson (ed.), *Encyclopedia of U.S. Political History* (Washington, DC.: CQ Press, 2010), 86.

pamphleteering made its mark on America. As discussed, the relative flexibility and low production and distribution costs of pamphlets allowed engagement by and with many who had typically been shut out of political discourse. Perhaps the best examples of the pamphlet's democratic nature have been illustrated in the edited work of Dorothy Porter, *Early Negro Writing 1760-1837* (1995), and later in Richard Newman, Patrick Rael and Philip Lapsansky's edited collection of a few dozen of the hundreds of pamphlets produced by black writers between 1790 and 1860, entitled *Pamphlets of Protest* (2001).[69] These works draw attention to the important but under-researched role that pamphlets played in giving a voice to black writers, including Frederick Douglass, Prince Saunders and John W. Lewis. As Newman et al. write, the freedom of genre and production permitted by the pamphlet allowed black authors practically complete editorial autonomy:

> Autobiographies and personal narratives told of slavery's horrors, newspaper essays railed against racism in its various form; and poetry, novellas, reprinted sermons, and speeches preached an ethos of racial uplift and redemption. … The gentle and moderate William Whipper could use the pamphlet to make logical and learned arguments for black moral reform, and do it in a highly prosodic manner. Yet so too the explosive Henry Highland Garnet could use pamphlets to call for slave rebellion and the more intellectually inclined Martin Delany could use them to articulate arguments for black emigration.[70]

This editorial control distinguished the pamphlet from the slave narrative, which usually 'featured an introduction written by a notable white abolitionist' and were written for a middle-class white audience. Their white editors tended towards formulaic stories which

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[69] Dorothy Porter, *Early Negro Writing 1760-1837* (Baltimore, MD.: Black Classic Press, 1995); Newman, Rael, and Lapsansky (eds.), *Pamphlets of Protest*.

[70] Newman, Rael, and Lapsansky (eds.), *Pamphlets of Protest*, 1, 7.

could 'overemphasize certain ideas and religiosity as a means of black redemption or the kindness of white abolitionists.'[71]

Black scholar and pamphleteer Prince Saunders remarked in 1818 at the Pennsylvania Augustine Society that 'perhaps there never was a period when the attention of so many enlightened men was so vigorously awakened to a sense of the importance of the universal dissemination of the blessing of instruction.'[72] Use of the pamphlet helped to enable the development of an outward-facing black literary identity and African-American protest. Moreover, in the words of Newman et al., 'the mere presence of African Americans in print constituted an affront to white supremacy.'[73] White Americans were now confronted with black activist thought; no longer were the thoughts and expression of the slave kept 'shielded from masters' eyes.'[74]

Print culture in the 18th and 19th century helped to develop a distinct American national identity, helping Americans to, in the words of Benedict Anderson, 'visualize in a general way the existence of thousands and thousands like themselves through print-language.'[75] Pamphleteering's historical importance in America would be underlined in a 1938 court ruling, in which a request for a permit system for circulation of such literature was denied. The court explained that the First Amendment 'necessarily embraces pamphlets and leaflets. These indeed have been historic weapons in the defense of liberty, as the

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[71] *ibid.*, 7.

[72] Prince Saunders, 'Address by Prince Saunders' in Porter, *Early Negro Writing*, 89.

[73] Newman et al., *Pamphlets of Protest*, 5.

[74] *ibid.*, 4.

[75] *ibid.*, 3.

pamphlets of Thomas Paine and others in our own history abundantly attest.'[76] A generation later, in 1960, this was reaffirmed by another Supreme Court ruling, which asserted that:

> Anonymous pamphlets, leaflets, brochures and even books have played an important role in the progress of mankind. Persecuted groups and sects from time to time throughout history have been able to criticize oppressive practices and laws either anonymously or not at all . . . . [I]dentification and fear of reprisal might deter perfectly peaceful discussions of public matters of importance.'[77]

The Endurance of Pamphlets and the Communist Manifesto

Though pamphlets are commonly classified as ephemera, to be an ephemeral object implies a fleeting relevance like that of a postcard, ticket, or flyer, which usually contain information that is only relevant for a short period of time. The pamphlet, however, is a publication in its own right which frequently contains lasting information which can be revisited, reprinted, and passed on. This is an important distinction to make, and the confusion of classifying the pamphlet is partially a result of its uncertain bibliographical definition, but also a symptom of its historical position outside of the mainstream of publishing.[78] But it is important to highlight the longevity of the pamphlet, as Newman et al. have remarked:

> … the pamphlet offered a media form that promised to preserve words and deeds in a discrete, individual, and long-lived object. … [it] was both a medium of the moment—allowing protestors to publish quickly their views—and a substantial document that could stand the test of time. Neither books

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[76] *Lovell v. City of Griffin*, 303 US 444, Supreme Court (1938)

[77] *Talley v. California*, 362 US 60, Supreme Court (1960)

[78] Chris E. Makepeace, *Ephemera: A Book on its Collection, Conservation, and Use* (Aldershot: Gower, 1985), 15.

> (which until the 1830s and a revolution in binding techniques remained expensive) nor broadsides (one page posters that did not treat matters in any extended way) provided this ideal combination.[79]

Needless to say, pamphlets such as *Common Sense* have stood the test of time in such a way that a mere flyer or even a newspaper could not. Moreover, as Newman et al. have highlighted, many pamphlets by pioneering black writers which had gone out of print were reprinted and found new life among new generations of black Americans.[80]

No pamphlet has lived as many lives as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel's *Communist Manifesto*. Not only the most influential pamphlet ever published, it is also one of the most important texts ever written and its influence across the world is unparalleled. Originally published anonymously in German in London in February 1848, the *Manifesto* initially had a small circulation among German revolutionaries, but soon attracted the attention of Prussian police spies who began seizing copies alongside other such seditious literature in light of the rebellions of 1848-9.[81] When the revolution failed, the manifesto fell into relative obscurity, only to be revived several decades later under the influence of the Paris

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[79] Newman, Rael, and Lapsansky (eds.), *Pamphlets of Protest,* 2.

[80] '[David Walker's "Appeal"] had gone out of print after Walker's untimely death in 1830, [but] old editions circulated in black communities. [Henry Highland] Garnet found the words fresh and revolutionary; he vowed to reprint the pamphlet—to further preserve Walker's legacy. … The first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal* (founded in 1827), republished James Forten's 1813 pamphlet protesting racist laws in Pennsylvania so that the "younger generation" might learn the trade of written protest.' *ibid*.

[81] Robert J. Usher, 'The Bibliography of the Communist Manifesto,' *Papers (Bibliographical Society of America)*, 5 (1910), 110; James Farr, 'The Communist Manifestoes: media of Marxism and Bolshevik contagion in America,' *Studies in East European Thought,* 70 (2018), 89.

Commune of 1871 and the trials of German socialists August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht in 1872, in which the *Manifesto* was cited as evidence. From thereon the text would go on to be reprinted in huge numbers in new editions and translations, turning Marx into 'a world-historical figure'.[82] Historian Eric Hobsbawm, in his own more recent preface to the *Manifesto*, recapitulated the sheer extent of the pamphlet's distribution across the world:

> Even before the Russian Revolution of 1917 it had been issued in several hundred editions in some thirty languages, including three editions in Japanese and one in Chinese. Nevertheless, its main region of influence was the central belt of Europe, stretching from France in the West to Russia in the East. Not surprisingly, the largest number of editions were in the Russian language (70) plus 35 more in the languages of the Tsarist empire – 11 in Polish, 7 in Yiddish, 6 in Finnish, 5 in Ukrainian, 4 in Georgian, 2 in Armenian. There were 55 editions in German plus, for the Habsburg Empire, another 9 in Hungarian and 8 in Czech (but only 3 in Croat and one each in Slovak and Slovene), 34 in English (covering the USA also, where the first translation appeared in 1871), 26 in French and 11 in Italian – the first not until 1889. Its impact in southwestern Europe was small – 6 editions in Spanish (including the Latin American ones); one in Portuguese. So was its impact in southeastern Europe (7 editions in Bulgarian, 4 in Serb, 4 in Romanian, and a single edition in Ladino, presumably published in Salonica). Northern Europe was moderately well represented, with 6 editions in Danish, 5 in Swedish and 2 in Norwegian.[83]

America saw its first edition of the *Manifesto* printed in German in 1851, followed by another in 1854, and thirteen more appearing between 1871 and 1917.[84] Aside from being printed in the USA, copies were also brought over by German immigrants, such as socialist and friend of Marx and Engels, Joseph Weydemeyer, who brought a copy over in 1851.[85]

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[82] Terrell Carver, 'The Manifesto in Marx's and Engels's lifetimes,' Terrell Carver and James Farr (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to The Communist Manifesto* (New York, NY.: Cambridge University Press 2015), 68.

[83] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction,' Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition* (London: Verso, 2012), 7.

[84] Farr, 'The Communist Manifestoes,' 94.

[85] *ibid.*, 93.

The *Manifesto* first appeared in English in America in 1871, ironically in the *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly,* in which Marx's 'materialist conception of history and its overt communism were presented, tone-deaf, as the "new socialism" and placed willy-nilly on its pages touting spiritualism, dietary health, and Free Love.'[86] But it would go on to have numerous printings at the turn of the century, including in Eugene V. Debs' Progressive Thought Library pamphlet series, Charles H. Kerr & Co., and through the Socialist Labor Party's New York Labor News Co. The manifesto was made widely accessible, too, through the various translations available across the U.S. As James Farr writes, it was published 'in far-flung American cities in Czech, Swedish, Finnish, Slovenian, Hungarian, Ukrainian, and Bulgarian. Three editions appeared in Croatian. Two more emerged from Chicago in Esperanto… '.[87]

Of course, its message attracted the ire of anti-socialists in America who denounced the *Manifesto* as dangerous and 'un-American'; an accusation which would come to dominate discourse around Communist pamphlets in the following decades. Yet the *Manifesto* was in many ways the quintessential modern pamphlet, epitomising the qualities which had defined the pamphlets of previous eras in its brevity, radicalism, and unparalleled ability to incite outrage among the powerful. It pioneered a modern ideology which would go on to influence and shape innumerable pamphlets into the next century.

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[86] Farr, 'The Communist Manifestoes,' 94. The issue of *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* which the *Communist Manifesto* was printed in was no. 7, in which most of chapter 4 was omitted. On 17 March 1972 Engels asked Frederick Sorge, who had recently emigrated from Germany to the U.S., to send him 50 copies of *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* as a result. See '209. Engels to Sorge,' *Marx and Engels Collected Works,* Volume 44 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989), 343.

[87] Farr, 'The Communist Manifestoes,' 94.

The Development of the American Political Pamphlet in the Progressive Era

Research specifically on pamphlets becomes scarcer when we move towards the turn of the twentieth century, where the study of modern publishing focuses overwhelmingly on newspapers, magazines and other periodicals which are often regarded as 'less ephemeral'.[88] Historians of mass media have asserted that the end of the nineteenth century was a period in which newspapers and periodicals in America 'helped to integrate the newcomer into the brave new world of modern industrial life.'[89] Yet pamphleteering, too, formed an influential part of this ecosystem, underpinned by the growing socialist movement in the country.

By the 1880s, there was little suppression of literature by the U.S. government and publishing itself was relatively cheap, as printers began using cheaper wood pulp, rather than expensive rag paper. Moreover, publishers could outsource typesetting and printing to independent manufacturing plants, so it was no longer necessary for publishers to own the means of production.[90] Improvements to the US postal service also resulted in reduced postage rates, meaning literature could be disseminated with greater ease and at lower cost.[91] There was, as a result, a proliferation of small publishers at the end of the nineteenth century.

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[88] Sanyal, *Revolutionary Pamphlets,* 13.

[89] David Paul Nord, 'Working-Class Readers: Family, Community, and in Late-Nineteenth Century America,' *Reading Communication Research*, 13:2 (1986), 176.

[90] Jason D. Martinek, *Socialism and Print Culture in America, 1897–1920* (New York, NY.: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), 3, 4.

[91] *ibid.*, 3

Notably, in contrast to the somewhat archaic, individualised method of output in earlier years, this period in America saw the rise of a more organised form of pamphleteering whereby authors more often wrote for a publisher on behalf of or in affiliation with an organisation, group or party, which would be produced as part of a network of literature alongside a newspaper or magazine, for example. Robert Ashers has noted the growing importance of publishing for radical organisations in late 19th and early 20th century America, in that they kept members and casual readers alike regularly in touch with the movement and informed on events and issues.[92] As historian Elliott Shore put it, 'in a vast and unevenly populated land, the socialist press was sometimes the only contact between socialists and their movement.'[93] And indeed, Socialist Party member and Vice-Presidential nominee Ben Hanford insisted that even the best of street speakers could 'do little more than rouse interest in Socialism. Unless his hearers carried home something to read, the impression he had made would soon fade out.'[94]

While the political pamphlets which began to emerge in America towards the end of the 19th century had much in common with their counterparts of previous centuries with regard to their general format and broad purpose, they operated in what was a rapidly changing political and social landscape, and a far larger potential readership due to

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[92] Robert Ashers, 'Introduction', in Mark E. Woodbridge (ed.), *American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organisations Pamphlets, 1889-1955* (London: Greenwood Press, 1970), ix.

[93] Elliot Shore, 'Selling Socialism: the Appeal to Reason and the radical press in turn-of-the-century America,' *Media, Culture & Society*, 7 (1985), 147.

[94] Ben Hanford paraphrased in James Oneal, *Socialism versus Bolshevism* (New York, NY.: Rand School Press, 1935), 3.

increasing literacy rates. Indeed, historian David Paul Nord found in his sample of the 1890 to 1891 Bureau of Labor Statistics' cost-of-living surveys that 77 per cent of the workers 'reported at least some spending on newspapers and books,' spending on average '$4.23 annually on printed materials, just below one percent of the family income.'[95] Pamphlets were arguably the most vital format in bringing in casual readers who may eventually join the socialist movement. Since they would typically focus on one particular subject clearly marked on the title page, pamphlets were 'more likely to attract the attention of persons who are interested in that subject but do not normally attend meetings or read an organisation's newspaper.'[96] The versatility of genre and style allowed for a wide readership, from the skilled worker to the intellectual, the union member to the organiser.[97]

Minor pamphlet series which emerged in the concluding decades of the 19th century include famed socialist Eugene V. Debs' 'Progressive Thought Library,' as well as the popular socialist newspaper *Appeal to Reason*'s supplementary pamphlets. However, the organizations and publishing houses most fundamental to the development of the 20th century radical pamphlet were Charles H. Kerr & Co., the New York Labor News Co., and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). These publishers helped to create what Jason D. Martinek has termed a 'print culture of dissent,' which brought radical, left-wing ideas into American political life and played a significant part in shaping a 'distinctly American Brand of Marxism' which would pave the way for the Communist pamphleteers of the interwar period.[98] As Martinek writes:

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[95] Martinek, *Socialism and Print Culture in America*, 4.

[96] Robert Ashers, 'Introduction', ix.

[97] *ibid.,* x.

[98] Martinek, *Socialism and Print Culture in America*, 2.

> For turn-of-the-twentieth-century socialists, reading was a radical act. It engendered grass-roots political activism, subverted dominant values and, in their estimation, provided a viable means of securing a new moral order, in which human beings came before the almighty dollar.... [99]

The most significant publisher to emerge in these years was Charles H. Kerr & Company. Founded in Chicago, Illinois in 1886 by Charles Kerr initially as a Unitarian publisher, it moved towards publications concerned with social reform and Marxism in the 1890s, as the publisher and Kerr himself began to develop a relationship with the socialist movement. 'Like numerous other Americans, we were looking for real socialism, but as yet knew little about it,' wrote Kerr.[100] He later went on to explain:

> when we began our work, the literature of modern scientific socialism was practically unknown to American readers … The really popular and widely circulated books in 1899 were of a sentimental, semi-populistic, character and were of doubtful value to the building up of a coherent socialist movement.[101]

Algie Martin Simons, who was editor of Kerr and Company's popular theoretical journal *International Socialist Review* until 1908, even remarked that 'American socialist literature has been a byword and a laughing stock among the socialists of other nations.'[102] Kerr and Company sought to remedy this, and would become a vital source of education for American socialists in its first several decades of existence, and can be credited with bringing some of the most famous socialist works to American audiences.

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[99] *ibid.*, 1.

[100] Charles H. Kerr, 'Our Co-operative Publishing Business: How Socialist Literature Is Being Circulated by Socialists,' *International Socialist Review,* 1:10 (April 1901), 669.

[101] Charles H. Kerr (1904), cited in Ruff, *"We Called Each Other Comrade",* 86.

[102] Algie Simons, 'Salutatory', *International Socialist Review*, 1:1, 54.

Especially successful was Kerr's series of five-cent, thirty-two page pamphlets known as the 'Pocket Library of Socialism' which ran from 1899 until 1906 and became a 'popular propaganda vehicle for socialist educators, organizers, and soapboxes throughout the country.'[103] The pamphlets were written about a wide range of topics, by both big-name and lesser-known authors—including Kerr himself, Marx, Peter Kropotkin, Upton Sinclair and Jack London—and featured both new and classic socialist texts.[104] For 50c a year subscribers would receive an issue of the Pocket Library as they were published each month wrapped in red cellophane, for which they would come to be known as 'little red books'.[105]

The Pocket Library of Socialism's design as a pamphlet-sized serial publication was a calculated business decision. The size of pamphlets was 'just right for mailing in an ordinary business envelope,' which meant lower postage costs, and they were made to be serial, as Martinek highlights, as a reduction in 1885 of second-class postage rates from 3 cents to 1 cent per pound was only valid for postage of periodical publications. These two factors combined helped to give Kerr and Company a competitive edge against publishing rivals, as Kerr recalled himself:

> I found that in order to compete at all with other publishers in reaching the smaller book stores and news stands throughout the country, it would be necessary to comply with the United States postal laws governing the issue of periodicals, and issue one book a month, under some common name for the series, thereby securing the privilege of mailing at a cent a pound.[106]

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[103] Ruff, *"We Called Each Other Comrade",* 85.

[104] David Cochran, 'A Socialist Publishing House,' *History Workshop*, 24 (1987), 162.

[105] *ibid.*

[106] Martinek, *Socialism and Print Culture in America*, 4.

The pamphlets' popularity grew quickly, and by the Pocket Library's thirty-fifth issue in 1902, circulation had reached over half a million.[107] Though the series technically came to an end in 1906, Kerr and Company continued to produce pamphlets in an essentially identical format for many years, until 1916 when rising paper costs rendered them too expensive to manufacture.[108]

Kerr and Company's catalogue was expanded with the procurement of the 'entire pamphlet inventory' of the Socialist Labor Party's International Library Publishing Company's pamphlets in 1901.[109] As historian Allen Ruff noted, this acquisition included a number of 'socialist classics' previously unavailable in the US and various European texts by the likes of Ferdinand Lassalle, H. M. Hyndman, Sidney Webb, and Gabriel Deville.[110] Importantly, Kerr also published numerous editions and translations of *The Communist Manifesto* in pamphlet format—the first being issued in 1899—which became by far its best selling title.[111] As artist Franklin Rosemont remarked, 'When Gene Debs or Kate O'Hare or John Reed gave a comrade a copy of the *Communist Manifesto*, it was almost certainly a copy of the Charles H. Kerr edition!'[112] The company would eventually publish every key work of Marx and Engels and became the first publisher to produce the full English translations of

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[107] Ruff, *"We Called Each Other Comrade",* 85.

[108] Martinek, *Socialism and Print Culture in America*, 117.

[109] Ruff, *"We Called Each Other Comrade",* 86.

[110] *ibid.*, 86.

[111] Cochran, 'A Socialist Publishing House,' 162.

[112] Franklin Rosemont in *The Charles H. Kerr Company archives: 1885–1985* (Chicago, IL.: Beasley Books, 1985), cited in Farr, 'The Communist Manifestoes,' 95.

all three volumes of *Capital* (1906-1909).[113] By 1910 Kerr and Company had become America's biggest producer of books and pamphlets by the most prominent and influential English socialists, and had done more than any publishing house to introduce Marxism into American political discourse.[114]

Often collaborating with Kerr and Company was the New York Labor News Co. (NYLN), the publishing house of the Socialist Labor Party (SLP). Also an influential publisher of pamphlets at the turn of the century, NYLN was formed under the leadership of American socialist heavyweight Daniel De Leon, who had in fact first become involved in U.S politics as a pamphlet writer for the 'mugwump opposition' to James G. Blaine's presidential candidacy in 1884.[115] De Leon was devoted to developing literature as an aid to the development of an American Marxist identity, and as such NYLN became 'the first press to publish revolutionary books and pamphlets in English on a large scale.'[116]

As well as publishing his own work and editing the SLP's *Weekly People* and *Daily People* newspapers, De Leon personally translated into English the texts of influential European

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[113] For example Marx's *Wage-Labor and Capital* was featured as Pocket Library number 7. See Ruff, *"We Called Each Other Comrade",* 86. Cochran, 'A Socialist Publishing House,' 164.

[114] Ruff, *"We Called Each Other Comrade",* 86; Tim Dayton, 'Red Ink--The Charles H. Kerr Story,' Book Review, *Against the Current,* 13:4 (1998).

[115] L. Glen Seretan, *Daniel DeLeon: the Odyssey of an American Marxist* (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 10-11.

[116] *ibid*., 83.

socialists, including those of Marx, Engels, Karl Kautsky, and Lassalle.[117] These were then published in the SLP's newspaper, quickly followed by their own pamphlet edition.[118] Notable were his translations of Engel's *Socialism: From Utopia to Science* and Marx's *Critique of The Gotha Program* in 1892 and 1900 respectively, which would be the first times these texts were introduced to American readers, as well as his translation of Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* which saw numerous editions published by Charles H. Kerr.[119] As Carl Reeve suggests, 'without De Leon's work as pamphleteer, translator, editor and publisher, a large reservoir of Marxist theory and tactics would have been lost to American readers.'[120] Joseph Hansen, who would become a leading American Trotskyist in the 1930s, recalled how he first began to take an interest in politics upon discovering a De Leon pamphlet hidden within a library book as a schoolchild in 1920, and tell of his attempts to spread the pamphlet's message to his schoolmates:

> … I happened to read a pamphlet in the public library probably slipped among the books by a migrant 'Wobbly' [the nickname used to describe a member of the Industrial Workers of the World]. It was an exposure by Daniel De Leon of the tariff, a key issue in Utah with its sugar-beet industry. De Leon used the case of low-cost Cuban sugar to drive home his socialist arguments against the tariff. I

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[117] L. Glen Seretan, 'Daniel De Leon as American', *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 61:3 (1978), 211.

[118] For example, Engels' *Socialism from Utopia to Science* and Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and *The Gotha Program* were translated by De Leon and printed in *The People* in 1892, 1897 and 1900 respectively. Both translations of Marx later appeared as pamphlets. De Leon's translation of Bebel's *Women Under Socialism* was published as a 379-page book in 1904.

[119] See Oakley C. Johnson and Carl Reeve, *Writings By and About Daniel De Leon: A Bibliography* (New York, NY.: American Institute for Marxist Studies, 1966).

[120] Carl Reeve, *The Life and Times of Daniel De Leon* (New York, NY.: Humanities Press, 1972), 79.

> repeated these in the school yard. The lesson of how easy it is to gain notoriety and how hard it is to overcome it has served me ever since.[121]

While De Leon would not live to see the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, passing away in 1914, his writings did have an impact on V. I. Lenin, who had read De Leon's pamphlets and was reportedly 'impressed by the extent to which the American's theories had anticipated his own'.[122] In the SLP's *Weekly People*, John Reed reported that '[Boris] Reinstein managed to take with him to Russia a few of the pamphlets written by De Leon, but Lenin wants more.'[123]

The influence of the SLP in America waned significantly into the 1910s, finding itself increasingly outflanked by the Socialist Party of America (SP) led by Eugene V. Debs, and particularly suffering after the death of De Leon.[124] Many of De Leon's articles and speeches would be posthumously printed as pamphlets by NYLN and Kerr & Co. throughout the 1920s and 1930s, though the SLP itself had become a far less influential force in radical American politics in these years.

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[121] Joseph Hansen, 'Introduction,' in Leon Trotsky, *My Life* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975), xii.

[122] Seretan, *Daniel DeLeon*, 2.

[123] 'Message from Reinstein,' *Weekly People*, 11 May 1918. Boris Reinstein was a Comintern official originally born in Russia before emigrating to the U.S. in 1901 where he joined the Socialist Labor Party. See Milorad M. Drachkovitch and Branko Lazitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern* (Stanford, CA.: The Hoover Institution Press, 1982), 392.

[124] The SP, however, did not have its own centralised publishing house, though factions within the party would produce their own newspapers and pamphlets. Instead, the SP relied on publishers like Charles Kerr and Co, as well as the Social Democratic Publishing Company and Appeal to Reason Publishing Company. See Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism*, 173.

In 1905, the 'three giants' of the labor movement—De Leon, Eugene V. Debs, and William "Big Bill" Haywood—met together in Chicago to create the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the revolutionary 'One Big Union', in which workers would be organised not by craft or district, like other unions, but by industry. Its embrace of black workers also set it apart from many other unions at the time. As one pamphlet highlighted:

> The practice of some craft unions is to bar men because of nationality or race. Not so with the I.W.W. Our union is open to all workers. Differences of color and language are not obstacles to us. In our organization, the Caucasian, the Malay, the Mongolian, and the Negro, are all on the same footing. All are workers and as such their interests are the same. An injury to them is an injury to us.[125]

As well as an industrial union, the IWW was, as American Trotskyist James P. Cannon described it, a 'propaganda society … devoted to agitation and propaganda — in soap-box speeches, press, pamphlets and songbooks — against the existing social order.'[126] This role was further underlined in an IWW pamphlet stressing the importance of education in achieving its objective:

> The IWW seeks to bring about its aims and objects primarily through education…. It seeks to educate the worker to realize their own importance in world affairs and to organize to solve those affairs as labor's importance demands, in a manner that will build up instead of tearing down.[127]

The IWW published its earlier pamphlets through Kerr and Co. and NYLN, before in 1912 members in Cleveland, Ohio set up the IWW Publishing Bureau, which also produced the

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[125] Grover H. Perry, *The Revolutionary I.W.W.* (Chicago, IL.: I.W.W. Publishing Bureau, 1913)

[126] James P. Cannon, 'The IWW (On the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding Convention),' *Fourth International*, 16:3 (1955), 78.

[127] *What is the I.W.W. preamble?* (Chicago, IL.: Agricultural Workers Industrial Union, 1922), 3.

IWW's newspaper *Solidarity*.[128] The Bureau produced the bulk of IWW pamphlets until 1918 (for example, *fig.* 1), from whence pamphlets were simply put out by the IWW's publicity committee, its education bureau, or its legal arm, the General Defense Committee. In the spirit of internationalism and reflecting the composition of American industrial labor, IWW pamphlets were published in a wide range of languages, including Spanish, Italian, Russian, Swedish, Yiddish, Hungarian, Greek, Finnish, Romanian, Croatian, Bulgarian, and Lithuanian. By 1916, the Bureau was offering to send readers a package of 12 pamphlets for a dollar, and also stated that it would send a 'complete list and prices of both the reading matter and other special mediums of propaganda such as I. W. W. Pennants, special designs in stickers, Pictures, Sheet Music, photographs and postcards' to anyone who requested.[129]

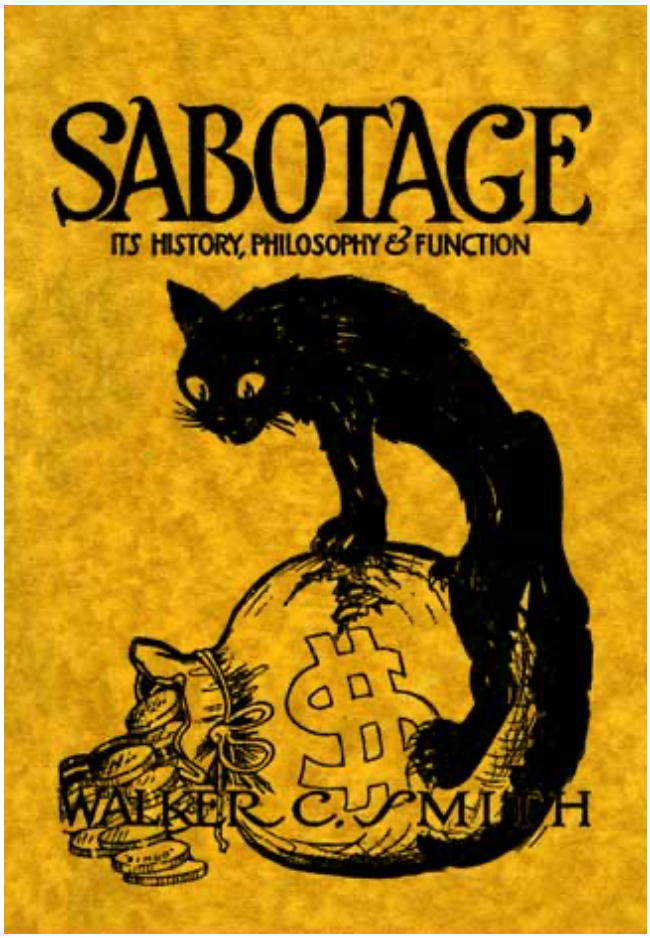

Figure 1: Walker C. Smith, *Sabotage: Its History, Philosophy and Function* (Chicago, IL.: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1913) Image courtesy of archive.iww.org.

Pamphleteering by the IWW formed a part of a wider educational counter-culture. A large number of the IWW membership by 1919 were regarded as hoboes; the 'migrant and seasonal laborers engaged in the then-burgeoning Western industries: logging, mining,

[128] Fred Thompson, *The IWW: Its First Fifty Years* (Chicago, IL.: Industrial Workers of the World, 1955), 86.

[129] Perry, *The Revolutionary IWW.*

harvesting, railroad maintenance, and construction' who would often travel around following the changing seasons of work.[130] Aside from helping hoboes to get wage increases and providing other such material support, the IWW, wrote Rosemont, 'introduced them to the world of libraries, ideas, debates, and wide-ranging intellectual discussion. It provided them with pamphlets and books to read—not only about class struggle and industrial unionism but also about U.S. and world history, geography, poetry, and literature.'[131] As Nels Anderson observed in his sociological study of the Hobo in 1923, the hobo was a prolific reader but hesitant to enter public libraries 'dressed as he usually is.' As such, the radical bookshops scattered around major cities provided alternative social and educational spaces for hoboes.[132]

In Chicago, the IWW's Agricultural Workers' Association had raised enough money in 1917 to open its headquarters at 1001 West Madison Street. This was in the heart of so-called 'hobohemia': a 'merger of intellectualism with the ethos of the migratory worker' made up of 'flophouses (single-room-occupancy hotels), burlesque theatres, cheap diners, barber colleges, used bookstores, and underclass saloons.'[133] The new headquarters featured an 'up-to-date print shop, meeting hall, scores of offices, and a twenty-foot sign atop the

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[130] Franklin Rosemont, 'The Legacy Of The Hoboes: What Rebel Workers Today Can Learn From The Footloose Wobblies Of Yesteryear,' *The Journal of Labor and Society,* 8 (2005), 593; Vincent St. John, *The IWW: Its History, Structure and Methods* (Chicago, IL.: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1917).

[131] Rosemont, 'The Legacy Of The Hoboes,' 598.

[132] Nels Anderson, *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man* (Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago, 1923), 185.

[133] Marc Moscato, 'Dill Pickle Club,' *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 30th August 2017, URL: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Dill-Pickle-Club [Date Accessed: 16 July 2021].

building', and would be where the majority of IWW pamphlets would be published for the rest of the decade.[134]

While cartooning and illustrations had previously been used very rarely in the pamphlets of the American socialist movement, IWW pamphlets would become notable in the 1910s for their ambitious designs and illustrations, and were the first in the American socialist movement to seize upon the cartoon as a means of communication within their pamphlets.[135] Perhaps the most compelling pamphlets were those produced in association with the IWW by cartoonist and hobo Ernest Riebe, who was best-known for creating the character Mr. Block, a jobsworth who as Michael Cohen put it, 'constantly gets his block rapped by cops, thrown down stairs by private detectives, has bricks thrown at him by striking union men and is otherwise abused through his own foolish faith in the justness of

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[134] Todd DePastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 104.

[135] *Socialist Cartoons and Comments* (1900) appears to have been one of the earliest instances of cartooning in a socialist pamphlet. The author, Fred Dwight Warren, writes of receiving a letter from Julius Augustus Wayland: "He had evidently been reading my stuff and had also seen a little pamphlet entitled 'Socialist Cartoons and Comments' which I had published, using my own illustrations. This little book was one of the very first illustrated Socialist pamphlets in English. I made the drawings myself on chalk plates, set all the type, and did the press work and binding. It had evidently attracted his attention. … It contained my 'Boytown Railroad' and several other sketches that have since reached some degree of popularity." George Allen England, *The Story of the Appeal* (Fort Scott, KS.: n.d., c. 1915), 38-9.

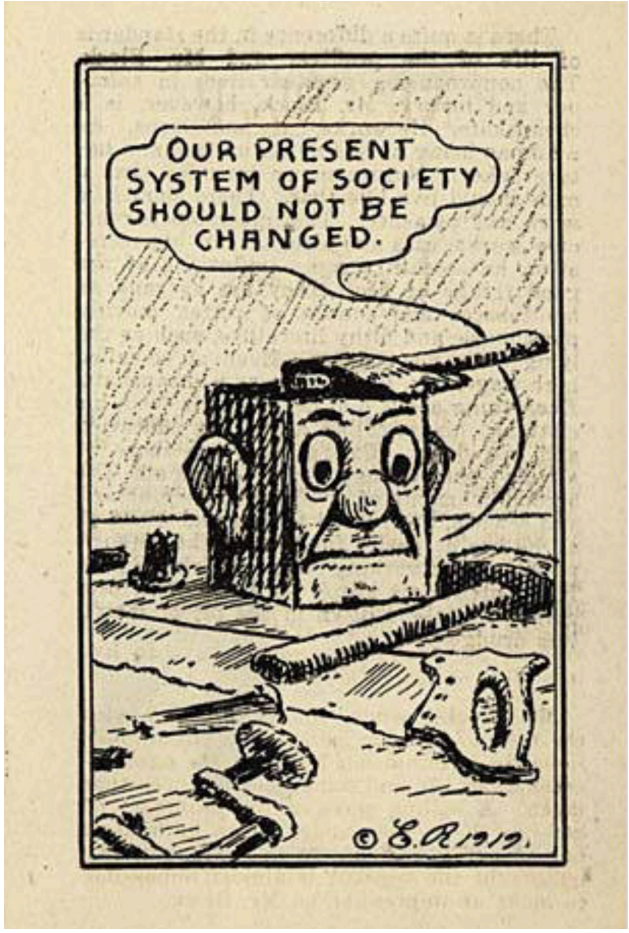

Figure 2: Pages from Ernest Riebe's *Mr. Block and the Profiteers* (Chicago, IL.: All-American Publishing Co., 1919) and *The Crimes of the Bolsheviki* (Chicago, IL.: All-American Publishing Co., 1919). Images courtesy of University of Washington via JSTOR and archive.org respectively.

the capitalist system.'[136] Riebe's work resulted in several pamphlets: In 1913 *Mr Block: Twenty-Four IWW Cartoons* became the 'first radical comic book in American history,' and in 1919 *Mr Block and the Profiteers* and the tongue-in-cheek *Crimes of the Bolsheviki* were published (*fig*. 2).[137] *Crimes of the Bolsheviki* illustrated the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia with various humorous interactions between workers and the ruling-class; one shows a capitalist bemoan to his crying wife, 'I am robbed out of my profits, I can't buy you another diamond necklace this week,' while another shows a aristocrat sat in a bath

[136] Michael Cohen, '"Cartooning Capitalism": Radical Cartooning and the Making of American Popular Radicalism in the Twentieth Century,' *International Review of Social History*, 52 (2007), 55.

[137] *ibid*.

demanding a back-scratch, to which his servant responds 'I'll do it with a pitchfork. I am a bolshevik and refuse to do degrading work.'[138]

The IWW was in fact the first organisation in America to produce a pro-Bolshevik pamphlet following the October Revolution of 1917. George Harrison, a wobbly who was in prison at the time, was enthusiastic about the news coming out of Russia about how workers had overthrown the Tsar and established a society governed by 'soviets,' and penned the pamphlet *The Red Dawn* from his jail cell, in which he would celebrate the achievement of the Bolsheviks and suggest that similar change should be brought to America (*fig*. 3).[139]

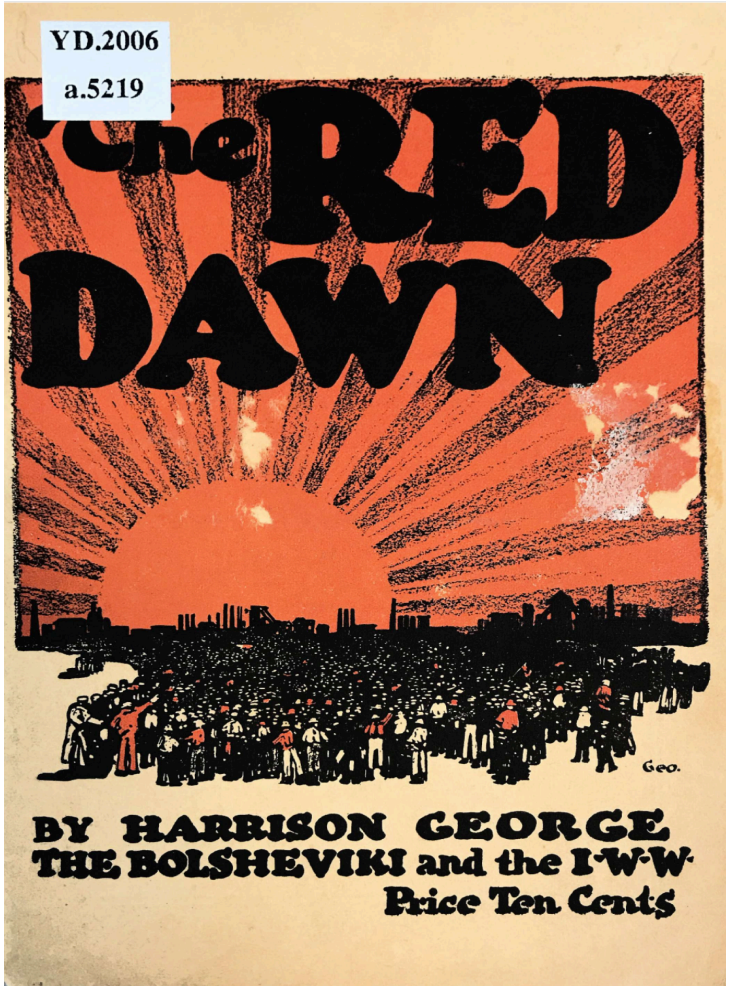

Figure 3: George Harrison, *The Red Dawn* (Chicago, IL.: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1918) Image courtesy of the British Library.

The IWW's most successful and longest running pamphlet, however, was the *I.W.W. Songbook*, originally published in 1909 and followed for many years after with a total of thirty-

[138] Ernest Riebe, *Crimes of the Bolsheviki* (Chicago, IL.: All-American Publishing Co., 1919), 6, 10.

[139] Bryan D. Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the origins of the American Revolutionary Left* (Chicago, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 87.

five separate editions.[140] The pamphlet was filled with motivational and humorous songs for workers, as well as classic socialist songs as the *Internationale* and *The Red Flag*. Many songs were parodies of those of the Salvation Army, which historian and IWW member Fred Thompson suggests was the result of employers recruiting the Salvation Army to drown out IWW speakers with their trumpets and drums, to which the IWW responded by creating new lines to replace those of the Salvation Army.

The IWW had 'lofty hopes' for the potential of singing as a means of radicalising the working class.[141] Joe Hill, who wrote many of the pamphlet's most humorous songs and would become a 'folk hero' and martyr of the labor movement after his execution in 1915, remarked on the importance of song in building mass appeal:

> If a person can put a few cold, common sense facts into a song and dress them (the facts) up in a cloak of humor to take the dryness off of them … he will succeed in reaching a great number of workers who are too unintelligent or too indifferent to read a pamphlet or an editorial on economic science.[142]

Rosemont, who was a former Wobbly, recalled his comrade George Roby marvelling at 'how much wisdom there is packed into the Little Red Song Book,' as well as noting that '[a] lot of us, when we had to travel, didn't have room for books, but we took the Song Book everywhere.'[143] Certainly, the IWW not only helped shape a new radical culture in America,

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[140] Timothy P. Lynch '"Better Than a Hundred Speeches": The Strike Song,' in Aaron Brenner, Benjamin Day and Immanuel Ness (eds.), *The Encylopedia of Strikes in American History* (London: M. E. Sharp, 2009), 108.

[141] *ibid*.

[142] Joe Hill, cited in Cohen, '"Cartooning Capitalism"…,' 54-55.

[143] Rosemont, 'The Legacy Of The Hoboes,' 600.

but it also broke with the tradition of the pamphlet as merely a plain treatise, and reinvented it with colour, song, cartoons and devastating wit to an unrivalled extent.

Suppression and Transition

Radical publishing in America was shaken by the country's entry into the First World War in 1917. Shortly after joining forces with the Allied Powers, the United States introduced the Espionage Act of 1917, followed by the Sedition Act of 1918, which allowed Americans to be prosecuted for criticising the war and gave the Postmaster General—or even the local postman—powers to confiscate and withhold delivery of publications which it deemed seditious.[144] As the Sedition Act stated:

> Whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States … shall be punished by a fine of not more than $10,000 or imprisonment of not more than twenty years.[145]

The government would carry out over two thousand prosecutions under the Espionage Act, and approximately forty-five newspapers and magazines lost their mailing privileges for criticising the war effort or government.[146] Radical publishers had been already struggling with increasing production costs—the price of paper had doubled between 1914 and 1916

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[144] Donald Johnson, *The Challenge to American Freedoms: World War I and the Rise of the American Civil Liberties Union* (Lexington, KT.: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), 56.

[145] 'Amendment to Section 3 of the Espionage Act of June 15, 1917,' *The Statues at Large of the United States,* Volume 40 (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1918), 553-554.

[146] John Fabian Witt, 'Crystal Eastman and the Internationalist Beginnings of American Civil Liberties,' *Duke Law Journal,* 54:3 (2004), 744; Jennifer Ruthanne Uhlmann, 'The Communist Civil Rights Movement: Legal Activism in the United States, 1919-1946,' Doctoral Thesis, University of California Los Angeles (2007), 18.

—as well as a decrease in pamphlet and book sales since the outbreak of the war, which Kerr suggested was down to 'recession and war excitement.'[147] However, the resulting years of surveillance, raids, arrests, imprisonment, expensive trials and deportation of so many radicals—including the imprisonment of such prominent socialist leaders as Eugene V. Debs and Bill Haywood—as well as the corresponding upsurge in nationalism and anti-socialist sentiment, was crippling for the socialist movement and the production of socialist literature in the US.

Postmaster General, Signey Burleson, was a congressman from Texas who 'became notorious for his petty-minded zealotry, his disdain for the First Amendment, and his willingness to ignore or contravene opposing views and even judicial rulings.' Upon the passing of the Espionage Act, Burleson quickly 'busied himself with running reform-minded and radical publications, particularly those issued in foreign languages, out of business.'[148] Editors of radical publications would be met with 'the usual curt notice,' as the SLP's *Weekly People* put it at the time: 'debarred from the mails,' 'submitted to Washington.'[149] The law was applied so capriciously that even where editors had taken consideration of the law before publication they would still find it held by the Postmaster. The reasons for the Post Office's refusal to mail literature could be so arbitrary and farcical that the staff at *Weekly People* would jokingly place bets on which article in each issue would cause their paper to be debarred.[150] When the Postmaster was confronted about these problems of ambiguity, he

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[147] Ruff, *"We Called Each Other Comrade",* 187.

[148] Nick Fischer, *Spider Web: The Birth of American Anti-Communism* (Chicago, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 46.

[149] 'Held Again—Why? Echo Answers—Why?' *Weekly People, 22* February 1919.

[150] *ibid*.

‘rebuffed their overtures; indeed, he refused even to issue guidelines or explanations of his censorship criteria. If the publishers disagreed with his decisions, he said, they could take up the matter in court.’[151]

With the mail becoming an insecure mode of distribution, organisations increasingly relied on more informal, covert methods of circulating literature. However, distribution or even simply possession of radical pamphlet material was enough to incite arrest, and pamphlets would often be used as evidence in trials. *Weekly People* for example decried the arrest of four comrades who were being held under $1000 and $500 bails ‘for the mere possession of certain S.L.P. pamphlets,’ most notably a copy of the Daniel De Leon pamphlet, *Socialist Reconstruction of Society* (1919).[152] Yet even if the Postmaster General *hadn’t* restricted a publication, its contents could still result in prosecution later on. The most notable instance of this was the prosecution of Scott Nearing, pacifist and Executive Chair of the radical anti-war organisation, the People's Council of America for Democracy and the Terms of Peace. Nearing found himself in court over the contents of his anti-war pamphlet *The Great Madness* (1917), published through the Rand School of Social Science, an auxiliary of the Socialist Party and the first Workers’ School in America, formed in 1906.[153] However, the

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[151] Laura M. Weinrib, ‘The Liberal Compromise: Civil Liberties, Labor, and the Limits of State Power, 1917-1940,’ Doctoral Thesis, Princeton University (2011), 82.

[152] ‘Hatford Comrades Arrested for Possession of S.L.P. Literature,’ *Weekly People, 22* February 1919.

[153] Scott Nearing, *The Great Madness: A Victory for the American Plutocracy* (New York, NY.: Rand School of Social Science, 1917), The Rand School would continue publishing pamphlets until 1952, though as Martinek writes, ‘it never posed a threat to the established order, even during the worst depression in the nation's history’, Martinek, S*ocialism and Print Culture in America*, 148.

pamphlet had initially circulated through the mail for nine months without issue before Nearing found himself under arrest, as he would recount in his 1918 address to the jury:

> … this pamphlet went through the mails, and as some of you know, the Post Office Department has been very rigorous in enforcing its decisions with regard to unmailable matter; and all through those nine months that pamphlet went through the mail and it was never once stopped to our knowledge.[154]

In fact, as lawyer Stephen Martin Kohn highlights in his book about the Espionage Act, even a previous ruling deeming a pamphlet's circulation acceptable did not protect from later prosecution. In 1920, five Socialist Party members were convicted for distributing the Party's anti-conscription pamphlet, *The Price We Pay.* Yet in 1917, a case in Maryland against two individuals who had distributed the *same* pamphlet was thrown out, with the Court ruling that to prosecute individuals for circulating a pamphlet would be 'going very far indeed.'[155]

By the end of the war the Post Office had compiled an 'elaborate index of illegal radical ideas to assist in systematic mail censorship.'[156] Literature continued to be closely monitored long after, and pamphlets that had been used as evidence in Espionage Act trials could creep back up on those who wrote—or even read—them many years later. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who would go on to become a leading member of the Communist Party in the

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[154] Scott Nearing, *Scott Nearing's Address to the Jury* (New York, NY.: Rand School of Social Science, 1918), 7.

[155] Stephen Martin Kohn, *American Political Prisoners: Prosecutions Under the Espionage and Sedition Act* (London: Praeger, 1994), 12-13.

[156] Peter H. Buckingham, *America Sees Red: Anticommunism in America, 1870s to 1980s* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1988), 20.

1930s and 40s, had translated Emile Pouget's classic tract on sabotage in 1917, which was published by the IWW in 1915.[157] Flynn recalled in her memoirs how the pamphlet was 'dug up' over 40 years later:

> I was greatly troubled that the pamphlet was being used effectively as so-called "evidence" by the prosecution in several IWW trials. I saw it so used in Seattle, Washington, in 1917. It has bobbed up like a bad penny from time to time, even in the Subversive Activities Control Board hearing in July 1952, when I was a defense witness for the Communist Party. … Any stick serves in a witch hunt, even a tattered and torn pamphlet, long since out of print, dug up by some sleuth in a secondhand bookstore, nearly 40 years after its publication. A few years ago when Michael Quill, the head of the Transport Workers Union in New York City, threatened the company with a strict enforcement of the Book of Rules, he was accused of having read this obscure pamphlet of mine, of which he had undoubtedly never heard. Very few copies are around today and most of them are in the government's files.[158]

Groups such as the National Civil Liberties Bureau (NCLB), which would become the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 1920, became prominent during this period in their fight for free speech and to defend those prosecuted by the sedition laws. But the NCLB too was greatly hindered by the legislation. Pamphlets by the organisation quickly found themselves subject to suppression. Its most controversial was *The Truth About the IWW,* the NCLB's 1918 pamphlet attempting to dispel misconceptions about the IWW and demonstrate that it was a legitimate labor union, was found by a judge to be 'sufficiently close to an endorsement' of revolutionary tactics and the government quickly moved to censor it.[159] Soon after, all NCLB publications were subject to investigation by the Post Office, which deemed every pamphlet to have 'elements of disloyalty' and fourteen were deemed un-mailable. The postal inspector noted that the NCLB should consider that 'in

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[157] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Sabotage* (Cleveland, OH.: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1915).

[158] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Rebel Girl* (New York, NY.: International Publishers, 1955), 163.

[159] Johnson, *The Challenge to American Freedoms,* 73-4; Weinrib, 'The Liberal Compromise,' 124.

times of great danger it may be necessary to suspend the constitutional right of free speech.'[160] Such censorship meant that the organisation struggled to raise money and publicise its case.

Though Kerr and Company, NYLN and the IWW survived an onslaught of government repression and continued to publish into the 1920s and beyond, their heyday would remain in the pre-war decades and their dominance in the realm of radical pamphleteering would be eclipsed by the emerging Communist movement which would dominate the interwar era. However, the spirit of Kerr and Company's Pocket Library of Socialism certainly influenced the pamphlet series established in 1919 known as the 'Little Blue Books', by the publisher Haldeman-Julius in Girard, Kansas, which became exceptionally popular during the '20s and '30s. The publisher was named after its founder, E. Haldeman-Julius, who had previously been editor for the socialist newspaper the *Call* and had worked with numerous socialists and labour leaders including Morris Hilquit. In January 1919 he had purchased the printing plant of socialist magazine *Appeal to Reason* in Girard, Kansas which had been struggling due to the pressures of wartime anti-socialist sentiment, and quickly went on to publish the first two issues of the Little Blue Books, which was then known as the Appeal Pocket Series. Sold at 25 cents each to subscribers to *Appeal to Reason*, the pamphlets sold so quickly that Haldeman-Julius went on to immediately publish various other classics by the likes of Dickens, Balzac and Abraham Lincoln, to name a few.[161]

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[160] Johnson, *The Challenge to American Freedoms,* 74.

[161] Dale M. Herder, 'Haldeman-Julius, the Little Blue Books, and the Theory of Popular Culture,' *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 4 (1971), 885-6.

Only three by five inches and featuring their trademark blue exterior, the pamphlets, as Dale M. Herder wrote, 'were consciously directed at "Mr. Average Man." Through them, for a nickel, he could buy works by Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Shakespeare, Dumas, Rabelais, Goethe, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Sophocles, Euripides, Marcus Aurelius, and many, many more.'[162] Herder expands on Haldeman-Julius' philosophy:

> Haldeman-Julius saw the invention of the printing press as a mind-liberating revolution that worked to dispel the popular fear and the popular ignorance. This faith in the potential of twentieth-century man, combined with his Socialist and working class background, led him to hypothesize that the average man was a potential buyer of good books. Haldeman-Julius believed that the "middle-brow" American could and probably would read good literature if it was presented to him in a size small enough to be carried in his work-trouser pocket and at a cost low enough that he could afford.'[163]

Though these pamphlets were not produced with such a salient political agenda in the same manner as Kerr and Co. and NYLN publications, their 'implicit organizational mission was to serve as a "debunker" of mainstream thought and institutions,' writes Louella Moore.[164] The series included its own edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, as well as relatively controversial pamphlets on sex (a sub-series was created titled the 'Rational Sex Series'), including Margaret Sanger's *What Every Girl Should Know* (c. 1920), which provided 'illegal and much sought after information on birth control.' It also produced 'one

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[162] *ibid.*, 884.

[163] *ibid.*, 887.

[164] Louella Moore, 'The E. Haldeman-Julius Story in the Context of Owenism and Fordism: An Exploration of Social Control.' *The Midwest Quarterly*, 61:1 (2019), 76.

of the first anthologies of African-American poetry', encouraged by Haldeman-Julius' personal correspondence with W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson.[165]

The series was certainly unorthodox for its time, and despite emerging at a period when it was 'political suicide for Americans to align themselves with socialist or collectivist ideas,' the Little Blue Books succeeded in popularising relatively progressive and radical pamphlets among the American public.[166] E. Haldeman-Julius himself would later boast that through his Little Blue Books he had 'done more to bring education to the masses than any other individual since the invention of printing.'[167] Indeed, the popularity of the Little Blue Books throughout the interwar period demonstrates that Haldeman was correct: there was widespread demand for educative pamphlets even as radio, cinema and television were expanding.

Conclusion

Pamphlets were often the renegade of print and publishing, operating in a far more informal and chaotic manner, springing forth as the moment dictated. Clergyman and antiquarian J. Harvey Bloom perhaps best encapsulated the dynamism and responsiveness of the pamphlet in his 1922 bibliography *English Tracts, Pamphlets and Printed Sheets*, in

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[165] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Girard, KS.: Haldeman-Julius Publications, c. 1922); Margaret Sanger, *What Every Girl Should Know* (Girard, KS.: Haldeman-Julius Publications, c. 1920); Eric Schocket, 'Proletarian Paperbacks: The Little Blue Books and Working-Class Culture,' *College Literature*, 19:4 (2002), 70.

[166] Moore, 'The E. Haldeman-Julius Story …,' 71.

[167] E. Haldeman-Julius, cited in Herder, 'Haldeman-Julius, the Little Blue Books, …,' 881.

which he stated that 'pamphlets represent the fluctuations in the pulse of public opinion, and are a record of stirring emotional feelings of the masses.'[168]

Dissent which began as primarily religious in early modern Europe became increasingly political into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, punctuated by the liberalism of Paine's *Common Sense* in 1776 and the communism of Marx and Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in 1848. The huge impact of these texts have demonstrated the effectiveness of the pamphlet in communicating ideas and their potential for stimulating political change.

As the labour movement became more organised in America, so too did the production of pamphlets. Socialist organisations formed close ties with sympathising publishing houses or simply built their own, and special notice was taken of the value of pamphleteering and new approaches to the production, design and distribution of pamphlets were introduced. As Ruff put it, these publishers and organisations played a central role in providing a 'counter hegemonic political forum as well as a sense of camaraderie' among socialists and the labor movement.[169] They also demonstrated how dramatically pamphlet production could be impacted by political events, particularly during the First World War and its immediate aftermath. Despite such struggles, however, these organisations had helped to modernise the radical pamphlet and even popularise it, and this laid the groundwork for the Communist movement's prolific pamphleteering of the interwar period.

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[168] Bloom, *English tracts, pamphlets …,* 6.

[169] Ruff, *"We Called Each Other Comrade",* 208.

2.

The Rise of Communist Pamphleteering in America

> … [O]ur best weapon, our best lever for raising the political understanding of the American people and for unifying and directing their burning will to struggle into the channels where they will be most effective, is our literature. The thousands of pamphlets, covering every aspect of the class struggle, written by the best leaders of the proletariat of all land, can bring to them not only enlightenment but a guide to action. Just as our revolutionary theory lays the basis for revolutionary action, our splendid pamphlets can devolp [*sic*.] splendid pickets!
>
> - Joe Fields, *Party Organizer* (1936)[170]

The year 1917 marked a seismic shift in both American and international politics. America joined the allies in the war against Germany in April, which resulted in the implementation of draconian anti-sedition legislation, and seven months later, the Bolsheviks would seize power in Russia which would mark the birth of the Soviet Union and the world's first socialist state. As James P. Cannon—one of the founders of the CPUSA—put it, the Russian Revolution helped to 'awaken and reeducate' the Left in America, and radicals in America used publishing in all its forms to communicate the events unfolding in Russia and to pass on the ideas of the leaders of the Russian Revolution. Such circulation of literature was particularly important for those living outside of the East Coast, where many like Cannon had 'never heard' of the likes of Lenin or Trotsky.[171] The Communist Party of America would eventually emerge out of this discourse in 1919 and go on to become the dominant voice of the radical left in America throughout the interwar period.

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[170] Joe Fields, 'Pamphlets and Pickets,' *Party Organizer*, 9:6, June 1936, 45.

[171] James P. Cannon, cited in Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the origins …*, 91.

While radio and cinema had expanded to become a mainstay of popular media by the 1920s, Communists were typically shut out of such outlets, and thus relied on the printed word in their quest to reach the millions.[172] Increasingly seeing the potential of pamphlets as a method of propaganda, the Party would become gradually more organised and disciplined in its approach to pamphleteering over the course of the interwar period, particularly upon the creation of its publishing house, Workers Library Publishing, in 1927.

By the 1930s the Party was, in the words of a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) report, distributing 'prodigious quantities' of literature, to which 'millions of Americans have been exposed, at one time or another.' The FBI noted that, between 1928 and 1956, 'communists in the United States annually published an average of 32 pamphlets for a 28-year total of nearly 50,000,000 pamphlets', and remarked on the various resourceful and unconventional ways in which these were distributed by the Party:[173]

> There is almost no limit to the methods employed by communists to disseminate leaflet and pamphlets. Literature has been surreptitiously left in such places as street cars, busses [*sic*.], and parked automobiles; in books on the shelves of public libraries; and in the magazine racks of reading rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association. Literature has been thrown into front yards and onto porches of dwellings at night, placed in the letter boxes and under the doors of private homes and apartment houses, handed out on street corners at busy intersections and outside factory gates, and mailed at random or to selected individuals.[174]

This chapter will explore the development of the American Communist pamphlet from its rise out of the ashes of the First World War, up to its heyday in the Popular Front period

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[172] See Martinek, *Socialism and Print Culture in America,* 148.

[173] Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Communist Propaganda in the United States, Part V: Press and Publications* (Washington DC.: United States Department of Justice, 1957), 68, 66.

[174] *ibid.*, 58-59.

from 1935 to the late-1930s. It will illustrate the pamphlet's role in the Party's ecosystem of literature, how the Party developed and adapted it use of pamphlets, and how political developments and Comintern policy in particular influenced pamphleteering in the Party, for better or worse.

Beginnings

In the first ten years of the developing American communist movement—1917 to 1927—pamphlets were produced by a patchwork of different, mostly short-lived, publishing houses, which reflected what Bryan D. Palmer described as the 'confusing array of parties, factions, and splinter groups [which] constituted the communist ranks'.[175] As such, what follows is a discussion of the most significant pamphlet publishers—whether by output or impact—as opposed to an exhaustive account of every publisher to have emerged at the time.

Though what is known as the American Communist Party was not formed until 1919, communist pamphleteering really begins with the Socialist Publication Society (SPS), formed in 1917. Based in Brooklyn, the SPS was a short-lived publisher for the Left Wing of the Socialist Party, formed to produce the bi-monthly magazine *Class Struggle,* but also a range of important pamphlets. The magazine had been conceptualised by Trotsky during his brief stay in Brooklyn in early 1917, and he encouraged American comrades to create an organ 'that would fearlessly and truthfully express the attitude of the revolutionary

[175] Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the origins…,* 150.

minority.'[176] His advice was taken and *Class Struggle* was established shortly after by Louis Fraina, Louis Boudin and Ludwig Lore, who would become its editors.

Of all the American socialist organizations and sections, the Left-Wing of the SP responded most eagerly to the October Revolution, and sought to 'translate what they saw in Russia into American terms.'[177] As such, the SPS would become the leading communicator to American radicals of the events unfolding and the speeches and writings of the revolution's leaders. It published the first American editions of many landmark texts and translations as pamphlets in its few years of existence, such as Trotsky's *From October to Brest Litovsk* and, most famously, Lenin's *A Letter to American Workers*, which had arrived in the United States as a letter printed on cigarette paper after being smuggled in by an engineer.[178] Its publication by the SPS would have been many radicals' first encounter with Lenin's thoughts on America—possibly even Lenin's writing altogether, and it would soon become a staple in recommended reading lists for American radicals. John Williamson, a Scottish-born member of the CPUSA noted in his autobiography, *Dangerous Scot*, how discovering *A Letter to American Workers* shortly after its first publication had made such an impression

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[176] Ludwig Lore, 'Leon Trotzky,' in *One Year of Revolution* (New York, NY.: Socialist Publication Society, 1918), 7.

[177] David E. Brown, 'Introduction,' *Class Struggle, Vol. I. [Radical periodicals in the United States, 1890-1900]* (New York, NY.: Greenwood Reprint Corporation, 1961), unpaginated.

[178] Art Shields, 'The Story Behind Lenin's Letter to American Workers,' in V. I. Lenin, *Letter to American Workingmen* (New York, NY.: New Outlook Publishers, 1970), 22.

on him that it would inspire him to eventually leave the SLP in favour of the Communists.[179]

SPS pamphlets were homogenous in their plain design which features only text, with a notable exception being the 1918 pamphlet commemorating the October Revolution, *One*

Figure 4: *One Year of Revolution* (New York, NY.: Socialist Publication Society, 1918) Image courtesy of University of Houston Digital Library.

[179] John Williamson, *Dangerous Scot: The Life and Work of an American "Undesirable"* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), 40.

Year of Revolution (*fig*. 4). A larger size than the average pamphlet, its cover featured a cartoon of the Red Guard by Boardman Robinson, and inside, readers would encounter full-page portraits of Lenin and Trotsky alongside appraisals of each by figures on the American radical left. Readers would also find a variety of texts, including an introduction by Eugene V. Debs and essays by John Reed, author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*, and Japanese Marxist radical Sen Katayama, as well as Lenin and Trotsky's call to German workers and soldiers in both German and English.

Despite wartime repression and the prosecution of its leaders, the Socialist Party's membership had risen from 81,000 in 1918 to 108,000 in 1919.[180] Its Left Wing, however, was also becoming stronger and increasingly frustrated with the direction of the Party. It published a pamphlet of its manifesto and program in early 1919 which began by underlining the reasons for such a publication:

> The members of the Socialist Party are entitled to an explanation for the issuance of this pamphlet by the Left Wing Section.
>
> We are a very active and growing section of the Socialist Party which is attempting to reach the rank and file with our urgent message over the heads of the powers that be, who, through inertia or a lack of vision, cannot see the necessity for a critical analysis of the party's policies and tactics.
>
> The official Socialist Party press is in the main closed to us; therefore we cannot adequately present our side of the case. …
>
> Therefore we have decided to issue our Manifesto and Program in pamphlet form, so that the rank and file may read and judge our case on its merits.[181]

It went on to criticise the prevailing 'moderate socialism' in the Party which failed to understand or adequately respond to the radical changes taking place both in America and

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[180] Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the origins…*, 104.

[181] *Manifesto and Program of the Left Wing Section, Socialist Party, Local Greater New York* (New York, NY.: Left Wing Section, SP, 1919).

internationally. The pamphlet instead urged for the adoption of the radical Left Wing program which urged the Party to 'teach, propagate, and agitate exclusively for the overthrow of Capitalism, and the establishment of Socialism through a Proletarian Dictatorship', and to participate in a new International affiliated with the Communist Parties in Russia and Germany. It is also urged that the Party press and educational institutions should be 'party owned and controlled' and that 'the party discard its obsolete literature and publish new literature in keeping with the policies and tactics above mentioned.'[182]

As well as being printed in radical newspapers *Ohio Socialist* and *The Revolutionary Age,* the pamphlet was widely distributed in the numerous Socialist Party branches and within radical bookstores such as that of the Rand School.[183] In May, the Left Wing was expelled from the Party, and during a three-day National Left-Wing Conference in Manhattan in June, the Communist Party of America (consisting of foreign-language speaking members) and the Communist Labor Party (made up of mostly English-speakers) were founded. In what would be its final issue published in November of 1919, *Class Struggle* declared that '[t]he Socialist Publication Society decided at a Special Meeting to give over THE CLASS

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[182] *Manifesto and Program of the Left Wing Section, Socialist Party, Local Greater New York* (New York, NY.: Left Wing Section, SP, 1919).

[183] *Revolutionary Radicalism: its history, purpose and tactics: with an exposition and discussion of the steps being taken and required to curb it, Part 1 Vol. 1* (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, 1920), 680. URL: https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/102156547 [Date Accessed: 24 May 2021].

STRUGGLE with all the pamphlets and books published during its existence to the Communist Labor Party of the U.S. of America.'[184]

However, the Red Scare was by now at its height. In 1919 alone there were 3,600 strikes in which over four million workers participated, and such an upsurge in industrial action appeared to confirm fears of the spread of Bolshevism in America.[185] The government continued with its crackdown on radicals, most notably in the Palmer Raids at the end of 1919. Raids persisted into 1920, 'repeated again and again with a ferocity unprecedented in the history of America,' as Communist Robert Minor recalled.[186] One such raid was reported by the *New York Times* in March:

> RED PAMPHLETS SEIZED
> Communist Headquarters Raided
> Detectives from Police Headquarters, accompanied by agents of the Military Intelligence Service, yesterday visited the headquarters of the Communist Labor Party in East Twelfth Street, and confiscated pamphlets entitled "Revolution in the Church." The pamphlets, according to a recent radical inquiry in Washington, constitute radical literature.[187]

In light of persistent raids, members of the Communist Party received specific warning about the risks involved in the possession and distribution of literature. One circular from

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[184] *The Class Struggle*, 3:4, November 1919, 45. This final issue his ceased to carry the 'Socialist Publication Society' as publisher and was instead replaced by the Communist Labor Party of the U.S.A.

[185] Julian F. Jaffe, *Crusade Against Radicalism: New York during the Red Scare, 1914-1924* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1972), 3.

[186] Robert Minor, *Steadman's Red Raid* (Cleveland, OH.: Toiler Publishing Association, 1921), 2.

[187] *New York Times*, 9 March 1920, 32.

early 1920 warned 'DON'T keep in your rooms openly any incriminating documents or literature.' It continued:

> Keep your rooms "clean." A little care in this respect may save you in case of accidental arrest or search on suspicion. Especially keep clean of any quantities of our papers, leaflets, or literature that would show that you are participating in the distribution of them. They cannot do very much for your reading revolutionary literature, but they will surely tuck you in for distributing it. And then, why should you risk being known as a Communist to all those who happen to come to your rooms — unknown "friends," peddlers, collectors, etc.?[188]

The crackdown on radicals significantly impacted the ability of the nascent Communist parties to carry out basic functions. By May 1920, the entirety of the Communist Labor Party's leadership was either jailed or under surveillance, while hundreds of supporters were arrested or deported under the Alien Act.[189] In the words of Bryan D. Palmer, such suppression led to the 'the assailed Bolshevik ranks of the United States retreat[ing] further into the illusory world of sect-like isolationism.'[190] The Communist movement was pushed underground, in what marked 'the worst year in the history of our movement' as Alexander Bittelman later recalled.[191]

Communist pamphleteering in the first several years of the 1920s inevitably suffered as a result of such government repression, as well as the Party's own disjointedness. Many

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[188] Rules for Underground Party Work [leaflet of the CPA — circa March 1920] Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 34, ll. 22-23. URL: https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/cpusa/1920/03/0300-cpa-undergroundrules.pdf [Date Accessed: 24 July 2021].

[189] Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the origins…*, 112.

[190] *ibid*., 112.

[191] Allen Ruff, *"We Called Each Other Comrade": Charles H. Kerr & Company, Radical Publishers* (Oakland, CA.: PM Press, 2011), 204; *ibid.*, 113.

communist pamphlets produced in these years were not directly produced by the Party itself but by groups and publishers affiliated with the broader movement. Nevertheless, the underground Communist Party of America still produced a number of pamphlets by notable European Marxists between 1920 and 1921 under the guise of the Contemporary Publishing Association—the 'CPA.' These included Lenin's *The State and Revolution* and *Kautsky the Renegade and the Proletarian Revolution*, Nikolai Bukharin's *The Communist Program*, and Alexandra Kollontai's *Communism and the Family*.[192] These, of course, were relatively inconspicuous pamphlets which did not feature any publication address beyond 'New York City,', nor did it contain any advertising, whether for the Party's newspapers, magazines or their other pamphlets, as was typical of most.

The most consistent, organised and 'open' pamphlet producer affiliated with the Communist movement to emerge at this time was the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL). Formed in 1920 by William Z. Foster, future leader of the Communist Party who at this time was well-known for his work as a militant leader in the trade unions, the TUEL was created in an attempt to unite radicals from across various trade unions, and was partially funded through sales of its magazine, the *Labor Herald*, and its pamphlet series known as the *Labor Herald Library* (*fig*. 5). These pamphlets were intended to be an educational supplement to the magazine, which would help further aid trade unionists'

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[192] V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (New York, NY.: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1921); Lenin, *Kautsky the Renegade and the Proletarian Revolution* (New York, NY.: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1920); Nikolai Bukharin, *The Communist Program* (New York, NY.: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1920); Alexandra M. Kollontai, *Communism and the Family* (New York, NY.: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1920).

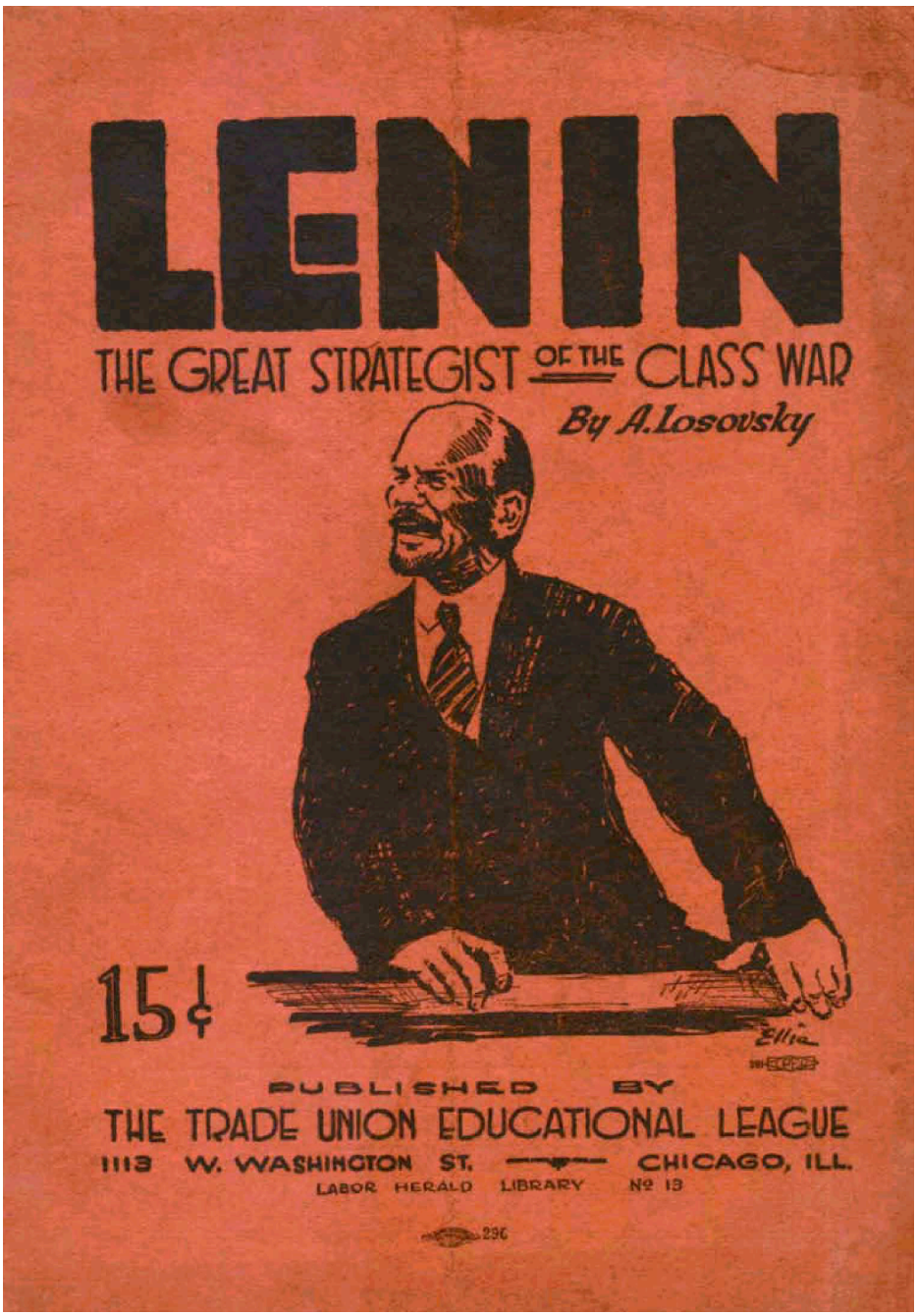

Figure 5: A. Losovsky, *Lenin: The Great Strategist of the Class War* (Chicago, IL.: Trade Union Educational League, 1924), number five in the Labor Herald Library Series. Image Courtesy of Florida Atlantic University Digital Collections.

knowledge on particular subjects. As the TUEL did not collect dues, it raised money through the sale of such literature. Pamphlets were illustrated by the big-name radical cartoonists such as Fred Ellis and noted for their use of firm, coloured paper covers. It would become one of the longer-lasting pamphlet producers associated with the Communist Party, producing a total of 20 pamphlets across the series until 1927.

State repression of radicals eventually began to ease, and throughout 1922 it became easier to print and distribute radical literature without fear of state reprisals. By 1923 the Workers Party of America emerged as the 'undisputed center of American communism' and the 'illegal' Party was finally dissolved.[193] Pamphlets were now produced by the Party's Literature Department in both Chicago and New York, which attempted to build a 'Workers Party Library' of various pamphlets and cloth-bound books.[194] In the same year the Party began a membership drive which focused on distribution of a short, 1 cent pamphlet by its General Secretary C. E. Ruthenberg, *Why Every Worker Should Be A Communist and Join the Workers Party*:

> The Workers' Party has just published an 8-page pamphlet with the title above.
>
> In it appears a brief statement of the principles of communism, written in language which every worker will understand.
>
> The opening statement is the challenging question: "Is this the best you can do?" followed by some plain facts about the operation of the capitalist system.
>
> The pamphlet is illustrated by two original cartoons, one by Robert Minor and the other by Ellis.
>
> On the back page is an application for membership and subscription blank for the party publications.
>
> CIRCULATE A MILLION COPIES
>
> The circulation of this pamphlet is a part of the membership drive of the party to add 10,000 members to its ranks.
>
> Every party member, every party branch must help circulate this pamphlet. The language branches must circulate their quota.
>
> The quota is 100 copies per member. The price is 1 cent per copy—in lots of 1,000 $8.

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[193] Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the origins …*, 166.

[194] See for example, Jay Lovestone, *The Government Strikebreaker* (New York, NY.: The Workers Party of America, 1923), 2.

Sell them to your shopmates, brother trade unionists, and friends.'[195]

Though short, the pamphlet put forward a clear summary of class conflict, imperialism, war, and the aims of the Party. A cartoon by Robert Minor filled the front cover, which depicted a huge man, denoted as the 'capitalist system,' being carried on the back of a struggling worker toward a cliff edge. The caption read, 'Will he throw him off his back or go over the brink with him?'[196] A membership form was included on the back page, as well as a subscription form for affiliated periodicals *The Worker*, *Voice of Labor*, *Liberator* and *Labor Herald.*

By the end of the year the Party appeared pleased with the success of the pamphlet, reporting that it was 'still being distributed and the total number will run into the hundreds of thousands before the campaign is over.'[197] Certainly, the consolidation of the various Parties into one Workers Party had improved its ability to effectively produce pamphlet literature, as the Party itself remarked that '[d]uring the past year our Party has at least made a beginning in the publication of Communist literature applicable to the needs of the

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[195] United States Congress Special Committee on Communist Activities in the United States, *Investigation of Communist Propaganda: Hearings Before a Special Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in the United States of the House of Representatives, Seventy-first Congress, Second Session, Pursuant to H. Res. 220, Providing for an Investigation of Communist Propaganda in the United States, Part 3, Volume 2* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930), 224.

[196] C. E. Ruthenberg, *Why Every Worker Should Be A Communist and Join the Workers Party* (Chicago, IL.: Workers Party of America, 1923), 1.

[197] *The Second Year of the Workers Party of America* (Chicago, IL.: Workers Party of America, 1924), 27.

life of the workers in this country.' The report listed eight pamphlets which had been published in 1923, three of which were authored by Jay Lovestone, and two by John Pepper (the Americanised name of Hungarian Communist József Pogány), alongside that of Ruthenberg.[198] These members would form the leading faction of the Party for the next several years.[199]

Building a Publishing House

On 13th of January 1924 the first issue of the Communist Party's new daily newspaper, the *Daily Worker,* was published. This marked a new era for the Party's publishing efforts, as it began to take concerted action to amalgamate its production and distribution of literature into one single organisation, which would become known as the Daily Worker Publishing (DWP) Company, based at 1113 West Washington Boulevard in Chicago. The overhaul was viewed as a major step for the Communist Party. In the first issue of the *Workers Monthly*—itself an amalgamation of the *Liberator*, the *Soviet Russia Pictorial* and the *Labor Herald* as part of this restructuring—in November of the same year, the Party acclaimed:

> The daily, the monthly and the party publishing department, united under one roof, almost unlimited in capacity are ready to fill the educational and propaganda needs of the American Communist movement. … A great forward step has been taken in the centralization of the communist publishing enterprises into the one organization, the Daily Worker Publishing company and the building of an adequate production equipment. Now the next step is obvious and equally necessary. Centralize the distributing machinery for the Communist press and build an adequate organization to make it live.[200]

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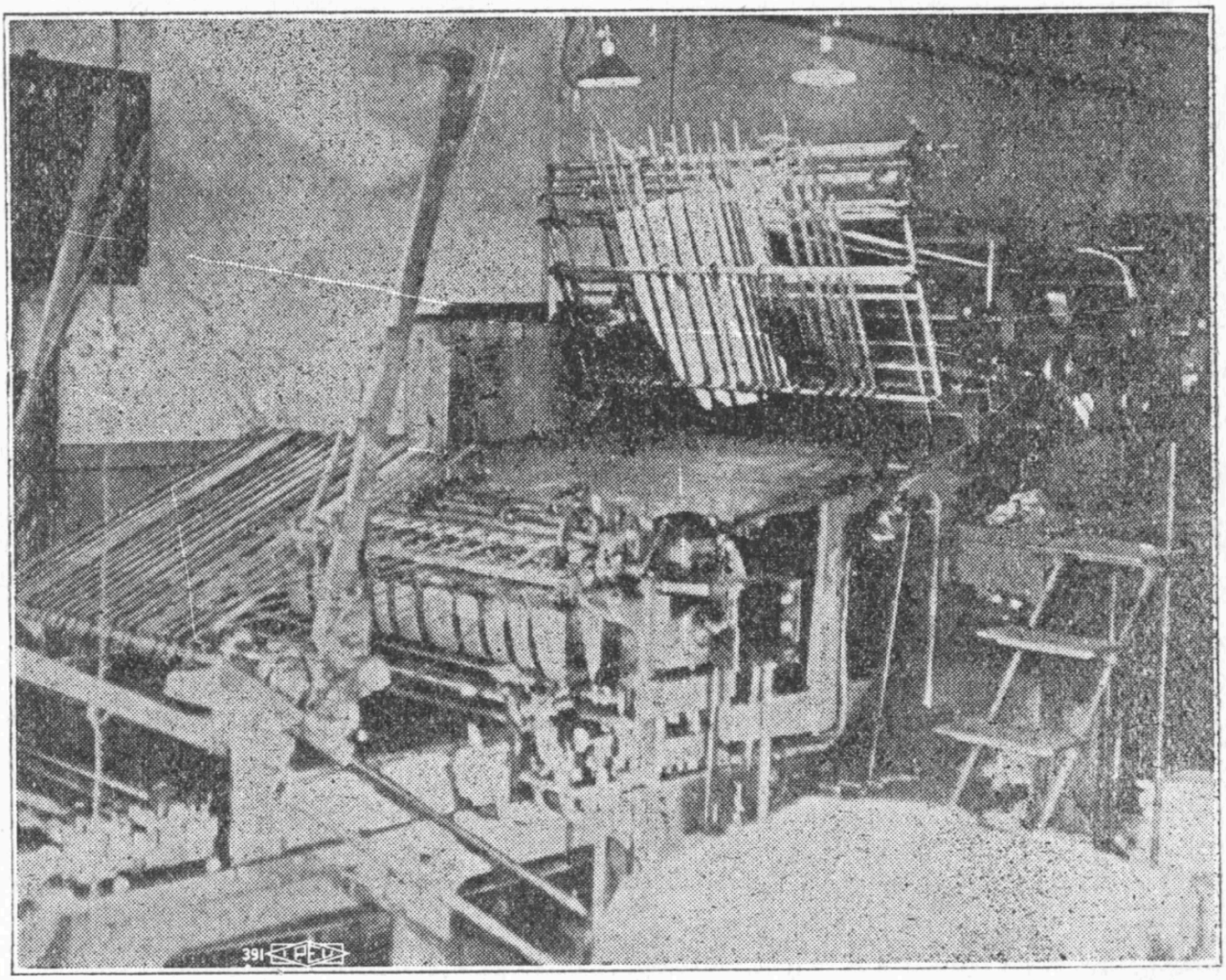
[198] *The Second Year of the Workers Party of America* (Chicago, IL.: Workers Party of America, 1924), 43.

[199] Ruthenberg would die unexpectedly in 1927. Having been regarded as the Party's leader up until that point, a vacuum was created in his absence.

[200] *Workers Monthly*, November 1924, 19-20.

The article featured several photographs of the printing presses the Party had acquired to produce its literature, including the cylinder press on which Party pamphlets were produced (*fig.* 6). Not only would DWP become the central publishing house for the American Communist Party, but it also acted as the 'agent for all foreign Communist and other labor



THE CYLINDER PRESS ON WHICH THE WORKERS MONTHLY AND THE PARTY PAMPHLETS AND BOOKS ARE PRINTED. THIS PRESS CAN TURN OUT 200,000 COPIES OF THE WORKERS MONTHLY EVERY MONTH IN ADDITION TO OTHER PARTY PUBLICATIONS. HOW LONG WILL IT BE UNTIL IT RUNS TO CAPACITY?

Figure 6: Photograph of the Workers Party's new cylinder press featured the article 'Torchbearers' by Moritz J. Loeb in *Workers Monthly*, November 1924, 20. Image courtesy of marxists.org.

publications', and as such dubbed itself 'the source of all Communist literature'.[201] This was reflected in their series of pamphlet catalogues, *Books for Workers*, which listed over 30 pages of literature which could be bought through DWP, including a range of pamphlets from friendly publishers like the Rand School and the TUEL.[202]

In 1925, DWP began to produce the ten-cent pamphlet series known as the Little Red Library. The pamphlets were highly publicised in Party literature as an 'inexpensive and convenient' form of agitation for the masses of American workers, as well as the answer to the needs of the revolutionary labor movement:

> These books are published at a uniform price and in uniform size. They are designed to become the pocket library of the American working class. …
>
> They will cover the whole field of working class literary effort; Communist theory and practice, social science, philosophy, political and industrial problems, history, fiction and poetry.
>
> Class conscious workers will want to possess themselves of each volume of the Library as they are issued (at about two week intervals). The low price makes it possible for every worker thus to build up a well rounded revolutionary library of his own.
>
> Militants will also want to make use of those volumes which are especially intended for agitational purposes. To sell copies of The Little Red Library to workers who are hesitant, unclear or unconvinced is to create the basis for building a larger and stronger and more militant labor movement.[203]

Though only producing a total of twelve pamphlets over two years, those produced lived up to their promise of a diverse range of texts, producing such works as Engels' catechism *Principles of Communism*, Max Shachtman's *The Paris Commune*, a collection of stories by

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[201] *The Party Organization* (Chicago, IL.: Daily Workers Publishing, n.d., c. 1925), 50.

[202] *Books for Workers: A Catalogue* (Chicago, IL.: Daily Worker Publishing, n.d.)

[203] *Catalogue of Books for Workers* (Chicago, IL.: Daily Worker Publishing, n.d.)

Michael Gold, and *Poems for Workers*, edited by Manuel Gomez.[204] There was also a pamphlet planned for the series about Wall Street by Gomez which did not materialise.[205]

The Little Red Library also offers us an insight into the factional divides in the Party. That the series began with the pamphlet *Trade Unions in America* authored by James P. Cannon, William Z. Foster and Earl Browder, was likely an indication that the series was predominantly the brainchild of the Foster-Cannon faction, the 'trade union, proletarian faction' which had controlled the Party until 1925.[206] This is further indicated by the subsequent authors such as Manuel Gomez and William F. Dunne, who were also known members of this faction. Meanwhile, Jay Lovestone and John Pepper, who led the opposing faction of the Party, were notably absent from the list of authors for the Little Red Library series. This is particularly notable as Lovestone and Pepper would become the most published pamphlet authors in the Party between 1923 and 1928. Pamphlets by Lovestone in particular appear to have often had more invested into them than other pamphlets by the Party, as they were frequently printed on a better quality paper, sometimes using coloured card covers and featuring striking cartoons on the front covers, such as 1924 pamphlet

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[204] Frederich Engels, *Principles of Communism* (Chicago, IL.: Daily Worker Publishing, n.d., c. 1926); Max Shachtman, *The Paris Commune* (Chicago, IL.: Daily Worker Publishing, n.d., c. 1926); Michael Gold, *The Damned Agitator and Other Stories* (Chicago, IL.: Daily Worker Publishing, n.d., c. 1926); Manuel Gomez, *Poems for Workers* (Chicago, IL.: Daily Worker Publishing, n.d., c. 1926).

[205] Michael Gold's *The Damned Agitator and Other Stories*, the inside cover advertises *The World Rule of Wall Street* by Gomez as an 'upcoming publication' but this never came to fruition. Gomez was one of the pseudonyms of Charles Shipman; see Charles Shipman, *It Had to Be Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[206] James P. Cannon, *History of American Trotskyism* (New York, NY.: Pathfinder Press, 1979), 29.

American Imperialism, which features a bright orange card cover with a large illustration of a sinister Uncle Sam figure hunched in a throne, holding a baseball bat marked with a large dollar sign.[207]

Following the success of Ruthenberg's 1923 pamphlet *Why Every Worker Should Be A Communist*, the party published a similar pamphlet in 1925 titled *The Workers [Communist] Party: What it Stands for and Why Workers Should Join (fig.* 7), also authored by Ruthenberg in his signature 'clear didactic style.'[208] It's front cover featured a cartoon of two workers sat side by side reading a copy of the 'Cry-bune'. The newspaper, in bold capitals, exclaims 'Bolshevism!' and the caption of the cartoon has one worker tell the other: "I know what this Bolshevism means Bill—it means us." Sixteen pages long, it covered Party positions on a range of issues, in a similar manifesto-style to the previous pamphlet. This time, however, the pamphlet included a pledge—notably absent from the previous—to support Black Americans against discrimination and exploitation and to campaign for 'complete social equality'.[209] Incisive cartoons by various artists were included throughout, which helped to communicate points made within the text; or, as historian James Farr describes it, 'Manifesto by cartoon drawing!'[210]

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[207] Jay Lovestone, *American Imperialism: The Menace of the Greatest Capitalist World Power* (Chicago, IL.: Workers Party of America, n.d., c. 1924).

[208] James Farr, 'The Communist Manifestoes: media of Marxism and Bolshevik contagion in America,' *Studies in East European Thought,* 70 (2018), 102.

[209] C. E. Ruthenberg, *Workers (Communist) Party of America: What It Stands For, Why Workers Should Join* (Chicago, IL.: Workers (Communist) Party of America, 1925).

[210] James Farr, 'The Communist Manifestoes: media of Marxism and Bolshevik contagion in America,' *Studies in East European Thought,* 70 (2018), 102.

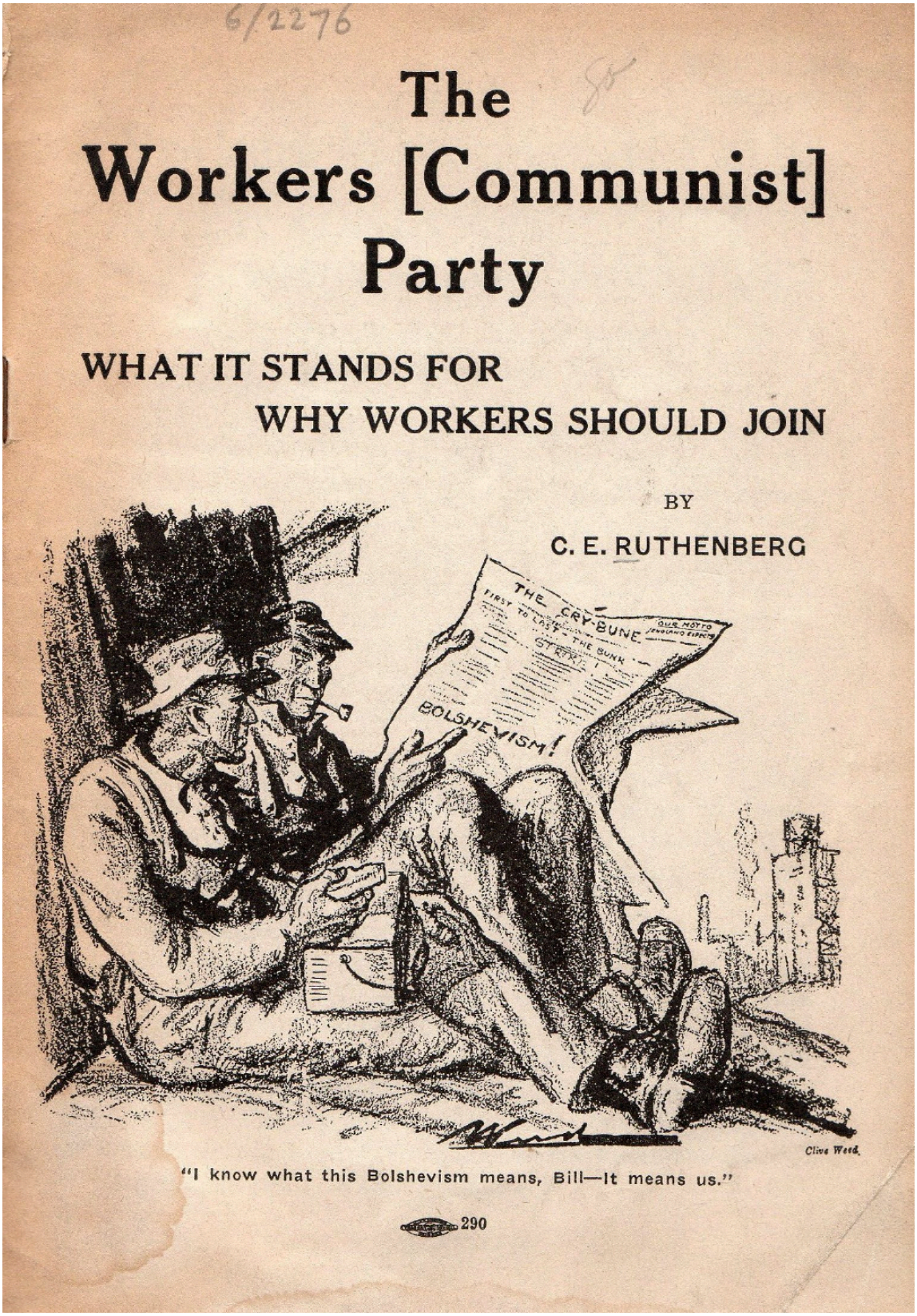

Figure 7: C. E. Ruthenberg, *The Workers [Communist] Party: What it Stands for and Why Workers Should Join* (Chicago, IL.: Workers (Communist) Party of America, 1925) Image courtesy of archive.org.

Certainly, cartooning was used prolifically in Communist Party publications; most of all in the *Daily Worker*. Their cartoons proved popular enough to warrant the production by DWP of several large special edition booklets titled *Red Cartoons,* filled with the work of some of the most well-known radical cartoonists like Fred Ellis, Robert Minor, William Gropper and Art Young.[211] In the 1927 edition, V. F. Calverton—pseudonym of literary critic George Goetz—highlights the unique abilities of radical cartooning to convey ideas:

> The cartoon represents a kind of snap-shot logic that often is sharper than words, and more effective than argument. A philosophy is captured in a flash of lines or scorned with a simple gesture. … They can by their directness of presentation agitate, propagandize and inspire. They give emotional tonus to intellectual attitudes. They give spirit to logic, reason to tactics. These cartoons are cartoons of social meaning and economic significance. They are conceived in the spirit of the class struggle and devoted to the definite purpose of class propaganda. … Use these pictures to stir men and women and boys and girls to think, to hope, to feel and to fight to make themselves a part of the immense army of the working class which will transform the world.[212]

Much like its predecessor, the DWP's pamphlet production fluctuated, both in quality and regularity. This was a reflection of the discord and struggles facing the Party itself; aside from the low funds available and poor recruitment figures, factionalism dominated the Party's internal politics. It was overall a relatively short lived endeavour, lasting only around two years, but it did produce a relatively large number of pamphlets in that time and

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[211] See Walt Carmon (ed.), *Red Cartoons* (New York, NY.: Daily Worker Publishing, 1926), Walt Carmon (ed.), *Red Cartoons 1927* (New York, NY.: Daily Worker Publishing, 1927), Walt Carmon (ed.), *Red Cartoons 1928* (New York, NY.: Daily Worker Publishing, 1928) and Sender Garlin (ed.), *1929 Red Cartoons* (New York, NY.: Comprodaily Publishing, 1926).

[212] V. F. Calverton, 'Introduction', in Carmon (ed.), *Red Cartoons 1927*.

marked the Party's first concerted attempt to build a comprehensive framework of Communist publishing.

At the beginning of 1927, it was announced that DWP and the Party headquarters had relocated to New York City. In the final issue of the *Monthly Worker* in February, it declared that it had moved to 'the center of the present struggle in the labor movement' to help 'serve as a rallying force against the combined attacks of [reformist union leaders] Sigman, Beckerman, Woll, Lewis, McMahon, the capitalist courts and the capitalist press.'[213] *Monthly Worker* would then be reorganised as *The Communist*, a more theoretical, analytical magazine. 'To make the magazine handier for library purposes,' it was declared, 'it will appear in a smaller form, 6 x 9 inches. To make up for this loss of space the pages will be increased from 48 to 64. This will make out of every issue of *The Communist* a handy pamphlet. The contents will make it a desirable pamphlet which every subscriber wants to keep.'[214]

However, while the *Daily Worker* newspaper continued to be published, Daily Worker Publishing Co. was phased out beginning in October 1927, and was officially replaced in early November by what would become the Party's most successful publishing house, Workers Library Publishing:[215]

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[213] *Workers Monthly*, February 1927, 721.

[214] *ibid.*

[215] Advertisements for books and pamphlets in the *Daily Worker* began to refer readers to the 'Daily Worker Book Department' instead of DWP in October 1927, and on the 4th of November the newspaper heralded the creation of Workers Library Publisher.

> Established to be of service to militant Labor—The Workers Library Publishers … has taken over completely all books and pamphlets issued by and distributed thru the Workers Party and the Daily Worker Pub. Co. It begins at once as the sole distributor of all literature of the American (and British) Communist movement. In addition, the Workers Library Publishers will serve as distributors of ALL LABOR publications. Most importantly, the energy and resources of the Workers Library Publishers will be directed mainly to the publication of new books and pamphlets. Funds already contributed to this purpose—and now being solicited—have made possible a whole new publication program of books of both immediate and lasting interest. The first book just off the press "The Tenth Year," by J. Louis Engdahl (15 cents) is the first of a series of books to be issued in rapid succession. Other are now on press and in preparation. Notice of new books—and a new catalogue being prepared—will be mailed to those sending name and address. … 39 East 125 Street New York.[216]

Workers Library Publishers began by producing pamphlets as part of a series called the 'Workers Library.' The first of the series was the commemorative pamphlet *The Tenth Year: The Rise and Achievements of Soviet Russia* by J. Louis Engdahl. Ten pamphlets were issued as part of the series before it was dropped, from which point pamphlets continued to simply be released individually. The transition to Workers Library Publishers was likely an initiative prompted by the triumph of the Lovestoneites in the Party: when C. E. Ruthenberg, leader of the Party, died in March 1927, Lovestone became the de facto leader based on the support he received from Ruthenberg and communications from the Comintern.[217] And indeed, the authors of pamphlets in the Workers Library series are dominated by the likes of Lovestone and Lovestoneite figures like John Pepper and Bertram D. Wolfe.

Combined with leadership decisions, it appears that the Party had come into a substantial amount of money which helped to make Workers Library Publishers possible. Inside the

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[216] *Daily Worker,* 4 November 1927.

[217] David A. Lincove, 'Radical Publishing to "Reach the Million Masses": Alexander L. Trachtenberg and International Publishers, 1906-1966,' *Left History*, 10:1 (2004), 93.

second pamphlet of the Workers Library series— Jay Lovestone's *The Coolidge Program*, released in December—it is noted:

> This series of publications of which this pamphlet is the second has been made possible through a fund contributed by a number of comrades and sympathizers. Acknowledgment is due to Comrade Bertha and Samuel Rubin, J. Barry, Dr. B, A. T and others for generous contributions.[218]

Though the identities of most of these names are unclear (for obvious reasons), Samuel Rubin was a Minneapolis-based Faberge perfume empire magnate who appears to have been a member of the Communist Party and friend of another well-known wealthy sympathiser, Armand Hammer.[219] Certainly, generous donations from wealthy sympathisers often helped to sustain the Party, but this appears to have been the first time this was acknowledged within the pages of Party pamphlets.

The 1927 reorganisation also heralded the introduction of the *Party Organizer.* This was a small, pamphlet-sized magazine strictly intended for internal Party circulation, which featured discussions about Party tactics and operations ranging from the top level of the Party down to cadres of various districts.[220] 'While there is nothing conspirative or confidential in the *Party Organizer*, nothing that we need to hide from the masses,' the publication informed readers, 'we must, however, differentiate between agitational and

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[218] Jay Lovestone, *The Coolidge Program* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1927), 2.

[219] Theodore Draper reported that Samuel and Bertha Rubin donated $2000 in this instance, although the identity of Bertha Rubin is unclear. See Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York, NY.: Vintage Books, 1986), 204.

[220] See Malcolm Sylvers, 'American Communists in the Popular Front Period: Reorganization or Disorganization?', *Journal of American Studies*, 23:3 (1989), 375-393.

propaganda literature for the non-Party masses and inner-Party literature for Party members for the purpose of improving the Party.'[221] The *Party Organizer* stressed the importance of strict discipline when it came to Party work, including in the distribution of literature. Issues would highlight new, key pamphlets due for distribution and set quotas alongside advice and anecdotes from comrades about selling literature. One 1928 issue featured an article titled 'The Art of Selling Literature,' a detailed guide to pamphlet distribution at meetings:

> Only one book or pamphlet besides the *Daily Worker* should be introduced at any meeting. Only in exceptional circumstance may two pieces of literature be introduced. Never permit temptation to mislead you into attempting more. Large quantities of the pamphlet selected must be on hand.
>
> … While the book is being introduced, the committee should stand near the platform displaying either the cover or a good picture or cartoon in the book.
>
> … Don't try to sell literature not introduced by the speaker. You will fail at this, but you may succeed in destroying the meeting by disturbing the crowd and the speaker.[222]

Such advice may not have necessarily been the most effective way of distributing as much literature as possible, but it does indicate that the Party was at least attempting to introduce more co-ordinated and serious approach to literature distribution, and also shows acknowledgement of the benefits of using illustrations and cartooning in marketing pamphlets.

Pamphlets and Renegades

Production of the *Party Organizer* suddenly stopped for over a year following its July/ August issue of 1928. It is no coincidence that the Sixth World Conference of the Comintern

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[221] *Party Organizer*, 4:1, February 1931, 1.

[222] *Party Organizer*, 2:7-8, July-August 1928, 19-20.

was held from 17 July to 1 September that same year. It was the first Comintern convention since Leon Trotsky's expulsion from the Russian Communist Party for his leading of the Opposition group, and marked the beginning of Stalin's uncontested leadership of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the Comintern's Third Period. It was here that leading Communist James P. Cannon accidentally came into possession of Trotsky's *Criticism of the Draft Program of the Communist International*, which convinced Cannon of the righteousness of Trotsky's position and compelled him to return to the United States and fight for the cause of the Left Opposition, for which he would be expelled from the Communist Party in October.

The American Party had not fully understood the extent of the dramatic power struggles in the Soviet Union, and had continued to advertise the works of Trotsky in its catalogues up until as late as 1926 (*Books for Workers* advertised five separate works of Trotsky, and noted his 'well-known brilliant and incisive style').[223] However, in early 1928—just prior to the Sixth Congress—the Party printed the pamphlet *The Trotsky Opposition: Its Significance for American Workers* by Bertram D. Wolfe in which Trotsky is deemed to 'represent a tendency hostile to the working class.'[224] Soon after the expulsion of Cannon and other Trotskyists, Lovestone would author the triumphant pamphlet *Pages From Party History*, in which he criticised the historical errors of rival factions since the Party's founding.[225]

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[223] *Books for Workers* (Chicago, IL.: Daily Worker Publishing, n.d.)

[224] Bertram D. Wolfe, *The Trotsky Opposition: Its Significance for American Workers* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1928).

[225] Jay Lovestone, *Pages From Party History* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1929)

Yet Lovestone, whose 'anti-Trotsky campaign was integral to his tenure as party leader,' would soon also fall victim to Stalin's factional opportunism.[226] Lovestone and his faction's leadership of the Party had been primarily owed to his allegiance to Bukharin, the head of the Comintern and ally to Stalin. Yet by the time of the Sixth Convention, Bukharin had been increasingly falling out of favour with Stalin, and by 1929 he was expelled by the Communist Party. Accordingly, Lovestone and allies who had maintained support for Bukharin found themselves, too, expelled from the American Party in the same year.[227]

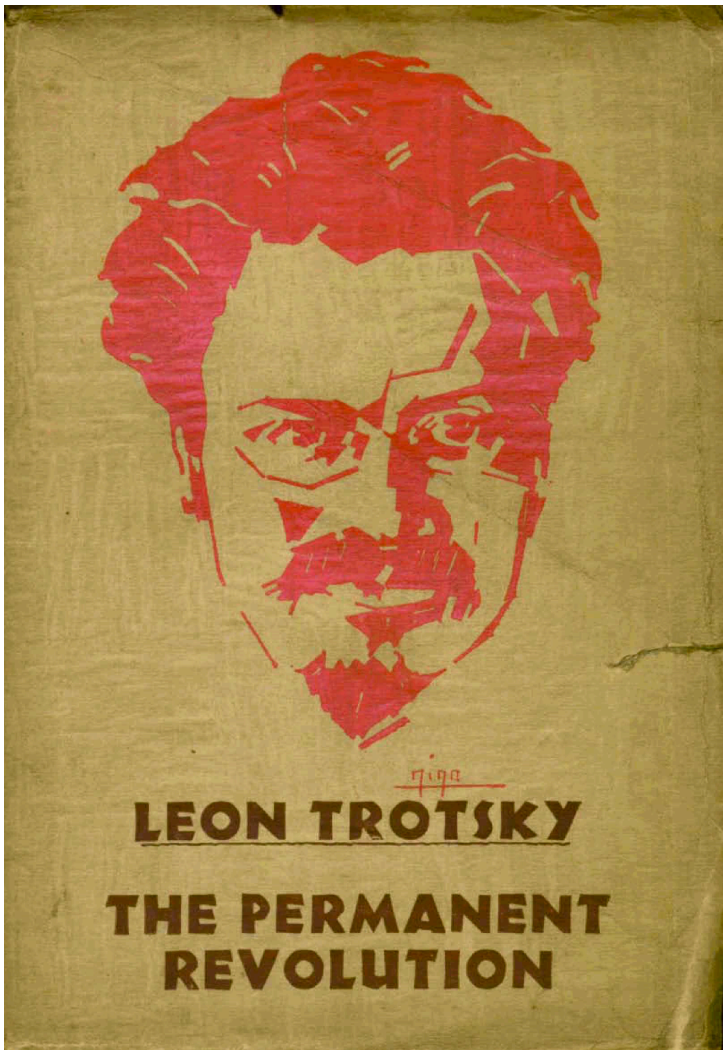

Figure 8: One of the earlier pamphlets produced by Pioneer Publishers, translated by Max Shachtman. Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution* (New York, NY.: Pioneer Publishers, 1931)

The Trotskyists who had been expelled from the Party such as Cannon and Max Shachtman went on to create the Communist League of America (eventually becoming the Socialist Workers Party) in the 1930s, and its publishing house, Pioneer Publishers, would go on to become a significant producer of both pamphlets and books over the next few decades and the primary source of the works of Trotsky in America

[226] Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism*, 266.

[227] Lincove, 'Radical Publishing to "Reach the Million Masses", 93.

(*fig.* 8).

Trotsky himself had long been recognised as a prolific pamphleteer internationally, to the extent that Bernard Shaw had baptised him 'prince of pamphleteers' in 1922.[228] He had a crucial influence on Pioneer Publishers until his assassination in 1940, and in 1937 had stressed its importance in providing America with 'a revolutionary publishing house, independent both from capital and from the Soviet bureaucracy' in the face of what he saw as the degeneration of CPUSA's literature:

> It is impossible to place the slightest hope in this respect in the publishing activity of the so-called Communist Party. With time it becomes ever more hostile to theory. No wonder: every page of the revolutionary classics is an accusation against the present politics of the Comintern. Frame-up and falsification have become its basic method in all fields. It is impossible to trust any book, any article, any quotation issued by the Comintern press. Sooner of later all these works will be placed on a special Index under the general title, "The library of pseudo-Marxism and lies."[229]

Trotsky's influence in the realm of pamphleteering remained such that a leader of the Dubuque Catholic Youth Organisation, Monsignor John M. Wolfe, remarked in a 1937 circular letter to the priests of the Dubuque Archdiocese explaining the importance of pamphlets in the fight against communism:[230]

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[228] Bernard Shaw, 'Trotsky, Prince of Pamphleteers,' in Brian Tyson (ed.), *Bernard Shaw's Book Reviews, Volume Two: 1884—1950* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 440.

[229] 'Trotsky urges backing for Pioneer Publishers,' *Socialist Appeal,* 2:1, 1 January 1938, 8.

[230] Mary Kevin Gallagher, *Seed/Harvest: A History of the Archdiocese of Dubuque* (Dubuque: Archdiocese of Dubuque Press, 1987), 89

> Leon Trotsky, the one-man brain trust of modern Communism, who at this moment is near our own borders in Mexico, is the greatest pamphlet propagandist for the United Front. The rapid spread of Communism is the direct result of pamphlet propaganda spread to doubtful and unsatisfied people. What Kerensky, Lenin, Stalin, and Marx could never have achieved with gunfire is today being accomplished by the written word of Trotsky.[231]

While the letter certainly took liberties in its understanding of the politics of international communism, it is interesting that Trotsky's pamphleteering remained a concern to American anti-communists into the late 1930s. And certainly, the CPUSA saw Trotskyist publishing as enough of a threat to advocate its sabotage in 1937:

> We must be more vigilant everywhere since the Trotskyites are subtle in their propaganda. They cover their counter-revolutionary deeds with "revolutionary" phrases. We must prevent workers' libraries and bookshops from becoming a medium through which they spread their poison propaganda. Clean out the libraries and throw out Trotskyite literature.[232]

Pamphlet production was certainly one of the strengths of the Trotskyists movement despite its relatively small size, and clearly their Communist and anti-Communist adversaries in the 1930s viewed this aptitude for pamphleteering as a threat.

The Depression Era and the Prime of Pamphleteering

The *Party Organizer* returned from its hiatus in 1930, in its own words 'newly united, freed from a factional fight'. It confidently stated that the Party

> now stands in a very favorable political situation, when the economic crisis in America, the beginning of a deep-going general world crisis for capitalism as a whole, throws the American working class into mass-unemployment, lowering its standard of living, worsening its labor conditions, cuts its wages and whips it thru "speed-up" and "stretch-out" into struggles of resistance taking a more

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[231] Msgr. John M. Wolfe, cited in Willging, *The Index to American Catholic Pamphlets*, Volume I, 1.

[232] *Party Organizer*, 10:2, February 1937, 6.

> and more aggressive character. … Seldom has there been such enthusiasm and eagerness to work in our Party as now.[233]

As such, the Party's approach to pamphleteering became far more regimented. Local Party districts were encouraged to create their own literature departments to better coordinate obtaining and distributing Party material, and *Party Organizer* began to feature a dedicated literature section in which local districts' performance would be scrutinised and members were encouraged to write in to report on successful tactics of coordination and distribution of Party literature.[234] Districts which appeared to not be ordering enough literature, or weren't ordering literature which the Party leadership specified to be focused on, would find themselves called out in the pages of the *Organizer* or the *Daily Worker*.[235] Nevertheless, informal and furtive methods of distribution were still encouraged:

> In some cases, putting leaflets, literature into the coat pockets where the workers keep their clothes will prove (and in some cases has proven) to be successful. Also, nearby grocery stores and restaurants can be used for this purpose. You get a sympathetic grocery store, restaurant or barber shop near the factory where the workers come in, and leave there leaflets and literature, and the workers of the factory will fall into the habit, after a while, always to "drop in" to these places for their literature.[236]

The pamphlet perhaps most publicised by the Party during the early 1930s was *Why Communism?* by Moissaye Joseph Olgin, editor of the Yiddish daily newspaper, *Freiheit*. It followed in the tradition of C. E. Ruthenberg's two very plain-speaking manifesto-style

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[233] *Party Organizer*, 3:1, February 1930, 2.

[234] See for example, *Party Organizer* 5:8 August, 1932, 31.

[235] For example, in the *Daily Worker*, 10 June 1932, 4, it was noted 'Our records show that the Pittsburg district has not ordered one single copy of the Plenum pamphlet "Towards Revolutionary Mass Work."'

[236] *Party Organizer*, 5:1, February 1932, 27.

pamphlets of 1923 and '25, and the Party promoted it as one of their 'most easily understood pamphlets':

> [It] fulfils in splendid manner what is required of writings for the masses: simplicity in style and form, clarity and conciseness. "Why Communism?" is designed for the so-called average worker, with his political backwardness, none too great understanding of political terms, and for the worker whose vocabulary is none too extensive. [It] begins with the things the worker knows from experience and leads him from the known to the, for him, unknown. … [It], however, is not so primitive that it can be appreciated only by backward workers. On the contrary, its very simplicity is such as to appeal to all workers and to intellectuals as well.[237]

Though its first edition was produced in 1933, by 1935 it was already into its fifth, having sold 316,000 ('and no doubt the copies were passed on to many other readers'). And that was just the English versions; the Party had produced translations of the pamphlet into Italian, Yugoslav, Yiddish, Hungarian, and Armenian.[238]

Importantly, publishing by the Party into the 1930s was also marked by a notable increase in pamphlet material directly addressing the fight for the rights and freedoms of Black Americans. One of the other significant developments to have come out of the Sixth Congress in 1928 was the CPUSA's adoption of the 'Black Belt' thesis, which asserted that Black Americans living in the Black Belt South 'constituted a nation with the right to self-determination.'[239] Though the policy itself was contested—with Harry Haywood being the

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[237] *Daily Worker*, 2 August 1935, 3.

[238] *ibid*.

[239] Gerald Horne, 'The Red and the Black: The Communist Party and African-Americans in Historical Perspective,' in Michael E. Brown, Randy Martin, Frank Rosengarten and George Snedeker (eds.), *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism* (New York, NY.: Monthly Review Press, 1993), 203.

only Black delegate to support it—it did push the Party to more aggressively focus on the oppression faced by Black Americans and the fight for liberation.[240] In reality, the Black Belt Thesis was seldom mentioned in pamphlet material; as historian Timothy Johnson explains, the Party sought above all to 'educate the membership to see the importance of the African American struggle and to urge their participation in it.' He continued:

> The constant polemics about viewing the African American question as a national question rather than as a race question was an attempt to break with the Socialist Party pattern. In short, what the party was attempting to do was to create a political culture within the CPUSA that would have zero tolerance for racism and would place the importance of the African American question near the top of the political agenda along with the class struggle.'[241]

Pamphlets from the Harlem Section of the Communist Party began to appear in 1929, with James W. Ford's *The Communists and the Struggle for Negro Liberation*, and followed with such pamphlets as Ford's *Imperialism Destroys the People of Africa* (1931), Harry Haywood's *The Road to Negro Liberation* (1934), Earl Browder's *The Communist Party and the Emancipation of the Negro People* (1934) and Ford's *Hunger and Terror in Harlem (1935)*. Black Communist writers Cyril Briggs and Eugene Gordon would also author the Party's first pamphlet directly addressing the double oppression of Black women in *The Position of Negro Women* (1935):

> In a society based on production for profit, to be both a woman worker and a Negro is to suffer a double handicap. … As a woman worker she feels the general inequalities-lower wages, longer hours, bad working conditions, etc.

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[240] Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic: African American Agency, West African Intellectuals and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Boston, MA.: Brill, 2013), 116.

[241] Timothy Johnson, '"Death for Negro lynching!" The Communist Party, USA's Position on the African American Question,' *American Communist History*, 7:2 (2008), 252.

> …. As a Negro, she is paid even less than her exploited white sister, made to work under even harder conditions, longer hours, etc., and is systematically excluded from all but the heaviest and dirtiest jobs. On her lower wages, she must meet the discriminative higher rentals extracted from Negro workers by piratical landlords, both Negro and white, in the segregated ghettoes into which she and her family are forced to live by Jim-Crow laws or practices. Thus the dirty deal that falls to all working women in capitalist society falls heaviest upon the Negro woman worker.[242]

The persecution of the Scottsboro Boys, in Harry Haywood's words, 'marked the first real bid of the Party and the Black working class for leadership in the Black liberation struggle.'[243] Workers Library Publishers and the Party's recently created League of Struggle for Negro Rights published numerous illustrated pamphlets calling for freedom for the Scottsboro boys and equal rights for Black Americans, such as *They Shall Not Die! The Story of Scottsboro in Pictures* in 1932, illustrated by artist Anton Refregier, and *Smash the Scottsboro Lynch Verdict* by James S. Allen (pseudonym of Sol Auerbach) in 1933:

> March, protest! Demand that Negroes be guaranteed their right to sit on juries, to vote, to hold office, to enjoy equal rights! Struggle against Jim-Crowism, lynching, persecution! White workers, disassociate yourselves from the lynch law policy of the ruling class, by being the first to strike out for Negro rights! Demand the release of the Scottsboro boys![244]

The International Labor Defense (ILD), the legal defense arm of the Party originally formed in 1925, became central to winning white workers over to support the Scottsboro Boys, and produced a number of pamphlets campaigning for their freedom, such as Joseph North's

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[242] Cyril Briggs and Eugene Gordon, *The Position of Negro Women* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1935), 2.

[243] Harry Haywood, *A Black Communist in the Freedom Struggle: The Life of Harry Haywood,* edited by Gwendolyn Midlo Hall (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 177.

[244] James S. Allen, *Smash the Scottsboro Lynch Verdict* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1933), 16.

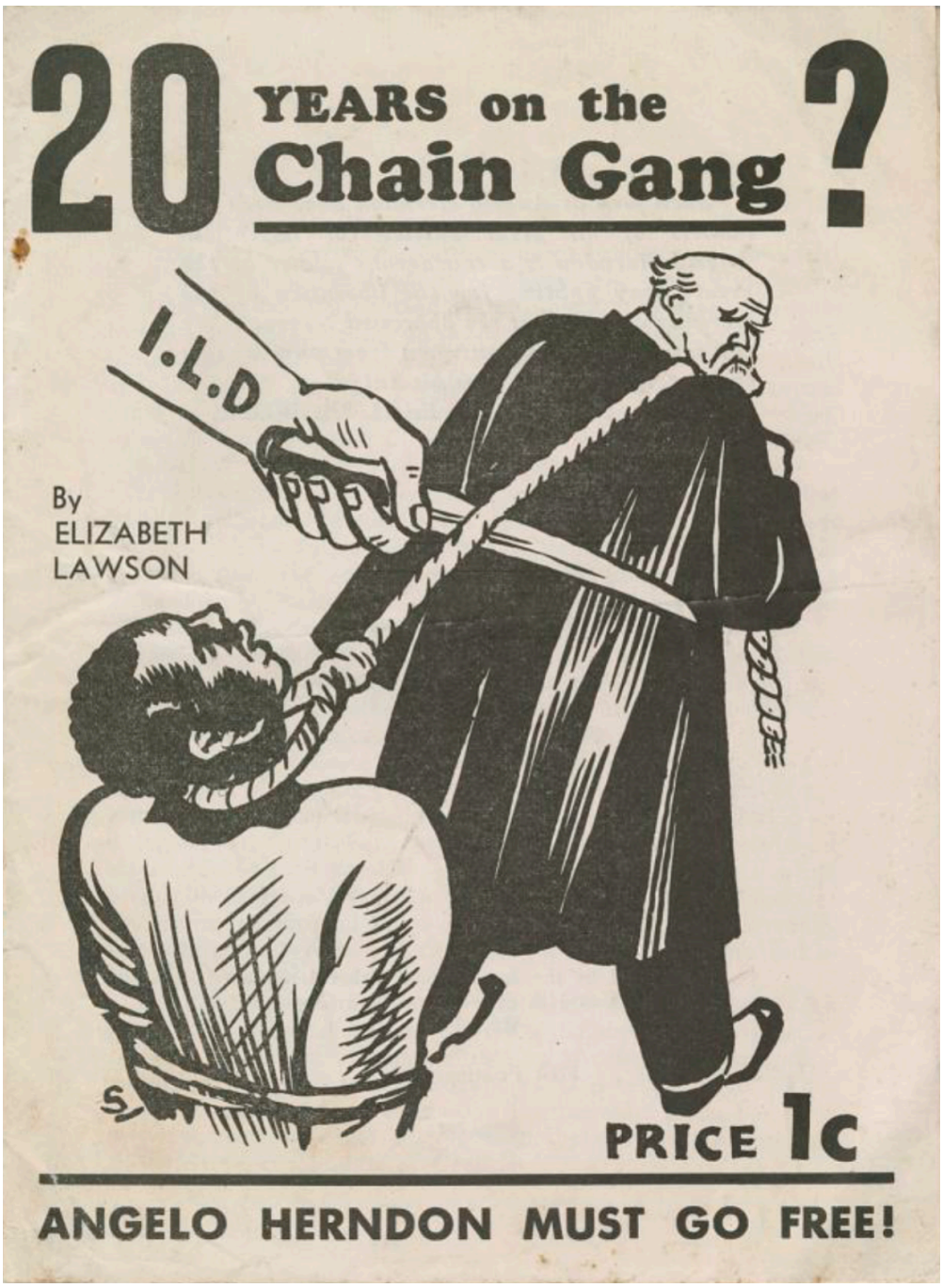

Figure 9: Elizabeth Lawson, *Twenty Years on the Chain Gang? Angelo Herndon Must Go Free!* (New York, NY.: International Labor Defense 1935). Image courtesy of Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Lynching Negro Children in Southern Courts, in 1931. They also published several pamphlets campaigning for the freedom of Black radical Angelo Herndon, who had received a sentence of 18 to 20 years on the chain-gang over drummed-up charges of attempting to

overthrow the government of the state of Georgia (*fig.* 9).[245] It was this coordinated and unapologetic support for Black liberation shown during this era which attracted the likes of poet Langston Hughes to the Party.[246]

By now, the pamphlets of Workers Library Publishers were increasingly accompanied by those of an assortment of organizations which formed an ecosystem of communist-affiliated pamphleteering. One of the more aesthetically interesting pamphlet publishers was Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU), founded in 1929. Between 1931 and '34 the organisation published 24 pamphlets in its campaign to bring out what it considered to be 'truthful and authentic accounts of the industrial, political, and cultural activities of the Soviet Union.'[247] Pamphlets typically documented daily life in the Soviet Union and the development of the country. *Soviet Pictorial: Forging Ahead*, for example, contains 63 photographs in an avant-garde photomontage style showing Soviet workers and their industrial, technological and social achievements in 1931, three years into the first Five Year Plan.[248]

Perhaps more significant than Workers Library Publishers to communist pamphleteering in 1930s America was International Publishers, founded in New York in 1924 by Russian refugee and Communist Alexander Trachtenberg with the financial help of his friend Abraham A. Heller (known as the 'millionaire Bolshevist'). It was established as a utilitarian

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[245] John Hammond Moore, 'The Angelo Herndon Case, 1932-1937,' *Phylon*, 32:1 (1971), 60.

[246] Brian Dolinar, 'Langston Hughes in the New American Century,' *The Langston Hughes Review*, 20 (2006), 50.

[247] Harold D. Lasswell and Dorothy, Blumenstock, *World Revolutionary Propaganda: A Chicago Study* (New York, NY.: A. A. Knopf, 1939), 67; *Socialist Competition in the Soviet Union* (New York, NY.: Friends of the Soviet Union, 1929), 4.

[248] *Soviet Pictorial: Forging Ahead* (New York, NY.: Friends of the Soviet Union, 1931).

and academic publisher with 'proletarian themes,' selling to mainstream bookstores, universities, libraries, schools,' as well as to workers bookshops.[249] Despite Trachtenberg's insistence that International Publishers was separate and independent from the Communist Party, its ties were so close that both Party members and the FBI referred to it as the CPUSA's 'chief book-publishing firm.'[250]

By 1929 Trachtenberg was working on 'translating the need to address working class issues at the point of struggle into concrete activities' and was convinced of the utility of 'smaller, cheaper, more popular pamphlets,' and thus in 1930 'International Pamphlets' was born, operating from 799 Broadway, New York.[251] These pamphlets were more often than not authored by Communist Party members and leaders—including Trachtenberg himself. Many were put together by the Labor Research Association, a statistics bureau also set up by Trachtenberg in 1927 alongside Scott Nearing and others to carry out research pertaining to the interests of the American labor movement, and some were sponsored by the John Reed Club, an organization of revolutionary writers and artists.

Party pamphlets would often advertise International Pamphlets publications alongside their own 'official' pamphlets in catalogues, newspapers, and within pamphlets themselves, often not making a distinction of who the publisher was. Numerous editions were often produced according to popularity; for example William Siegel's 1931 pamphlet *The Paris Commune: A Story in Pictures* went into its third edition by 1934 (*fig.* 10). Other popular titles included

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[249] Lincove, 'Radical Publishing to "Reach the Million Masses"', 96, 97, 101.

[250] FBI, *Communist Propaganda in the United States, Part V: Press and Publications,* 52; *ibid.,* 96, 98.

[251] Julia M. Allen, *Passionate Commitments: The Lives of Anna Rochester and Grace Hutchins* (New York, NY.: State University of New York Press, 2013), 146.

Figure 10: Number twelve in the International Pamphlets series, William Siegel, *The Paris Commune: A Story in Pictures*, Second Edition (New York: International Pamphlets, 1932). Image courtesy of Florida Atlantic University Digital Collections.

History of May Day by Trachtenberg, which entered its ninth edition by 1937, and *Negro Liberation* by James Allen which reached its fourth edition in 1938.[252] Also published

[252] Alexander Trachtenberg, *The History of May Day* [International Pamphlets No. 14], Ninth Edition (New York, NY.: International Pamphlets, 1937); James S. Allen, *Negro Liberation* (New York, NY.: International Pamphlets, 1938).

alongside International Pamphlets was the 'Little Lenin Library'; a series of pamphlets of Lenin's writings on various topics, pocket-sized.

Despite the assertion of its independence, International Publishers deferred to Soviet and Comintern policy. Historian David A. Lincove highlights how Trachtenberg took great care in assessing the suitability of manuscripts for publication; in one instance, his friend Scott Nearing submitted a manuscript about imperialism, but sensing it may be ideologically problematic, Trachtenberg sent it to Moscow for approval, where Nearing's manuscript would be rejected for deviating from current Stalinist policy. Trachtenberg apologised to Nearing, remarking 'over there they are more interested in party politics than they are in social theory.'[253]

The Popular Front

The Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in June 1935 inaugurated the Popular Front, which advocated the building of alliances between Communist Parties and their respective country's left and liberal groups in unity against the growing threat of fascism and Nazism. The CPUSA's transition to the Popular Front period began with perhaps the Party's most intensive pamphlet campaign ever in order to spread the word about the new Comintern policy. The five-cent pamphlet, *The United Front Against Fascism and War,* which contained three speeches Dimitrov had given at the Seventh World Congress, would be the first of many pamphlets quickly produced and distributed en masse to both members and the public.[254] Party functionaries and students in workers' schools were instructed to

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[253] Lincove, 'Radical Publishing to "Reach the Million Masses",' 99.

[254] *Daily Worker*, 17 October 1935, 6.

purchase the unabridged version of Dimitrov's report for fifteen cents.[255] The Central Committee on the 7th World Congress described the distribution of these pamphlets as 'one of the important political tasks confronting our Party organization':

> We must guard against the comrades viewing this task an ordinary problem of selling literature. This is decidedly not the case. The mass distribution of one-half million copies throughout the country of Dimitroff's report has been decided upon by the Politburo as one of the most potent weapons in our hands for the mobilization of the masses in the struggle against war and fascism, for the building of the united front and the People's Front in the U.S.A. It is necessary that the Agit-Prop apparatus and Literature Agents and all Party members be mobilized for this task.[256]

The CPUSA stressed the need for '[c]onstant check-up and political discussion of the importance of distributing this pamphlet among the broadest masses.'[257] Within a month the Party was advertising eleven new pamphlets which would help to establish the Party line, such as Earl Browder's *New Steps in the United Front* and *The Fight for Peace* by M. Ercoli (pseudonym of Palmiro Togliatti, leader of the Communist Party of Italy), as well as those aimed at the Young Communist League (YCL), such as *Youth and Fascism* by O. Kuusinen and *Young Communists and the Unity of Youth* by Gil Green.

Already, by the end of 1935 the Party reported to have sold and distributed 'over three and a half million pieces of literature, books and pamphlets' across the United States — up nearly eighty per cent from 1934 and undoubtably its highest figures ever.[258] Yet still the Party improved the following year, producing 150 titles in 1936.[259] Joe Fields (pseudonym

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[255] *Daily Worker*, 20 November 1935, 5.

[256] *Daily Worker*, 17 October 1935, 6.

[257] *ibid*.

[258] Joe Fields, *Party Organizer*, 9:6, June 1936, 43.

[259] *Party Organizer*, 10:9, September 1937, 16.

of Joseph Felshin) who worked for Workers Library Publishers, encouraged Party members to make pamphlet distribution a central part of their activism in a *Party Organizer* article:[260]

> Experience shows that our Workers and Peoples Bookstores, which are increasing in number, quickly develop into real centers of distribution to which an ever-growing circle of sympathizers turn for our literature. But we must warn sharply against opening Workers Bookstores as the easiest way out, as a substitute for mass work with literature in the shops and neighborhoods. We must warn against the danger of comrades sitting back and waiting for the masses to come to their bookstore instead of going out and bringing our literature to the masses. … But this requires resourcefulness, individual initiative on the part of every comrade combined with determined action. Only then will be be able to carry into life our fighting slogan, "Reach the Millions!"[261]

Joe Fields returned to the pages of the *Party Organizer* the following year to persuade members of the joys of pamphlet distribution. He told the story of a group of 'resourceful comrades in one of the Mid-Western districts' who had organised a literature caravan, in which they travelled 'about the countryside, selling books, pamphlets, and other progressive literature to workers and farmers in the towns and villages along the route.' Not only did these comrades help bring literature to those who often could not be reached, but they also 'enjoyed a novel vacation and made expenses' and were apparently met with enthusiasm by locals:

> The comrades fixed up a little Ford with show racks along the side on which the pamphlets and periodicals could be attractively displayed. Whenever they reach a likely town they would pick out a suitable corner, set up their literature display, and hold an open-air meeting at which one of them spoke on some current issue of local interest. Then, holding up and describing the various

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[260] *Investigation of Communist Propaganda in the United States—Part 5 (New York City Area), Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Eighty-Fifth Congress, First Session, December 12 and 13, 1957* (Washington, DC.: United States Government Printing Office, 1956), 285-6.

[261] Joe Fields, *Party Organizer*, 9:6, June 1936, 44-45.

> pamphlets and periodicals, they would urge their listeners not only to buy a copy for themselves, but additional copies for distribution among their friends.

One reason why the Party pushed so hard for the distribution of new Popular Front-approved pamphlets was likely because so much of the Party's previous literature was no longer in keeping with the Comintern line; at worst, it was at odds with the new policy. As a result, by early 1936 the Party's Literature Department began to recall a number of books and pamphlets which were not in line with the aims of the Popular Front, including those which had been published barely months before the Seventh World Congress, such as James Ford and James Allen's June 1935 pamphlet *The Negroes in a Soviet America*.[262]

While the pamphlets hastily produced in the second half of 1935 aimed to inform members and sympathisers of the new Popular Front line, the following years would be primarily dedicated to getting the message out to the wider American public. This will be explored in further depth in the following two chapters.

Conclusion

From the Socialist Publication Society to Workers Library Publishers, the Communist movement in America continuously sought to build an effective means to produce and distribute pamphlet literature for the masses, and its eventual creation of a publishing house dedicated solely to the production of pamphlet literature —Workers Library Publishers—underlined how important the Party viewed pamphlets to be in their work. This work would result in a huge increase in both quality and quantity of pamphlets: while in

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[262] Thomas L. Sakmyster, *Red Conspirator: J. Peters and the American Communist Underground* (Chicago, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 53.

the 1920s around 'ten pamphlets were published each year in a total volume of several hundred thousand copies,' by the mid-1930s the Party was producing around 60 pamphlets a year 'in a volume of several million copies.'[263]

Through the lens of the Communist Party's pamphlets we can observe the factional rivalries, organisational upheavals and wider development and fluctuations of the international Communist movement. In the 1920s, while the prevailing faction tended to have more influence in the realm of pamphleteering and the wider press, there remained a more collaborative aspect to it and openness to proposals from other writers for new pamphlets. The ousting of both the left- and right- opposition marked the beginning of a top-down yet cohesive approach to publishing, which in many ways helped to make pamphleteering in the Party more prolific and effective. This approach would peak in the Popular Front era, whereby pamphlets could not stray from the official party line.

Though this chapter ends with the onset of the Popular Front, this was certainly not the end of the Party's pamphleteering efforts. The following two chapters will explore the prolific pamphleteering campaigning carried out by the Party throughout the Popular Front era, and show how despite being a 'heyday' for the American Communist movement, it was also a period in which the Party's pamphlets were characterised by contradiction, reaction and opportunism.

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[263] FBI, *Communist Propaganda in the United States, Part V: Press and Publications,* 39.

3.

Americanizing the Communist Pamphlet

> We are not un-American! Since when has it become un-American to revolt against oppression and tyranny! Since when is it un-American to call for revolutionary struggle to overthrow a tyrannical and destructive system?
>
> - Earl Browder, *Communism in the United States* (1935)[264]

In 1936 a large, twenty-page pamphlet titled *20th Century Americanism* was issued by Workers Library Publishers. The title, emblazoned across the front page, is followed by a subheading asking "What does every American family want?" Below, a photographic image of a conventional-looking woman and man with a young girl on his shoulders fills the rest of the cover. Such a politically ambiguous design would likely attract the attention of many Americans (*fig.* 11). The more keen-eyed, however, would have recognised the man featured on the front cover as CPUSA leader Earl Browder, joined by his wife Raissa Browder—though the identity of the child is something of a mystery.[265] Inside the pamphlet the reader would also find images of American historical figures like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln, paired with invocations of the American Revolution and the Civil War:

> This is a crucial hour in the history of the American people. Not since 1861 has so great a crisis confronted us. Liberty and peace are at stake as dark reaction threatens the land we love.
>
> But there is an American way of defeating the enemies of freedom. That way is the way of Valley Forge—the dauntless courage and the united action of

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[264] Earl Browder, *Communism in the United States* (New York, NY.: International Publishers, 1935), 173-4.

[265] Browder and his wife had three sons, but never had a daughter.

> the common people as in the days of 1776. Shoulder to shoulder we must face the danger.[266]

The pamphlet is a graphic manifesto for the Party's new Popular Front policy aimed at the American masses. Readers would find short texts on topics such fascism, war, and racial inequality, inserted within photomontages typical of the socialist-realist style of

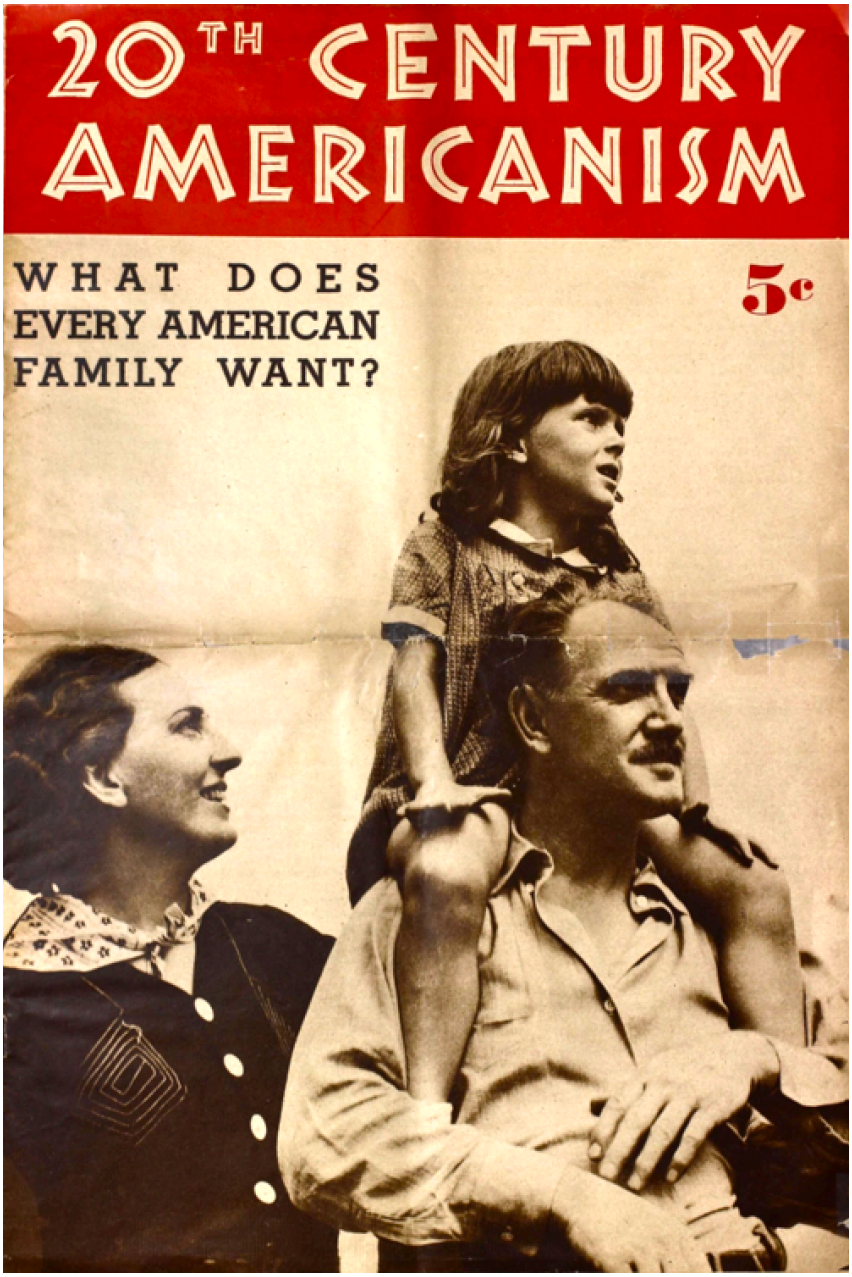

Figure 11: *20th Century Americanism* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1936) Image courtesy of University of Hawaii Social Movements Collection.

[266] *20th Century Americanism* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 1.

photography popularised in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. In fact, this pamphlet's design was not dissimilar to that of the Soviet journal *USSR in Construction*. Towards the end of the pamphlet, 'The Land of Socialism' is printed across a page among photos of smiling citizens of the U.S.S.R. and Stalin, boasting of the successes of socialism in the Soviet Union.

The wholesome image conveyed on the cover of this Communist Party pamphlet and the rhetorical and emotive use of Americanism throughout was part of the new Party campaign which was encapsulated in the full slogan 'Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism'. This was a time when the CPUSA was publishing a flurry of pamphlets which reimagined the Communist Party's role in American society and its history, and it was hoped that these would help to shape a more favourable perception of the Party to the average American. The new patriotic campaign saw Communist Party rallies and meetings draped in 'true blue Americanism'. At the Party's Ninth Convention in June 1936, which inaugurated Browder as the Party's presidential candidate, 'the hall was decorated with pictures of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Frederick Douglass; "Yankee Doodle" joined the "International" as one of the theme songs. Browder was referred to as the "new John Brown from Osawatomie." His running mate James W. Ford, who was African American, became the "Frederick Douglass of 1936.'"[267] The Party even held a beauty pageant in New York in

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[267] Fraser M. Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War II* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 101; The reference to Browder as the 'new John Brown' and Ford as the 'Frederick Douglass of 1936' comes from the presidential campaign pamphlet Ben Davis, *James W. Ford: What He Is and What He Stands For* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1936).

1938, featuring women in swimsuits wearing sashes featuring slogans such as 'Long Live the Peoples Front'.[268]

The American Communist Party had, since its birth in 1919, always been acutely aware of its 'alien' nature in American society. Its early membership was overwhelmingly composed of immigrants—English-speaking branches of the Party still only constituted a mere 11 percent of members in 1924.[269] Not only was the Party quite literally 'foreign' in its composition, but its very ideological foundations were in Russian Bolshevism. As was noted in the Party's internal periodical *Party Organizer* in 1928:

> … in 1919 there appeared for the first time a political party with a program demanding a Proletarian Dictatorship. Now what great event took place in America which called forth this new development in American political parties [*sic.*]. The answer is that this great event did not occur in America but many

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[268] 'Mother Bloor is 76,' *Life*, 5:7 (August 15 1938), 25.

[269] 'Reflecting the immigrant character of the American working class, the structure of the early Communist movement was taken over in its entirety from the Socialist party. While one party in name, in effect there were 19 parties — 18 of them language federations and one composed of the English speaking branches. The total membership in 1924 was 17,377. … The members of English-speaking branches constituted only 11 per cent of the total membership, and about half of these were Jewish comrades who preferred to speak English. A substantial proportion of the others were to be found in four areas – Seattle, Chicago, Ohio and California. A considerable change in composition had already occurred since the formation of the party in 1919, when the English-speaking branches accounted for only seven per cent of the total.' John Williamson, *Dangerous Scot: The Life and Work of an American "Undesirable"* (New York, NY.: International Publishers, 1969), 68.

> thousands of miles away. It was the successful Proletarian Revolution in Russian [*sic.*] which led to the formation of a Communist Party in America.[270]

The Party thus found itself struggling to define what made it a distinctly American Party and to relate to the American people. Often with the guidance of the Comintern, the Party in its first two decades took various approaches to dealing with this identity crisis.

For most of the 1920s, the 'Americanizing' campaign was predominantly concerned with applying Leninism to specific American conditions. During this period the Party had little concern with American traditions, and typically engaged in 'debunking' American mythology. Nevertheless, in the later part of the 1920s, sections of the Party—notably Jay Lovestone and Bertram D. Wolfe—saw value in reclaiming the American revolutionary tradition, producing literature with a more sympathetic position towards the American War of Independence, for example, but still retaining a typically historical materialist analysis. This formed part of the 'American Exceptionalism' espoused by Lovestone and his faction within the Party, which would be short-lived due to the expulsion of its proponents in 1929.

During the Popular Front period and the advent of the slogan 'Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism', the Party sought to draw parallels between itself and America's mainstream historical tradition, with the Party's all-American leader, Browder, at the fore. Though this was not an entirely new phenomenon, by 1937 the invocation of the American revolutionary tradition was being extended to all aspects of Party propaganda, and Marxist

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[270] Arnold Ziegler, 'What Americanization Means to Our Party', *Party Organizer,* 2:3-4 (March-April 1928), 23-4.

language had been all but abandoned in pamphlet literature, of which Browder became the most prolific author.[271]

Twentieth-century Americanism certainly seemed to pay off for the Party, at least in terms of its membership. Numbers rose substantially year on year; by 1938 the Party's membership had reached 70,000—not including the 20,000 members of the YCL—which was an increase of over 45,000 since before the campaign began in 1935. Crucially, by the end of 1936, the majority of the members were now 'native born' Americans for the first time in the Party's history.[272] However, despite these achievements, the Communist Party still remained relatively isolated in mainstream politics—even within the labour movement, which remained largely anti-Communist. Through its enthusiastic and often conservative Americanism, the Party had almost entirely shed its Marxist character, but its continued ardent and open support of the Soviet Union and Stalin meant that it was still viewed with much suspicion by the liberals with which it sought alliances.

This chapter will assess the ways in which the Party used pamphlets to understand and to convey to the public its role as an American Party from its birth in 1919 to its temporary dissolution in 1944. It explores in particular how, with the adoption of the Popular Front line, American historical traditions and values were prolifically promoted throughout pamphlet literature, and how Browder himself would be peddled as the personification of such values.[273]

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[271] Of a sample of 75 pamphlets published by Workers Library Publishers between 1935 and 1939, 23 were authored by Browder, and 3 were about Browder.

[272] Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States,* 115.

[273] Burgchardt, 'Two Faces of American Communism,' 386.

Marxism and Americanism: A Background

The American Communist Party came to being in 1919, just as the first Red Scare and public fear of 'foreign radicals' or 'aliens' was reaching their height, and the U.S. government had begun taking unprecedented measures on restricting immigration while carrying out mass arrests and deportations of foreign-born radicals.[274] It was a time when 'the idea that all radicals were foreign agitators—and that all foreigners were radicals—had become axiomatic to many Americans,' writes Sarah Churchwell, and resulted in an 'outpouring of calls for "one hundred per cent Americanism," and against the "Sovietization" of the United States by anarchists and Bolsheviks, with endless animadversions against "un-American" activities.'[275]

Indeed, the Communist Party's huge foreign-born membership only seemed to reinforce these anxieties. Nevertheless, the bogeyman of the 'alien radical' infiltrating and corrupting America had been developing for decades prior to the Red Scare. While large numbers of immigrants were not a new phenomenon to America, social and economic conditions were changing by 1880, as divisions between the poor and the wealthy were becoming far more distinct and opportunities for economic advancement far fewer. This meant that newer immigrants found less opportunities to economically assimilate.[276] Growth in class antagonisms led to an upsurge in industrial action, and with many immigrants involved in

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[274] Sally M. Miller, *The Radical Immigrant* (New York, NY.: Twayne Publishers, 1974), 18.

[275] Sarah Churchwell, *Behold, America: A Partial History of America First and the American Dream* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 118.

[276] Pamela Vaughan Knaus, 'American Nativism, Immigration Policy, and the New Immigrants, 1921-1924', Dissertation for Doctorate of Philosophy, Southern Illinois University (1996), 4-5.

the labour movement, many of the upheavals at the end of the nineteenth century were blamed on immigrants, who were accused of 'encouraging worker discontent, increasing social tensions, and fomenting class hatreds.'[277] Yet this hysteria could not have taken off if not for the so-called 'nativists', who moulded public opinion 'through the auspices of the print media and their own organizational publications,' writes Pamela Vaughan Knaus.[278]

The major Marxist party in late nineteenth century America was the Socialist Labor Party (SLP), which was made up of mostly German émigrés. Indeed, it had been German immigrants in particular who would bring the first copies of the *Communist Manifesto* into the United States.[279] The SLP's official language was German, and the party organ was the German-language newspaper, the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*.[280] Daniel De Leon, upon joining the SLP in 1890 and soon becoming the acknowledged leader, embarked upon the task of Americanizing the party. De Leon was familiar with Friedrich Engels' criticism of the SLP, having read the numerous letters he had sent to the party's leadership throughout the 1800s. Engels also offered his evaluation of the SLP in his preface to the American edition of *The Condition of the Working Class in England:*

> [The Socialist Labor Party] is a party but in name, for nowhere in America has it, up to now, been able actually to take its stand as a political party. It is… foreign to America, having until lately been made up almost exclusively by German immigrants, using their own language and for the most part, conversant with the common language of the country. But if it came from a foreign stock, it came, at the same time, armed with the experience earned during long years of class struggle in Europe, and with an insight into the

[277] Miller, *The Radical Immigrant,* 17.

[278] Knaus, 'American Nativism, Immigration Policy, and the New Immigrants,' 1.

[279] Farr, 'The Communist Manifestoes,' 93.

[280] George Simpson, 'The American Karl Marx,' *The American Mercury*, 33:129, September 1934, 60-1.

> general conditions of working-class emancipation, far superior to that hitherto gained by American working-men. This is a fortunate circumstance for the American proletarians who thus are enabled to appropriate, and to take advantage of, the intellectual and moral fruits of the forty years' struggle of their European classmates, and thus to hasten on the time of their own victory. … [T]he ultimate platform of the American working class must and will be essentially the same as that now adopted by the whole militant working class of Europe, the same as that of the German-American Socialist Labor Party. In so far this party is called upon to play a very important part in the movement. But in order to do so they will have to doff every remnant of their foreign garb. They will have to become out and out American. They cannot expect the Americans to come to them; they, the minority and the immigrants, must go to the Americans, who are the vast majority and the natives. And to do that, they must above all things learn English.[281]

'Despite his Caribbean origin and slightly foreign accent,' wrote historian Stephen Coleman, 'De Leon was seen as a real American, who used English better than most Americans and had a feel for American political life.'[282] Under De Leon's leadership, English replaced German as the official language and recruitment focused on targeting English-speakers, with an open preference for American-born comrades. Moves were also made to participate in elections, and in 1892 two 'obvious non-Germans' were put up on the party's ticket.[283]

De Leon completed many English translations of leading European socialists which would be published by the SLP publishing house, New York Labor News Co., which he had been instrumental in establishing. These were then published in the SLP's newspaper *The People* and in pamphlet form, and as books for longer works such as his translation of Ferdinand

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[281] Friedrich Engels, *Condition of the Working Class in England,* 1887 (New York, NY.: Progress Publishers, 1953), URL: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1887/01/26.htm [Date Accessed: 3 September 2021].

[282] Stephen Coleman, *Daniel De Leon* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 19.

[283] Seretan, 'Daniel De Leon as American', 211.

August Bebel's *Women Under Socialism.*[284] Understanding the importance of literature in the development of an American Marxist identity, De Leon took care to go above and beyond merely translating these texts into English; he was also conscious of the way in which they should be presented for American readers. For example, De Leon translated Kautsky's treatise on the 1891 program of the Social Democratic Party in Germany, *Das Erfurter Program* ("*The Erfurt Program*") into English, but took measures to edit and format it to be more digestible for American readers and relatable to American conditions. In his own words:

> In working this exposition into English for the American public, substantial alteration, not in the essence, but in the manner of presentation, became necessary. Some chapters had to be omitted as wholly inapplicable here, and the others were recast into four pamphlets, each of which stands on its own feet. While they are connected with each other by the subject, and, together, present a fairly connected exposition of Socialism, they can be read independently in any sequence and be perfectly intelligible.[285]

The result of this was a series of four pamphlets: *The Working Class*, *The Capitalist Class*, *The Class Struggle,* and *The Socialist Republic*, each sold for five cents. Similar adaptations for American audiences were made by De Leon in his translation of Engels' *Socialism from Utopia to Science* which appeared in *The People*.[286]

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[284] For example, Engels' *Socialism from Utopia to Science* and Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and *The Gotha Program* were translated by De Leon and printed in *The People* in 1892, 1897 and 1900 respectively. Both translations of Marx later appeared as pamphlets. De Leon's translation of Bebel's *Women Under Socialism* was published as a 379-page book in 1904. See Johnson and Reeve, *Writings By and About Daniel De Leon.*

[285] Karl Kautsky, *The Working Class (The Proletariat)*, translated from German by Daniel De Leon (New York, NY.: New York Labor News Company, 1900), 3.

[286] Johnson and Reeve, *Writings By and About Daniel De Leon*, 3.

De Leon was also sensitive to Americans' likely unfamiliarity with Marxist language, and in the introductions to the series of pamphlets by Kautsky, he endeavoured to clarify certain words so that American readers are better able to engage with the text:

> A word as to terms used. … In Europe the word "bourgeoisie" is universally used to designate the class known in the United States as the "capitalist class." In Europe, also, the word "proletariat" is used to designate the class known in the United States as the "working class." The term working class has served so long in America to designate the wage-earning class, as distinguished from the profit-receiving class, that in this adaptation the term working class has been used quite largely for that purpose. But it has been impossible rigidly to adhere to one term in every connection. Let it be observed, therefore, that the terms "proletariat," "working class," "wage-earning class," "wage-earners," "wage-slaves," "workingmen," and "work-men," are used synonymously to indicate the "class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor-power in order to live."[287]

This followed the example of Engels, who, for the 1888 authorised English translation of *The Communist Manifesto*, had supplied 'eight substantial footnotes for Anglophone readers,' who he regarded as 'tremendously backward,'— 'especially the "untheoretical matter-of-fact Americans".'[288] Engels would also complain in a 1893 letter to socialist Friedrich Sorge about the sectarian Marxists in the US who ignored 'the necessity of learning the language of the country or getting to know American conditions properly.'[289]

De Leon's 'Americanism' was not just expressed in his organisation of the party and its literature. He was also critical of those on the Left who dismissed the American Revolution and its heritage. For example, in 1912 he criticised the 'undeveloped mentality' of

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[287] Daniel De Leon in Kautsky, *The Working Class*, 3-4.

[288] Farr, 'The Communist Manifestoes,' 91-2.

[289] Friedrich Engels, cited in Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the origins …,* 103.

anarchists who sought to remove the American flag at a May Day demonstration. 'While all the European flags rose out of the fumes of human sighs, were planted upon the prostrate bodies of subjects, and were meant defiantly to proclaim the double wretchedness as a social principle,' the American flag was created with a sincere vision of freedom, wrote De Leon in the *Daily People*. To be sure, 'The revolutionary fathers were oncoming capitalists, they were bourgeois, … but they imagined that if you would allow a person free access to the opportunities of labor his freedom would be guaranteed.'[290]

Nevertheless, De Leon encouraged a criticism of the 'Americanism' endorsed by those on the right who accused Marxism of being 'un-American':

> "Americanism," in the minds of those whose lips use the term "un-American," is as indistinguishable from that for which "Capitalism" stands in Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland and all other countries as peas in a pod are distinguishable from one another.[291]

De Leon appeared to have shaped his position on these aspects of America's heritage with the sensibilities of the American public in mind. In a debate within the SLP concerning the party's references to the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence and the Founding Fathers in their Declaration of Principles, he asserted: 'When we appeal to the people, we want to be careful to have ballast to our ship, so that it will not capsize, but we must also see to it that we have all the sails set up that will catch all the winds to carry our

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[290] Daniel De Leon, 'The Rebels of 1776, Address by Daniel De Leon, June 5, 1900' *The People*, 105:7, 22 July 1997, URL: http://www.deleonism.org/text/95072201.htm [Date Accessed: 3 September 2021].

[291] Daniel De Leon, 'Americanism — What Is It?', *Daily People*, 11:16, 17 July, 1910.

ship forward.'[292] As such, De Leon sought not to dismiss certain aspects of patriotism completely, which could potentially alienate many Americans, but to engage with them critically.

Despite his work to Americanise the SLP, De Leon—who was born to Jewish parents on the island of Curaçao in the Dutch West Indies, and grew up and studied in Europe before his emigration to New York in 1872—nevertheless exemplified to many the foreign character of American Marxism.[293] As L. Glen Seretan described, De Leon was typically seen as 'the classic political alien, a representative of the exotic class politics of Europe who presaged the later appearance of Russian Bolshevism.'[294]

In the first few decades of the twentieth century, it was Eugene V. Debs of the SP who would come to exemplify American socialism. Debs had first made a name for himself during the labour struggles of the 1890s and 1900s, most notably leading the Pullman strikers in 1894. Debs described socialism 'as the fulfilment of shared American ideals instead of an alien creed' and would often attract huge crowds and was respected for his ability to make 'sa genuine and emotional an appeal for human solidarity as was ever expressed by an American politician.'[295] Though a proud Marxist, Debs was able to communicate his political convictions in terms which every American could relate to, and

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[292] Daniel De Leon, 'The Rebels of 1776.'

[293] Johnson and Reeve, *Writings By and About Daniel De Leon,* 2.

[294] Seretan, 'Daniel De Leon,' 210.

[295] Michael Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation* (New York, NY.: Vintage Books, 2012) 122-4.

would typically refer to such figures as Victor Hugo and Abraham Lincoln, as opposed to espousing marxist theory.[296]

Though a non-believer who was skeptical of religion, Debs was also notable for being an American-born Christian, which was viewed by some as a valuable characteristic in a party made up of mostly immigrants.[297] Despite his own personal lack of belief, he had praised Jesus Christ as 'a pure communist' and was himself even considered something of a Christ-like figure, particularly following his imprisonment in 1919: he was the 'humble carpenter who sacrifices himself to redeem a corrupt society.'[298]

Debs became such a popular figure in America that he received six per cent of the popular vote in the 1912 presidential election, and, despite being in jail at the time, 3.4 per cent in the 1920 presidential election. For these reasons Debs often acted as a reference point for those on the left who sought to 'understand' America; for example in a 1919 letter to Debs, the editor of *The Class Struggle*, Ludwig Lore, asked if Debs would be willing to write an article:

> But can we count on you for an article on some American topic for this number? I suggest an American subject, because I sometimes fear that *The Class Struggle* is rather in danger of treating too exclusively with the revolutions of Russia and Germany, without sufficient application to conditions

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[296] Mike Davis, 'Introduction,' Ray Ginger, *The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene Victor Debs* (Chicago, IL.: Haymarket Books, 2007) xvi.

[297] Melvin Dubrofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 36.

[298] Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 123-4; *ibid*., 36.

> at home. Your first article met with such wholehearted appreciation everywhere…[299]

Certainly, it was Debs' distinctly American character which helped to make the Socialist Party 'acceptable, respectable, almost popular,' to Americans in the Progressive Era.[300]

Many American radicals viewed the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution as an indication that 'a new day of the worker was dawning,' and began to look toward Soviet Russia and its leaders for guidance on how they could emulate the Bolsheviks' success. When Lenin's *A Letter to American Workers* appeared in the U.S. in August 1918, it would be the first time most Americans had encountered Lenin's thoughts on America—perhaps the first time encountering Lenin's writing altogether. Written during the closing months of the First World War, at a time when America, alongside the Allied Powers, was aiding the White Army in the nascent Soviet Republic's civil war, *Letter to American Workers* appeals to the American proletariat to resist American imperialism in support of internationalism and world-wide revolution.[301] Though Lenin strongly criticised the American government's actions, he nevertheless recognised and appealed to America's unique and important historical tradition. In fact, he exclaims that only a 'pedant' or 'idiot' would deny 'the immense, world-historic, progressive and revolutionary significance of the American Civil War of 1863-65!':

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[299] Letter to Eugene V. Debs in Terre Haute, IN, from Ludwig Lore in New York City, 5 March, 1919. URL: https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/spusa/1919/0305-lore-todebs2.pdf [Date Accessed: 03 September 2021]

[300] Dubrofsky, *We Shall Be All,* 36.

[301] Lenin, V. I., 'Letter to American Workers,' *Pravda,* 178, 22 August 1918, in *Lenin Collected Works,* Volume 28 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 62-75.

> The history of modern, civilised America opened with one of those great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars of which there have been so few compared to the vast number of wars of conquest which, like the present imperialist war, were caused by squabbles among kings, landowners or capitalists over the division of usurped lands or ill-gotten gains. … The American people have a revolutionary tradition which has been adopted by the best representatives of the American proletariat, … That tradition is the war of liberation against the British in the eighteenth century and the Civil War in the nineteenth century.[302]

American workers would not follow the ruling class, wrote Lenin. 'They will be with us, for civil war against the bourgeoisie. The whole history of the world and of the American labour movement strengthens my conviction that this is so.'[303]

Letter to American Workers reached the masses through the efforts of John Reed, the journalist and early American Communist known for *Ten Days that Shook the World*.[304] It was translated into English and appeared in an abridged version in the short-running American Marxist theoretical journal *The Class Struggle* and the Boston weekly *The Revolutionary Age*—both at this time organs of the American Socialist Party.[305] By December 1918 Lenin's *Letter* could be bought for five cents as a pamphlet, printed by the Left Wing of the Socialist Party's publishing house, the Socialist Publication Society of Brooklyn.[306]

In the words of Alexander Trachtenberg, *Letter to American Workingmen* 'played an important part in developing among American Socialists an understanding of the nature of

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[302] *ibid.*, 62-63.

[303] *ibid.*, 70.

[304] Shields, 'The Story Behind Lenin's Letter to American Workers,' 22.

[305] *ibid.*, 39.

[306] V. I. Lenin, *Letter to American Workingmen* (New York, NY.: Socialist Publication Society of Brooklyn, 1918).

imperialism, of the aims of the October Revolution and of the role of social-chauvinists in the labor movement.'[307] But it was a potentially difficult and dangerous text to disseminate or possess at the time due to the Espionage and Sedition Acts of 1917 and 1918.[308] Nevertheless, it soon became a staple in recommended reading lists for American radicals, and the first complete English translation was printed in 1934 by International Publishers, which included previously omitted passages and an introduction by Trachtenberg, selling for only three cents. A second printing followed in 1935, with a print run of 100,000. This edition would be advertised at the back of other relevant pamphlets into the 1940s as one of the 'Classics of Marxism-Leninism'. Yet during the Popular Front period, only the most explicitly 'pro-American' excerpts of *Letter to American Workers* were selectively quoted in several pamphlets by the Communist Party, such as *Lincoln and the Communists* (1936) and

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[307] Alexander Trachtenberg, 'Introduction', Lenin, V. I., *Letter to American Workers* (New York, NY.: International Publishers, 1934), 7.

[308] Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America, 1919* (New York, NY.: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 29, 56.

The American Legion and the Communists Discuss Democracy (1938), with the wider critique of modern American imperialism unmentioned.[309]

The different conceptions of Americanism conveyed by De Leon, Debs and Lenin helped to direct and educate early American radicals and, more broadly, working class Americans. Both De Leon and Lenin's discussion of the American Revolution reminded radicals of the need to understand the historical progression of revolution and unique position of the United States in that history, and helped to form an early understanding among radicals of its relevance to contemporary American capitalism.

'Americanizing' the Early Communist Party

In the first decade of the life of American Communist Party since being formed in 1919, many of the problems it encountered boiled down to the question of 'Americanizing' the Party. John Pepper highlighted in *The Worker* in May 1923 the various issues facing the Party:

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[309] Ernest Fischer, *What is Socialism?* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1940) lists *A Letter to American Workers* at the back as one of thirteen 'Classics of Marxism-Leninism', alongside other classics from Lenin, Marx, and Engels, and several works by Joseph Stalin. Earl Browder, *Lincoln and the Communists* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers 1936) quotes Lenin's proclamation of 'the great, world historic, progressive and revolutionary significance of the American Civil War of 1861-1865!', while the text used in *The American Legion and the Communists Discuss Democracy* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1938) was shortened to omit particular words such as 'imperialist' and 'capitalists'; there is no mention of the wider context of resistance to American imperialism.

> The 20,000 members of our party would exercise a 10-fold dynamic power if they would speak one language. The party has 9 dailies, with a circulation of 90,000, and 21 weeklies, with a circulation of 70,000. The great political and propaganda power of this press is immeasurably diminished through being split into a score of languages.
>
> … If we look through the press of the various Federations … we find with few exceptions very little about the political and social struggle of this country. If one were to read the 9 dailies and 21 weeklies of the Workers Party carefully, one would get the complete picture of all European countries, but a very incomplete picture of the political life in America. … To be a Communist means to be an Internationalist. … But here in this country, our first duty is to struggle against the American part of the world reaction, and advance the American part of the world revolution. … It is vital for our party to realize the slogan: Be American![310]

But Pepper made the additional point that 'It would be a betrayal of the working class if … we should count only the English-speaking workers as a political factor.' He highlighted that the majority of workers in industry and unskilled workers in America are foreign-born, which is why the Communist Party 'has so many foreign-born members, not because it is un-American, but because it is a true image of the composition of the proletariat in American big industry.'[311] Though historian Theodore Draper did note that John Pepper—or József Pogány—was particularly displeased that his own identity as a Hungarian 'was not the best human material … to use in making an American revolution.'[312]

Pepper's article mirrored the advice of the Comintern at the time, which, in a letter to the American Communist Party, noted that the Party's large foreign-language press should 'awaken these workers to class-consciousness and to struggle against the capitalism under which they are exploited, viz. the capitalism in the USA' rather than dealing too much on

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[310] John Pepper, 'Problems of the Party — IV: Be American!', *The Worker*, 6:276, 26 May 1923, 5.

[311] *ibid.*

[312] Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, 60.

‘the affairs of the country from which they have emigrated.’[313] Zumoff best encapsulated the Party’s problem with the foreign-language federations: ‘On a sociological level, the federations' strength and persistence, in reflecting the immigrant roots of the working class, were quite American. Yet these federations hindered the political Americanisation of the Party.’[314] Zumoff highlights that in 1922, the Party did not even have a list of all its official foreign language papers in circulation, which consisted of a Lithuanian, Polish, Greek and Ukrainian newspaper, three Finnish newspapers, a daily and weekly Hungarian paper, a weekly Italian, and a Jewish newspaper, the *Freiheit*, whose readership was ‘150 percent of the total party membership.’[315] Such a lack of harmonisation of the Party press may have contributed to the Party’s sluggish pamphlet production in the early 1920s, and it was not until the foreign-language federations were consolidated in 1925 that the Party formed a central ‘Agitprop’ department and would see a sharp increase in production of pamphlets.[316]

Pamphlets on the issue of Americanizing are almost non-existent in the earlier years of the Party, though the issue dominated its papers and meetings. Nevertheless, there was one pamphlet which was frequently promoted by the Party press in the early 1920s titled *The*

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[313] ‘Letter to the Workers Party of America and all its Language Federations from the Executive Committee of the Communist International,’ January 25, 1923. Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 164, ll. 1-3. URL: https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/cpusa/1923/01/0125-ecci-onwpaenglishdaily.pdf [Date Accessed: 03 September 2021].

[314] Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism,* 172.

[315] *ibid*., 173.

[316] *ibid*., 181.

American Foreign-Born Workers, published between 1922 and 1923.[317] It was authored by Clarissa S. Ware, who led the Research Department for the Workers Party and was an editor for *The Liberator*. She tragically died not long after the publication of the pamphlet due to complications from an abortion.[318] *The American Foreign-Born Workers* was written at a time when there was significant national debate over immigration, which would culminate in the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924. This greatly restricted immigration of Southern and Eastern Europeans, and completely prohibited immigration from Asia. The pamphlet, in response to this immigration debate, proposed what would become the Council for Protection of the Foreign-Born Workers, in which Ware would play a leading role until her untimely death.[319] The pamphlet discusses the demographics of America and stresses the significant contribution immigrant workers have made in helping to build American industry. It challenges from the very beginning the notion of Americanism by asserting immigrant workers as *true* Americans:

> Who Are the Americans?
>
> Are they the Scottish-born Carnegies, the German-born Schiffs or the English-born Marshall Fields, whose Americanism has paid them in hundreds of millions of dollars?
>
> or
>
> Are they the many millions of workers, who, coming from far lands, have dug the coal, made the steel, laid the railroad tracks, and run the textile looms — have built the giant industries of America?[320]

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[317] Clarissa S. Ware, *The American Foreign-Born Workers* (New York, NY.: Workers Party of America, n. d., c. 1923).

[318] Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the origins…,* 442n16.

[319] There is very little information about the Council for Protection of the Foreign-Born Workers, which is not to be confused with the American Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born, its successor, which was formed in 1926.

[320] Ware, *The American Foreign-Born Workers*, 3.

The pamphlet goes on to praise the foreign-born workers as 'splendid fighters' in the struggle for workers rights in the U.S., and stresses the importance of unity between foreign-born and native workers, seeking to debunk anti-immigrant ideas perpetuated among workers by capitalists:

> … the employing class misleads the native workers into believing that their foreign-born brothers are responsible for lowering wages and lengthening hours. The American workers are in this way divided along the artificial lines of nationality. … the problems and hardships of the millions of foreign-born workers are of the greatest industrial and political importance to the native workers.[321]

The American Foreign-Born Workers gives an indication of how the Party at this time generally wanted to convey itself to the public in relation to the idea of Americanism. That is, the Party was attempting to redefine what it meant to be 'American' away from popular prejudices against foreign-born workers towards a more class-conscious position against the exploitation carried out by employers.

Ware's pamphlet appears to be one of the only pamphlets produced by the Party directly addressing the issue of Americanism and immigration in the early 1920s (though admittedly pamphlet production was scarce at this time), and it continued to be advertised in the *Daily Worker* until at least 1926.[322] Other pamphlets did appear later in the 1920s which reinforced the idea that there was nothing 'un-American' about foreign-born workers, and justifying their heavy presence in the Communist Party. For example, in *Why Every Miner Should Be A Communist* by Pepper, he challenges the assertion that "The Communists are a Bunch of Foreigners":

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[321] *ibid.*, 35.

[322] For example, see *Daily Worker*, 3:44, 5 March 1926, 5.

> Such a statement is a typical capitalist lie. Indeed, it is true the there are many foreign-speaking workers among the Communists, but that is only because the bulk of the workers in the basic industries … themselves are foreign-speaking workers. If there are foreign-speaking workers in the Communist Party, it is so only because the Communist Party is the only true party of the working class, regardless of language, race, or nationality. The Communists are as good Americans as anybody, but certainly the Communists are against such American nationalism which despises the Italian, Slovak, Polish, or Hungarian workers.[323]

It would not be until 1926 that a pamphlet specifically analysing the American Revolution was published by the Party. *Our Heritage from 1776: A Working Class View of the First American Revolution* was issued by the Party's Workers School and contained three short essays: 'Whose Revolution is it?' by Bertram D. Wolfe, 'On the Fourth of July' by Jay Lovestone, and 'Uphold the Revolutionary Tradition' by William F. Dunne, which had each appeared separately in newspapers beforehand.[324] The pamphlet's front page features an image of a red flag, on which there is the rattlesnake of the Gadsden flag, alongside the motto 'Don't Tread on Me' (*fig.* 12). In using such a symbol, the Party was attempting to reclaim what it meant to be American and replace right-wing associations with radical interpretations of America's past.

The pamphlet's essays critique the modern, popular portrayal of the revolution—especially the portrayal of 'the founding fathers as demigods, the revolution as a glorious vindication of the eternal rights of man, the institutions created as classless and eternal and

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[323] John Pepper, *Why Every Miner Should be a Communist* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, n.d. circa 1928), 14.

[324] Bertram D. Wolfe, Jay Lovestone and William F. Dunne, *Our Heritage from 1776: A Working Class View of the First American Revolution* (New York, NY.: The Workers School, 1926).

unimproveable.'[325] It does not idealise the Revolution—it seeks to 'debunk the history of 1776, throw away the chaff of chauvinism, mystification and reaction and keep and use the wheat of revolutionary traditions and methods and lessons.[326] In other words, the pamphlet was attempting to convey the importance of the Revolution as an historical process from

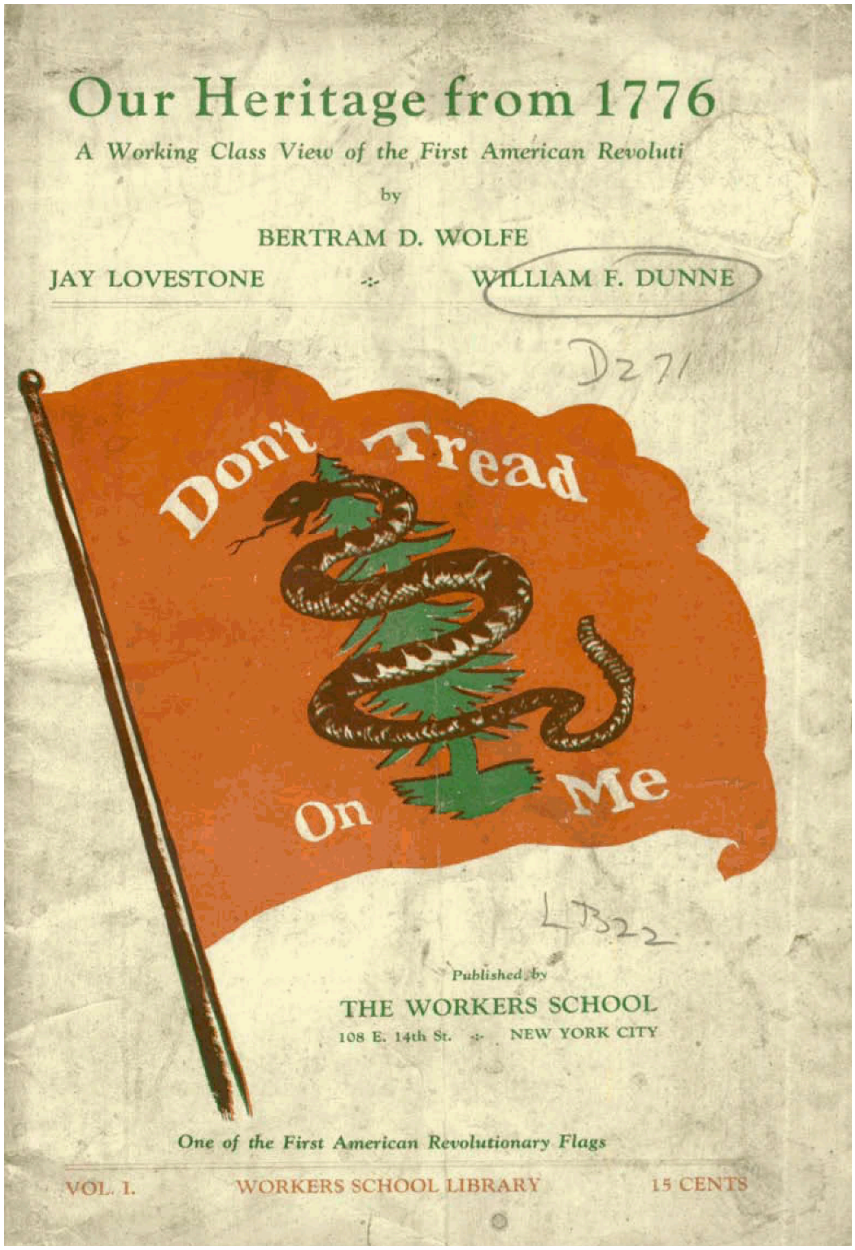

Figure 12: Bertram D. Wolfe, Jay Lovestone and William F. Dunne, *Our Heritage from 1776: A Working Class View of the First American Revolution* (New York, NY.: The Workers School, 1926). Image courtesy of Florida Atlantic University Digital Collections.

[325] *ibid.*, 3.

[326] *ibid.*, 2-3.

which important lessons could be learned, but not to romanticise it. Many of the general ideas within the pamphlet echo Lenin's approach to the American Revolution in *Letter to American Workers*, and Wolfe uses Lenin's term 'infantile leftism' to describe those workers who want to entirely reject the 'heritage' of the American Revolution:

> Rejecting the bunk with which the American revolution of 1776 has been surrounded and the uses to which it is put in breeding chauvinism, rejecting also the reactionary slogan of the petty bourgeois liberals—"Back to 1776"—it renounces its revolutionary inheritance as well and declares that there is nothing in 1776 which can be carried forward toward 1927 and beyond.

Certainly, *Our Heritage* would be perhaps the most 'American' pamphlet produced by the Party until the mid 1930s, and marked a departure from the idea that 'The Declaration of Independence is dead,' as was proclaimed in a 1923 article in *The Worker*.[327]

The significance of *Our Heritage* also relates to the fact that Lovestone and Wolfe were both leading proponents of what would come to be termed 'American Exceptionalism' in the Party in the mid-to-late-1920s. The Lovestoneites argued that, due to the United States' unique social, economic and historical development and its growing imperial position in the world, American capitalism was distinct from that of other countries. While European capitalism in the 1920s was now stagnant, it appeared that American capitalism was advancing, and thus the economic collapse seen in Europe was not materialising in

[327] 'Some Thoughts on July Fourth', *The Worker*, 6:282, 7 July 1923.

America. Therefore, the Lovestoneites held, the Communist Party should adapt its approach to these unique American conditions.[328]

This factional position was indicated by Lovestone in the 1927 pamphlet *Labor Lieutenants of American Imperialism*, but he had also authored a pamphlet as far back as 1924, entitled *American Imperialism: The Menace of the Greatest Capitalist World Power*, which had made earlier allusions to an 'exceptional' nature to American capitalism.[329] *American Imperialism* maps the history of America's increasingly powerful presence on the international stage since the 1898 Spanish-American War, and highlights how this imperialism forms a unique relationship with the 'labor aristocracy' in America. Thus, in this context it is clear how the 'pamphletisation' of Lovestone, Wolfe and Dunne's essays on America's unique revolutionary history was also part of the Lovestone faction's efforts to push its political position within the Party. As Draper pointed out, Lovestone, much like Browder nearly a decade later, 'recognized that the American historical tradition was linked with the "Americanization" of the American Communists, though he never went as far as Browder and warned against an "Americanization craze."'[330]

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[328] For more on Lovestone and American Exceptionalism, see Harvey Klehr 'Leninism and Lovestoneism,' *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 7:1-2 (1974), 3-20, and Paul Le Blanc and Tim Davenport (eds.), *The 'American Exceptionalism' of Jay Lovestone and His Comrades, 1929-1940* (Boston, MA.: Brill, 2015).

[329] Jay Lovestone, *Labor Lieutenants of American Imperialism* (New York, NY.: Daily Worker Publishing, 1927); Lovestone, *American Imperialism.*

[330] Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, 274.

But Lovestone was expelled from the Party in 1929, and American exceptionalism was no longer compatible with the Comintern's introduction of the 'ultra-left' Third Period, which would last until 1935. The collapse of capitalism and the beginning of global revolution was imminent, according to this position, and Communists employed radical rhetoric in its pamphlets to inform and prepare the Party and the masses. Others on the Left were deemed social fascists, whose 'socialist slogans were mere camouflage for programs that would deliver the working class into the hands of the fascists.'[331] 'Americanism' would remain a largely dormant theme in Party literature until 1935; until then pamphleteers 'used the phrase "100% Americanism" derisively to label reactionary thinking and had characterized all things American as repressive, crushing, and persecuting.'[332]

The Prelude to the Popular Front

In 1935, a series of seven pamphlets was published by Workers Library Publishers under the theme of 'In a Soviet America,' each sold for five cents. These were *Happy Days for American Youth* by Max Weiss, *The Miners Road to Freedom* by Anna Rochester and Pat Toohey, *Seamen and Longshoremen Under the Red Flag* by Hays Jones, *Social Security in a Soviet America* by I. Amter, *The Farmers' Way Out* by John Barnett, *Professionals in a Soviet America* by Edward Magnus and *The Negroes in a Soviet America* by James S. Allen and

[331] Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes and Kyrill M. Anderson (eds.), *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New York, NY.: Yale University Press, 1998), 280.

[332] Burgchardt, 'Two Faces of American Communism,' 389.

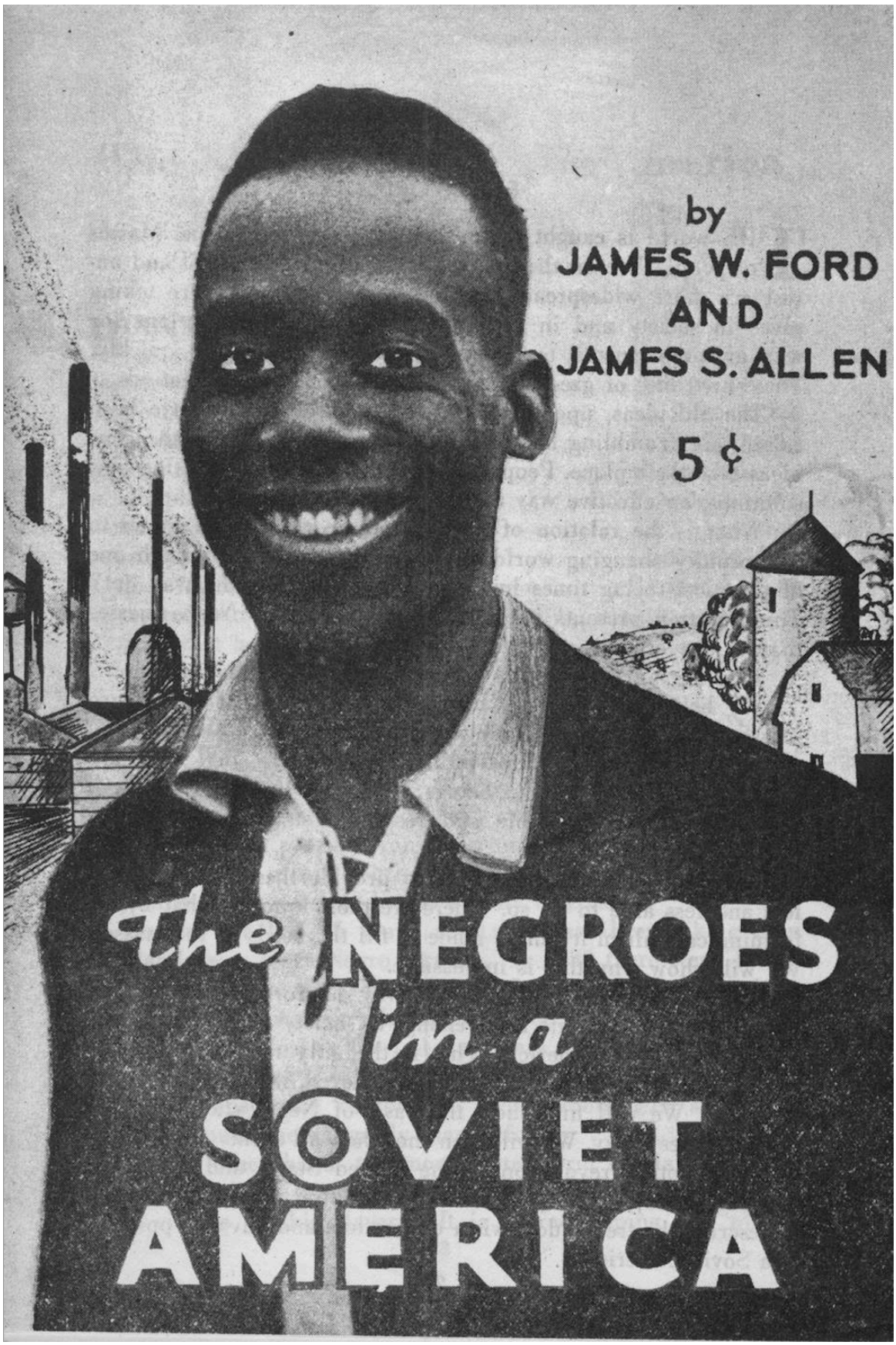

Figure 13: James W. Ford and James S. Allen, *The Negroes in a Soviet America* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1935) Image courtesy of University of Southern Mississippi Digital Collections.

James W. Ford (*fig.* 13).[333]

The 'In a Soviet America' series was inspired by the same slogan popularised by William Z. Foster in his 1932 book, *Toward Soviet America*, a book filled with Third Period rhetoric about the imminent collapse of capitalism and the coming revolution in America ('in the United States objective conditions are more ripe for revolution than they were in old Russia'), and the branding of socialists and social democrats as 'social fascists'.[334] It also made frequent comparisons between the American Revolution of 1776 and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and asserted the historical necessity of armed struggle: 'The American bourgeois revolution of 1776, even as the Russian Bolshevik revolution of 1917, was carried

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[333] Max Weiss, *Happy Days for American Youth* (New York, NY.: Worker Library Publishers, 1935); Anna Rochester and Pat Toohey *The Miners Road to Freedom* (New York, NY.: Worker Library Publishers, 1935); Hays Jones, *Seamen and Longshoremen Under the Red Flag* (New York, NY.: Worker Library Publishers, 1935); I. Amter,, *Social Security in a Soviet America* (New York, NY.: Worker Library Publishers, 1935); John Barnett, *The Farmers' Way Out* (New York, NY.: Worker Library Publishers, 1935); Edward Magnus, *Professionals in a Soviet America* (New York, NY.: Worker Library Publishers, 1935); James S. Allen and James W. Ford, *The Negroes in a Soviet America* (New York, NY.: Worker Library Publishers, 1935).

[334] 'The Social Fascists are still more dangerous masters at this demagogic art. As we have seen they have, under pretense of fighting for Socialism, backed up every plan that capitalism has put forward for saving itself and more intensely exploiting the toilers. Under the fig-leaf of Socialism they supported the World War, the Versailles Treaty, the Dawes and Young Plans, the Kellogg Pact, the Chinese butcher, Chang Kai Shek, and the Indian faker, Gandhi.' William Z. Foster, *Toward Soviet America* (New York, NY.: Coward-McCann, 1932), 194-5.

through on the basis of armed struggle.'[335] Indeed, Foster asserts in *In a Soviet America* that the only way in which the working class could come into power was through civil war.[336]

That the pamphlets were produced as a series alone, each with different authors and featuring a photographic image on the cover, indicates that the Party had invested a relatively large amount of time and money into them. In fact, the photo on the front of *The Miners Road to Freedom* is by Ewing Galloway, a well-known photographer; though it isn't clear if Galloway's photos are also the ones featured on the other pamphlets.[337]

In contrast to the relatively aggressive rhetoric and manifesto style of Fosters' *Toward Soviet America*, each edition in the 'In a Soviet America' pamphlet series conceptualised what the United States under proletarian rule would entail for certain workers and sections of society:

> Soviet America in these pamphlets … is not a Utopia a la Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. Presented in the light of the achievements of socialist construction in the Soviet Union, and on the basis of the highly developed material pre-conditions for the socialist society in the United States, Soviet America becomes a vivid reality—to be achieved by the American workers and farmers through struggle."[338]

In fact, in contrast to the Third Period rhetoric of Foster's book, the language in these pamphlets foreshadow some of the rhetoric of 'Communism is Twentieth Century

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[335] *ibid.*, 217.

[336] *ibid.*, 213–214.

[337] Ewing Galloway was a well-known American photographer and journalist of the interwar period. He founded the Ewing Galloway Agency, which at the time was the largest photography agency in the United States.

[338] Weiss, *Happy Days*, 47.

Americanism'. For example, *Happy Days for American Youth* begins with a romantic description of America's natural beauty, and goes on to declare a bittersweet love for the country:

> In bygone years, poets of many lands … [have] marvelled at the roaring thunder of Niagara Falls, at the slow moving waters of the yellow Mississippi River, at the towering snow-capped peaks of the Rocky Mountains, at the giant redwoods of California, at the breathtaking majesty of the Grand Canyon, at the rolling plains of the Middle West … For, truly, America is a beautiful land. … We love this country of ours. … Because we love this country so dearly we are unwilling to stand idle while a ruthless group of capitalist pirates spoils and destroys both it and its people.[339]

Though there is nothing particularly bourgeois about admiring the American landscape, such sentimental language was not a usual feature of Third Period pamphlets. However, since these pamphlets were explicitly aimed at recruiting non-communist American workers, it may have been seen to be necessary to employ some kind of patriotic sentiment which the average American might relate better to. Use of such language was likely only permissible, however, due to the fact that the Third Period was beginning to thaw by the time these pamphlets were being written; indeed, capitalism had not collapsed, revolution had not occurred, and with the Nazi's rise to power in Germany, fascism was becoming a far more potent threat.

However, the 'In a Soviet America' series could not have been produced at a more awkward time. The first two pamphlets in the series were published in June, 1935. Then, at the Seventh World Congress in July 1935, the Comintern endorsed the new Popular Front line, which put an end to the inflammatory rhetoric of the Third Period and promoted the formation of alliances with liberal forces in the name of collective security against the

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[339] *ibid.*, 3, 6.

threat of Nazi Germany. In these months the American Communist Party was working out how it was going to adapt to the new Comintern line. The publication of the *In a Soviet America* series continued into August and November, and at the back of *Happy Days for American Youth* it was advertised that '[f]urther publications in this series' were in production, and urged the reader to 'watch for announcements.'[340] But these would never materialise. 'It did not take long for CPUSA leaders to realise that much of the Party literature in circulation was not in tune with the new Comintern line,' notes historian Thomas L. Sakmyster. Despite the pamphlets displaying some elements of Browder's future policy and its relatively soft rhetoric, the creation of a 'Soviet America' certainly was not a slogan that would compel the United States to form an alliance with the USSR. As a result, by early 1936 the Party's Literature Department began to recall a number of books and pamphlets in early 1936 which were not in line with the aims of the Popular Front, including the 'In a Soviet America' series.[341]

The timing of the publication of the 'Soviet America' series seems to indicate that the Party was caught somewhat blindsided by the announcement of the Popular Front line. Leader since 1933, even Browder had written an article for the *New Masses* published on 25 July 1935—the same day as the first day of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern—referencing what a 'Soviet America' might look like. Nevertheless, he appears to have had little involvement in the pamphlet series, possibly as the slogan was coined by his Party rival,

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[340] *ibid.*, 47.

[341] Sakmyster, *Red Conspirator*, 53.

Foster.[342] But Browder seems to have had some degree of prescience. His pamphlet published in July 1936 titled *Who Are the Americans?*—the very first pamphlet to introduce the use the slogan 'Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism'—was not actually conceived in the Popular Front period.[343] The text (and therefore the slogan) had originally been published as an article in the *New Masses* in June 1935—one month before the Seventh World Congress where the Popular Front was adopted—as part of a series of weekly articles by Browder called 'What is Communism?'.[344] 'Without realizing it at the time,' recalled Browder in 1938, 'I had coined a slogan which was taken up and made a symbol of the whole struggle for a new evaluation of American history.'[345] Moreover, it was almost a word-for-word copy; it had not even needed to be altered to avoid any awkward Third Period-isms. So not only was Browder's article still seen as politically acceptable through this transition, it was even deemed necessary to release it as its own pamphlet to commemorate the Party's new line. It would seem, then, that Browder had early aspirations for a new 'Americanism' for the Party.

Though *Who are the Americans?* had only inaugurated the slogan 'Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism' in July 1936, already by December Browder triumphantly declared:

> Can anyone deny that in this campaign the Communist Party broke through and smashed the legend of our enemies that our Party is something foreign,

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[342] Browder, Earl, 'What is Communism? A Glimpse at Soviet America,' *New Masses*, 16:2, 9 July 1935.

[343] Browder, Earl, *Who are the Americans?* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1936)

[344] Browder, Earl, 'Americanism — Who are the Americans?', *New Masses,* 15:13, 25 June 1935.

[345] Earl Browder, 'Concerning American Revolutionary Traditions,' *The Communist,* 17:12, December 1938, 1080.

> imported from abroad, not organically a part of the American political scene? No one can deny that we thoroughly established our Party as an American Party, that our slogan—"Communism is 20th Century Americanism"—registered deeply with the American people.[346]

Communist George Charney recalled in his autobiography of this time, 'We were not only Communists, we were also Americans again.'[347] But what exactly did being 'American' entail for the Party?

New Image and Rhetorical Shifts

As the Popular Front policy was being established and the new 'Americanism' campaign took shape, the Communist Party began to produce and distribute greater quantities of literature than ever before.[348] But the pamphlets were now guided by the commitment to forming liberal alliances, which compelled the Party to dramatically soften its image. Pamphlets were now addressed to 'liberty loving Americans' and 'citizens' rather than 'workers,' 'toilers,' and 'proletarians.' Words like 'capitalism,' and 'imperialism' were now replaced with critiques of 'kings of business,' 'big-money conspirators,' 'monopolists' and 'empire hunters' in order to both make their publications more accessible to everyday people and to loosen association with the radicalism such phrases were typically associated with.[349]

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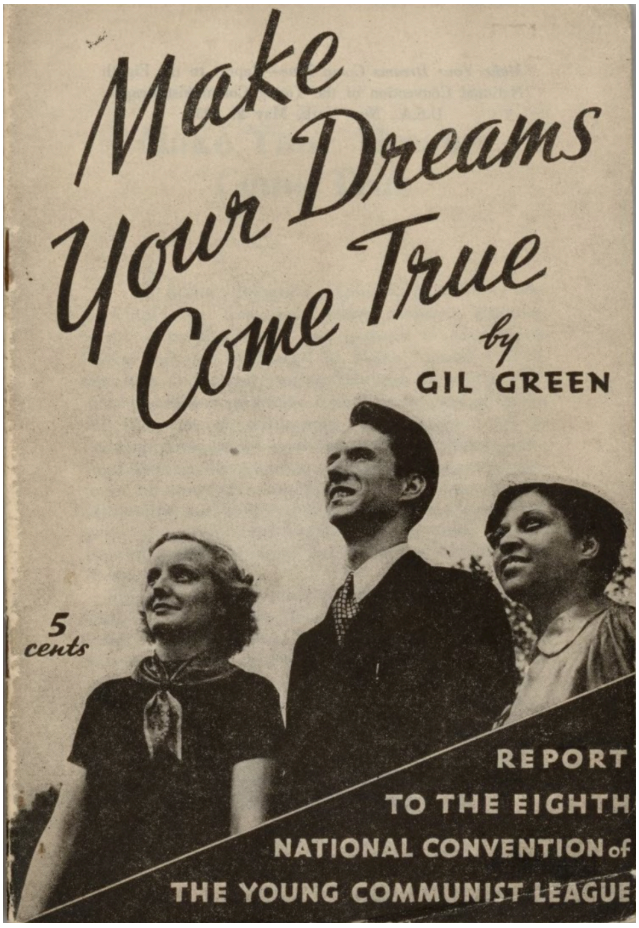
[346] Browder, *The Results of the Elections and the People's Front*, 42.

[347] George Charney, cited in James G. Ryan, *Earl Browder: The Failure of American Communism* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 96.

[348] Earl Browder, *The Results of the Elections and the People's Front* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 44.

[349] See for example Ann Rivington, *Women—Vote for Life!* (New York, Workers Library Publishers: 1940), *We Take Our Stand* (New York, NY.: Young Communist League, 1937), 4.



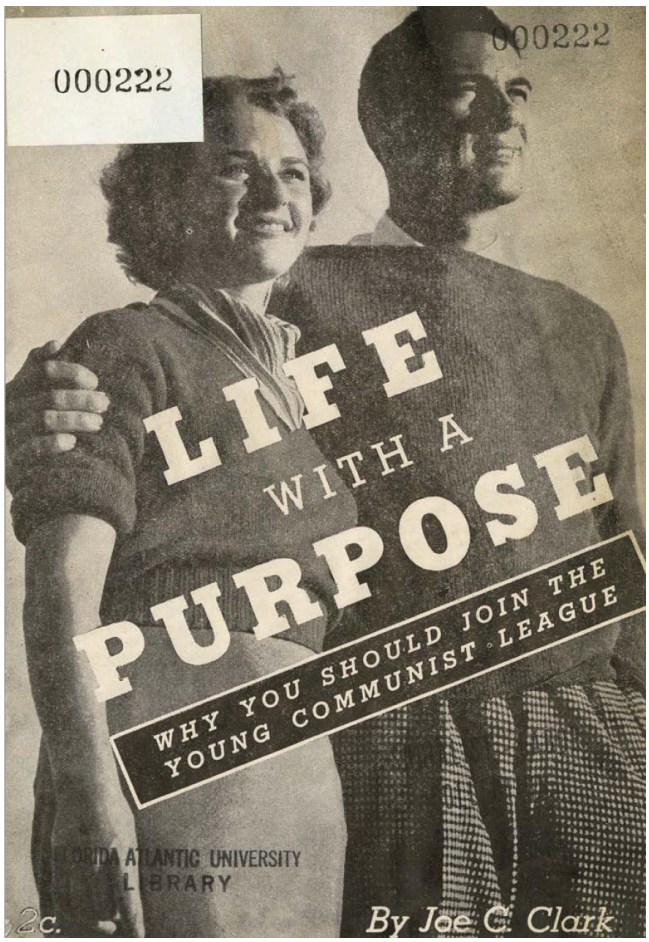


Figure 14 (left): Gil Green, *Make Your Dreams Come True* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1937) Image courtesy of Historic Pittsburg's American Left Ephemera Collection.

Figure 15 (right): Joe C. Clark, *Life With a Purpose* (New York, NY.: National Committee of the Young Communist League, 1940) Image courtesy of Florida Atlantic University Digital Collections.

References to the 'Great American Dream,' became regular occurrences in pamphlets, and calls for systemic change was abandoned in favour of mild reformist demands. For example, when the pamphlet *We Take Our Stand* (1937) discusses what a 'socialist America' would entail, it is vague and saccharine, with liberal commitments to economic planning:

> We will create an America of a free and equal people. We will insure a future of peace by eliminating the causes of war-the struggle of the financial rulers for profit and for the enslavement of other nations and colonies.
>
> Socialism will give hope and inspiration to youth. It will provide useful creative jobs for all. It will enable them to obtain higher education. It will extend the possibility of recreation and athletics to all.

> We who believe in socialism love our country not only for what it is but for what it can become, not for its suffering of today but for this promise of the future-when America shall belong to the people.[350]

Pamphlets aimed at young people in particular often followed the example of the *20th Century Americanism* cover featuring Browder and his family. The cliched image of young, implicitly heterosexual youths looking out to the distance became commonplace, as seen in Gil Green's *Make Your Dreams Come True* and Joe C. Clark's *Life with a Purpose* (*fig.* 14). A similar approach can be seen in the YCL's pamphlet *Life Begins With Freedom* (*fig*. 15), by Henry Winston. The cover features a smiling young Winston wearing a suit, and inside he writes:

> Our great country, labor and progressive people, and lately the President, are coming forward with real progressive legislation. … this legislation will bring a new life in our country. … We derive inspiration from the progressive creators of our country—Jefferson, John Brown, Lincoln, Frederick Douglass. … We want the right to live in decent homes. Each of us wants to marry, to found a home, to live securely in it, to rear families which will not be subjected to indignities. We want the right to participate freely in American democracy. Each one of us must have the right to vote and hold office.[351]

In this instance, the fight for liberation for black Americans was softened. Having published powerful pamphlets such as *The Position of Negro Women* (1935) by Cyril Briggs and Eugene Gordon only two years earlier, which educated the reader on the multi-faceted historical and economic oppression of black American women and called for concerted organisation to fight Jim Crow, this pamphlet emphasises a desire to merely assimilate into existing white patriarchal institutions, rather than to abolish them.[352]

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[350] *We Take Our Stand,* 5.

[351] Henry Winston, *Life Begins With Freedom* (New York, NY.: New Age Publishers, 1937), 7.

[352] Briggs and Gordon, *The Position of Negro Women.*

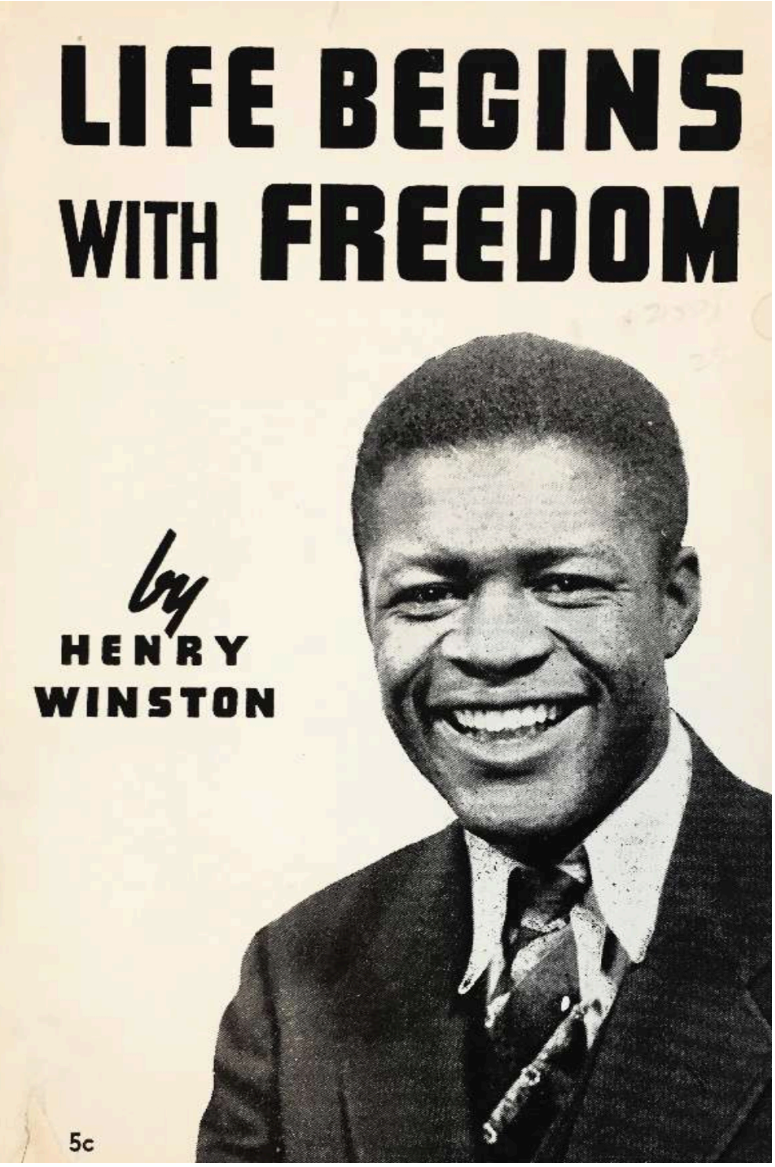

Figure 16: Henry Winston, *Life Begins With Freedom* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1937). Image courtesy of the British Library.

Americanism and the Founding Fathers

The slogan 'Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism' in itself was an attempt to convey that the Communist Party was the modern-day incarnation of the American Revolutionaries of the eighteenth century. As we have seen, this comparison was not a new concept among radicals, let alone within the CPUSA. However, Browder took his pursuit of a revolutionary heritage a step further, and his interpretation fell 'into a kind of whig

history,' of America, in the words of historians Gregory H. Nobles and Alfred E. Young.[353] The American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Civil War were commonly referenced in pamphlets material produced from 1935 onwards. The Party typically used the 'revolutionary' Founding Fathers as a way of turning the anti-communist propaganda of right-wing critics on its head by declaring that the Founding Fathers were 'the "international incendiaries" of their day':[354]

> Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln — what "super-patriot" does not hide behind these great names? Yet, in his day, Tories called Washington a traitor to the mother country (meaning the bankers and shippers of England); Jefferson was despised by the bankers of early America; and against Lincoln stood the aristocracy of the slave-owning South. All three were revolutionaries.
>
> Reactionaries of all shades cry out against Communism. They say it is revolutionary.
>
> But since when is revolution un-American? … The Communist Party continues the traditions of 1776, which saw the revolutionary birth of our country; the traditions of the revolutionary Lincoln, leader of the historic struggle that preserved our nation in the hour of crisis.[355]

Party pamphlets to a lesser extent also contained references to figures of the American literary and political tradition such as Walt Whitman and Mark Twain, while branches of the YCL were given names such as the Walt Whitman Club, Harriet Tubman Club, and Fred Douglass Club, as well as the Thomas Paine Club and Abe Lincoln Club, and so on.[356]

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[353] Alfred F. Young and Gregory H. Nobles, *Whose American Revolution Was It?: Historians Interpret the Founding* (New York, NY.: New York University, 2011), 77.

[354] Browder, *Who are the Americans?* 8-9.

[355] *20th Century Americanism,* 15.

[356] For example, see Ann Weedon, *Hearst: Counterfeit American* (New York, NY.: American League Against War and Fascism, 1936); Frank Cestare, *Meet the Young Communist League* (New York, NY.: New Age Publishers, 1943).

This new appeal to the American revolutionary tradition led International Publishers to produce its own pamphlet edition of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence, with an introduction by Browder. International Publishers maintained a certain level of scholarly integrity that those of its official CPUSA counterpart were far more lax about. In particular, the publishers' 4-pamphlet series 'The Negro in American History' was authored by Herbert Aptheker, an historian of African American history and CPUSA member. Nevertheless, Aptheker would be criticised later by *The Black Jacobin*s author and communist, C.L.R. James (writing under the pseudonym J. Meyer), for distortion of history to serve the Soviet agenda under Stalin. While these pamphlets were notable for demonstrating 'elementary facts,' James argued that Aptheker 'never once stepped outside the bounds of the limits prescribed by Stalinism for Negroes-as manpower, as shock-troops and as deserving of "recognition."' Regarding Aptheker's pamphlet *The Negro in the Abolitionist Movemen*t (1941), James is particularly dismissive:

> [I]f you could imagine a writer being given an assignment to write about Negroes in the Abolition movement and to exclude every example of their political activity, then the result could easily be Aptheker's pamphlet.[357]

American history was also called upon to defend the Moscow Trials and lambast Trotskyists in America. Browder's pamphlet *Traitors in American History: Lessons of the Moscow Trials* (*fig*. 17), features a dramatic, black cover with an illustration of a yellow rattlesnake. Inside, critics of the Trials and defenders of Trotsky were deemed 'shamefully un-American,' and extravagant parallels are drawn between the 'traitors' of the American Revolution, such as Aaron Burr, Alexander Hamilton, and Benedict Arnold, and those accused of counterrevolution in the Moscow Trials:

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[357] *Fourth International*, 10:10, November 1949, 309-314.

> First, there is Benedict Arnold … A widespread plot arose inside the [American] Revolutionary Army similar to that headed by Tukhachevsky in the Soviet Union. Headed by Thomas Conway, and called in history the "Conway Cabal," … their scheme centered in the assassination of Washington and his closest comrades, just as the Trotsky-Bukharin plot centered on the assassination of Stalin and his closest co-workers.[358]

Stalin—'the greatest leader of democracy that mankind has ever produced'— was held up as a besmirched hero like Jefferson, Paine and Lincoln, who had also been betrayed by their comrades:[359]

> As we witness this disgusting spectacle, we remember our American history. We recall how the same forces carried on exactly the same kind of campaign against Thomas Jefferson … the long campaign of slander and abuse against Tom Paine, … the murderous incitations against Lincoln … which led up to the assassination of the most loved figure in American history. We cannot ignore that today we have a campaign against our own American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, which behind the curtains is equal in virulence to that against Comrade Stalin, … which is organized and cultivated by Wall Street conspirators.[360]

But the pamphlet did note *one* difference between these cases. While it took the US government 'thirty-eight years before it finally suppressed the treasonable circles that had arisen in the first days of the revolution. … The Soviet Union has dug out and liquidated its treasonable sects in only about half that time,' boasted Browder.[361]

Such parallels between Trotsky and the 'traitors of the American Revolution' were repeated in other pamphlets, such as *This 4th of July* (1938), while others such as Browder's

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[358] Earl Browder, *Traitors in American History: Lessons of the Moscow Trials* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1938), 7-8.

[359] *ibid*., 26-7.

[360] *ibid.*, 26.

[361] *ibid.*, 12.

Trotskyism Against World Peace (1937) bypasses such comparisons and straightforwardly accuses the 'little Trotskyist rats' of collaboration with fascist agents.[362] The production of anti-Trotsky literature at this time raises questions about the purpose of the Party's Americanism campaign. While the campaign was ostensibly grounded in making the CPUSA more relatable to the American public, Trotskyism was not likely a significant concern of the majority of the American people, if they were even aware of it at all, and in fact such a display of sectarianism may even have been perplexing to the public. Moreover, such visceral anti-Trotskyism revealed that, rather than fostering a coalition of the American left, the Popular Front was concerned with seeking a hegemonic bloc with sections of the Democratic Party.

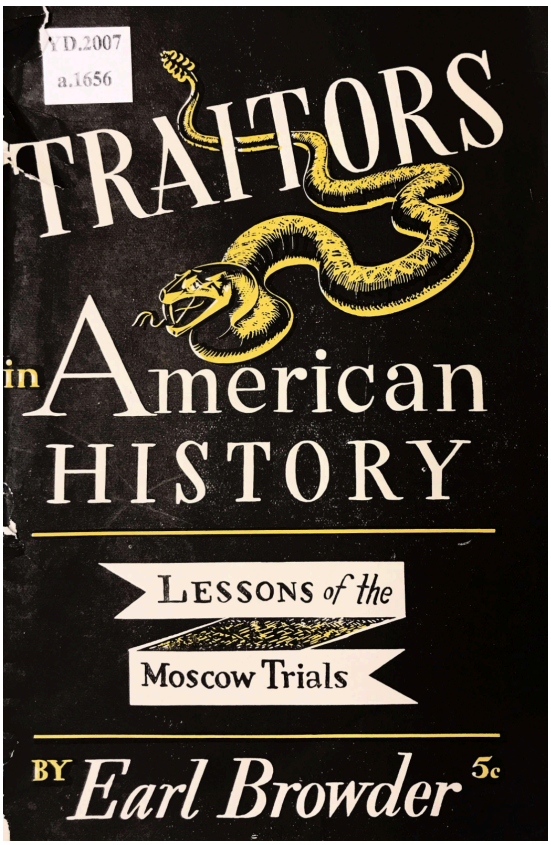

Figure 17: Earl Browder, *Traitors in American History: Lessons of thee Moscow Trials* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1938) Image courtesy of the British Library.

[362] 'Reaction and hate of the people always degenerate to treason and conspiracy. The people of the Soviet Union learned that when they uncovered and speedily crushed the nest of Trotskyite-Bukharinite spies working with the fascist agents of Hitler. The people of Spain are paying a terrible price in their fight for liberty for their failure to stamp out in time the traitors like Franco in their midst. The Francos who whine about their "love for traditional Spain" do not hesitate to bring in the armies of the invader and mercenaries to drown their country in blood. We Americans had our own Trotskys and Francos. And when the stupid or faint hearted cried aloud at the "unfairness to the Tories," George Washington fumed in anger and roared: "They all ought to be hanged by US or by themselves."' Milton Howard, *This 4th of July* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1938), 8.

Nevertheless, at a time when the CPUSA's anti-fascist campaign was winning over new sympathisers and members, the consistent charge that Trotskyists were Nazi spies likely worked to stop potential defections. Yet the impulse to continue to denounce Trotskyists despite its irrelevance to 'Americanism' indicates that the campaign of the Popular Front was shaped around Soviet policy rather than simply a case of confronting real American conditions.

The Party's claims to the heritage of the Founding Fathers was not confined to the Popular Front period. Officially, the slogan 'Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism' was withdrawn in 1938, but Browder was keen to assure anyone who thought this may mean 'a return to sectarian policies' by asserting that it was in fact the opposite case; that the slogan was withdrawn 'because it implied that only Communists were "Good Americans," excluding all other progressive forces.'[363] All the components of twentieth century Americanism remained in Party literature into the 1940s, in some cases with more vigour than before.[364]

In one 1942 article Browder insists that the likes of Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln were victims of anti-communism:

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[363] Earl Browder, 'Concerning American Revolutionary Traditions,' *The Communist,* 17:12, December 1938, cited in Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States*, 124.

[364] Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States*, 123-4. Other examples of Americanism after the slogan was dropped can be seen in Claude G. Bowers, Earl Browder and Francis Franklin, *The Heritage of Jefferson* (New York, NY.: Workers School, 1943) and Earl Browder, *Production for Victory* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1942).

> Thomas Jefferson was denounced as a communist and red by the Federalists … Andrew Jackson was denounced as a communist and red … Abraham Lincoln was denounced as a communist and red, both by the slave power and by Northern Copperheads. Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln were the chief figures in establishing the American tradition of a self-governing democracy. All three were the victims of "red-baiting," but not one of them ever himself descended to red-baiting. .. There is no reason today for any attempt to revise the tradition of these three great Americans. The Communist Party has its place in the great American tradition.[365]

Notably, there was one aspect of the American Revolution with which the CPUSA did not attempt to draw comparisons. While Lovestone et. al's 1927 pamphlet did not shy away from discussing the principle of 'resistance by force' in the fight for American independence, this was inconceivable from the pamphlets produced after 1935, and Browder would repeatedly state that Communists 'did not advocate the use of force' and had no intention to overthrow the country's government.[366] Certainly, this was at least in part an act of self-preservation against the threat of persecution by the government. However, Browder would go a step further, and 'pledged the Party's support to "crush" any group or organisation "which conspires or acts to subvert, undermine, weaken or overthrow, any or all institutions of American democracy."'[367] And indeed, they did: when when eighteen leaders of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) were convicted under the 1940 Smith Act, the CPUSA 'welcomed the verdict and the banning of the SWP newspaper, *The Militant*, from U.S. postal privileges.'[368]

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[365] Earl Browder,, 'The Communist and National Unity,' *The Communist,* 21:8, September 1942, 679-680.

[366] Wolfe, Lovestone and Dunne, *Our Heritage from 1776*, 16.

[367] Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States*, 4.

[368] Howard Brick and Christopher Phelps, *Radicals in America: The U.S. Left Since the Second World War* (New York, NY.: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 27.

As David Lincove writes in his analysis of International Publishers, it was intended that this flurry of pamphlets and books would illustrate the 'bonds of unity between communists and the American mainstream population.'[369] Yet it seemed that mainstream news outlets weren't particularly convinced by the Communist Party's attempt to claim America's revolutionary heritage, and in 1945 the Communists' use of Thomas Paine in particular was criticised in the *New York Times:*

> …[Paine] was one of the great voices of the eighteenth-century revolutionary spirit. But it was a democratic kind of revolution in which he believed; and we must beware in particular of people who try to make use of him nowadays for a more extreme type of revolution. Tom Paine does not belong to Moscow; he belongs to Washington and London. … he never believed in breaking out of the democratic framework.[370]

Browder's and the Party's interpretation of American history wasn't always particularly accurate, and appealed more to emotive symbols and rhetoric to rouse Americans rather than historical analysis. As Ryan puts it, Browder employed a superficial understanding of American history, filled with 'oversimplifications, half-truths, and selective samplings that colored his evidence. Writing as a radical, he used historical allusions for political analysis. The result was not scholarship (nor did he intend it to be), but it brought the CPUSA unprecedented attention.'[371]

Despite its faults, Lovestone et al.'s 1926 pamphlet *Our Heritage* had made an effort to educate both Party members and workers on the American Revolution in a historical

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[369] Lincove, 'Radical Publishing to "Reach the Million Masses",' 108-9.

[370] Allen Nevins, 'Thomas Paine: World Citizen,' *New York Times*, 23 December, 1945, 1.

[371] Ryan, *Earl Browder,* 103.

materialist manner. But the discussions of American history in the pamphlets of the era of 'twentieth century Americanism' were not educative—they were primarily intended to evoke an emotional response; to appeal to the patriotic sensibilities of Americans. The CPUSA was now, ironically, using American history in the same cynical way in which it had accused its right-wing critics of doing.

Browder as the 'True Blue' American

Earl Browder's presence was all-encompassing during this period, becoming the face of the Communist Party. He authored approximately a third of all pamphlets published by Workers Library Publishers between 1935 and 1939, and often his portrait would feature either on the cover or inside cover. 'For more than a decade the domestic left acclaimed Browder almost as fervently as the Soviet's hailed Stalin,' wrote James G. Ryan in his biography of Browder. 'His pleasant, bland nature and relaxed, confident manner offended no one. Quietly he copied Stalin's strategy of emphasizing his unspectacular straightforwardness as a character strength.'[372] He was dubbed 'the world's greatest English-speaking Marxist' by Georgi Dimitrov, the leader of the Comintern, and became such a focal point of the Party that he featured—suit and all—on the cover of *Time* magazine in May 1938, with the tagline: 'For Stalin, for Roosevelt; for jobs, security, democracy, peace.'[373]

As Ryan highlights, Marxists in America had been stereotyped as 'swarthy figures having thick Slavic accents,' but Browder appeared as American as apple pie; 'A middle-aged version of the all-American boy, he was a walking refutation of every Communist

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[372] Ryan, *Earl Browder*, 94-5.

[373] *ibid.*, 94; *Time*, 31:22, 30 May 1938.

stereotype.'[374] One may speculate that it was such stereotypes which had likely influenced the Party not to run a Jewish candidate for president or vice president, nor to elect a Jewish general secretary, despite its proportionately high Jewish membership and large Jewish presence on the Central Committee.[375] As Michael Kazan highlights, '[f]rom 1930 to 1956, the highest offices in the Party were occupied by Earl Browder from Protestant Kansas, William Z. Foster from Irish Catholic Philadelphia, and Eugene Dennis, a lapsed Catholic from polyethnic Seattle.'[376]

The Party apparatus began to enthusiastically curate Browder 's image as a Kansas populist, 'complete with the boyhood twang he had never lost.'[377] He frequently 'advertised his deep ancestral roots in the white settler experience' and his family's involvement in both the War of Independence and the Civil War to bolster his legitimacy as a Red-Blooded American:[378]

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[374] Ryan, *Earl Browder*, 107, 1.

[375] 'By 1931, at least 19 per cent of the party was Jewish, and its largest district, New York, was overwhelmingly Jewish in membership. An even higher proportion of Communist officials were Jews: between 1921 and 1938 no Central Committee had fewer than a one-third Jewish membership; most were about 10 per cent Jewish. According to some estimates, during the 1930s and 1940s, about half of the Party's membership was composed of Jews, many with an East European socialist background.' Henry Felix Srebrnik, *Dreams of Nationhood: American Jewish Communists and the Soviet Birobidzhan Project, 1924-1951* (Brighton, MA.: Academic Studies Press, 2010) 3.

[376] Kazin, *American Dreamers,* 160.

[377] Ryan, *Earl Browder*, 94.

[378] Kevin Morgan, *International Communism and the Cult of the Individual: Leaders, Tribunes and Martyrs under Lenin and Stalin* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 88.

> The Browder family settled in Virginia in the late 1600's, played an honorable role in carving a new civilization out of the wilderness, bore arms against England in 1776 and 1812 and for the Union in the Civil War, gained honourable mention in the official History of the Methodist Church of Kentucky in its earliest days, followed the frontier until it vanished, was always characterized by examples of public service, and never abused the confidence gained from its fellow citizens to amass private wealth. I am proud of my name and of its history, and in my own modest way endeavor to continue the family tradition.'[379]

Such biographical accounts were also used for other leading Communists, such as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's 1942 pamphlet *Daughters of America*, which commemorates the lives of Communist women Ella Reeve Bloor and Anita Whitney, whose ancestry is emphasised to assert their righteousness as Americans.[380] Such veneration, however, pandered to concepts of bloodlines and the idea of the foreign-born and non-white people as 'un-American.'

The first manifestation of Browder-mania came out of his 1936 presidential candidacy, which was marked by a sycophantic pamphlet entitled *That Man Browder* on which a smiling, suit-clad Browder features on the front cover.[381] Written by M. J. Olgin, *That Man Browder* looks at Browder's life from his 'Blood and Bone America' ancestry to his progression through the ranks of the Communist Party, while reminding the reader that despite his unassuming character, he was a brilliant leader:

> Earl Browder is the "average" American. He is deeply rooted in American soil. He is of the prairies and the woods, the mines and railroads, offices and country schools. He knows the grievances of the plain man. He is a plain man, himself, …He is plain-spoken. He is modest. He is even somewhat retiring. But the fifty thousand members and the hundreds of thousands of sympathisers of

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[379] Earl Browder, *Stop the War* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1939), 5.

[380] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Daughters of America: Ella Reeve Bloor and Anita Whitney* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1942).

[381] M. J. Olgin, *That Man Browder* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1936).

> the Communist Party hang on his every word. … His advice is followed because it is the best advice.[382]

The reverence of Browder seemed to only strengthen within the Party when Browder was put on trial on charges of passport fraud in 1940, and subsequently imprisoned the following year. Numerous pamphlets about him were published protesting his imprisonment such as *Earl Browder Takes his Case to the People*, and *America Needs Earl Browder*, which recycled many of the typical themes to reinforce his Americanism:[383]

> I recall one of the last times I saw Browder … and the words that seemed to be made out of the building-blocks of history: "…. we represent the future of America. We represent the American search for truth; we represent the American tradition of democracy, of government of, by, and for the people. … And that is why the future belongs to us." … America needs that kind of vision today. Tom Paine and John Brown had it in their own time. And America needs the leadership of Earl Browder. One does not have to agree with Communism to believe that; one has only to be an intelligent, small-"d" democrat. Our fight against fascism is weaker without Browder, the victory less certain.[384]

Yet there was a paradoxical aspect to the hero-worship of Browder that the Party encouraged. While the Party was attempting to prove its traditional democratic American values, such centralised leadership focused on the veneration of a single figure was more reminiscent of that of the Soviet Union and the 'cult of personality' around Stalin. Indeed, as Ryan has argued, Browder 'constructed a cult-like following befitting a miniature imitator of Stalin,' and shaped his image with a brand of Communism which resembled

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[382] *ibid.* 15.

[383] Earl Browder, *Earl Browder Takes His Case to the People* (New York, NY.: Worker Library Publishers, 1940); A. B. Magil, *America Needs Earl Browder* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1941).

[384] Magil, *America Needs Earl Browder*, 14-15.

more that of a secular religion than Marxism.[385] But there is no denying that Browder's image garnered the Party unprecedented mainstream attention—certainly no other leader of the CPUSA would have dreamt of appearing on the cover of *Time* magazine . 'By far not the movement's most profound ideologist,' writes Ryan, 'Browder proved beyond question its greatest sales person.'[386]

Conclusion

The CPUSA's twentieth century Americanism had undoubtedly played a role in helping the Party to become more a part of mainstream American political life, and its membership became larger and more 'American' than ever before. Yet many were being recruited on a superficially popular, rather than ideological basis, which as Malcolm Sylver highlighted resulted in a 'loose rein' on members.[387] Such a shallow basis of recruitment led to one half of all Communists during the Americanism years failing to renew their party cards. Notably, the Party also admitted to a decline in membership of African Americans in 1936-37, at the height of their Americanism campaign.[388]

While pamphleteering in the earlier years of American radicalism earnestly attempted to make sense of America's historical and economic trajectory, and to encourage the development of a critical Marxist analysis in both radicals and the American masses, by the 1930s, it seemed that the more that pamphlets promoted the Communist Party's 'Twentieth Century Americanism,' the less they resembled Marxist texts at all. But this wasn't

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[385] Ryan, *Earl Browder*, 37, 143.

[386] *ibid.,* 107.

[387] Sylvers, 'American Communists in the Popular Front Period,' 383.

[388] *Party Organizer*, June 1938, 5; *ibid.*

necessarily a consequence of the desire to Americanise the CPUSA, but was as much the product of the leadership of the CP's desire—and particularly Browder's desire—to follow the political leadership of Stalin in the 1930s. Moreover, as writer and sociologist Charlie Post observed, the demobilisation of radicalism and popular militancy by the Party, alongside their endorsement of the application of the Smith Act on its rivals, helped to lay the groundwork for 'the right-wing offensive that began during World War II and culminated in the purge of the radical left from the organized labor movement in the late 1940s.'[389]

It was also the conciliatory and opportunistic logic of this policy which would embolden Browder to eventually dissolve the Communist Party altogether in 1944, replaced by the 'Communist Political Association'. Browder clearly intended this to be a similar gesture to the American ruling class as the Soviet's dissolution of the Comintern in 1943. However, Browder had clearly taken a little too much initiative and misunderstood the post-war situation, and he was denounced by Moscow in 1945, who claimed that Browder's 'notorious revision of Marxism' had resulted in the 'liquidation of the independent political party of the working class.'[390] The decision to dissolve the Party 'can be seen as part of a continuing effort on his part … to integrate the CP into mainstream political life.'[391] Browder was expelled and the Party was reestablished in June 1945 with Foster now at the helm instead.

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[389] Charlie Post, 'The Popular Front: Rethinking CPUSA History,' *Against the Current*, 63, July/August 1996, URL: https://againstthecurrent.org/atc063/p2363/ [Date Accessed: 21 September 2021].

[390] Dulcos article in *Les Cahiers de communisme* (April 1945), cited in Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism*, 95.

[391] Sylvers, 'American Communists in the Popular Front …,' 391.

4.

Women, the Family and the Popular Front: Refashioning Marxism in Communist Publications

> [I]s it really necessary to lure women readers with cooking recipes and style and beauty notes? We are rather overwhelmed with that sort of thing already, it seems to us. But the really important thing about your publication, we feel, is that it does tend to perpetuate that most evil segregation of the sexes, in the matter of working class organization and solidarity.
>
> — Letter from L. O. and E. McN. featured in *Woman Today* August 1936.[392]

The Communist Party's shift during the Popular Front towards appealing to American traditions and values extended into glorification of the traditional American family unit. Publications produced by the Party—especially those aimed at women—increasingly began to appeal to emotion and moralism often at the expense of a Marxist interrogation of American society and women's role within it. While education of both Party members and the masses had previously been a priority when it came to producing literature, simplified and stereotypical narratives were now often used to promote and justify the party line. Drawing particularly on the pamphlets of the period, this chapter will demonstrate how, in contrast to the arguments of a number of scholars, the Party's abandonment of a Marxist analysis of the family, gender and sexuality during the Popular Front disoriented the fight for women's liberation within the Party and the broader left in which it was so influential.

[392] *Woman Today,* August 1936, 23.

Marxism and Gender

From the period of the first Red Scare of 1919-20 and persisting in varying degrees throughout the twentieth century, an ideology developed in the United States which centred around a supposed 'crisis' of the family, and the 'related anxieties over changing gender and sexual norms' which was believed to be inextricably linked to the rise of radicalism in America.[393] 'Under the banner of Americanism,' writes Erica J. Ryan, 'social conservatives, nativists, business elites, society women, settlement workers, and "super" patriots … reinforced the patriarchal family as a symbol of patriotism and capitalism, a producer of conservative gender norms, a promoter of assimilation, and a tool of social control in the effort [to] contain sex modernism.'[394]

There was a basis for this fear. Radicals had for many decades been challenging traditional ideas about family, marriage, sex, and gender. Indeed, in the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels had proclaimed: 'Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists.'[395] Marxists had traditionally seen marriage and the traditional family as part of institutions that evolved to sustain private property ownership and which reinforced reactionary morality and patriarchy, and socialists around the world

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[393] Ryan, *Red War on the Family,* 169.

[394] *ibid.,* 167.

[395] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party,' in *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Collected Works,* Volume 6 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), 501.

had, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, been involved in advancing ideas around female and sexual liberation.[396]

In the words of German Marxist Clara Zetkin, 'The materialist view of history did not, it is true, give us ready-made answers to the woman question … but it gave us something better: the correct and precise method of studying and understanding the question.'[397] Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) was the touchstone for a Marxist understanding of the family, marriage and sex, and August Bebel's *Women and Socialism* (1879)—particularly popular among American Socialists—positioned the woman question into the larger framework of Marxist theory.[398] Central to the Marxist approach was the historical materialist analysis of the family and its origins and development alongside the changing modes of production, as well as its impact on social relations—particularly the subjugation of women—underlined by the hypocrisies borne out of the contradictions of the bourgeois family under capitalism.[399]

It was this Marxist analysis which guided the Bolsheviks' introduction of radical new laws in the Soviet Union shortly after the October Revolution. Making a concerted effort to abolish patriarchal relations and institutions, the 1918 Family Code gave women equal

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[396] John Lauritsen and David Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement, 1863-1935* (New York, NY.: Times Change Press, 1974), 33.

[397] Clara Zetkin, cited in Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 233.

[398] *ibid.*

[399] This is summarised well in Richard Weikart, 'Marx, Engels and the Abolition of the Family,' *History of European Ideas,* 18:5 (1994), 658.

status to men, made divorce easy, abolished the category of 'illegitimate' children, and communal facilities for childcare and domestic work were vastly expanded to liberate women from the home. Abortion was made legal in 1920, and by 1922 homosexuality was decriminalised. Figures such as Alexandra Kollontai greatly contributed to making these landmark pieces of legislation possible and wrote influential works on sexual liberation.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, it was asserted particularly among the religious right that the Bolsheviks had turned Russia into an immoral, depraved cesspit. Edmund A. Walsh, an American Catholic Priest who is discussed in more depth in chapter six, for example, declared in a 1930 pamphlet that 'Russia has developed a vast multitude of semi-illiterate, corrupt, immoral, uncontrolled, and uncontrollable young men and women whose highest ideal is to satisfy the cravings of licentious appetite.' This had been, according to the author, influenced by the work of pioneering Bolshevik 'Madam Kollontai, with her doctrines of free love, free marriage, and jungle promiscuity.' The Soviets had, through their 'constant war on traditions, on the "old family"—"old morals," etc. … plunged Russia into a complete moral chaos.'[400] And as historian Katherine Olmstead has highlighted, there was a distinct paranoia among American anti-communists about 'gender inversion and transgressive sexual behavior':

> Communism sometimes made men gay: they became 'pinks,' or 'pussyfooters,' and 'busybodies.' But it also released a man's 'innate savagery' and freed his inner rapist. It transformed women into whores who haunted dance halls in search of sailors to seduce – except when it turned them into lesbians.[401]

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[400] Edmund A. Walsh, *Why Pope Pius XI Asked Prayers for Russia on March 19¸ 1930* (New York, NY.: Catholic Near East Welfare Association, 1930), 19-20.

[401] Katheryn Olmstead, 'British and US Anticommunism Between the World Wars,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53:1 (2018), 101-2.

Scholars such as Van Gosse have asserted that Marxist 'dogma' stunted the women's movement in the Party during the 1920s; that 'the focus of Marxists on productive and waged labor excludes women' and 'denied the existence' of unwaged housewives and children.[402] However, many American women had been drawn to the CPUSA and Marxism on the basis of the radicalism of the new policies introduced by the Bolsheviks. 'This revolution went beyond efforts to get women the vote or to make laws more equitable,' explains Julia L. Mickenberg. 'It meant professional opportunities for women. It meant psychological emancipation from social expectations. It meant romantic relationships based on mutual attraction and shared values and an end to the sexual double standard. It meant the possibility of women being mothers and also having careers.'[403]

Progressive ideas around the roles of women both in society and within the Communist movement were visible throughout various Party publications. Sasha Small's *Women in Action*, a short but comprehensive pamphlet published for International Women's Day in February 1935 (only months before the Popular Front policy was adopted), begins with a sharp attack against the idea that 'a woman's place is in the home' and describes the various valiant ways in which women have fought in strikes and protests throughout the decades. Describing how women textile workers 'took their places, battling cops and tear gas' in the 1934 San Francisco General Strike and how women 'threw themselves in front of the trucks

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[402] Van Gosse, "To Organize in Every Neighborhood, in Every Home": The Gender Politics of American Communists between the Wars,' *Radical History Review*, 50 (1991), 109-110, 117, 134.

[403] Julia L. Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 6-7.

that tried to take scab goods out of the factory' when 1,500 female cigar makers went on strike in Pennsylvania, the pamphlet also details their organizational skill, for example, in preparing relief kitchens for strikers and their major role in campaigning against war and fascism throughout 1934. In fact, women in this pamphlet are spoken of as being stronger and more valiant than the men. Small recalls how during the textile strike in Lawrence in 1912 police terror was 'so fierce' that Bill Haywood, leader of the strike, 'advised the women to stay off the picket lines,' to which one striking woman responded that 'Mr. Haywood can't keep us ladies from the picket line … just because the cops will be there. … The men are alright but they're not so brave in striking as the ladies.'[404]

Small calls attention to the many sacrifices made especially by black women in strikes and protests, and this is a consistent theme throughout the pamphlet. It highlights stories such as that of the black women who, in the ore-mine strikes in Alabama, 'threw themselves on the railroad tracks to block trains carrying scabs,' the mothers of the Scottsboro Boys who travelled around the US and Europe 'mobilizing the millions behind the struggle' to free the falsely accused black teenagers, and the courage of figures like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth in fighting against slavery.[405] The narrative of *Women in Action* clearly seeks to combat the dominant perceptions of women and femininity in American society by portraying them in active and assertive roles. Small concludes the pamphlet with the rallying call:

> We women of today have a splendid heritage of struggle behind us. We can draw courage from what has been before, for carrying on the battles to come. We must gather strength and rally around us those who still hold back—

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[404] Sasha Small, *Women in Action* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1935), 8.

[405] *ibid.*, 5.

> millions of American women who still hide their slavery by their fire-side, timid, fooled by hateful lies to chain them to their present drudgery. Our work has only just begun.[406]

Another pamphlet which illustrates the radicalism in the CPUSA's women's movement before the advent of the Popular Front is Grace Hutchins' 1932 pamphlet *Women Who Work*. Hutchins underlines how capitalism 'aims to keep women subordinate' through lower wages which force women into positions of inferiority, 'to the interest of the employing class, which knows how to use the schools, the churches, the family, the movies, and the radio to keep women in this subordinate position.' Rather than simply rallying women behind 'their men', the pamphlet highlights the pressing need for men to fight this propaganda and for solidarity with women, robustly arguing that the labor movement will be chronically weakened if it cannot properly include women. Like Small, Hutchins writes that 'women of the working class prove themselves among the best and most determined fighters in the workers' struggles.'[407] Importantly, Hutchins also stresses that the majority of black mothers are unable to be housewives, as they are compelled to work to compensate for the low wages of their husbands:

> A greater proportion of Negro mothers must go out to work for a living, even while the children are still babies, because the husband's earnings are so small that they cannot possibly support the family. … More than half the Negro mothers who were living with their husbands and four-fifths of the other Negro mothers were on paid jobs away from the home, while one-fifth of the white mothers went out to work.… Negro women earned from one-third to one-half less than white women … [408]

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[406] *ibid.*, 12.

[407] Grace Hutchins, *Women Who Work* (New York, NY.: International Publishers, 1932), 5.

[408] *ibid.*, 7.

The most significant CPUSA publication for women in the pre-Popular Front era was the *Working Woman* (1929-35), published by the Women's Commission. Written almost entirely by women, it reached a circulation of approximately 8,000 in the 1930s. *Working Woman* often featured dramatic illustrations by notable radical artists like William Gropper, and

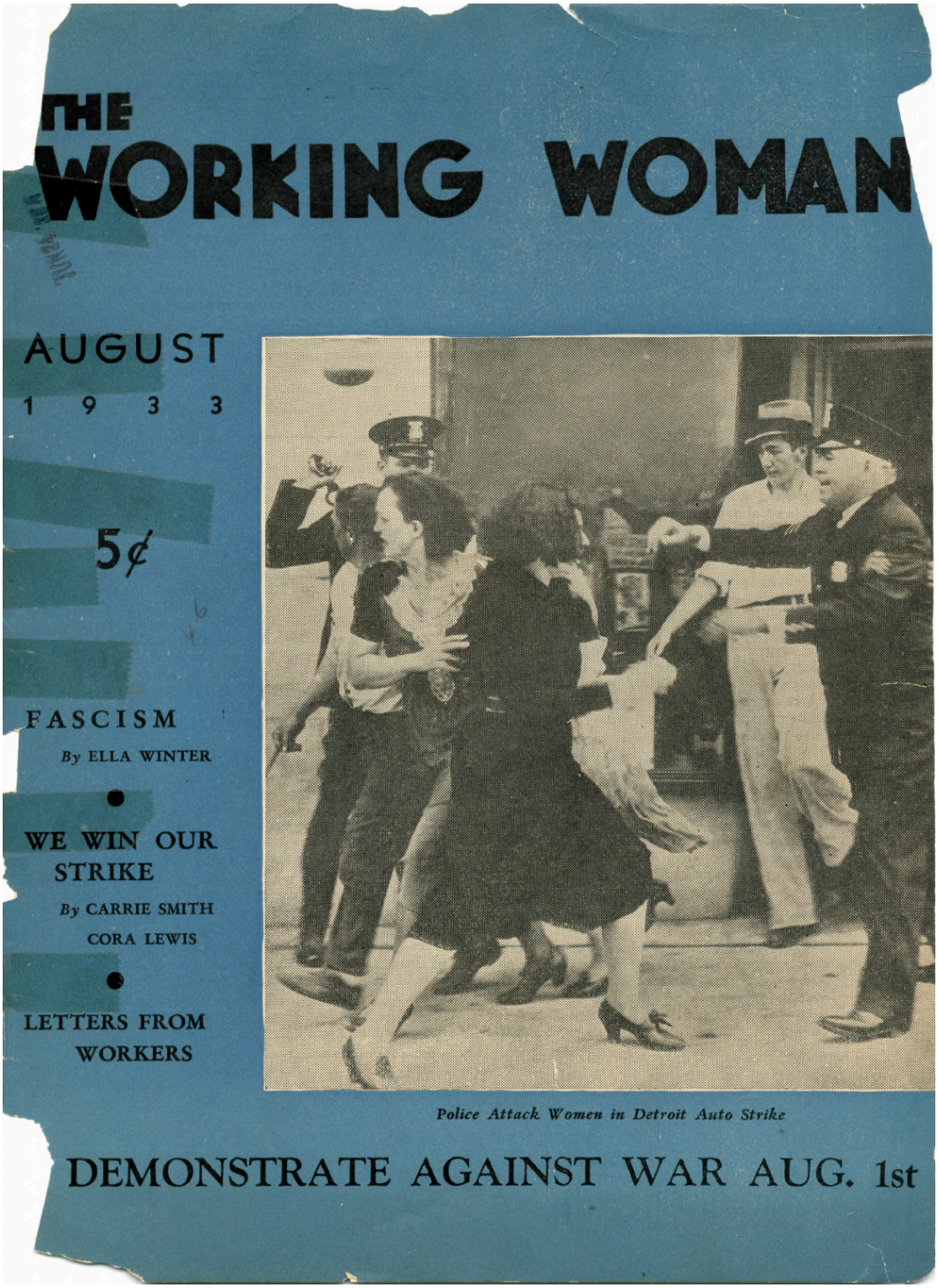

Figure 18: *Working Woman* August 1933. Image courtesy of marxists.org.

photography of women at work, on strike together, and even battling against police aggression in demonstrations. The fight against lynching and the call for black and white unity among working women were often promoted. Women can be seen on the front cover of the August 1933 *Working Woman* being attacked by police during the Detroit auto workers strike (*fig.* 18). On the front cover of the International Women's Day 1933 issue, a white woman and a black woman stand together making a calling signal similar to the famous image of Lilya Brik by Alexander Rodchenko. *Working Woman*'s June 1930 cover features a dramatic illustration of lynchings in the South, accompanied by the headline 'Communist Party in Fight Against Lynching'. Articles would frequently boast of women being at the forefront of the struggle of the American working class and vital in the success of strike action and demonstrations. But fundamentally, the *Working Woman* educated readers and encouraged them to fight for liberation, and to question the values and structures which upheld their oppression. There was no appeal to feminine stereotypes, and discussions of the family, home, and motherhood are addressed firmly within a Marxist framework.

The Family and the Popular Front

A key aspect of the Communist Party's new Popular Front approach from 1935 to 1939 was the repositioning of the Party as a paragon of American cultural and moral values, as in the slogan 'Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism.' While this was on the one hand a response to the pressure of American anti-communism, its nationalism and conservatism dovetailed with the Soviet Union's changing laws on sex and sexuality. Homosexuality was made illegal in the U.S.S.R. in 1934, then in 1936 the Law 'On the Protection of Motherhood and Childhood' was introduced, which imposed strict abortion laws, promoted

large families, and tightened restrictions on divorce. The aim of the legislation was to assert the primacy of women's role as mothers and to encourage large, strong families with values similar to those long established in western countries and pre-revolutionary Russia. This was a marked retreat from the Bolsheviks' earlier laws which had focused on women's liberation and the 'dissolution of bourgeois family life.'[409] In fact, the classical Marxist idea that the family may 'wither away' under communism was denounced under Stalin, who maintained 'class enemies' were to blame for the theory. As printed in the official journal of the Commissariat of Justice: 'The state cannot exist without the family. Marriage is a positive value for the Socialist Soviet State only if the partners see in it a lifelong union. So-called free love is a bourgeois invention …. Moreover, marriage receives its full value for the State only if there is progeny, and the consorts experience the highest happiness of parenthood.'[410]

Parties around the world that were members of the Communist International had embarked upon similar campaigns. Perhaps most striking was an announcement made by leading member of the French Communist Party (Parti Communiste Français), Paul Vaillant-Courturier, in *L'Humanité* soon after the Popular Front policy was announced in 1935:

> Save the family! Help us in our great inquiry in the interest of the right to love … The Communists are confronted by a very grave situation. The country which they are to revolutionize, the French world, runs the danger of being crippled and depopulated. The maliciousness of a dying capitalism, its immorality, the egotism it creates, the misery, the clandestine abortion which it provokes, destroy the family. The Communists want to fight in the defense of

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[409] Lauren Kaminsky, 'Utopian Visions of Family Life in the Stalin-Era Soviet Union,' *Central European History*, 44:1 (2011), 71, 65.

[410] *Sotsialisticheskaya Zakonnost*, No. 2.(1939), cited in Nicholas S. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat* (New York, NY.: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1946), 198.

> the French family … They want to take over a strong country and a fertile race. The USSR points the way. But it is necessary to take active measures to save the race.[411]

In much scholarship on the CPUSA's approach to women and the family there is a tendency to romanticise the Popular Front period in the US; for example, Gosse wrote that the Popular Front approach saw improvements due to the Party's 'new awareness of home, family, and neighborhood.'[412] In turn, many blame Marxist theory for failures in the Party's approach to women. Denise Lynn indicated that the failures on the woman question during the Popular Front period were in fact borne out of 'strict adherence to a Marxian class analysis,' and, writing on the Soviet Union specifically, Janet Evans asserted that the increased conservatism in the 1930s was in part due to what she claims was the limited nature of the Marxist theory of women's oppression and liberation.[413] Similarly Rosalyn Baxandall has asserted that the Party 'was narrow in its ideas about women, never straying from Marx's early classics or transforming their ideas to suit women's changing position in society.'[414]

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[411] Paul Vaillant-Courturier, *L'Humanité,* 31 October 1935, cited and translated in Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (London: Hart-Davis, 1971), 176.

[412] Gosse, '"To Organize in Every Neighborhood…",' 109-110, 117, 134.

[413] Denise Lynn, 'Anti-Nazism and the Fear of Pronatalism in the American Popular Front, Radical Americas,' *Radical Americas*, 1:1 (2016), 27; Janet Evans, 'The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Women's Question: The Case of the 1936 Decree 'In Defence of Mother and Child',' *Journal of Contemporary History,* 16:4 (1981), 766.

[414] Rosalyn Baxandall, 'The Question Seldom Asked: Women and the CPUSA,' in Brown, et al. (eds.), *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism*, 142.

This blames Marxism for what was, in reality, the Popular Front's dilution and distortion of it. As the CPUSA began to exalt the family as an endless institution—the 'cornerstone of present day civilization'—the Marxist theory of the family was inverted. Party pamphlets bemoaned that the family was being destroyed by 'economic royalists' and 'big business' and that, rather, it was the Communists who would 'save' the family.[415] The pamphlet *20th Century Americanism* lamented on its first page:

> The youth—the hope of America—are themselves without hope. For them America is no longer the land of opportunity. Where will they find jobs? How will they be able to have a real American home and children? In these questions lies the tragedy of the young people today.[416]

Bearing a remarkable resemblance to right-wing advocacy of a return to traditional family values, the supposed eternal and moral nature of the family became synonymous in CP publications with an imagined ideal of America. Personifying this policy was Party leader Browder, who was portrayed across publications as 'an exemplar of marital fidelity'—as seen by the photograph on the cover of *20th Century Americanism*—and repeatedly described as a 'plain' man in various pamphlets.[417]

One pamphlet published by the Massachusetts branch of the YCL entitled *The American Way* illustrated how altered the analysis of the family had become by 1938. Beginning with the

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[415] *The American Way* (Boston, MA.: Young Communist League, n.d., c. 1938), 5-6; Rivington, *Women—Vote for Life!,* 7, 8, 15; Maurice Thorez, *Catholics and Communists* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1938)

[416] *20th Century Americanism*, 1.

[417] Ryan, *Earl Browder,* 143. See, for example Olgin, *That Man Browder* and Magil, *America Needs Earl Browder.*

question, 'Are you a good American citizen?', it expounds the importance of voting before insisting:

> YOUTH WANTS TO MARRY
>
> Unemployment and low wages make it impossible for young people to marry. The unhappiness caused by this fact is immeasurable. Young people fall in love now just as deeply as ever. But they cannot be completely happy in their love in the face of poverty and an insecure future. … Population figures reflect the fact that youth is not marrying and having children. … A happy family life is the cornerstone of present day civilization. Its destruction can only lead to complete demoralization. Let our "100% patriots" ponder that one! … Youth should demand some sort of federal program that would give them financial assistance and make it possible for them to marry.[418]

This pamphlet illustrates not just the increased use of sentimental platitudes and lack of Marxist analysis in CP publications, but also the great extent to which the Party had tempered its radicalism. As well as the broad appeal to 'average' Americans that the rhetoric of family values potentially had, the CPUSA had particularly hoped that this pro-family campaign could help placate the religious groups which it was attempting to court at this time. As leader Earl Browder explains in the pamphlet *A Message to Catholics*, 'To the millions of American Catholics who share such noble and humane ideas, and whose families and homes are threatened by those reactionary forces which have no religion or compassion, we extend our hands in simple friendship.'[419] The American Communist Party was obediently mirroring the ideology of the Soviet Union under Stalin, which had begun its own campaign of zealously promoting the institutions of marriage, family, and motherhood; all part of the Soviet state's industrialisation objectives.

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[418] *The American Way*, 5-6.

[419] Earl Browder, *A Message to Catholics* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1938)

Browder, however, still remained anxious to quell doubts about the Party's dedication to traditional family and marriage. In 1938, the Party published two pamphlets—*The Democratic Front* and the aforementioned *A Message to Catholics*—in which a speech by Browder at the Party's Tenth National Convention was printed. He declared:

> Questions of family and social morality furnish no practical divisions between Catholics and Communists. … Contrary to much slander distributed by reactionary politicians in Catholic circles, the Communists are staunch upholders of the family. We consider sexual immorality, looseness and aberrations as the harmful product of bad social organization, and their increase in America today as largely products of the crisis of the capitalist system, of the demoralization among the upper classes which affects the masses by contagion, and we combat them as we combat all other harmful social manifestations.[420]

These pamphlets—particularly *A Message to Catholics*—were primarily intended for the American public, but this conservative message had already been outlined to Party members in an article by Browder in *The Communist* a year earlier:

> Any manifestation of looseness or penetration into our ranks of bourgeois habits, particularly with respect to personal life, must be rooted out, because it is precisely from such things as this that the enemies recruit in our ranks. It has been an almost invariable result of examination of political degeneration that it almost always is accompanied by personal degeneration. We must begin to examine the private lives of our leading cadres as a necessary and unavoidable part of the guarantee of the political integrity of our Party.[421]

It would have been clear to readers that "sexual aberrations" and "personal degeneration" were references to homosexuality. Although the CPUSA had historically been largely silent on the issue of homosexuality, it attracted a number of lesbian and gay members who, often socially ostracised and faced with state repression, were drawn to the Marxist tradition of

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[420] *ibid.*, 9; Earl Browder, *The Democratic Front: For Jobs, Security, Democracy and Peace* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1938), 54.

[421] Earl Browder, 'The People's Front Moves Forward,' *The Communist*, December 1937, 1101.

challenging norms and oppression.[422] Moreover, there were instances of vocal support within the Party; for example in 1932 when John Pittman, a black Communist journalist, wrote an editorial for the newspaper he founded and edited, the *San Francisco Spokesman*, condemning prejudice against homosexuals and insisting that the Left should be at the forefront of the fight for their liberation.[423] Though homosexual members remained in the Party after Browder's pronouncements, this formalisation of the CPUSA's position on sexuality was a tipping point for others. This included Los Angeles gay rights activist Harry Hay, who left in the same year. In a 1939 letter to an ex-lover, writer Harold Norse explained that he had left the Party as it 'doesn't take kindly to Writers and queers anyway. And what if they found out about David and me? To the salt mines, dear.'[424]

Denunciation of homosexuality and policing of the normativity of members' sex lives was a logical extension of the Party's increasing social conservatism which held up the monogamous family as the heart of civilization.[425] Though certainly in line with American anxieties about homosexuality and 'sexual deviancy,' the Party's decisive stance against homosexuality echoed the changed policy of the Soviet Union, which in 1934 made

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[422] Aaron Lecklider, 'TWO Witch-hunts: On (Not) Seeing Red in LGBT History,' *American Communist History*, 14:3, (2015), 242.

[423] John Pittman, 'Prejudice Against Homosexuals,' *The Spokesman*, 3 November, 1932, referenced in *ibid.*

[424] Kathleen A. Brown and Elizabeth Faue, 'Revolutionary Desires: Redefining the Politics of Sexuality of American Radicals, 1919-1945,' in Kathleen Kennedy and Sharon Ullman (eds.), *Sexual Borderlands: Constructing an American Sexual Past* (Columbus, OH.: Ohio State University, 2003), 288.

[425] *The American Way*, 5-6.

homosexuality illegal. Soon after, in a March 1936 speech, People's Commissar of Justice N. V. Krylenko added homosexuals to the list of 'class enemies, declassed elements, and criminal elements.'[426] Engels' assertion that sexual life should be free from state interference was, much like his theory of the family, now dismissed as 'bourgeois' under Stalin.[427]

Originally, the Bolsheviks had decriminalised homosexuality on the basis that it was both harmless and not a legal matter but a personal one. The nascent Soviet republic sent delegates to the International Congresses of the World League for Sexual Reform and was held up as a 'model for world sexual reform' among Austrian and German sex reformers.[428] The spirit of the Bolsheviks' early reforms was summarised in a pamphlet by Dr. Grigorii Batkis, the Director of the Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene, written in 1923:

> The revolution let nothing remain of the old despotic and infinitely unscientific laws; it did not tread the path of reformist bourgeois legislation which, with juristic subtlety, still hangs on to the concept of property in the sexual sphere, and ultimately demands that the double standard hold sway over sexual life. … Concerning homosexuality, sodomy, and various other forms of sexual gratification, which are set down in European legislation as offenses against public morality—Soviet legislation treats these exactly the same as so-called 'natural' intercourse. All forms of sexual intercourse are private matters. Only when there's use of force or duress, as in general when there's an injury or

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[426] Allen, *Passionate Commitments,* 187; Dan Healy, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 195.

[427] Millet, *Sexual Politics*, 175.

[428] Lauritsen and Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement,* 66-7; Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution* (New York, NY.: Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 1945), 157.

> encroachment upon the rights of another person, is there a question of criminal prosecution.[429]

In stark contrast to Batkis's summary, the CPUSA's appeal to bourgeois morality and hypocrisies led to the Party publishing denunciations of homosexuality, closing off any alternatives to the heteronormative family unit.[430]

How the Party conveyed the image and role of women in its publications was inevitably affected by the Party's embrace of the traditional family and denunciation of sexual 'immorality.' Although the number of women working in industry was on the rise, the Party focused on attracting more middle-class housewives. This was not in and of itself a conservative policy; for example, Zetkin had in 1922 underlined the need to engage with and educate even 'bourgeois' housewives:

> Under the pressure of inflation, of the glaring discrepancy between income and the cost of living, more and more housewives, including bourgeois housewives, are awakening to a recognition that present conditions – the continued existence of capitalism – are incompatible with their most basic interests in life. … Especially now I consider it particularly necessary to be concerned with the clearest, deepest, and most fundamental education of women.[431]

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[429] Grigory Batkis, *Die Sexualrevolution in Russland* (Berlin: Der Syndikalist, 1925). The original Russian was published in 1923. English translation from Lauritsen and Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement,* 64.

[430] Elsa Jane Dixler, 'The Woman Question: Women and the American Communist Party, 1921-1941,' Doctoral Thesis, Yale University, (1974), 43.

[431] Clara Zetkin, 'Communist Work Among Women' in John Riddell (ed.), *Toward the United Front: Proceedings for the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922* (Chicago, IL.: Haymarket, 2012), 850.

However, as the Popular Front policy began to permeate pamphlet publications, women began to be spoken of in terms of their relation to the family and home, moving away from discussions about empowering women to fight for liberation or as fellow comrades. Now, pamphlets accepted the complete economic dependence of women on their husbands and encouraged them to help empower their men so they could tend to the house and feed the children.[432] CP member Jenny Elizabeth Johnstone underlined this in the pamphlet *Women in Steel*: 'This little pamphlet has been written in the hope that it will arouse more women to think of the need to go out and fight for the maintenance of their homes, for a better life for their families and children.'[433]

Women in Steel was just one example of a trend of pamphlets written for and by women in a 'relatable' manner, sometimes as dialogue, where women would chat about the struggles of modern life, and invoke an idea of a once great America now being torn apart by the ravages of so-called 'big business' and 'economic royalists.' As Johnstone writes, 'We can regain our birthright of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'[434] The front page of the 1937 pamphlet, *The High Cost of Living*, features an illustration of a woman chasing milk and bread upwards in the style of a chart symbolising the increase in prices (*fig.* 19) . Written by Margaret Cowl as a dialogue, it begins:

> "Hello, Kate. Been doing your shopping?"

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[432] Dixler, 'The Woman Question,' 51.

[433] Jenny Elizabeth Johnstone, *Women in Steel* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1937), 2.

[434] *ibid.,* 29.

> "Oh, hello, Sue; yes, as much as I could. But my heavens, prices are so high I just don't know how we're going to get through this winter."[435]

Kate's husband Dick eventually joins in the discussion, and Kate suggests 'a baby parade' where women 'march to City Hall in with our kids in their buggies' to 'counteract the pressure on Congress from big business.'[436] 'Boy, oh, boy,' Dick exclaims, 'I'd love to be there when that baby parade rolls up to the Mayor's office!'[437] While these pamphlets include some valuable discussion of wealth inequality, analyses remain shallow and concerned with mild social reform and appeals to government institutions over the advancement of any radical Marxist ideas.

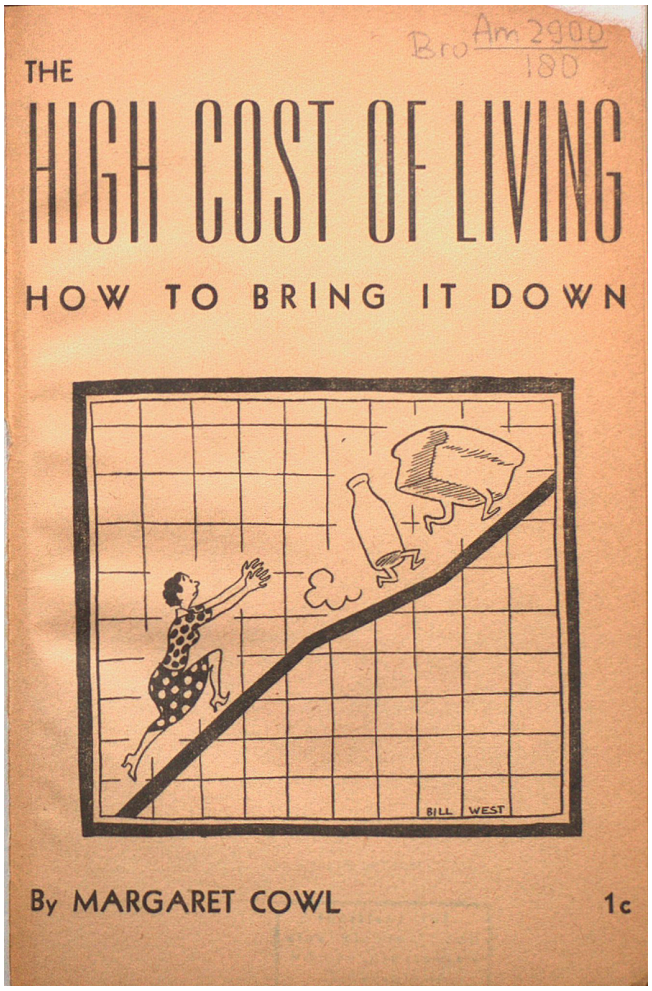

Figure 19: Margaret Cowl, *The High Cost of Living* (New York, NY. Workers Library Publishers, 1937). Image courtesy of International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam).

Perhaps the best visual indicator of the CP's changing approach to women could be seen in the rebranding of the monthly magazine *Working Woman* to the more glossy *Woman Today* (1936-37). Though a handful of scholars have discussed *Working Woman* and *Woman Today*, the stark differences between these publications

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[435] Margaret Cowl, *The High Cost of Living: How to Bring it Down* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1937).

[436] *ibid.*, 12.

[437] *ibid.*, 13.

remains unaddressed.[438] When *Working Woman* relaunched as *Woman Today* in 1936, the magazine began its first four months with a front-page illustration of a fashionable young woman in a hat (*fig*. 20). The first issue's leading story was titled 'The Permanent Wave', a dull tale of a 17-year-old girl who wished to have her hair curled in a perm, but her father would not allow it. Each issue had features on beauty, cooking, and fashion. 'Show us a woman completely devoid of interest in her appearance and we'll show you the woman who considers herself hopelessly unattractive. … There is no such thing as a woman whose appearance cannot be improved to some extent.' Needless to say, you wouldn't find similar columns aimed at men in the *Daily Worker* or *The Communist*.[439]

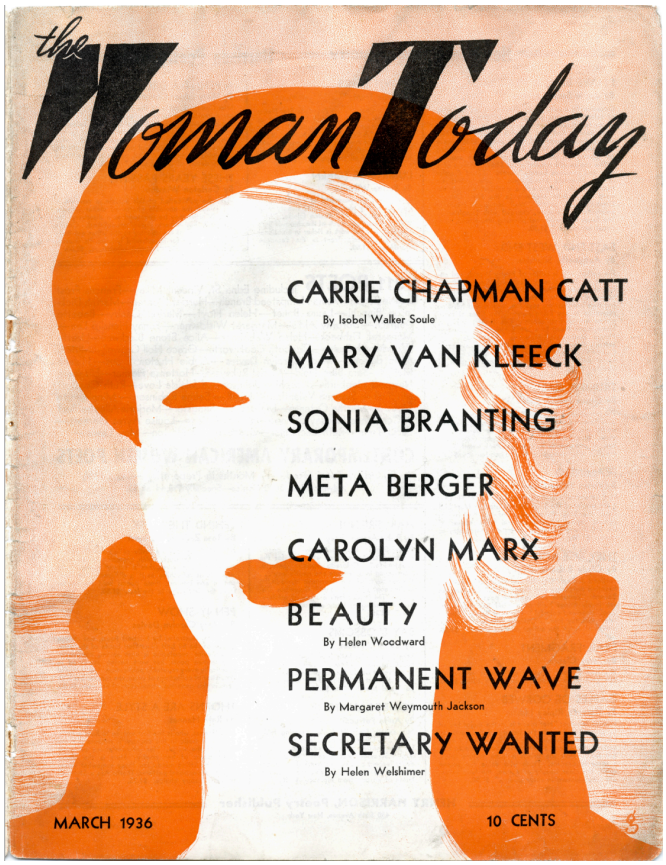

Figure 20: The first issue of *Woman Today*, issued in March 1936. Image courtesy of marxists.org.

Woman Today was still more progressive than any other women's magazine in America, dealing with issues such as economic insecurity, sex discrimination, participating in unions, fascism, war, and immigration. Yet within the same pages it promoted stereotypes and, when compared to its predecessor *Working Woman*, had noticeably cooled its rhetoric and

[438] See for example Mary E. Triece, *On the Picket Line: Strategies of Working-Class Women during the Depression* (Chicago, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 2007) and Robert Schaffer, 'Women and the Communist Party,' *Socialist Review,* 45 (1979), 95.

[439] *Woman Today,* March 1936, 25.

erased any trace of Marxist political theory. One letter from a pair of readers published in the August 1936 issue encapsulated the confusion that had been caused by Party publications among women in the Communist movement:

> As for the contents of the magazine—is it really necessary to lure women readers with cooking recipes and style and beauty notes? We are rather overwhelmed with that sort of thing already, it seems to us. But the really important thing about your publication, we feel, is that it does tend to perpetuate that most evil segregation of the sexes, in the matter of working class organization and solidarity.[440]

While Marxists had sought to liberate women from their oppression within the family, the CPUSA publications of the Popular Front characterised women primarily in terms of their relation to the family unit and the gender stereotypes that reinforced it. Women were now differentiated and spoken of less as comrades and more as wives and mothers. This was underpinned by a conscious orientation towards a conciliation with American values and norms by Party leaders, vindicated and encouraged by the changing politics of the Soviet Union under Stalin, and disseminated to membership and the public through the publications for women. This left a legacy in that the same approach to women persisted in the Party's subsequent phases. After the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in August 1939, when the CPUSA abandoned the Popular Front policy and began to tirelessly campaign against war, pamphlets made emotive appeals to maternal instinct to encourage anti-war sentiment:

> Women are funny. They care more for their dear ones—children and husband, or maybe sweetheart or father and brothers—than for anything else in the world. Women want to keep their dear ones, to take care of them, to do for them, to protect them.[441]

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[440] *Woman Today,* August 1936, 23.

[441] Rivington, *Women—Vote for Life!*.

Around 1940, the Women's Division of the American Peace Mobilization (the spiritual successor to the Communist Party's American League for Peace and Democracy) issued *Wives or Widows?*, a pamphlet by Katherine Beecher.[442] While the pamphlet itself contains nothing new, a review of the pamphlet in the Women's section of the *Sunday Worker* couches anti-war sentiment in maternalism, and women are described as 'actual or potential' wives and mothers.[443] Notably, adjacent to the review is an article from Gurley Flynn titled 'A Nagging Wife Never Helped a Union Man,' which encourages women to join a union auxiliary while shamelessly echoing the misogynistic stereotype of the shrewish wife:

> A man dreads a cranky, nagging wife who complains when he pays dues and assessments, who objects when he attends meetings and who believes everything she hears over the radio and sees in the papers against the union.[444]

When the Soviets joined the Allied war effort in 1941, the emotive appeal to supposed maternal instincts was abandoned and the American Peace Mobilization quickly changed its name to the American Peoples' Mobilization. The war was now wholeheartedly endorsed by the Party as its pamphlets' tone shifted to emphasising the strength and capabilities of women and their importance in the fight against fascism as they were encouraged to enter the workforce for war production. Now, Gurley Flynn declared "The glamor girl of today … is the working woman. … They do not worry about their appearance. 'Feminine vanity' does not balk at dirty faces, greasy hands, hair plastered down under a protective cap … a lunchbox instead of a fancy purse."[445] Certainly, the Party's official approach to women was curated to the whim of changing Soviet policy.

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[442] Katherine Beecher, *Wives or Widows?* (New York, NY.: American Peace Mobilization, n.d.).

[443] *Sunday Worker*, 6 April 1941, 6.

[444] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, 'Love your Men-Folk? Join an Auxiliary,' *Sunday Worker*, 6 April 1941, 6.

[445] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Women in the War* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1942), 10.

The CPUSA, the USSR and abortion rights

It was perhaps the issue of abortion in the Soviet Union which best illustrated the extent to which Stalinisation disoriented the women's movement in the Party. In 1935 the Soviet Government began charging for abortions, and in 1936 the procedure was completely prohibited. Abortion in the Soviet Union had, until this point, been free and regarded as a health matter, while in America abortion was linked to communism ideologically and *ipso facto* just another example of radicals' 'sexual license and deviance.'[446]

As the legislation which would outlaw abortion in the U.S.S.R. was being finalised, the CPUSA published the pamphlet *Love - Family Life - Career: Behind the Soviet Law Limiting Abortions and Increasing Aid to Mothers* through the Woman Today Publishing Company, which produced the *Woman Today* magazine. It contained the text of the Draft Law on Abortions and Aid to Mothers and an anonymously written introduction which explained to readers that in the Soviet Union, 'abundance, security, [and] confidence in the future' meant that women no longer needed to have abortions.[447] Towards the end of its introduction, the pamphlet reveals sexual moralism and state control in the ideas supporting the ban: 'In such a situation [of economic and social security] there can be no room for light-mindedness and irresponsibility in sexual relationship—all the more since their consequences bear most heavily upon the children of the offenders—hence the provisions of the new law designed to enforce parental responsibility.'[448]

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[446] Leslie J. Reagan, *When Abortion Was A Crime* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1997), 172.

[447] *Love — Family Life — Career* (New York, NY.: Woman Today Publishing, 1936), 5.

[448] *ibid.*

Love - Family Life - Career was the only pamphlet ever to be published through *Woman Today*, which suggests an urgency within the Party to clarify its position on the question and quell any doubts women may have had about the new policy. Confusion over the law can be seen across Party publications. The September 1936 issue of *Health and Hygiene* opened with the statement: 'It seems that whenever three people congregate these days the conversation invariably drifts to the new Soviet laws on abortion. … Quite a few of our friends, however, are honestly upset.'[449] In one article by Sender Garlin, entitled 'Every Day is Mother's Day in U.S.S.R.', Garlin writes how a 'young American social worker … failed to see the distinction between the law prohibiting abortions in the U.S.S.R. and the official ban which exists in her own state.'[450] Similarly, a reader wrote to the *Daily Worker*:

> Since the new Soviet law against abortions has gone into effect … How can we justify the making illegal of abortions? Won't this simply put the abortionist doctors underground as they are in this country? … don't you think a woman has the right to choose for herself whether or when she will have a family?'[451]

The only article-length protest against the law to be published in any Party publication was written in *Woman Today* by Dr. Hannah M. Stone. Stone was forthright in declaring the new abortion law as a 'definite backward step' and clarified that Russia had legalised abortions in 1920 'because it frankly and realistically recognised the fact that women who do not wish to bear children will resort to any measure to have their pregnancy interrupted, and

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[449] *Health and Hygiene* was a monthly magazine tied to the CPUSA which ran from 1935 to 1938 and was written by doctors offering left-wing perspectives on health matters.

[450] Sender Garlin, 'Everyday is Mother's Day in the U.S.S.R.,' *Daily Worker*, 18 June 1936, 7.

[451] 'Questions and Answers,' *Daily Worker*, 3 July 1936, 7.

because they accepted the concept that parenthood should be conscious and voluntary.'[452] Stone goes on to cite the Russian physician Dr. Vera Lebedeva, who had proclaimed that 'the laws of procreation … must be placed under human control. Conception must be subjected to the free will of the woman. Motherhood must be made conscious!' At the end of this article, an editor's note confirmed that *Woman Today* did 'not wholly agree with' the author. Officially, every Party publication wholeheartedly supported the U.S.S.R.'s banning of abortion.

After 1936, discussion started to move towards the criticism of women who would possibly even *want* an abortion. In a 1937 article in *Woman Today*, Beatrice Blosser asserts:

> I do not believe any normal woman wants to have an abortion. For the average working class woman, it is purely a matter of economy. The professional woman does not want a child because it will interfere with her career. Yet every childless woman approaching the age of 35 wishes she had or could have a child. … Capitalism has created a selfishness in the middle class and professional woman which leads her to curb her natural instincts. Neither force operates in a socialist society. The only people who, living in a socialist society, could fail to see the progressive character of the new abortion law, would be those containing within themselves remnants of this old selfishness carried over from capitalism.[453]

In 1938, when the journalist Dorothy Dunbar Bromley criticised the Soviet's banning of abortion, an article by Louise Mitchell in the *Daily Worker* unequivocally stated:

> Dorothy Dunbar Bromley stuck her head in the sand again the other day and started wailing [on] behalf of the Soviet women who had lost the *sweet rugged*

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[452] Hannah M. Stone, 'Soviet Russia's New Family Welfare Laws,' *Woman Today,* September 1936, 8.

[453] *Woman Today,* January 1937, 26.

> *individualism of countless abortions* and had accepted happy motherhood instead.[454]

The idea that a woman might not want children was now explained as a kind of bourgeois decadence. Such an interpretation would likely provoke American communist women who questioned the new law to self-criticism. Nevertheless, the clear uneasiness among Communists upon the introduction of the law indicates that the abortion issue was tied to what many in the Party had believed the foundations of women's liberation under Communism to be. Free and accessible abortion was one of the revolutionary laws introduced in the earlier years of the Soviet Union designed to form the basis of equality between men and women; it was a measure frequently hailed by the Party in previous years, progressive even from the standpoint of reproductive rights by today's feminist standards.

Conclusion

Few organizations in America in the 1920s and 1930s could claim to have been more progressive than the American Communist Party when it came to its attitudes towards the roles of women. As Bryan D. Palmer writes, there is 'no denying that women in the ranks of the revolutionary Party promoted progressive, feminist causes and struck important blows not only for female emancipation, but for women's public involvement in political struggle.'[455]

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[454] Louise Mitchell, 'Abortion in the U.S.S.R.: A reply to doubting (Thomas) Bromley,' *Daily Worker*, 13 July 1938, 7. Emphasis my own.

[455] Palmer, 'Rethinking the Historiography of United States Communism,' 146.

The loss of a Marxist analysis in the approach to the family, women, and sexuality, however, caused disorientation and undermined the struggle for women's liberation. While the Party made significant gains in recruiting women during the Popular Front period—with the numbers of women reaching between 30 to 40 percent of CP membership—there is an absence of evidence that women were joining the Party because of its publications' portrayal as a bulwark of heteronormative sexuality and traditional family values rather than their campaigns for equal pay and anti-fascism.[456] Moreover, the grassroots work done by women in the Party and progressive ideas which were developed by individual Communist women in the years that followed, as Bettina Aptheker has argued, grew precisely out of their application of Marxism, 'with its emphasis on class and race and its dialectical analysis of social movements … in spite of Party dogma.'[457]

Central to Marxist analysis is the concept that the family is not a timeless, unchanging institution, but a social relation subject to historical change. But during the Popular Front the American Communist Party abandoned this interrogation of capitalist relations and dismissed analysis of the historical and material origins of the family unit and the position of women. Importantly, it was not strictly its striving to 'be American' *per se* which was to blame for the Party's conservatism in the latter half of the 1930s, but rather the Party's unfailing support for and imitation of the Soviet Union's changing policies under Stalin. This was underlined by the desire of the CPUSA's leadership to follow Comintern policy and

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[456] Susan Ware, *Holding their own: American women in the 1930s* (Boston, MA.: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 120.

[457] Bettina Aptheker, 'Red Feminism: A Personal and Historical Reflection,' *Science & Society*, 66:4 (2002/2003), 522.

ally with liberal forces in America by trimming its radicalism and embracing a conservative ideal of 'Americanism.'

The CPUSA was filled with women who had admired the advances made in the Soviet Union. But when the USSR shifted its position on the family in the mid-1930s, Party members now had to adapt to what they had previously understood to be conservative ideas and policies. The Party's pamphlets and magazines for women—usually written by women—attempted to reorient women's aspirations to fit the changing Party line. To do so was to compromise the Marxist foundations of the Party on questions of women, sexuality and the family. In the words of Kate Millet, 'Marxism was stood on its head'.[458]

[458] Millet, *Sexual Politics*, 175.

5.

Anti-Communist Pamphleteering in Government and Patriotic Organisations

> The Socialists of the United States use pamphlets and leaflets, much more than books, in appealing to working-men. Books are more expensive and require more time to read. Leaflets are attractive, short, to the point, easily remembered and almost costless. Anti-Socialist leaflets, distributed by the millions, would do untold good and would soon start a tremendous opposition among laborers to the Red Flag movement.
>
> - Joseph J. Mereto, *The Red Conspiracy* (1920)[459]

Though Communist and Socialist organizations were collectively the most prolific pamphleteers of the interwar period, they were not necessarily the most influential in America. Upon America's entrance into the First World War and the following Bolshevik Revolution, organizations made up of politicians, lawyers, military leaders, academics and even union leaders sought to appeal to the public against the growing socialist anti-war sentiment across the U.S. and warn against the supposed global threat of Bolshevism. These pamphlets supplemented the aggressive direct action often taken by anti-communists, as patriotic organisations routinely broke up strikes and rallies and even carried out lynchings of radicals.

When it came to the business of pamphleteering, anti-communists had the upper-hand in various respects. Certainly, anti-communism was actively supported and encouraged by the American government, so their message was already hegemonic and mainly served to

[459] Joseph J. Mereto, *The Red Conspiracy* (New York: National Historical Society, 1920), pg. 379.

reinforce or further establish this hegemony. Most of the organizations which produced anti-communist literature were financially far more well-endowed. They were often funded or backed by wealthy business-owners with vested interests, and in some cases funded directly by the U.S. government. This is in stark contrast to the Communist movement which relied precariously on sympathetic wealthy donors, membership dues, literature sales, and of course subventions from the Comintern, in order to fund pamphlet production, and whose pamphlets were largely threatening to the status-quo and often subject to suppression. This chapter will discuss the rise of the anti-communist pamphlet in America in the years 1917 to 1921 and explore the resurgence of such pamphleteering among patriotic, far-right groups in the 1930s. It will be shown that pamphlets were viewed as a useful instrument in their propaganda campaigns, not merely a cheap option for the radical outcast.

Government and Labour

On 13th April 1917, barely a week after the United States entered the First World War, Woodrow Wilson signed an executive order which would create the Committee on Public Information (CPI). This was a federal wartime propaganda agency headed by journalist George Creel, which launched a major operation intended to influence American public and the country's role in the Great War. As summarised by Robert Jackall and Janice M. Hirota:

> The CPI brought together … leading journalists, publicists, and advertising men, along with novelists, academic intellectuals, moral crusaders, and muckrakers of every sort …. A whole generation of what might be called experts with symbols - opinion shapers, image-makers, interpretive geniuses,

> and storytellers of every sort - honed their already sharp skills to sell America's Crusade to the American public and the idea of America to the world.[460]

In his recollections of the CPI's campaign, Creel explained how '[b]ig books were not what we wanted, and long, tedious state papers were not what we needed. …we decided to go in for "popular pamphleteering."'[461] A pamphlet division was created within the organisation which enlisted more than 3,000 leading historians who would articulate a message of pro-war Americanism.[462] Pamphlets were printed in dozens of languages and distributed around the world, with more than seventy-five million pamphlets distributed in America alone.[463] In Creel's own words:

> A number of the principal pamphlets were put into other languages German, Italian, the Scandinavian tongues, Spanish, Portuguese, Bohemian, Polish, Yiddish, etc. and given careful distribution through the clubs and churches of the foreign-language groups in America, while the translations themselves were sent to the various countries to be printed on daily presses and circulated by our representatives.[464]

While the majority of its pamphlets were aimed at generating support for the war, the CPI was compelled to address the 1917 October Revolution in Russia and not only its impact on international relations but also its influence on radicalism in America. Until the Revolution, the spectre of Communism remained an abstract threat; the Bolsheviks had made the threat

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[460] Robert Jackall and Janice M. Hirota, 'America's First Propaganda Ministry: The Committee on Public Information During the Great War,' in Robert Jackall, *Propaganda* (New York, NY.: NYU Press, 1995)

[461] George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York, NY.: Harper & Brothers, 1920),100.

[462] Fischer, *Spider Web*, 48.

[463] Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 112-113.

[464] *ibid.*

far more urgent, and their plans for an immediate end to Russian participation in the war with Germany threatened to undermine the Allied war effort.

Perhaps most significant among the CPI's anti-communist pamphlets was the 30-page *The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy*, produced in 1918 as part of their 'War Information Series'.[465] The pamphlet consisted of what was purported to be 70 official Russian documents—known as the 'Sisson documents'—which claimed to prove that Bolshevik leaders Lenin and Trotsky were German agents, and that the Soviet government was 'not a Russian government at all, but a German Government'.[466] The pamphlet was also translated into German and published in Bern, Switzerland, in 1919.[467] Not long after, it was confirmed that documents used in the pamphlet were forgeries, and the CPI had put 'considerable pressure' on experts to confirm their validity in order to 'promote that emotional upsurge necessary for the mobilization of all our resources to be thrown into the struggle.'[468] Upon its publication the pamphlet was 'heralded by a flood of clever press publicity, which was eagerly seized upon by editors from coast to coast,' wrote Evans Clark in the 1920 pamphlet *Facts and Fabrications About Soviet Russia*. Fake though these documents may have been, the pamphlet was a success in fulfilling the CPI's primary goal of shaping public opinion: 'From that day to this, vast numbers of goodhearted but naive American citizens have been

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465 *The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy* (Washington, DC.: Committee on Public Information, 1918)

466 *ibid.*, 3.

467 *Die deutsch-bolschewistische Verschwörung* (Bern: Der Freie Verlag, 1919)

468 Regin Schmidt, *Red Scare: FBI and the origins of anticommunism in the United States, 1919-1943* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000),136. See also: Stephen L. Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* (Chapel Hill, NC.: University of North Carolina Press 1980).

convinced that the Kaiser was responsible for the Russian Revolution and that Lenin and Trotzky were "nothing else than paid agents of the German Government,'" wrote Clark.[469] The Bolsheviks would inherit the American public's perception as the enemy, allowing the 'wartime passions against the Germans' to be redirected against communists once the war came to an end.[470]

The dubious provenance of the documents used in *The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy* was part of a trend of overall questionable sources and historical inaccuracies presented in CPI pamphlets, though this would be no impediment to its success as propaganda. As historian George T. Blakely wrote:

> Whether in exhortations, documented essays, or guidelines for civilian activism these pamphlets succeeded as propaganda. The frequency with which magazines and newspapers reprinted them and the difficulty which their sponsors had in meeting circulation demands testify to their acceptability. It is doubtful that these historians of 1917-1918 considered their pamphlets serious contributions to knowledge. The purpose of their existence and the manner of presentation identified them as nonscholarly works for the public. … Even the more intricate use of documentation and bibliographies … did not substitute for genuine research; indeed, many footnotes in the CPI pamphlets referred readers to other CPI pamphlets.[471]

The CPI was particularly eager for its pamphlets to reach the 'working man' of America, who was presumed to be most susceptible to the influence of radicalism and particularly to

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[469] See also Evans Clark, *Facts and Fabrications About Soviet Russia* (New York, NY.: The Rand School of Social Science, 1920), 11. Such tropes about German money behind the Bolsheviks are not consigned to history, and are still employed by contemporary right-wing historians; see for example Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Revolution: A New History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

[470] Schmidt, *Red Scare,* 137.

[471] George T. Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront: American Propagandists for the Great War* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1970),52.

the charge made by socialists that America was fighting a 'rich man's war'.[472] In a correspondence with Guy S. Ford, who headed the CPI's Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation, Indiana novelist Booth Tarkington described the effects of pamphlet propaganda on his neighbours in the Midwest when he distributed pamphlets in support of the war:

> These people are avid and loyal, but not at all clear as to *what* we are fighting; somewhat mystified, too, as to why. Now and then a fisherman will say, 'Well, I *have* heard *some* tellin' around that it's a kind of a capitalist's war; dunno whether it's so or not.' Talk doesn't explain to him .... But if he reads a pamphlet 'got out by the United States Gov'ment' he is 'impressed!'[473]

To reach the working classes, the most valuable alliance that the CPI made was with the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy (AALD). The AALD had been created in 1917 by labor conservative and leader of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), Samuel Gompers, to produce propaganda to rally workers behind the war effort. Gompers had also declared that he had formed the organisation to fight radicalism in labor.[474] The CPI funded and produced the pamphlets of the AALD as part of their efforts to reach workers, and various employers wrote to the CPI 'suggesting ways of stimulating patriotism among workers.'[475]

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[472] Creel, *How We Advertised America,* 178.

[473] Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront,* 34.

[474] Frank L. Grubbs Jr., 'Council and alliance labor propaganda: 1917–1919,' *Labor History*, 7:2, (1966),160.

[475] Jackall and Hirota, 'America's First Propaganda Ministry…,' in Jackall, *Propaganda,* 153. See also Anne Cipriano Venzon (ed.),*The United States in the First World War: An Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2012),25.

The main adversary of the AALD was the People's Council of America for Democracy and the Terms of Peace, which had been set up by socialists and pacifists to rally workers against the war. The People's Council produced many pamphlets by such familiar Socialists as Scott Nearing, Max Eastman and Alexander Trachtenberg. In the battle to win the hearts and minds of the American working man, a small pamphlet war broke out between the two groups, though this was an admittedly somewhat one sided battle, as many of those by the People's Council, such as Nearing's *Open Letters to Profiteers* (1917) were barred from the post. The AALD produced and distributed a total of 1,380,612 pamphlets aimed to counter the radical propaganda of the Peoples Council.[476] Alongside this, the AALD set up 150 branches across the country, held '200 public mass meetings, placed 10,000 columns of publicity, and mailed a weekly news service to 600 newspapers' all within its first 6 months of existence.[477]

The most widely circulated pamphlets were written by John R. Commons, Professor of Political Economy at the University of Wisconsin, who set out to discredit the arguments of anti-war socialists and sought to instead promote 'harmony' between capital and labor.[478] '[A]nybody that says this is a capitalistic war simply does not see what is going on,' Commons asserts in *Why Workingmen Support the War*, of which over 300,000 prints were made. 'Never before has democracy for wage-earning men and women made anywhere

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[476] Grubbs Jr., 'Council and alliance labor propaganda,' 170.

[477] Jackall and Hirota, 'America's First Propaganda Ministry…,' in Jackall, *Propaganda,* 153.

[478] David L. Herzberg, 'Thinking Through War: The Social Thought of Richard T. Ely, John R. Commons, and Edward A. Ross During the First World War,' *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 37:2, (2001),131.

near the progress that it has made in the nine months of this war. … No wonder the American Federation of Labor … supports the war almost unanimously.'[479]

Other AALD pamphlets were written by journalists and focused more heavily on emotive and patriotic rhetoric, and would shower praise upon the workingmen of America. 'Labor is the brawn, sinews and brains of society … Labor makes possible every great forward movement of the world,' reads *To the Workers of Free America*. 'The worker is a human being whose life has value and dignity to him. He is willing to sacrifice for an ideal but not for the selfish gain of another.'[480] These pamphlets stressed the workingman as loyal, brave and esteemed, and tied these qualities with the country's participation in the war in such a way as to make anti-war activists appear weak and traitorous. In his overview of the work of the AALD, Frank L. Grubbs Jr. described the pamphlets as 'hard-hitting, unpretentious' and usually emphasising 'a single message, one understandable to the immigrant or poorly-educated.' He highlights how workers, simply by supporting the war effort, were portrayed as being 'part of a great domestic army every bit as important as that vast military one now stretching across France.' Inversely, the worker who was 'disloyal' and hampered the war effort was 'just as responsible for the killing of Allied soldiers as if he himself had fired the shots.'[481]

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[479] John R. Commons, *Why Workingmen Support the War* (New York, NY.: American Alliance for Labor and Democracy, 1918),4. See also John R. Commons, *German Socialists and the War* (New York, NY.: American Alliance for Labor and Democracy, 1918).

[480] *To the Workers of Free America* (New York, NY.: American Alliance for Labor and Democracy, 1918), 5-7.

[481] Grubbs Jr., 'Council and alliance labor propaganda,' 163-4.

In fact, supporting the war was akin to fighting for improved working conditions, according to Gompers, who promised good fortune for loyal workers in a 1917 circular:

> Out of the war will arise the golden days for the men who toil. Autocracy in industry will be just as much annihilated as will be autocracy in government. The winning of this war means better wages, better hours, better ship conditions, better opportunities, a fuller life, more leisure, and more chance to live the kind of life that every man's ambition cherishes."[482]

Nevertheless, there was bitter opposition within the unions to the aims of the AALD. And as the war came to its end, the AALD lost much of its *raison d'être.* With the end of the 'war boom' and freedom from the obligation to cooperate with labor, American industry began to roll back production. Workers were not reaping the benefits of the war as extolled in the pamphlets of the AALD, and huge strikes spread across America as the Red Scare reached its height.[483] The organisation was dissolved in November 1919, having lost its source of funding as the CPI, too, was terminated.

Closely linked to the leadership of the AALD and AFL was the National Civic Federation (NCF). The NCF was a sort of 'labor lobby' organised in 1900 by newspaper editor and Republican Party activist Ralph M. Easley. Endorsing an 'antistatist progressivism that relied on enlightened businessmen, responsible unionists, and intelligent experts' the NCF primarily sought to create 'harmony' between capital and labour.[484] This was an anti-socialist campaign; by reconciling industrial strife the group hoped to strengthen public confidence in the capitalist system, and in doing so intended to undermine the electoral success that socialist groups had in the Progressive Era. As labour historian Jennifer Luff

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[482] Circular letter, Gompers, to all locals, August 15, 1917, cited in *ibid.*, 160.

[483] Grubbs Jr., 'Council and alliance labor propaganda,' 170.

[484] Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism,* 23. See also Buckingham, *America Sees Red,* 8-9.

highlights, endorsement of welfare and trade unions made the NCF seem relatively progressive, but it had opposed women's suffrage and public ownership of utilities and was made up of wealthy business owners. It had also led numerous anti-socialist educational campaigns before the war began, one of which sought to fire socialist academics from universities.[485] Board members included big names like William Howard Taft and Andrew Carnegie, as well as Samuel Gompers. Members also included writer for the CPI and AALD, John Commons. For Gompers and other conservative trade union leaders, the NCF 'was a reliable mouthpiece and useful intermediary' in debates over national policy, writes Luff.[486]

The NCF had already produced a substantial number of pamphlets before 1914, but its anti-socialist efforts were intensified during the war, as it became more akin to a patriotic organisation. Dime novelist T. Everett Harré wrote several pamphlets for the NCF, including pamphlets which linked anti-war movements and food riots in America to Germany, claimed that 'the Kaiser's agents were stimulating bolshevism and using the IWW to foment industrial unrest', and listed the newspapers and magazines which they claimed were supported by the Germans.[487] Luff highlights that the NCF also collaborated with the Bureau of Investigation, working as 'publicity agents' and providing information to the Lusk

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[485] Buckingham, *America Sees Red,* 8-9.

[486] Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism*, 21; Talbert, *Negative Intelligence,* 32; John Zerzan, 'Understanding the Anti-Radicalism of the National Civic Federation,' *International Review of Social History*, 19:2 (1974), 194. See also Overview, National Civic Federation records 1894-1949, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts, URL: http://archives.nypl.org/mss/2101, [Date Accessed: 9 September 2020]

[487] Marguerite Green, *The National Civic Federation and the American Labor Movement, 1900-1925* (Washington, DC.: Catholic University of America Press, 1956), 375.

Committee, New York State's joint legislative committee to combat radicalism. Gompers and the AFL were also involved, though in a 1924 report by journalist Sidney Howard the NCF were described as 'the worst offender.'[488]

Patriotic Anti-Communism

The pamphleteering efforts of labor organizations were dwarfed, when compared to the output of the many patriotic groups and so-called defense societies during this period, who led the way in anti-communist publishing. Most of these organisations had been formed during or before the war, but by the armistice a majority had already reoriented their campaigns to combating the 'red menace' in America, and for many this became their *modus operandi*. Many had found themselves influenced and emboldened by the overtly anti-'alien' policies and rhetoric which the Wilson government had promoted not only to justify and encourage support for America's involvement in the war, but to also shut down dissent. Wilson himself had 'displayed unmistakable candor in associating treachery with foreign-born Americans' in speeches, declaring that '[t]he gravest threats against our national peace and safety have been uttered within our own borders [by] citizens of the U.S., I blush to admit, born under other flags … who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life.'[489]

The role of pamphleteering among socialists and communists during the war was also recognised by these patriotic groups as a key method of winning over, organising, and educating supporters. Importantly, many socialist and communist pamphlets were produced

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[488] Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism,* 100.

[489] Fischer, *Spider Web,* 31.

in various different languages to reach the largely working-class immigrant population. This was concerning to those on the Right who were either explicitly anti-immigrant or who promoted the 'Americanizing' of such immigrants. Anti-radical Joseph J. Mereto highlighted this pressing issue in the book *The Red Conspiracy*, published by the National Historical Society in 1920, and urged anti-communists to take up the same tactics:

> Since the foreigners in our country, especially Russians, Italians, and jews, take to socialism very readily, something should be done to protect them by native Americans who are especially able to do so. Patriotic persons and organizations should have immense numbers of anti-Socialist books, pamphlets and leaflets published in the different languages and distributed free of charge to foreigners who are not yet acquainted with English.[490]

The fostering of a wartime Americanism was above all concerned with loyalty, suppression of dissent, and suspicion of immigrant communities, and would scarcely need to be adapted for the postwar world. The enemy of Americanism became the 'alien' Bolshevik, who to many of these groups was equally if not far more threatening to American life than the German foe. Though a few groups struggled to maintain an identity in the post-war world and disappeared, many found their calling. In the words of Manuel Franz:

> Defense societies had found a new enemy they could prepare against—communism. Fueling America's Red Scare, they vigorously agitated against radicalism and what they perceived as such. Since they denounced all the "various disturbing elements generally masquerading under the guise of socialism," they often targeted organized labor as well. Linking America's socialist movement to radical immigrants, defense societies maintained the xenophobic thrust of their campaign.[491]

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[490] Mereto, *The Red Conspiracy*, 379.

[491] Manuel Franz, 'Preparedness Revisited: Civilian Societies ad the Campaign for American Defense, 1914-1920,' *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 17 (2018), 672.

Pamphleteering for many of these groups was a vital part of such a propaganda campaign. The groups addressed here were among some of the most prolific pamphleteers during the period in discussion. The APL is an exception, having not produced pamphlets but was notable for its role in actively suppressing the literature of radicals. Although these groups varied somewhat in their approach, it was the patriotic groups more than any other who were most prone to promote and engage with conspiracy theories, anti-immigrant rhetoric and anti-semitic tropes.

The American Protective League (APL), created by Albert M. Briggs just weeks before American entrance into the war, already claimed up to eighty thousand volunteers by June 1917, including 'a former secretary of war, retired police commissioners, and numerous citizens' groups that were already aiding local law enforcement agencies.'[492] Though a private organization, the League was formed with the approval and support of the Bureau of Investigation (BI), and the volunteers aided the government by working essentially as 'citizen spies', exposing disloyal 'aliens' and German spies, as well as regularly posing as Bureau agents to confiscate mail from post offices.[493] It was essentially a vigilante group, as James Ciment summarised:

> The APL held Germans and German Americans in contempt and blamed them for nefarious plots. It targeted socialists, pacifists, Mexican Americans, and members of the Industrial Workers of the World. The APL attacked free speech, press, assembly, and association rights and violated due process. Its members illegally entered and searched homes and offices, read mail, wiretapped conversations, and seized property. League volunteers relied on reckless undocumented accusations, public opinion, and hearsay. Based upon faulty APL

[492] Fischer, *Spider Web,* 41.

[493] Fischer, *Spider Web,* 43. See also Buckingham, *America Sees Red,* 14-16.

> recommendations, loyal citizens were denied jobs and detained by authorities.[494]

It is estimated that, among the 1,500 APL units across America, around 3,000,000 investigations were conducted for the government, 'including almost 450,000 cases of suspected subversion,' writes Nick Fischer.[495] Though the APL did not use pamphleteering beyond issuing small wallet-sized guidebooks for its members, it was important not only for being the largest patriotic group at the time but also for its fundamental role in supporting the government's suppression of radicalism. The group's lack of literature was presumably due to the fact that its aim was not to win over, inform or educate supporters, but to directly attack and suppress its opponents. It did, however, have a periodical known as *Spy Glass,* in which portraits of 'enemy aliens' would be featured like 'wanted' signs. At its height, the APL reached a quarter of a million members before it was retired by Briggs in December 1918.[496]

Though smaller in membership than the APL, the National Security League (NSL), formed in 1914, claimed 'a membership list of nearly 100,000 earnest Americans' across the country and emerged as one of the leading pamphleteers among patriotic groups during and after the war.[497] By 1918 the NSL had already distributed approximately 30 million

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[494] James Ciment, *The Home Front Encyclopedia: United States, Britain, and Canada in World Wars I and II,* Volume 1 (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 226.

[495] Fischer, *Spider Web,* check page

[496] Ciment, *The Home Front Encyclopedia,* 226.

[497] S. Stanwood Menken, *A Concept of National Service* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1918), 6-7; *A Square Deal for the Public: A Working Program for Crushing the Radical Menace* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1919), 6.

copies of pamphlets written by numerous authors advocating American participation in the war, patriotic education and universal military training and service in order to improve American preparedness for war. 'There are two ways which we can reach the minds of the people—the printed word and the spoken word,' observed one NSL pamphlet. 'Our printed matter takes the form of pamphlets or simple tracts and are being circulated by the hundred thousand.'[498] The organisation's pamphlet series, known at the "Patriotism Through Education Series,' published at least 35 different instalments between 1917 and 1919, with titles such as *What Our Country Asks of Its Young Women* and *The Conscientious Objector*.[499]

A key focus of the NSL was patriotic education in American public schools, even suggesting that 'the public school system must be nationalized in as far as that is possible' in order to be able to effectively instil these American values.[500] Thus, much of the NSL's literature campaign focused on public schools, written to both educate students while also reaching 'the masses of the voters in the homes', that is, the parents of school children. Pamphlets

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[498] Henry L. West, *The Work of the National Security League* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1917), 5.

[499] Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker, *What Our Country Asks of Its Young Women* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1917); George Herbert Mead, *The Conscientious Objector* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1918).

[500] *Proceedings of the Congress of Constructive Patriotism* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1917), 92.

were offered free of cost in these instances, and included a handbook for teachers 'and a small pamphlet of War Points in the form of a short catechism' for pupils.[501]

It was vital, as one pamphlet's author declared, 'to make use of [public schools] in order to meet the wide-spread pro-German arguments against our being in this war and in favor of a German peace.'[502] Note the rhetorical sleight of hand, implying that those against the war were *de facto* pro-German. The pamphlet went on to stress that it was not only the job of the NSL to 'Americanise' the foreign-born: 'If we could Americanize *Americans* it would be easier to assimilate foreign elements.'[503] Thus, even those born in America may not have been deemed 'American' enough by the NSL, depending on their political view. Indeed, the NSL's 'Americanization' campaign became its foremost purpose particularly as the war was coming to an end. 'We are interested in *Americanization*, in acquainting the foreign-born with the spirit of our institutions to bring them to a proper concept of our democracy,' wrote the corporate lawyer and NSL founder, Solomon Stanwood Menken, in the 1918 pamphlet *A Concept of National Service*.[504]

Though this campaign had framed itself in a benevolent light—helping to support the foreign-born with pamphlets such as *How to Obtain Citizenship Papers*—this was within the context of the organisation's aim to discourage them from joining in radical, anti-war

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[501] M. F. Libby, *Suggestions for the Organization of a State for Patriotic Education* (New York, NY.: National Security League, n.d.), 3.

[502] *ibid.*

[503] *ibid.*

[504] S. Stanwood Menken, *A Concept of National Service* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1918), 6.

activities.[505] Menken had in his 1918 pamphlet criticised the so-called 'foreign born disciples of radical protest,' who 'work in secret day and night,' and urged for 'an immediate nation-wide campaign letting loose the full flood of our Americanism to counterbalance their wicked attempt to misguide and disturb' as the war was coming to an end. In fact, Menken asserted in the same pamphlet that 'we have been very negligent in our sedition laws', and called for further tightening of restrictions on free assembly.[506]

On 16th November 1918, the NSL's President Charles E. Lydecker declared that the League would be 'reorganizing to meet postwar problems,' stating that the League would no longer focus on issues of 'military preparedness,' instead focusing the majority of its work on propaganda:

> The nation, [Lydecker] said, must be steadied by a "great propaganda" for the maintenance of freedom, justice, law, and liberty, and this would be accomplished by "teaching the meaning and value of our constitution and the maintenance of our national integrity." It was the duty of the League, he continued, to create a greater respect for representative government "as distinguished from mass administration," while at the same time it must protect "our national legislators from dangerous proletarians.[507]

The League's budget for this post-war project of education and loyalty totalled $1,209,000. But it did not have such an huge transition to make ideologically. Having already laid much of the groundwork during the war, the NSL easily transitioned to its post-war identity based

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[505] Henry D. Thompson, *How to Obtain Citizenship Papers* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1919). For further reading see also Michael Lienesch, 'Creating Constitutional Conservatism,' *Polity*, 48:3 (2016), 395.

[506] Menken, *A Concept of National Service,* 6.

[507] Robin D. Ward, 'The Origin and Activities of the National Security League, 1914-1919,' *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 47:1 (1960), 59.

on the same anti-radical, anti-immigrant principles which fit into and fanned the flames of the anti-Red hysteria throughout 1919. The rhetoric of their pamphlets, however, became far more confrontational. In *A Square Deal for the Public: A Working Program for Crushing the Radical Menace* (1919), the NSL declared:

> The attempted revolution in America today is by a minority, which is largely foreign. It is such a minority which will control here, unless the majority organizes for its protection. America's handling of her foreign-born citizens has been even more lax than her treatment of the native product. For years she has welcomed to her shores with open arms all who saw fit to come, omitting any real test of their sympathy with the American form of government, and allowing them to become citizens when they know nothing of the language nor of the ideals of America…. The vicious element in the unassimilated alien hordes confuses the abuses of our social system.[508]

In the same pamphlet, the NSL laid out aggressive demands for dealing with the 'foreign' menace, including 'admission only of the right kind of raw material for American citizenship,' laws to punish and deport 'all who seek by word or deed the overthrow of the American government,' and to disenfranchise all 'non-citizens'.[509]

The League laid out its plans for the future in another 1919 pamphlet, in which it outlined its campaign within the public school system. This included 'teaching teachers' through their many study groups scattered throughout the country, and the circulation of pamphlets celebrating the American Constitution 'written by the great minds of the Nation.'[510] In addition, it highlighted the group's five key policies for Americanisation:

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[508] *A Square Deal for the Public: A Working Program for Crushing the Radical Menace* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1919), 4-5.

[509] *ibid.,* 8-9.

[510] *The National Security League: Future Work* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1919), 4-6.

> (a) Teaching English to our foreign born (b) The prohibition of foreign languages as the basic language in any of our schools (c) The narrowing of the use of foreign languages by our citizens (d) Restricting the exercise of the franchise to citizens of the United States through the repeal of State laws which allow aliens to vote. (e) A propaganda for the dominance of American born political and national sentiments over those of foreign origin.[511]

Another notable pamphlet released in the same year was *"And He Answered the Red Stranger"*, which was written as a dialogue between a 'Wise Man' and the eponymous 'Red Stranger', who despises America and spends his time plotting to overthrow the government. The Wise Man, applying his deep understanding of the superiority of the American Constitution, persuades the Red Stranger that there is in fact 'nothing better' than the American political system. The pamphlet concludes by warning that '[i]gnorance is the ally of Bolshevism. Education, the study of our own Constitution, the teaching of its sound, progressive doctrines to all the people,—this is the weapon with which to meet the "Red Stranger" and his propaganda,' and urges the reader to write to the NSL to receive ten pamphlets: 'The literature will be furnished FREE. We seek no object save our country's good.'[512]

It is evident throughout these pamphlets that, alongside the campaign to introduce draconian anti-immigration and anti-radical laws, the NSL viewed propaganda to vital in the country's long-term strategy for fighting radicalism and promoting its image of Americanism, particularly through distributing literature and controlling public education. However, the NSL faced several controversies between 1918-1920 surrounding the sourcing of its funding, which eventually diminished its influence for the remainder of its lifetime,

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[511] *The National Security League: Future Work* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1919), 5.

[512] Robert L. McElroy, *"And He Answered the Red Stranger"* (New York, NY.: National Security League, 1919).

until finally disbanding in 1942. But this loss of influence as an organisation did not mean that it had failed overall; as Robin D. Ward put it, other organizations came forward to take its place as the upholders of military preparedness and patriotism, and the developments of the 1920s suggest that its ideas were far more durable than its corporate life.'[513]

An off-shoot of the NSL was the American Defense Society (ADS), created by Clarence Smedley Thompson, the former publicity director of the NSL. Thompson and another two members of the NSL's Publicity Committee had left over Menken's refusal to publish a pamphlet of speeches critical of President Wilson, and accused him of playing 'Democratic politics.'[514] The ADS was far smaller than the NSL both terms of its membership and financially, but it was more popular among Republicans (though it claimed to have no 'political faith'[515]). In fact, the former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt was the organisation's honorary President until his death in 1919.[516] Though their pamphleteering may not have been quite as prolific as that of the NSL, it still claimed to have circulated pamphlets in the hundreds of thousands, with a pamphlet series of at least 35 instalments.[517] Literature was deemed by the organisation to be one of the most important

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[513] Ward, 'The Origin and Activities of the National Security League,' 65.

[514] *ibid*., 53-55.

[515] *Handbook of the American Defense Society* (New York, NY.: American Defense Society, 1918), 7.

[516] *ibid.* 3.

[517] Leaflet of the American Defense Society (c. October 1920), copy in DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA M-1085, reel 918, URL: https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/eam/cpa/cpadownloads-1920.htm [Date Accessed: 12 April 2020] The estimation of issues of the pamphlet series is based off William T. Hornaday's *The Lying Lure of Bolshevism* (New York, NY.: American Defense Society, 1919) which is listed as 'Pamphlet Seres No. 35' on its front page.

aspects of its campaign; describing itself as 'a national clearing house for pamphlets and general literature on all subjects dealing with the war,' and encouraging members to 'buy at cost as much of the Society's literature as you can afford, circulating it where it will accomplish good.'[518]

The ADS conducted a campaign similar to that of the NSL in its support for universal military training and its attempts to 'educate' the foreign-born, especially about the American Constitution. Its 'People's Edition' of the American Constitution was offered to 'clubs, schools, and public libraries,' and was particularly targeted at 'Russian immigrants, many of them Jewish refugees whom it suspected of holding radical political views.'[519] The organisation created a 'Teachers' Loyalty Committee' to monitor 'disloyal' teachers, part of its wider efforts to drive 'alien socialism' out of public schools.[520] It also drew criticisms from the Teachers' Union for its 1918 pamphlet *Unpatriotic Teaching in Public Schools*, published in collaboration with the Schoolmasters' Association, and was circulated around the schools of New York City. It was released after three New York school teachers set up an appeal after being dismissed for 'conduct unbecoming a teacher'. The pamphlet stressed that the plea should be denied and that 'that such other teachers in the service as express like views should be dismissed'.[521] In response, the Teachers Union of New York City issued

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[518] *Handbook of the American Defense Society*, 7.

[519] Michael Lienesch, 'Creating Constitutional Conservatism,' *Polity*, 48:3 (2016), 392-95.

[520] *Handbook of the American Defense Society,* 22-23.

[521] *Unpatriotic Teaching in Public Schools: The Facts Concerning the Transfer and Dismissal of certain Teachers of the DeWitt Clinton High School, New York City* (New York, NY.: American Defense Society, 1918); *Towards the New Education: The case against autocracy in our public schools* (New York, NY.: Teachers' Union of the City of New York, 1918), 4-5.

the pamphlet *Toward the New Education,* criticising the ADS as an organisation which 'inspire mob madness':

> The self-appointed champions of the flag have accused the Teachers' Union of disloyalty, and when the Union challenges their organization to join the issue, the American Defense Society evades and runs away. … In addition, it is well worth noting at the very outset, that the Schoolmasters' report is full of one-sided, inadequate, untruthful and sometimes even malicious assertions. For example, what do they mean by "unpatriotic" teaching, when they themselves admit (on page 8) "the committee was unable to find any proof that any of these teachers had even been suspected, much less accused, of disloyalty by any school official or any teacher. In fact all the evidence tends to prove the negative of this claim."[522]

Such antagonism between the ADS and teachers was not unusual. Historian M. J. Heale has highlighted how the Red Scare was marked by paranoia about communist propaganda and left-wing teachers infiltrating schools and poisoning the minds of impressionable youths. On the most extreme end of this was the Ku Klux Klan, who asserted that the public school system was 'being attacked from within and without by papists and anti-Christian Jews of the bolshevik Socialist stripe.' Meanwhile, more 'reputable lobbies' such as bar associations were calling for loyalty oaths for teachers and inspection of textbooks.[523]

Where the similarities between the NSL and the ADS start to diverge are in the latter's vigilante activities and racist and conspiratorial rhetoric within its pamphlets. The *Handbook of the American Defense Society* dedicates a large section to encouraging members to create 'Vigilance Corps' in their area which would monitor members of the community:

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[522] *Towards the New Education: The case against autocracy in our public schools* (New York, NY.: Teachers' Union of the City of New York, NY.: 1918), 3, 5.

[523] Heale, *American Anticommunism,* 48.

> Provide a check list containing names of all voters at the last election. … read each name on the check list and after voting, record it in one of four columns: "Loyal," "Disloyal," "Doubtful," "Unknown." These should be recanvassed at future meetings until the "unknown" column is eliminated and the "doubtful" column is reduced to a minimum. No name should be placed in the "Loyal" or transferred from the "disloyal" column until all reasonable doubt has been removed. You will then have a card index of every voter—a "Who's Who" in every community. This can be supplemented by names from the local directory, and other lists which will include alien residents.[524]

The Vigilance Corps would distribute its own literature and monitor the literature distributed in the community. 'While the Government has done much toward tightening the censorship of mails and cables,' the *Handbook* explained, there was still work to be done to combat the 'numberless channels' used by both the Germans and Bolsheviks who were 'capable of very great mischief.'[525] The lists, composed of 'loyal and disloyal Americans', would help the Corps to combat the spread of seditious literature.[526] '[N]o one denies the right of a free press or of free speech,' the ADS claimed, 'but this by no means permits licentiousness of the press or of speech.'[527]

The *Handbook* encouraged its members to carry out arrests, should they encounter somebody distributing seditious literature or holding a street meeting, and :

> Some policemen may question your method of getting him to court, but never lose sight of the fact that the courts have ruled many times that it is none of the court's concern how you got your prisoner before them, whether you walked him, dragged him, shanghaied him, picked him up in Jersey or California and kidnapped him, or brought him in on a trolley or an airplane. They won't worry over that point.[528]

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[524] *Handbook of the American Defense Society,* 16-17.

[525] *ibid.,* 17-20.

[526] *ibid.,* 18.

[527] *ibid.,* 24.

[528] *ibid.,* 29.

The ADS encouraged much more aggressive attitudes towards the foreign-born. In its members' handbook the ADS highlighted its demands, which included the internment of 'Alien Enemies and Enemy Sympathizers.' In fact, the group insisted that 'even previous to our entrance into the war, too much latitude was being given to foreigners' and that 'enforcement of internment upon a reasonably large number of aliens,' they claimed, would have helped prevent the influx of radicalism in America:

> 50 years of dragging American citizenship through the slums of all nations. We have been a nation of sleepy, spineless, sodden fools. Now we are in the mire of alien socialism, up to our knees.[529]

But it was the publication of their 1919 pamphlet, *The Lying Lure of Bolshevism*, which laid bare the racism and prejudices which underlined the organisation and its approach to radicalism in America.[530] The pamphlet was written by William T. Hornaday, a trustee of the ADS who was better known as a pioneer of wildlife conservation in the U.S. He had previously authored literature for the organisation, such as the 1917 pamphlet *A Searchlight on Germany,* but *The Lying Lure of Bolshevism* was his most well-known.[531] It was essentially a more compact revision of his 1918 booklet *Awake! America,* also published under the auspices of the ADS, in which Hornaday had warned that immigration would turn America

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[529] William T. Hornaday, *The Lying Lure of Bolshevism* (New York, NY.: American Defense Society, 1919), 22-23.

[530] *ibid.*

[531] William T. Hornaday, *A Searchlight on Germany; Germany's blunders, crimes and punishment* (New York, NY.: American Defense Society, 1917). For further reading on William T. Hornaday, see Gregory J. Dehler, *William Temple Hornaday and His Controversial Crusade to Save American Wildlife* (University of Virginia Press, 2013)

into 'a nation of indecipherables, mongrels, with the mental handicaps and the vices of all contributors sharply accentuated.'[532] The pamphlet opens with 'Theodore Roosevelt's Warning', a short adaptation of some of Roosevelt's articles, which sets the tone for the replacement of the German enemy with the radical:

> The simple truth is that the men who lead and give tone to the I. W. W. are more dangerous criminals than an equal number of white slavers and black handers. The Internationalist of the Red Flag or the Black Flag type is an enemy of this nation just exactly as much as Hindenburg or Ludendorff was before the armistice was signed.[533]

Among the more typical charges that the Germans were behind the rise of the Bolsheviks ('it is said that Germany furnished Lenine and Trotzky sums of money variously estimated at from $11,000,000 to $20,000,000') the pamphlet is riddled with some far more sinister ideas.[534] Throughout the pamphlet Hornaday repeatedly describes radicals and Russians as 'monsters' and animals, and much of the language is clearly racially charged:

> Arm a gorilla or a Hun with a knotted club, turn him loose to smash everything in sight, and you have a Bolshevik. … Bolshevism, or radical Socialism, … is a wild orgy of murder, loot, lust and laziness. …
>
> In the Zoological Park we have a big, black chimpanzee who is a genuine Bolshevist. He is powerful, ugly, and has dangerous teeth. He has the lustfulness of a Hun officer, of infantry, the temper of a wild boar and the heart of a raging devil. Morning, noon and night, sleeping or waking, his one dominant thought is to smash things, and to hurt some one. His cunning is truly devilish, and all of it is directed toward destruction. He knows no such sentiments as gratitude or affection, and personally is as ugly as he is wicked. …
>
> The American MAN must cut down the exotic brute, the Bolshevik, or whatever he calls himself.[535]

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[532] William T. Hornaday, *Awake! America* (New York, NY.: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1918), 107. The front page of the book confirms: 'Published under the auspices of the American Defense Society.'

[533] Hornaday, *The Lying Lure of Bolshevism*, 8-15.

[534] *ibid.*, 16.

[535] *ibid.*, 8-15, 28.

Hornaday also makes an explicitly anti-semitic remark about a chief judge in a Soviet court, describing her as 'obese Jewess with oiled locks who lolls on a seat.' This remark perhaps makes clearer the intent behind Hornaday's specific naming of Jewish radicals throughout the pamphlet, including Trotsky who he describes as a 'moral leper', as well as the author's need to highlight Morris Hillquit's original Jewish name:

> Leon Trotzky-, now Minister of Military and Marine Affairs of the Soviet "government" ; a cold-blooded devil who has caused the ruthless slaughter of tens of thousands of the finest people of European Russia. His cruelties are as yet only slightly known to the world. S. Epstein, organizer of the Ladies' Waist Makers Union. S. Shubin, in New York a radical newspaper writer and agitator. Dr. Max Goldfarb, formerly a "labor" writer and agitator. J. Vostron, organizer of the Jewish Carpenters' Union, later a Bolshevik organizer in Moscow.'[536]
>
> … New York is full of them ; and they are a bold, blatant and a potentially dangerous lot. When Morris "Hillquit," born a Russian in Riga under the name of Hilkowitz, ran for mayor in 1917, 142,000 of them voted for him…. This group includes such men as Dr. Judah P. Magnes, a Russian rabbi … [537]

These were typical remarks that fit into the anti-semitic 'Judeo-Bolshevik' conspiracy theory which had gained popularity after the Russian Revolution, not only within reactionary groups but in mainstream publications and among politicians and, particularly, the military.[538] Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer (who would become well-known for the eponymous Palmer Raids against radicals between November 1919 to January 1920, a defining moment of the First Red Scare) had too described Trotsky as 'a disreputable alien —Leon Bronstein' and referred to American Jews as a 'small clique of outcasts from the East Side of New York.' Meanwhile Delaware Senator Josiah Walcott, who had proclaimed the

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[536] *ibid.,* 16.

[537] *ibid.,* 18.

[538] For further reading on anti-semitism in the American military, see Bendersky, *The "Jewish Threat".*

literature he encountered during his visit to the Rand School of Social Science in New York as 'some of the most seditious stuff I have ever found against our own Government,' pointed out that '19 out of every 20 people I have seen there have been Jews.' The persistent references to New York, as Richard E. Frankel explains, was a antisemitic trope 'to convey the image of dangerous, revolutionary Jewish Bolsheviks.' President Wilson had described the Bolsheviks as having been 'led by the Jews,' and Colonel John M. Dunn of the army's Military Intelligence Division stated that 'the principal agents of dissemination of Bolshevistic as well as other radical propaganda in the United States are Jewish newspapers.'[539] The *Chicago Tribune*, too, published an article in 1920 warning of a revolutionary movement led by 'Jewish radicals' which aimed to 'establish a new racial domination of the world.'[540]

In the pamphlet Hornaday also expressed his concern for the women of the Soviet Union who he claimed had begun to be nationalised under Bolshevik rule. 'In some parts of Russia today it also is "help yourself" to your neighbor's young wife and daughters, and change them once a month, if you like!' At the same time he decried that churches in Moscow had been turned into theatres and dancing halls 'where women revel nightly.'[541] These apparent concerns about gender, sexuality and the rights of women were emerging as one of the foremost ways in which American anti-communists would communicate the threat of the Bolsheviks to the public. As Erica J. Ryan writes in *Red War on the Family*, 'Writers and

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[539] Richard E. Frankel, 'An Exceptional Hatred? Re-Examining Antisemitism in Germany and the United States in a Time of War and Upheaval, 1914-1923,' *Antisemitism Studies*, 3:2 (2019), 210-212.

[540] *ibid.* 212.

[541] Hornaday, *The Lying Lure of Bolshevism*, 12.

cultural commentators talked about women during the Red Scare as a way to make the radical threat intelligible to Americans … Russian family policies, both real and imagined, became a prime site for Americans' engagements with the ideology of Bolshevism.'[542] Incidentally, as Ryan highlights, the outrage at the idea of women being 'nationalized' reinforced the idea of women as 'possessions' of men in the same sense that land and homes were possessions under capitalism. This rumour among anti-Bolshevists 'laid bare the profoundly powerful connection between private property and the patriarchal home, as well as the status of married women as dependents, or property, within that home.'[543]

Hornaday, too, was disdainful of the 'often ignorant' working class in America, complaining that the 'baboons of Bolshevism' wanted to 'drag down the hated "capitalistic class" and the educated "bourgeoise" to the lowest intellectual level of the peasant and workman.'[544] Hornaday, made clear, however, that the *real* American workingman—'not the shirker, the saboteur and the jaw-smith'— believes in the American Dream:

> And the real American is no fool. Although he may work in shirt-sleeves today, he knows that his educated son or daughter may be rich tomorrow ! This is THE land of Opportunity, and the ambitious workingman is not going to drag his own wife and children down to the level of cave men, while under the present system his son may become president of the United States.[545]

But Hornaday also pitted the workingman against the immigrant; claiming that if a labourer's housing or working conditions are poor, 'in the congested districts of the great cities no power on earth can provide a roomy and comfortable home for every alien who

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[542] Ryan, *Red War on the Family,* 48.

[543] *ibid.*, 60.

[544] Hornaday, *The Lying Lure of Bolshevism,* 16, 22.

[545] *ibid.,* 25.

chooses to jam himself in and live where there is no room for him, instead of seeking more room elsewhere.'[546] But most sinister of all, perhaps, was Hornaday's scarcely-veiled threat against black Americans:

> I wish to add, for the special benefit of the Southern negroes, this bit of friendly advice: Don't you touch Bolshevism with anything shorter than a ten-foot pole. If you do, you will see a tremendous revival of the old Ku Klux Klan; and you will get the worst of it. This is not an idle personal opinion on my part. I know Southern men who say, "I will be mighty sorry to see the Southern negroes go in for Bolshevism; for we wish them well."[547]

There is no evidence that Hornaday or the ADS had any direct links to the Ku Klux Klan, but warning that black Americans should 'behave' to avoid trouble was a typical threat made by the KKK. Their infamous leaflet from the 1930s relays a very similar warning to that of Hornaday: 'Paid organizers for the communists are only trying to get negroes in trouble. Alabama is a good place for good negroes to live in, but a bad place for negroes who believe in SOCIAL EQUALITY.'[548]

These extreme remarks in *The Lying Lure* were also furnished with the more outlandish claims that the Bolsheviks 'cruelly murdered tens of thousands of persons because they were educated, wore clean clothes, bathed, shaved and kept their hair cut.'[549] Hornaday concludes the pamphlet by setting out the draconian measures that the ADS advocates for fighting the Bolsheviks. He adds that readers should 'assist the American

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[546] *ibid.,* 26.

[547] *ibid.,* 20.

[548] 'Negroes Beware: Do Not Attend Communist Meetings,' Alabama Textual Materials Collection (Digital Collection), Alabama Department of Archives and History, URL: http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/ref/collection/voices/id/2020, [Date Accessed: 9 June 2020]

[549] Hornaday, *The Lying Lure of Bolshevism*, 30.

Federation of Labor in its educational campaign against Bolshevism,' an endorsement which gives an indication of the close relationship between Conservative and Labor anti-Bolshevists.

Unsurprisingly, the ADS went on to assist the publication of an American edition of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in 1920. Along with White Russian émigrés, the ADS distributed the pamphlet its membership and to congressmen. In fact, according to Frankel, publisher and ADS member George Haven Putnam had also helped to bring a British book based on *The Protocols* to America.[550]

In the early 1920s, the ADS would publish further anti-communist pamphlets such as *The Youth Movement in America* and *Back to Barbarism*, both authored by Richard Merill Whitney, who also published the book *Reds in America* in 1924, which praised the anti-semitic *World Revolution* author Nester Webster for revealing a so-called conspiracy of a secret, organized minority.[551] However, the group faded away as the interwar period went on, with only a brief resurgence in the late 1930s, followed by its demise in the 1950s.

While these organisations may have had somewhat differing purposes, they all united (both figuratively and literally) to fight the rising tide of radicalism. They produced hundreds of thousands of pamphlets which would redirect the public's ire against radicals and

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[550] Frankel, 'An Exceptional Hatred?', 212.

[551] R. M. Whitney, *The Youth Movement in America* (New York, NY.: American Defense Society, 1923); R. M. Whitney, *Back to Barbarism* (New York, NY.: American Defense Society, n.d.); R. M. Whitney, *Reds in America* (New York, NY.: Berkwith Press, 1923).

immigrants after the war against Germany. While some were more overt than others, they all contributed to fostering a climate of suspicion among the American public of the foreign-born and the shaping of an Americanism of which anti-radicalism was a fundamental aspect. The reciprocal relationship that many of these groups had with the government meant that they could dominate the discourse surrounding the I.W.W., Socialists, Americanism, and Russia and the Bolsheviks, while the other side of the discussion was repressed through anti-sedition laws and postal restrictions. This meant that even false information could be easily spread without challenge. Correspondingly, the public's attitude towards radicals and immigrants became vindictive and sometimes violent. Stephen M. Feldman describes how 'in hundreds of incidences, German aliens, German Americans, Socialists, pacifists, Wobblies, and other outsiders were flogged, tarred and feathered, forced to kiss the flag, and murdered. … All in all, the public strongly supported the 100-percenters.'[552] Already by 1918 federal district attorneys had observed that convictions became essentially predetermined outcomes for I.W.W. prosecutions due to public sentiment having been 'so inflamed against radicals'.[553]

Nevertheless, as historian Larry Ceplair writes, despite such widespread anti-Communist sentiment, the two 1920s presidential candidates who most exploited the red-scare were unsuccessful: 'Palmer's "undiluted Americanism" did not win him the Democrats' nomination and General Leonard Wood's promise to kill Communists like "rattlesnakes"

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[552] Stephen M. Feldman, *Free Expression and Democracy in America: A History* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 247.

[553] William Preston Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933* (Chicago, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 122.

failed to entice Republicans.' Meanwhile, President Warren G. Harding had remarked during his campaign that 'too much had been said about Bolshevism in America.'[554]

Though anti-radical pamphleteering would wind down over the course of the 1920s, those that did appear still echoed many of the same sentiments. The United Mine Workers of America, for example, issued the pamphlet *Attempt By Communists To Seize the American Labor Movement* in 1923, containing half a dozen articles which make up an *exposé* of communists in America. It made claims that campaigns to free political prisoners—including the work of the ACLU—were part of a wider German-Communist conspiracy, and cautioned readers that most Communist 'agents' were foreigners, who spread 'propaganda and revolutionary doctrines' in different languages.[555]

Meanwhile, other groups hoped to prevent a resurgence of radicalism through expanding their education campaigns. With the help of the American Legion and the American Bankers Association, the NSL helped to bring compulsory Constitution education laws to at least twenty-five states, provided lesson plans and textbooks for schools, while the United States Patriotic Society worked to translate the American Constitution 'into all languages' for immigrants.[556] Henry Campbell Black, who edited the National Association for Constitutional Government's journal *Constitutional Review*, explained that 'denouncing the "reds" does no good. There must be a campaign of countereducation.'[557]

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[554] Ceplair, *Anti-Communism in Twentieth-Century America,* 22.

[555] *Attempt By Communists To Seize the American Labor Movement* (Indianapolis: United Mine Workers of America, 1923).

[556] Michael Lienesch, 'Creating Constitutional Conservatism,' *Polity*, 48:3 (2016), 393.

[557] *ibid.,* 396.

The Second Wave

The relative dampening of political discord over the course of the 1920s began to unravel in 1929, as the Wall Street Crash and the ensuing Great Depression unleashed a new wave of unemployment and social unrest. Americans increasingly saw the global economic collapse as evidence of a failing capitalist system, and began to look to radical ideas for possible solutions. Many worried that the depression may have signalled America's permanent economic and political decline, and anti-communists began to rally to once again fight against a resurgence of radicalism and revolution in the face of such a collapse.[558] As one anti-radical, Nelson E. Hewitt, wrote in his 1935 pamphlet on radicalism at the University of Chicago:

> The coming of a major depression with its unemployment, wholesale destruction of industry, oppressive taxation, doles, relief, and all of the abhorrent conditions that go with depressions, provided the ideal setting for purveyors of disloyalty, discontent and revolutionary agitation who had been patiently awaiting their time and opportunity while entrenching themselves in the halls of learning, a vital and strategic spot, for the inculcation of sedition and disloyalty in the plastic minds of our American Youth under the guise of progressive education and research.[559]

Indeed, the labour movement had been gaining considerable strength and industrial action increased throughout the 1930s, as radical activity became as formidable and widespread as it had been since the First World War and the first 'Red Scare'. The Communist Party of America's pamphleteering campaign intensified, as the Party sought to seize upon the

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[558] Thomas E. Bergler, 'Youth, Christianity, and the Crisis of Civilization, 1930–1945,' *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, 24:2 (2014), 261.

[559] Nelson E. Hewitt, *How "Red" is the University of Chicago?* (Chicago, IL.: Advisory Associates, 1935), 3.

increasing disillusionment among the masses, and membership of the Party grew each year.[560] For some sections of the right, even the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 and the implementation of the reformist New Deal served as further evidence that the country was heading toward socialism. The formal U.S. recognition of the Soviet Union in the same year seemed to only confirm such suspicions.

Many of the patriotic societies of the wartime years had faded away by the 1930s; their focus on a war which had been won and a radicalism which had mostly been quelled meant they had lost much of their original purpose. However, some groups such as the National Civic Federation, who retained a broader purpose, prevailed throughout the relatively calm 1920s, while many new anti-communist groups began to materialise which developed upon the work of their predecessors.[561] However, anti-communist organisations of the 1930s overall tended not to have such a coordinated approach to pamphleteering as those of the First World War and the First Red Scare, and the pamphlets they did produce throughout the 1930s were generally much more sporadically published, and in some cases self-published. One exception to this was the short-lived Liberty League, formed in 1934 by right-wing, anti-New Deal Democrats and executives from Du Pont and General Motors with the aim of combatting radicalism.[562] The League had one of the most intensive pamphlet campaigns of any organisation at the time, producing 135 pamphlets between August 1934 and September 1936. In his survey of the Liberty League, George Wolfskill

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[560] By 1938 the Party's membership had reached 70,000—not including the 20,000 members of the YCL—which was an increase of over 45,000 since 1935. See Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States,* 115.

[561] Amann, 'A "Dog in the Nighttime",' 567.

[562] Heale, *American Anti-Communism,* 111.

remarked that the pamphlets were 'skillfully written and edited, expertly printed on high-quality paper of a size for easy mailing.' They had a huge distribution, with five million sent to 'members, newspapers, other political organizations and government agencies' as well as over 7,500 libraries and 'every member of the House and Senate.'[563]

Many of these patriotic groups, when compared to their wartime counterparts, were marked by a strong rightward shift toward conspiracy antisemitic theories and endorsement of fascistic rhetoric and tactics.[564] Anti-communists like Elizabeth Dilling, author of the conspiracy-laden *The Red Network: A Who's Who and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots* in 1935, reached the height of their notoriety in the 1930s. As noted by historian Nick Fischer, the book, which claimed to expose over 1,300 communists and sympathisers as part of a conspiracy, was extremely successful and received support from a plethora of government, right-wing, religious, fascist, and nazi organizations:

> A steal at $0.50 wholesale and $1.15 retail, the book sold two thousand copies in less than a fortnight and by 1941 had gone through eight printings with the support of the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camellia, the German-American Bund, the Aryan Bookstore, the Silver Shirts, the Church League of America, the Moody Church and Bible Institute, the DAR, the American Legion, the FBI, MI, the US Army and Navy Officers' Club, the Women's Patriotic League, the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs, the New York and Chicago police departments, and Pinkertons. Both the Chicago Tribune and the Hearst newspaper chain promoted Dilling's views and work.[565]

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[563] George Wolfskill, *The Revolt of the Conservatives: A History of the American Liberty League 1934-1940* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1962), 65-7.

[564] For an overview of the numerous far-right, antisemitic organizations during the Depression years, see James S. Olson, *Historical Dictionary of the Great Depression* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001).

[565] Fischer, *Spider Web*, 94.

Much like Dilling's book, pamphlets by these groups tended to be conceived as 'exposés,' supposedly revealing extensive global conspiracy, either implicitly or explicitly between Jews and communists. For example, the Industrial Defense Association (IDA), an off-shoot of the Ku Klux Klan, produced pamphlets in the 1930s such as *The Grave-diggers of Russia,* which contained almost exclusively 'horrible caricatures of the alleged leaders of the Soviet government, all of whom are portrayed with exaggerated Jewish features.' Other pamphlets distributed by the IDA included such ominous titles as *Jewish Jazz*, *The Man Behind the Men Behind the President*, as well as a variety of publications published in Germany by the Nazis.[566] The group claimed at the time to have associations with numerous other American patriotic societies, as well as 'police departments, military authorities, and the immigration, naturalization, deportation and legal departments of the national government.'[567] A similar group was the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation, led by ex-private investigator and anti-semite Harry A. Jung. Alongside distributing blacklists and millions of copies of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* the group was 'a major producer and distributor of anti-communist, anti-New Deal and anti-Semitic brochures, published in thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of copies.'[568] Pamphlets included such titles as *Communism* (1931) and *Are We Aliens in Our Own County?* (1935).

Such ominous alliances became common in 1930s America. For example, the supposedly more respectable National Civil Federation's chairman, Ralph Easley, had distributed copies of a 1933 pamphlet titled *Communism in Germany* through the 'American Section of the International Committee to Combat the World Menace of Communism' (*fig*. 21). This was

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566 L. M. Birkhead, 'Songs of Hate,' *The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, 11 September, 1936, 4.

567 Pat McGrady, 'The Ku Klux Klan Riding Again,' *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, 26 April, 1934, 3.

568 Olson, *Historical Dictionary of the Great Depression,* 12; Amann, 'A "Dog in the Nighttime",' 567.

an English translation of a text by Nazi Adolf Ehrt, which highlighted what the author called the 'life and death struggle Germany has been waging against Communism' and claimed the prevalence of Jews among these communists. The pamphlet's cover featured a dramatic montage depicting the Reichstag fire with communists superimposed over the flames. It was reported by the Jewish Daily Bulletin as 'one of the boldest attempts on the part of Adoph Hitler to gain influence among Americans' and was distributed free of charge.[569] Easley had even sent a large number to William Dudley Pelley, leader of the fascist Silver Shirts and creator of Pelley Publishers, which printed some of the country's most explicitly anti-semitic pamphlets, such as *There IS a Jewish World Plot... JEWS SAY SO!* and *Famous Jew-Baiters of History*.[570]

Figure 21: Adolf Ehrt, *Communism in Germany* (1933). Image courtesy of archive.org.

As well as Easley, also appended to the American edition of *Communism in Germany* were Harry Jung, F. O. Johnson of the Better America Federation, and Hamilton Fish, who had

[569] 'Congressman Fish Cuts Name off List of Group Here Fighting Communism,' *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, 19 November, 1933, 2.

[570] *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, 26 April, 1934, 3.

famously led anti-communist investigations in 1930 in the eponymous Fish Committee, a prelude to the House of Un-American Activities Committee. Fish, however, rejected any affiliation with the group soon after the pamphlet's publication, stating that he had 'never heard of the committee and merely glanced over the book.'[571] Nevertheless the controversy surrounding *Communism in Germany* had revealed how American conservatives could be, intentionally or not, inclined to embrace the ideas and tactics of fascists. The episode became infamous enough that Communist cartoonist Jacob Burck would illustrate Easley, donning a swastika armband, being booted out of a doorway with his copies of the

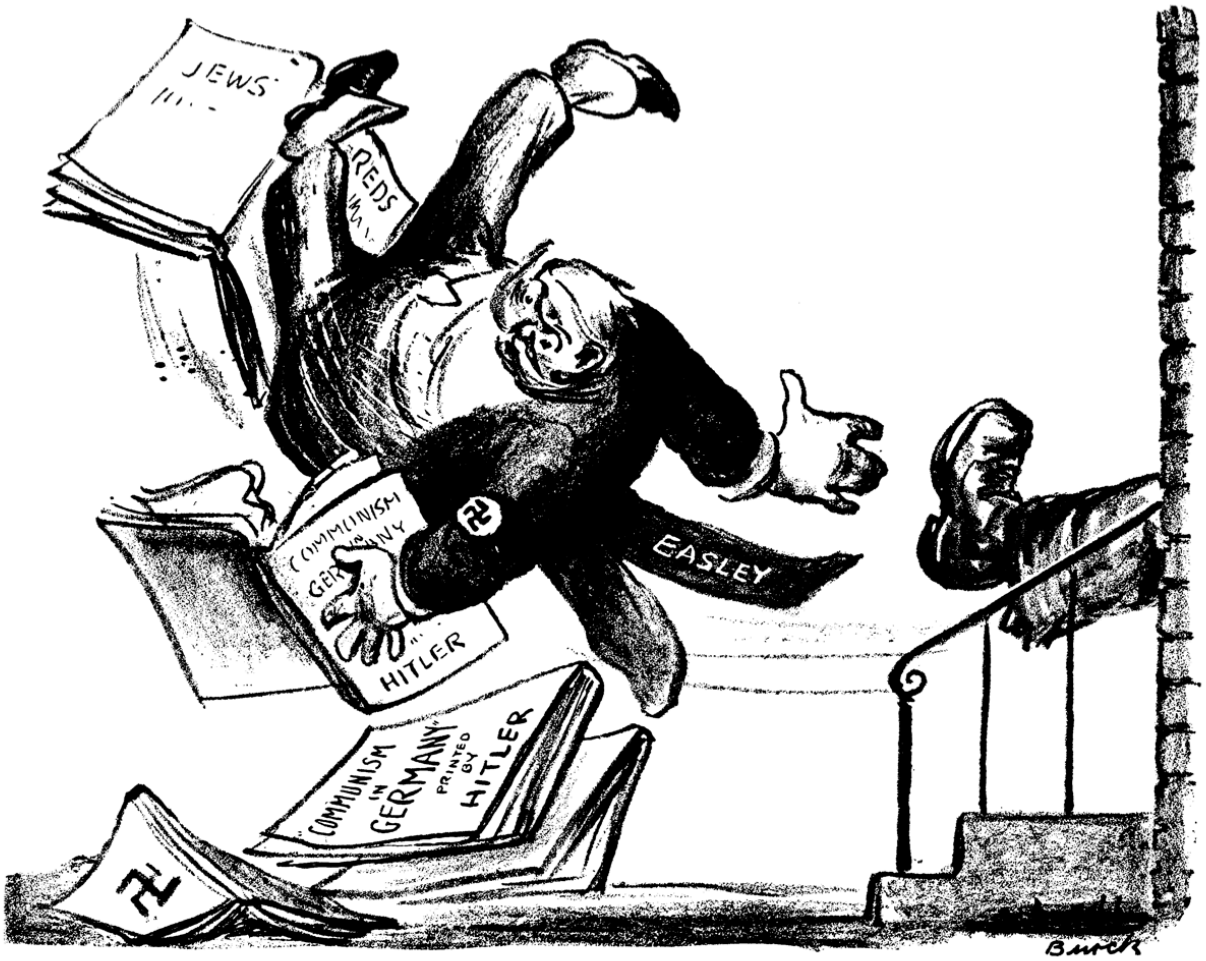

Figure 22: Jacob Burck's illustration of Easley and *Communism in Germany,* featured in *Hunger and Revolt: Cartoons by Burck* (New York, NY.: Daily Worker, 1935). Image courtesy of marxists.org.

[571] Adolf Ehrt, *Communism in Germany* (Berlin: General League of German Anti-Communist Associations, 1933); Jewish *Daily Bulletin,* 19 November, 1933.

pamphlet, which the cartoon depicts as having a foreword written by Hitler himself (*fig.* 22).[572]

Conclusion

Pamphlets were indeed useful due to their cheapness to produce and disseminate, but their uptake by powerful and wealthy government and right-wing groups shows that their appeal went beyond their accessibility, and that they played an important role in the war of information. Especially during the First World War, pamphlets were recognised by government propagandists and patriotic groups as a particularly useful tool in spreading political ideas and encouraging support for the war. With the growth of the Communist movement both internationally and at home, these organisations successfully used pamphlets to redirect wartime anti-German sentiment towards the American Left, which would enable them to justify the crack-down on radicalism during the Red Scare. Groups such as the NSL did not simply view themselves as agitators for the implementation of anti-radical and anti-immigrant policy; they coupled this with a strategy of propaganda which they believed would serve as a long-term preventative measure against Bolshevism.

It is clear to see how these combined attacks from both government and patriotic organisations left the nascent American Communist Party on the back foot. Though many of these patriotic groups would either disband or fade into the background into the late 1920s, the ferocity of their pamphlet campaigns would help to lay the groundwork for the more explicitly anti-semitic and fascist-inspired campaigns of the 1930s, bolstered by the rise of Nazism in Germany and its world-wide propaganda campaign. Yet, as the next

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[572] *Hunger and Revolt: Cartoons by Burck* (New York, NY.: Daily Worker, 1935), 198.

chapter discusses, it would in fact be Catholic organisations who led the anti-Communist pamphlet campaigns of the 1930s particularly as the Communist Party was working to soften its image through its Popular Front approach.

6.

Catholic Pamphlets and Anti-Communism in the 1930s

> Would that I might see our Protestant and Catholic Churches thronged, our Synagogues filled to overflowing in the war being waged against God. But, under false banners, anarchy and lawlessness batten. There is want in the midst of plenty. The virus of Communism has been injected into the veins of the civic body. The Red stranglehold is laid upon our Universities. Atheism pours forth from our professional rostra. Spiritual sabotage undermines hourly the invisible cornerstone of our civilization; our faith in God. Wide-sown is the soil of our nation with the seeds of subversion. America is ripe for revolution. I call upon every man, woman and child who believes in God to rise and arm—not materially—but morally, intellectually and spiritually. In the name of God and country. To save America for Americans.
>
> — Jane Anderson, American journalist and fascist propagandist, c. 1938.[573]

While the 1930s saw an increasing number of anti-communist pamphlets produced by an emboldened far-right in America, no section of American society was as coordinated and productive during this decade as the Catholic Church when it came to anti-communist pamphleteering. Catholics in America were already among the more frequent producers of pamphlets in America, drawing on the Church's historic pamphleteering tradition. In the 1930s, however, the Church found itself increasingly worried by the growth of the Communist movement in America and around the world—particularly during the Spanish Civil War.

This chapter explores how Catholic publishers published an abundance of pamphlets dedicated to warning both Catholics and non-Catholics of the threat of atheistic

[573] Jane Anderson cited in *How Communism Works* (St Paul, MN.: Catholic Library Service, 1938)

Communism. Their pamphlet campaigns dwarfed that of any other anti-communist organisation, and its intensity would be such that the ACLU alleged in its Annual Report of 1937 that 'our correspondents cited the anti-communist drive of the Catholic Church and its lay organisations as responsible for the atmosphere in which repression of civil rights thrives.'[574] In particular, these pamphlets help to illustrate how anti-communism would cause something of an identity crisis among many American Catholic organisations during the Spanish Civil War.

Catholic Anti-Communism

Even prior to the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, the Catholic Church had been at the forefront of anti-communism. In his 1846 encyclical *Qui Pluribus,* Pope Pius IX condemned 'the unspeakable doctrine of Communism … a doctrine most opposed to the very natural law'. The Pope warned that these radical ideas would lead to 'the complete destruction of everyone's laws, government, property, and even of human society itself,' and he castigated those who attempted to 'make men fly in terror from all practice of religion' through disseminating the 'widespread disgusting infection from books and pamphlets which teach the lessons of sinning.'[575] Later, in 1878, Pope Leo XIII published the encyclical entitled *Socialism, Communism, Nihilism,* in which he decried the 'venomous teachings' of socialists:

> From the heads of States to whom, as the Apostle admonishes, all owe submission, and on whom the rights of authority are bestowed by God Himself, these sectaries withhold obedience and preach up the perfect equality of all men in regard to rights alike and duties. The natural union of man and woman,

[574] Robert L. Frank, 'Prelude to Cold War: American Catholics and Communism,' *Journal of Church and State*, 34:1 (1992), 40.

[575] Pope Pius IX, *Qui Pluribus: On Faith and Religion* (1846).

> which is held sacred even among barbarous nations, they hold in scorn; and its bond, whereby family life is chiefly maintained, they slacken, or else yield up to the sway of lust. In short, spurred on by greedy hankering after things present, which is *the root of all evils, which some coveting have erred from the faith,* they attack the right of property, sanctioned by the law of nature, and with signal depravity, while pretending to feel solicitous about the needs, and anxious to satisfy the requirements of all, they strain every effort to seize upon and hold in common all that has been individually acquired by title of lawful inheritance, through intellectual or manual labor, or economy in living. These monstrous views they proclaim in public meetings, uphold in booklets, and spread broadcast everywhere through the daily press.[576]

There were typically four key issues which the Church outlined as rendering communism irreconcilable with Catholicism. First was socialists' belief of absolute equality; that authority is not bestowed upon individuals by God. Second, the socialist critique of the family unit under capitalist relations. Third, the right to private property as a fundamental 'natural law' and the assertion that 'Man precedes the State', meant that the Church was most fundamentally at odds with an ideology which strived towards common ownership of the means of production.[577] Finally—and most essentially—Marxism is a materialist philosophy and thus atheistic, as opposed to the spirituality of the Church.

Though the opposition to Communism was integral to the Catholic Church's teachings, Catholics in America had a compound motivation in their desire to prove Catholics' patriotism and their assimilation into American society. Much like those in the Communist movement, the Catholic Church had faced the charge of being a foreign, 'alien' entity by nativists in America. As Robert L. Frank summarises:

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[576] *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII* (New York, NY.: Benziger Brothers, 1903), 23-4.

[577] See Lisa C. Moreno, 'The National Catholic Welfare Conference and Catholic Americanism,' Doctoral Thesis, University of Maryland (1999), 20.

> The Church had weathered the anti-Catholic nativist movements of the late nineteenth century, and was still combating the resurgence of anti-foreign, anti-Catholic sentiment in the labors of the Ku Klux Klan. Among its more intemperate foes, the American Catholic Church was perceived as a Trojan Horse, directed by the Vatican, awaiting the opportune moment to seize the reins of government and create a Catholic state. It was, quite simply, a foreign church. Populated largely by immigrants, speaking at masses in a foreign language, and affirming allegiance to the Church of Rome, the American Catholic Church looked anything but American to many outsiders.[578]

Pamphlets were produced as early as 1827 by Catholics in America to defend the Church from this attack by nativists.[579] However, the rising radicalism of the early twentieth century presented Catholic publishers with the ideal opportunity to demonstrate the Americanism of the Church and its followers. Through a sustained campaign against Communism, the Catholic Church could both assert its commitment to Catholic doctrine and affirm the loyalty of Catholics to America and the principles of freedom and democracy; to 'blend American Catholics into the melting pot.'[580]

Catholics in America had long seen the appeal of pamphlets in their low cost and accessibility. Lawrence Kehoe and Isaac Hecker, intending to provide 'good, cheap Catholic literature' to the public, set up the Catholic Publication Society of New York in 1866. By 1871 they had already distributed 2,250,000 pamphlets, most free of charge, and by the end of the century had a catalogue of 988 titles.[581] They continued their pamphleteering efforts throughout the rest of the century, and in 1916 the publisher Paulist Press was

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[578] Frank, 'Prelude to Cold War,' 41.

[579] Charlotte Ames, 'Catholic Pamphlets and Pamphleteers: A Guide to Indexes and Collections,' *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, 103:1 (1992), 2.

[580] Frank, 'Prelude to Cold War,' 56.

[581] Ames, 'Catholic Pamphlets and Pamphleteers, 3.

created, and would become one of the most prolific producers of pamphlets in the twentieth century.[582]

In 1917, the National Catholic War Council (better known later as the National Catholic Welfare Council) was established as the 'primary national organization of Catholic bishops,' creating a national Catholic press for literature distribution throughout America. Faced with the rising popularity of 'One-Hundred Percent Americanism', the Council hoped to help 'Americanize' the Catholic Church and help incorporate Catholics better into American culture and society. In his recent doctoral thesis on the topic, William John Korinko pinpointed this event as the beginning of the 'modern, national structure of Catholicism in America.'[583]

Pamphlets produced by Catholics in the twentieth century became far broader and political in their subject matter than they had been in the nineteenth century. While those published in the previous century were generally more focused on internal questions of the Church and religion, pamphlets of the twentieth century began to look at issues of education, sex and the family, human rights and social justice, labour, war and peace, and of course, Communism.[584] In the words of Charlotte Ames, 'Catholic action came to life in a much

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[582] *ibid.*

[583] William John Korinko Jr., 'The Construction of the American Catholic Church: Gender, Sexuality, and Patriotism in U.S. Catholic Media, 1917–1970,' Doctoral Thesis, University of Kentucky (2020) 3.

[584] Ames, 'Catholic Pamphlets and Pamphleteers,' 4.

more dynamic way in the twentieth century through the sheer power of the spoken word crystallized in print.'[585]

Mobilisation began to ramp up among Catholic organizations in 1930, as the Pope warned John H. Ryan, rector of the Catholic University in Washington, to 'beware lest Bolshevism spread in America at this moment of financial depression and unemployment' and urged concerted action by Catholics.[586] A new 'Secretariat on Atheism' was established by the Vatican as part of its foreign policy apparatus, as Clergy members were instructed to 'name regular correspondents to report on the progress of leftist forces in situ and help produce Catholic anti-communist propaganda fitted to local circumstances.'[587] Accompanying the Vatican's campaign was the battle cry, 'If Moscow's Comintern is at the head of the Communist International, Rome is the center of the Catholic International!'[588]

The Church was becoming increasingly fearful of the Communist Party's propaganda drive to recruit Catholics to the Party; as one anonymous Jesuit writer noted in 1934, the Party

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[585] *ibid.*

[586] Walter T. Howard, 'The National Miners Union: Communists and Miners in the Pennsylvania Anthracite, 1928-1931,' *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 125:1/2 (2001), 117n64.

[587] Giuliana Chamedes, 'The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, and the Making of Transnational Anti-communism in the 1930s,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 51:2 (2016), 270.

[588] *ibid.*, 262.

was ‘appealing precisely to the people who make up our parishes … and our students.’[589] Indeed, a significant proportion of Catholics in America were working class immigrants, and the Church had long feared the ‘insidious appeal of socialism to the lower orders’.[590] Thus it was viewed by many Church figures that a concerted effort should be made ‘to parallel communist propaganda with Jesuit propaganda,’ and the integral role of literature in such a campaign was often stressed by members of the Clergy.[591] Catholic organizations began to expand their publishing output, and the number of pamphlets printed on Communism grew each year: The 1934-1938 edition of the Catholic Periodical Index boasted 838 entries under the heading ‘COMMUNISM’—four times higher than the previous 1930-1933 edition. In 1936 alone, nearly 4.5 million Catholic pamphlets were sold —more than double that of 1926— and Communism had become the most ‘in demand’ topic.[592]

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[589] Anonymous author cited in Charles R. Gallagher, ‘Decentering American Jesuit Anti-Communism: John LaFarge’s United Front Strategy, 1934–39,’ *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 5 (2018), 103.

[590] Dianne Kirby, ‘The Roots of the Religious Cold War: Pre-Cold War Factors,’ *Social Sciences*, 7:56 (2018), 2.

[591] James Terrence Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962* (Chapel Hill, NC.: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 153; Korinko, ‘The Construction of the American Catholic Church,’ 86-7; Gallagher, ‘Decentering American Jesuit Anti-Communism,’ 103; see also Charles J. McNeal, ‘Priest Stresses Need of Catholic Works: Literature is Means of Influencing Thought,’ *The Denver Catholic Register*, 4 February, 1937, 1-4.

[592] Willging, *The Index to American Catholic Pamphlets*, Volume I; Frank, 'Prelude to Cold War,’ 39.

Publishers and Authors

Catholic publishers were plentiful in 1930s America, and produced millions of pamphlets to inform readers of Communism's atheistic, materialistic and immoral teachings. Among the most prolific were the America Press, the Queen's Work, Paulist Press, Our Sunday Visitor, International Catholic Truth Society, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference. These pamphlets, mostly written by priests, were distributed and used in a variety of ways. As Eugene P. Willging, pamphlet collector at the time and author of four volumes of *The Index to American Catholic Pamphlets,* described:

> Pamphlets are being sold in parish racks; they are being used in colleges, high schools and elementary schools for textual purposes and for supplementary reading; priests are finding them invaluable in preparation of sermons and instructions; librarians are besieged by students who want this concise and popular form of literature.[593]

Beyond these educational outlets, as Korinko writes, Catholic pamphlets began to appear in public locations such as 'hotel lobbies, hospitals, libraries, bus stations, and train stations,' which demonstrated that many of these pamphlets were also intended to be read by non-Catholics.[594] Study clubs were abundant among the various Catholic organizations, and pamphlets were often used as the basis of, or to support, group discussions.[595]

The Queen's Work

The Queen's Work was among the most prolific publishers of pamphlets on Communism in the 1930s. It was the headquarters of the Central Office of the Sodalities of Our Lady, and was best known for its magazine of the same name which had a circulation of

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[593] Willging, *The Index to American Catholic Pamphlets,* Volume I, 1.

[594] Korinko, 'The Construction of the American Catholic Church,' 88.

[595] McNeal, 'Priest Stresses Need of Catholic Works,' 5.

approximately 100,000.[596] The Queens Work was directed by Daniel A. Lord, a highly popular figure especially among young Catholics who took a special interest in the propaganda potential of literature. Lord saw Communism as 'a militant, orchestrated, and comprehensive attack on Christian civilization,' against which the Church needed to wage an ideological battle, and saw literature—especially pamphlets—as fundamental in such a campaign.[597] Lord was acutely aware of the dominance that radicals had over the pamphlet format, remarking that 'communists, socialists, atheists, and many of the Protestant groups know the power of the printed word and broadcast their pamphlets and tracts through the land.'[598] He continued:

> A Catholic pamphlet left on a street car, at a library, or in any public place may be a sown seed that will later blossom into a conversion. The pamphlet may be the means of strengthening a fellow Catholic who is wavering in his faith. It may give pause to one on the verge of radicalism or despair.[599]

Lord even wrote a poem on pamphleteering and Catholic literature, titled *The Battle of the Books— Style 1935*:

> We'll shoot them with pamphlet and paper and book.
> We'll shoot them with poem and play.
> They crouch in their terror 'neath' ramparts of error.
> Who's going with us to the fray?[600]

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[596] Korinko, 'The Construction of the American Catholic Church,' 88; Gallagher, 'Decentering American Jesuit Anti-Communism,' 111.

[597] Arnold Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem: The Catholic Literary Revival and the Cultural Transformation of American Catholicism, 1920-1960* (London: Greenwood Press, 1990), 49.

[598] *Pamphlet News*, second edition, cited in Korinko, 'The Construction of the American Catholic Church,' 88.

[599] Daniel A. Lord, cited in Korinko, 'The Construction of the American Catholic Church,' 88.

[600] cited in Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem,* 49

The Queens Work produced pamphlets aimed at students, 'married couples, members of the Armed Services, or prospective converts', and distribution was typically in the tens of thousands.[601] They also produced a 'Queen's Work's Study Club' series of pamphlets, whereby after each section the pamphlet would pose questions for groups to consider. The pamphlet *Godless Communism,* for example, asks students such questions as: 'How is communism seeking to destroy Christian civilization and the Christian religion? What makes the present procedure different from that used among barbaric people?'[602]

Lord himself authored over 300 pamphlets in his career, following his own credo that 'spreading good Catholic literature is certainly a form of active Catholicity.'[603] They were often quirky, frank texts, and were frequently given seemingly provocative titles in order to attract attention, such as *Murder in the Classroom* (1931), *What Catholicity and Communism Have in Common* (1936), *Of Dirty Stories* (1935) and *The Church is a Failure?* (1939).[604]

But Lord's pamphleteering went beyond the written word, as he also took great care in developing the aesthetic appeal of Queen's Work publications. 'We have always considered the covers of our pamphlets as one of the most essential factors,' Lord stated. 'When we entered the pamphlet business, the covers of the pamphlets were one color, one tone,

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[601] Ames, 'Catholic Pamphlets and Pamphleteers,' 9.

[602] J. Roger Lyons, *Godless Communism* (St Louis, MO.: Queens Work, 1937), 31.

[603] Korinko, 'The Construction of the American Catholic Church,' 88.

[604] *ibid.*, 89; John C. Bates, 'Father Daniel A. Lord, S.J., and Catholic Action In Western Pennsylvania 1925-1954,' *Gathered Fragments*, 29 (2019), 6.

extremely unattractive, and the pamphlets were sold entirely on the basis of the content.'[605] Thus the Queen's Work pamphlets were notable for their glossy and eye-catching designs. Though this made them more costly to produce, Lord considered it a valuable investment. But they didn't stop there: To show off the designs of these pamphlets, the Queen's Work constructed a 'pamphlet rack' which would be distributed with the pamphlets themselves, which was built in such a way as to show off the entirety of the pamphlet's cover to a passing audience.[606]

Paulist Press

Originally founded as the Catholic Publication Society in New York in 1866, Paulist Press became one of the leading pamphlet publishers of the twentieth century. Particularly in the mid- to late- 1930s it printed a series of anti-communist pamphlets which were written in large, clear, accessible language—often in question and answer format (or catechisms)—and would typically cover the very 'basics' of communist theory and the Catholic opposition to it. Clearly aimed at a younger audience, they included titles such as *The Tactics of Communism, Liberty Under Communism, Just what is Communism?, American Democracy vs. Racism, Communism.* They were designed to have particularly eye-catching covers; designs were bold and in some cases rather sensationalist, and often used dramatic typography. For example, the 1935 pamphlet *Communism and Morals* featured a severe black and red art-deco style cover *(fig.* 23).[607]

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[605] Korinko, 'The Construction of the American Catholic Church,' 89.

[606] *ibid.*

[607] *Communism and Morals* was also reissued with the same design with the title *Morals and Moscow*.

A frequent author of Paulist Press pamphlets was Father Raymond T. Feeley, who wrote in a very familiar, disarming style intended for younger readers. His *Just What is Communism* begins with the dialogue:

> "What's wrong with Communism anyway?"—
> "If one would leave out the atheism and some of the Soviet ideas on women, Communism wouldn't be a bad thing, would it?"
> These questions are being asked by thousands today and every intelligent man and woman demands a reply that is at once clear, authentic and convincing.[608]

Feely also applied this self-aware tone in *Communism and Morals*, in which he opens with a (presumably fictionalised) conversation with a friend:

> A few weeks ago, a friend of mine cynically laughed, when in response to his query, I told him that the next pamphlet in the series, "The Case Against Communism," would be titled "Communism and Morals." "A catchy title," he scoffed, "but if you're serious about combatting Communism in America, you won't waste your time on the moral issue. People today are concerned with jobs, not with the Ten Commandments. Why pen off on a lot of stuff about marriage and divorce, abortion and loose sex relations? Twenty years ago these things might have shocked America; today, it's just life, whether in the U. S. S. R. Or the U. S. A."[609]

Explicitly aimed at young Catholics was the 1936 pamphlet *A Catechism of Communism for Catholic High School Students,* written by an anonymous 'Passionist Father.' This pamphlet utilises an aesthetic which could potentially be confused with that of a left-wing pamphlet; using a Lissitzky-influenced style, reminiscent of the famous *Red Wedge (fig.* 24). Though such dramatic covers may have been simply used to make them more eye-catching, there may have also been an intention to attract young students who were potentially interested

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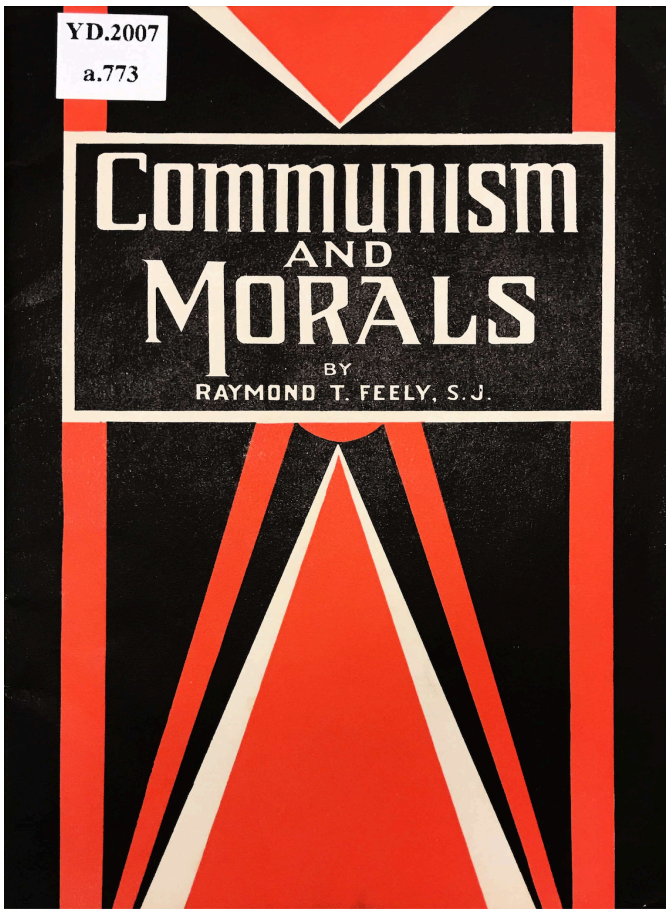
[608] Raymond T. Feely, *Just What is Communism?* (New York, NY.: Paulist Press, 1935), 3.

[609] Raymond T. Feely, *Communism and Morals* (New York, NY.: Paulist Press, 1935), 3. See also Raymond T. Feely, *Moscow and Morals* (New York, NY.: Paulist Press, 1935)



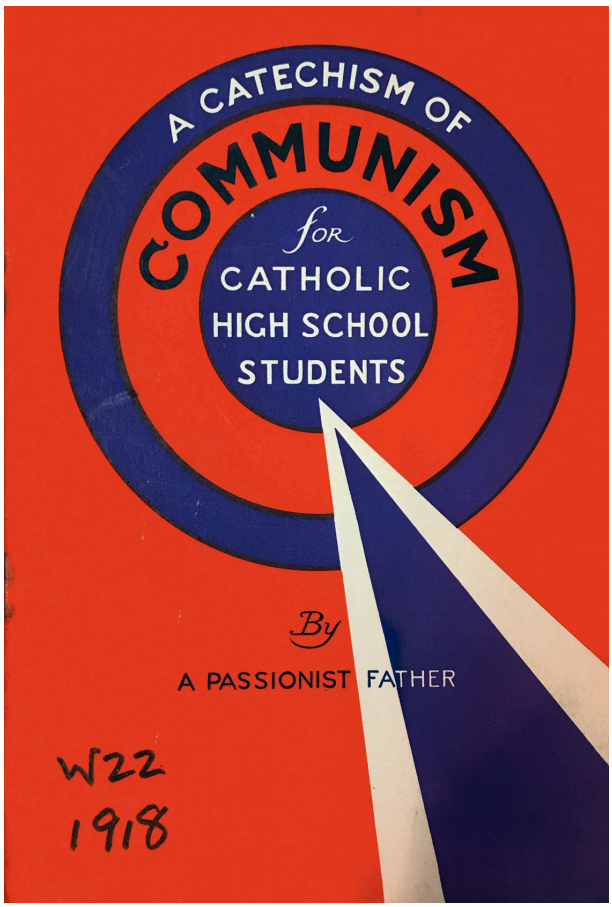


Figure 23 (left): Raymond T. Feely, *Communism and Morals* (New York, NY.: Paulist Press, 1935). Figure 24 (right): *A Catechism of Communism for Catholic High School Students* (New York, NY.: Paulist Press, 1936) Images courtesy of the British Library.

in Communist literature or attracted by the avant-garde, with the intention that they may read the pamphlet and see the error of their ways. The pamphlet warns the reader that Communists 'know that it is quite easy to abuse the simplicity, generosity and ignorance of youth' and warns that the 'public schools are in grave danger, due to the activities of Communists.'[610] In keeping with the tradition of the *Index Liborum Prohibitorum*, it instructs boys and girls:

> If anyone should give you Communist books or pamphlets or papers, you should tear them up at once. If any of your teachers or your companions at school should

[610] *A Catechism of Communism for Catholic High School Students* (New York, NY.: Paulist Press, 1936), 16-17.

> try to talk Communism to you or your classmates you should report them to the authorities.[611]

Paulist Press also often printed the works of Father Fulton J. Sheen, such as *Liberty Under Communism* (1936) and *The Tactics of Communism* (1936). Sheen, described by Charlotte Ames as 'one of the most dramatic and dynamic pamphleteers in the twentieth century,' had gained a significant amount of popularity from his *Catholic Hour* radio broadcasts throughout the 1930s, run by the National Council of Catholic Men.[612] Within Sheen's first year on the show, hundreds of thousands of letters from listeners were received requesting transcripts of his talks, which would go on to be released as pamphlets in a series known as the 'Catholic Hour Booklets', which the publishing house Our Sunday Visitor would print and distribute.[613] Sheen 'helped to underline the patriotism in his talks which made him so popular' by linking his Catholic message with anti-communism, and he became so well regarded that *Time* magazine commended him for his contributions in making religion 'sensible and attractive to great masses of people.'[614]

America Press

Perhaps the largest publisher of anti-communist pamphlets was the America Press, which was popular for its influential magazine *America*. Edited by Father Francis X. Talbot, *America* was considered the leading journal of the Catholic literary revival of the 1930s and

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[611] *ibid.*, 22.

[612] Ames, 'Catholic Pamphlets and Pamphleteers,' 6.

[613] Mark S. Massa, *Catholics and American Culture: Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and the Notre Dame Football Team* (New York, NY.: Crossroad Publishing, 1999), 90.

[614] *ibid.*, 90-1.

‘at the forefront of reporting and shaping Catholic public opinion.’[615] By 1936 America Press was already offering readers a ‘complete set’ of 19 pamphlets on Communism and the Spanish Civil War for a dollar, many of which included study group supplements. Most popular among America Press’ pamphlets were the numerous editions of the translated 1937 encyclical *Divini Redemptoris: On Atheistic Communism* from Pope Pius XI 1937, which took a definitive stance against the ‘satanic scourge’ of Communism and the Soviet regime, leaving little doubt as to the Church’s official position on international affairs.[616] America Press produced at least four separate runs of *Atheistic Communism*, totalling at least 65,000 copies, which were specially formatted for study clubs, featuring questions and references for readers.

A frequent author of America Press pamphlets on the Communist question was John LaFarge, assistant editor of *America*. LaFarge had hoped to form a more aggressive anti-communism than others in the Clergy, proposing a ‘United Front’ of Jesuit anti-Communists, to ‘gain control' of causes such as the peace and labour movements, as well as to ‘influence secular newspaper writers, American businessmen, and “Negro intellectuals”.’[617] His pamphlets included such titles as *Communism’s Threat to Democracy* (1937) and

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[615] Charles Gallagher, ‘“Correct and Christian”: American Jesuit Support of Father Charles E. Coughlin’s Anti-Semitism, 1935-1938,’ James Bernauer and Robert Aleksander Maryks (eds.), *Tragic Couple: Encounters Between Jews and Jesuits* (Boston, MA.: Brill, 2013), 299.

[616] Pope Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris: Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Atheistic Communism* (1937), URL: http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19370319_divini-redemptoris.html [Date Accessed: 13 January 2021]

[617] Peter McDonough, *Men Astutely Trained: A History of the Jesuits in the American Century* (New York, NY.: Free Press, 1994), 79; Gallagher, ‘Decentering American Jesuit Anti-Communism,’ 108.

Communism and the Catholic Answer (1936), which saw multiple editions printed, with print runs into the tens of thousands.

LaFarge had also formed the Catholic Interracial Council of New York in May 1934 and had become regarded as a 'national figure in ecumenicism and race relations,' as well as 'perhaps the single most human rights-oriented Catholic intellectual of the day.'[618] LaFarge reflected the increasing concern in the clergy about the influence of Communism among black workers. As the America Press pamphlet *Communism in U.S.A.* (*sic*.) highlighted in 1936:

> Easily the most spectacular increase, both numerically and from the standpoint of potential development, is the enrollment of more than 2,500 Negroes [to the Communist Party]. … The dynamic character of the Communist creed carries with it hope, aspiration, and daring to every Negro heart. To the simple-minded colored worker in field or factory, it seems the only ones who are willing and eager "to do something about improving conditions and situations" are the Communist agitators and organizers.[619]

To LaFarge, overcoming racism—both on a societal level and within the Catholic Church—would be vital in order to stop the spread of communism, and he would warn in his pamphlets about how the Communists used 'devious means to win the Negro in the South.'[620] However, despite LaFarge's reputation and influence at America Press, the publisher didn't produce pamphlets intended for Black Americans or that went into any depth about racism in America. In fact, LaFarge's major work on race in America, *Interracial Justice*—frequently advertised within America Press pamphlets—is a surprisingly condescending and convoluted text which above all appears intended to quell the concerns

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618 Gallagher, '"Correct and Christian",' 299.

619 Joseph F. Thorning, *Communism in U.S.A.* (New York, NY.: America Press, 1936)

620 John LaFarge, *Communist Action vs. Catholic Action* (New York, NY.: America Press, 1936)

of white Americans rather than to advocate for Black Americans. For example, in chapter seven, 'Social Equality and Intermarriage,' LaFarge (in an exceptionally convoluted manner) reassures readers that increased social equality won't encourage marriage between races:

> The writer has found no evidence to the effect that the establishment of friendly, just, and charitable relations between the Negro and white groups encourages any notable tendency to intermarriage. Such indications as there are seem to point in the contrary direction: that in proportion as the pressure of fear and insecurity is removed from the minority group and its status raised by education and improved welfare, spiritual and temporal, the better opportunity is afforded to its youth to find suitable life partners within its own numbers. … Where a few individual Negroes demand a disregard of such natural restraints, such an attitude is the consequence of a doctrinaire ideology, such as Communism; not of the traditional group attitude.[621]

Historian David W. Southern questioned LaFarge's authenticity and sincerity, and wrote that his 'aristocratic background and his Eurocentric bias, which often aided him in the racial apostolate, and in higher-echelon Catholic politics, saddled him with a lingering paternalism and ambivalence about black culture.'[622]

When race was mentioned within America Press pamphlets, it tended towards a paternalistic approach whereby Black Americans who were drifting leftward were seen as being misguided or hoodwinked by Communists: 'These sincere Communists who really believe that in Communism alone the salvation of the world depends. It is these we must rescue,' wrote Joseph C. Davoli in *Communism and the Masses:* 'Their zeal and energy

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[621] John LaFarge, *Interracial Justice: A Study of the Catholic Doctrine of Race Relations* (New York, NY.: America Press, 1937), 137-148.

[622] David W. F, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge, LA.: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), xix, xviii.

should be directed in the right path … Our American Negroes must be saved because they for the most part fall into this group.'[623]

Josephite Press

A smaller Catholic publisher which did produce pamphlets specifically about race and racism was the Josephite Press. It was the publishing house of the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, a Baltimore-based society of Catholic priests known as Josephites or Josephite Fathers, which produced pamphlets such as John T. Gillard's 1937 *Christ, Color & Communism; Negroes Do Think, As Communists Will Find Out, The Negro Challenges: Christianity, Communism, Catholicism.* They generally follow a relatively more liberal analysis and consider issues of social inequality and justice with more scrutiny than other pamphlet publishers, but remain clear in their overall aim of undermining Communist influence: 'On the surface it would seem that Russian red and American black is a coming color scheme. Why not? The Negro has a grievance. Christians refuse to heed it. Communism listens sympathetically. And when men are hungry and their children are fainting for bread, a promise seems better than a threat,' writes Father J. T. Gillard in one pamphlet: 'Unless we do something for the 12,000,000 colored citizens of this country and do it soon, we shall see the Communists swelling their ranks, Negro leaders nursing swelled heads, and the police getting "swell" exercise.'[624]

Charles E. Coughlin

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[623] Joseph C. Davoli, *Communism and the Masses* (New York, NY.: America Press, 1937), 5.

[624] J. T. Gillard, *The Negro Challenges: Christianity, Communism, Catholicism* (Baltimore, MA.: Josephite Press, 1937), 15, 24.

Among all the radio priests of 1930s America, there was none—priest or otherwise—more popular than the ferociously anti-Communist Father Charles Coughlin. He was the first Catholic in America to build a national political following, and his Sunday radio sermons attracted more than 30 million listeners. Coughlin, the 'Radio Priest of Flower Parish,' began as a supporter of Roosevelt and the New Deal, but by the mid-1930s began to describe the administration as Communistic and formed the National Union for Social Justice in 1936 to 'take a Communist out of the chair once occupied by Washington.'[625] To further extend his audience, his radio sermons were published by the Radio League of the Little Flower, and Coughlin would mail out hundreds of thousands of free copies. American Trotskyist Joseph Hanson described these pamphlets at the time as 'designed to appeal to those who have been crushed by the depression—the millions of unemployed, youth who see only a blank future, farmers facing ruin, those who see no more hope in Roosevelt's New Deal.'[626]

Coughlin had begun to show his inclination towards anti-semitic conspiracies since 1931, when in one of his many radio speeches he suggested that 'international financiers' had brought about the stock market crash of 1929, and attributed it to 'the inspiration of a Jew, Karl Marx.'[627] But it wasn't until 1938, when he returned from a brief retirement and gave a radio sermon—published as the pamphlet *Persecution—Jewish and Christian*— which

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[625] Heale, *American Anti-Communism,* 108.

[626] Joseph Hansen, *Father Coughlin: Fascist Demagogue* (New York, NY.: Pioneer Publishers, 1939), 5.

[627] Stephen E. Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Modern American Extremists and Extremist Groups* (Westport, CT., Greenwood Press, 2002), 73, cited in Gallagher, '"Correct and Christian",' 298.

implicated the Jews in Germany as responsible for their persecution due to their supposed inclination to Communism:

> There were definite causes that produced the effect known as Naziism. According to German statements the Jews were too closely interwoven with the growth of Communism in Germany; and Jews held many important positions in the Communist state of Russia, being responsible, in part, in financing the Russian Revolution.[628]

The pamphlet goes on to list Jews involved in the Russian Revolution, each listed alongside their 'real' (Jewish) name, and contains many other instances of support for fascism and anti-semitic conspiracy. In the same year, he began to publish the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in his newspaper *Social Justice*.[629] Coughlin would receive support from the fascist German American Bund, whose deeply antisemitic 1939 pamphlet *Free America* would list Coughlin's *Untermeyer Speech and Comments* alongside various other works linking Bolshevism and Judaism by the likes of Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels and anti-semitic conspiracy theorist Nesta Webster. The pamphlet declares:

> You have seen what "Free speech" over the Radio means by observing the experiences of Father Coughlin. He however, was cut off the big stations a week too late, so that the whole Country was able to see classic proof that there is no free radio for White Men who call Bolshevism by its proper name![630]

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[628] Charles E. Coughlin, *Persecution--Jewish and Christian and "Let Us Consider the Record"* (Royal Oak, MI.: Radio League of the Little Flower, 1938), unpaginated.

[629] Ronald H. Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews, and Italians of New York City, 1929-1941* (Baltimore, MA.: John Hopkins University Press, 2019), 94-5.

[630] *Free America: The Aims and Purposes of the German American Bund* (New York, NY.: German American Bund, 1939), 9.

Though Coughlin slid further and further into demagoguery and fascism throughout the decade, *America* magazine, particularly after 1936, was supportive of the radio priest. In 1938 the magazine's editor remarked 'We are backing Father Coughlin and wish him all success in his endeavors for the glory of God,' while LaFarge remarked that 'I think on the whole, his influence is good.'[631] As Charles Gallagher writes, even 'as Jewish groups placed mounting heavy pressure on Coughlin, the Jesuit relationship to Coughlin turned from public tepidity to behind-the-scenes collusion' and when the Catholic leadership should have begun to 'rein him in,' little if anything was done.[632]

Father Coughlin was among the most written-about anti-communists in Communist pamphlets throughout the decade, perhaps only surpassed by the right-wing media mogul William Randolph Hearst. Coughlin was plainly described in these pamphlets as an antisemite and fascist, as well as a 'traitor to American democracy', in keeping with the Communist Party's patriotic venture.[633] These included A. B. Magil's *The Truth About Father Coughlin* (1935), reissued in several editions in 1939 as *The Real Father Coughlin* and Alex Bittelman's *How to Win Social Justice: Can Coughlin and Lemke do it?* Also available was the Socialist Workers Party's 1939 pamphlet *Father Coughlin: Fascist Demagogue* by Joseph Hansen, which critiqued Coughlin in the context of the wider problems within America.[634]

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[631] Francis Talbot, SJ, to Edward Kirwin, March 1938, cited in Gallagher, '"Correct and Christian",' 309.

[632] *ibid*., 299-300.

[633] A. B. Magil, *The Real Father Coughlin* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1939), 17.

[634] A. B. Magil, *The Truth About Father Coughlin* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1935); Magil, *The Real Father Coughlin*; Alex Bittelman, *Social Justice: Can Coughlin and Lemke do it?* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1939); Hansen, *Father Coughlin*.

The National Catholic Welfare Conference

The National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), the coordinating body of Catholic priests, was also a producer of numerous pamphlets alongside its popular magazine *Catholic Action*, and sometimes published through the Paulist Press; for example *American Democracy vs. Racism¸ Communism* (1938) by Father John A. Ryan. Communism 'colored almost all of the NCWC's concerns,' though their pamphlets were often relatively less emotive and verbose and more matter-of-fact than others, for example their 1937 pamphlet *Communism in the United States: A Survey by the N.C.W.C. Department of Social Action* details the inner-workings of the American Communist Party and their various publications and front organisations.[635] These publications were also more cautious in their application of anti-communism, expressing concern that the aggressive approach taken by many anti-communists could inadvertently push people into the hands of radicalism:

> The old Liberalistic day is passing, many gladly think, and some, while accepting neither common ownership nor revolution, believe in a vaguely collectivized society or a large measure of public ownership and do not yet sharply distinguish between legislation for some public ownership and the Communist aim. Being often called Communists and hearing their ideas called Communist makes some of them vaguely sympathetic towards the Communist thesis.[636]

This more nuanced approach was promoted by NCWC's Department of Social Action led by Reverend R. A. McGowan, who for many years cautioned against the potentially adverse effects of aggressive anti-communism and promoted civil liberties and social justice as a remedy. He first outlined this in his 1920 pamphlet, *Bolshevism in Russia and America¸*

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[635] Moreno, 'The National Catholic Welfare Conference and Catholic Americanism,' iv.

[636] *Communism in the United States: A Survey by the N.C.W.C. Department of Social Action* (Washington D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1937), 10.

published on behalf of the NCWC through the Paulist Press. Though certainly opposed to communism, the pamphlet makes a surprisingly tempered evaluation of the Russian Revolution and the radical American labor movement and avoids moralising or sensationalism. It even cites the works of Lenin, Trotsky and John Reed to inform the pamphlet. McGowan instead calls for the adoption of progressive policies as a way to combat the appeal of communism, in keeping with his role as head of the NCWC's Department of Social Action, which was dedicated to defending civil liberties and promoting social justice. McGowan remained overall consistent in his attitude to Communism throughout his career, and fifteen years later would repeat his call for progressive reform to fight Communism in the November 1935 issue of *Catholic Action*, and again five years later in a 1940 pamphlet by the American Association for Economic Freedom entitled *Unemployment Must Be Abolished!*[637]

The more progressive approach taken by McGowan, alongside other prominent Catholic figureheads such as Monsignor John A. Ryan, who took leadership of the Social Action Department in the 1930s, was reflective of a 'long-standing Catholic doctrine on the dignity of labor, as expressed in the papal encyclicals *Renan Novanan* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931),' writes Lisa C. Moreno. 'Catholic proponents of Americanization believed that trade unionism offered a positive alternative to socialism and a means for the largely lower class Catholic worker to assimilate into American society.'[638] This had motivated the Church's involvement with the Knights of Labor in the late nineteenth century, and later in

[637] R. A. McGowan, 'A Cure for Communism,' *Catholic Action*, 17:11, November 1935, 15-16; *Unemployment Must Be Abolished!* (Washington, D.C: American Association for Economic Freedom, 1940).

[638] Moreno, 'The National Catholic Welfare Conference and Catholic Americanism,' v.

1937 the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, of which one of its main objectives was to 'resist Communist influence,' particularly within the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).[639] These more liberal figures and organisations were in some way as anti-communist as any other Catholic group in America, but saw that the defeat of radicalism could be achieved best through ideologically isolating it and dampening its appeal through social reform and trade union support. Indeed, the Communist Party was aware of this 'softer' approach, as Bennett Stevens highlights in the 1935 pamphlet *The Church and the Workers:*

> This has always been the guiding principle of the work of the Department of Social Action of the National Catholic Welfare Conference whose director is the "liberal" John A. Ryan. "Justice to the working man" has been a slogan to keep workers under the church's domination and to prevent them from participating actively in a movement that has for its aim the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a government that serves the interests of the masses.[640]

The activities of the Department for Social Action wasn't necessarily reflective of the NCWC as a whole, however, which cooperated with and promoted the works of other Catholic publishers and often published their writings through the Paulist Press, such as was the case with Father John A. Ryan's *American Democracy vs. Racism, Communism* (1938). The NCWC also produced at least three print runs—at least 75,000 copies—of the Pope's encyclical *Atheistic Communism*. They also produced small bibliographies in pamphlet format, most notably their *Bibliography on Communism* which advertised nearly 30 anti-communist pamphlets from various other publishers, including some of the more contentious pamphlets of Father Edward Lodge Curran's International Catholic Truth Society.[641]

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[639] Heale, *American Anti-Communism,* 116.

[640] Bennett Stevens, *The Church and the Workers* (New York, NY.: International Publishers, 1935), 18-19.

[641] *Bibliography on Communism* (Washington D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, n.d.).

Other Pamphleteers

Curran, described by J. David Valaik as 'an East-Coast counterpart to Father Coughlin,' had a large following in New York City, and also ran an anti-Communist organisation called the American Association Against Communism, aka the 'Triple A-C'.[642] Curran wrote front-page columns for Coughlin's *Social Justice* magazine, and supported the Christian Front organisation, 'whose *modus operandi* was to instigate violence by sending anti-Semitic soapbox orators into Jewish neighborhoods' in Brooklyn.[643] Believing that 'every piece of communistic propaganda in the nation must be met and surpassed by "truth propaganda",' the International Catholic Truth Society produced a large number of pamphlets, often focused on international affairs—particularly the enthusiastic defence of General Franco and the Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War.[644] In one notable pamphlet titled *I was a Communist!* (1936), the author purports to be in discussion with an ex-communist who fled the Soviet Union and recalls the suffering in the Soviet Union, who remarks: 'I'd rather be a Jew in Germany under Hitler than a Russian peasant or worker in Russia under

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[642] J. David Valaik, 'American Catholic Dissenters and the Spanish Civil War,' *The Catholic Historical Review*, 53:4 (1968), 553; 'Anti-Reds Start Drive: Brooklyn Group Opens Street Corner Appeal for Funds' *New York Times*, 12 June 1937, 3.

[643] Matthew J. O'Brien, 'Lost in Translation: William Donohue and the Recent Controversies of the Catholic Church in Ireland', in David Carroll Cochran and John C. Waldmeir (eds.), *The Catholic Church in Ireland Today* (London: Lexington Books, 2015), 118.

[644] 'Call for a Campaign Against Communism: Catholic Press Convention…' *New York Times*, 20 May, 1938, 8. The international Catholic Truth Society was originally founded in 1900 to provide information refuting nativist accusations against Catholics in America. For further biographical information on Curran see *ibid.*, 115-6.

Stalin.'[645] Curran also shared platforms with the likes of Elizabeth Dilling for such events as a 'Pro-American Rally' in 1938, sponsored by various veteran and civilian patriotic groups, and of which Fritz Khun, head of the fascist German American Bund, was reported to be in attendance.[646]

Other pamphlets of note include *Wolves In Sheep's Clothing* (1937) published by the women's Catholic organisation, Sodality Union of Washington D.C.[647] Written as a catechism, it is a deeply antisemitic text describing communism as a 'criminal conspiracy' led by 'occult forces' with 'great financial resources', posing such questions as 'Is there any doubt or question about the communist seizure of Russia in November 1917 having been the work of international plotters?' To which the pamphlet answers:

> Absolutely none. Many of the leaders came from a variety of Nations, including the United States, a great many coming from the East Side of New York, under the leadership of one Bronstein (called Comrade Trotzky). Many leaders sought to conceal their real identities by taking Russian names. Thus, not only was Bronstein changed to Trotsky, but Finkelstein was changed to Litvinov, Rosenfel to Kamenev, Apfelbaum to Zinoviev, etc.[648]

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[645] Alexei B. Liberov, *I was a Communist!* (Brooklyn, NY.: International Catholic Truth Society, 1936), 8. The authenticity of the author's name is very questionable and likely made up to sound more legitimately Russian. The pamphlet somewhat amusingly verifies its assertions in its opening pages: 'N.B. The facts mentioned in this story can be verified by anyone who *really* knows actual conditions in Russia today.'

[646] '2,000 Attend Rally to Denounce Reds,' *New York Times,* 31 October, 1938, 10.

[647] *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings Before a Special Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Seventy-fifth Congress, Third Session on H. Res. 282* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938), 3032.

[648] George Edward Sullivan, *Wolves in Sheep's Clothing* (Washington D.C.: Sodality Union, 1937)

This preludes recommendations of the work of Nesta Webster among many pages of far more explicit diatribes about the 'alarming extent of Jewish participation in communist activities' and assertions that 'Worthy members of the Jewish race should courageously make their identities and attitudes known.'[649]

Finally, the Catholic Library Service, a mail lending service for study clubs and publishers of the index series of Catholic pamphlets by Eugene P. Willging, produced an eccentric 1938 pamphlet *How Communism Works,* part of what appears to have been a quickly-defunct pamphlet series called 'Telling Facts Concerning Communism.'[650] It featured on its front cover a large red octopus with the face of Stalin, spreading its tentacles to various parts of the world—America, South America, Spain, and of course, Russia. Underneath it urges the reader to 'KEEP THIS PAMPHLET MOVING!' (*fig.* 25). Inside it explains that it would like to see the pamphlets 'distributed by pastors at the church door' and that Dr. Igino Giordani of the Vatican Library 'authorizes us to say that the Holy Father feels that a pamphlet campaign is very important at this time.'[651] Among the more outlandish of the Catholic anti-communist pamphlets of the time, one of its more intriguing claims was that Leon Trotsky was 'leading the vanguard of world revolution' from Mexico. 'Do not be misled by the carefully-fostered legend that Trotsky, broken and ruined, in exile from the Soviet Utopia,

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[649] *ibid.*, 27-37.

[650] *How Communism Works*; Anne Klejment, '"Catholic Digest" and the Catholic Revival, 1936-1945,' *U.S. Catholic Historian,* 21:3, (2003), 92. The 'Telling Facts Concerning Communism' series appears to have only produced three issues, the first being in November 1938 and its final issue in January-February 1939.

[651] *How Communism Works,* 2.

languishes in the nostalgic shadows of Popocatypetyl,' it declares, 'Wherever Leon Trotsky moves, follow the forces of world revolution.'[652]

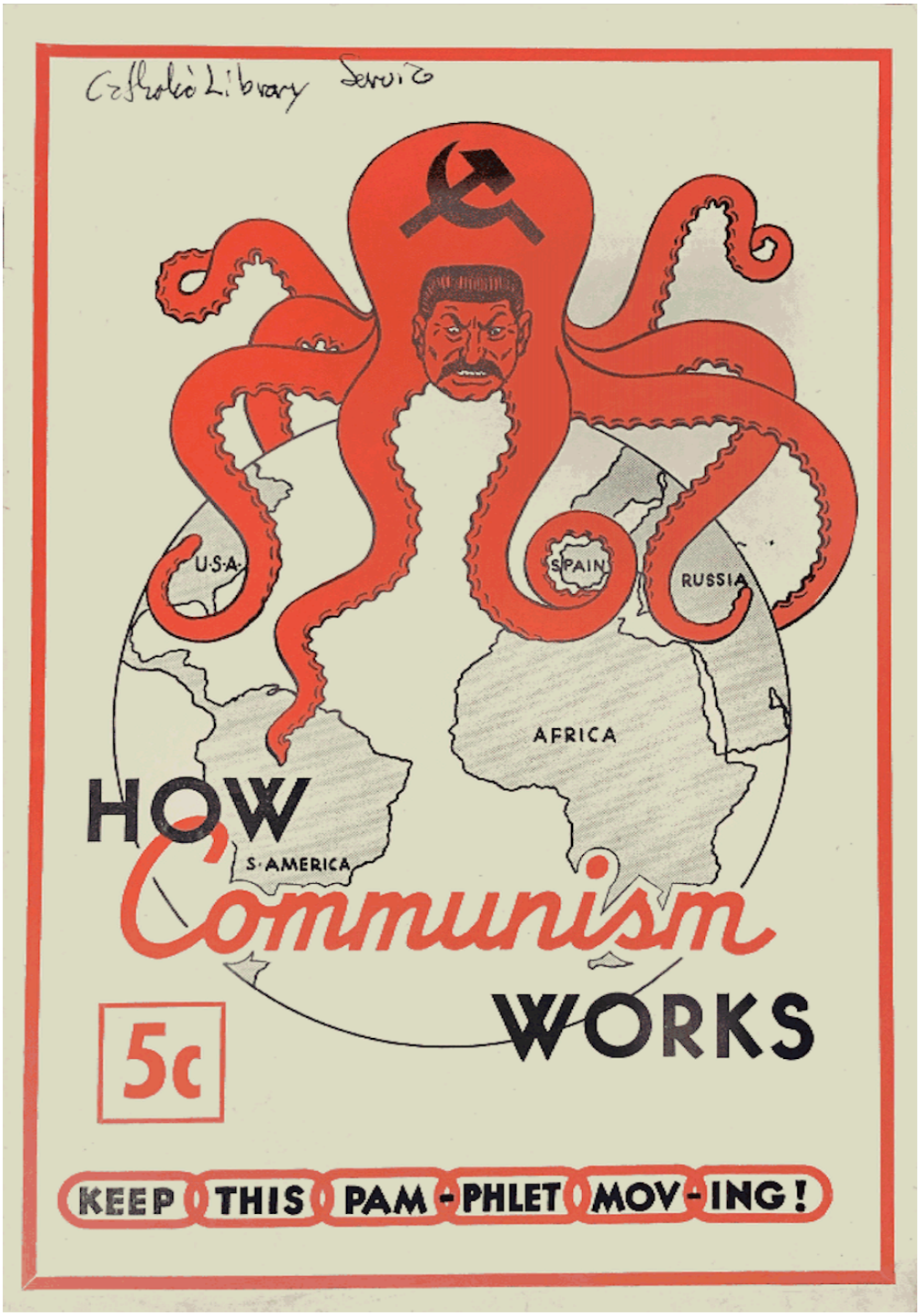

Figure 25: *How Communism Works* (St Paul, MN.: Catholic Library Service, 1938) Image courtesy of the Catholic University of America's Rare Books Collection.

652 *ibid.*, 30-31.

International Communism and the Spanish Civil War

Anti-Communism among Catholic pamphleteers in the US reached its apex at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, as General Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces attempted to overthrow the elected Popular Front (Republican/Loyalist) government. Fearing the Republicans for their socialism and anti-clericalism, the Catholic Church put its weight behind the Italian and German-backed Nationalists. Within only the first year of the war, pamphlets on the topic of Spain made up over a thousand entries in the *Catholic Periodical Index*, as 175 members of the Catholic clergy and laity formally threw their support behind Franco's rebellion against the Popular Front forces in Spain.[653] As Donald Prudlo has summarised, in the years leading up to the war, there had been an '*ad hoc* alliance between the liberal intelligentsia of the United States and American Catholics united in common concerns for social justice and military isolationism,' which ruptured under the pressure of the diverging opinions on the situation in Spain.[654] The Church had now become a 'vanguard' of a minority in America who supported Francoist forces, and pamphlet authors worked to defend such a stance without appearing to compromise their commitment to the 'democratic values' of American society.[655]

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[653] Willging, *The Index to American Catholic Pamphlets,* Volume I; Wilson D. Miscamble, 'The Limits of American Catholic Antifascism: The Case John A. Ryan,' *Church History*, 59:4 (1990), 533; Frank, 'Prelude to Cold War,' 39.

[654] Donald Prudlo, 'American Catholics and the Spanish Civil War,' *Faith and Reason,* 31:2 (2006), 243-273.

[655] Frank, 'Prelude to Cold War,' 43.

One of the primary ways in which some of the more 'moderate' Catholic pamphlet publishers tried to manage this difficult position by applying a certain vagueness in discussing—if mentioning at all—Franco or the Nationalist forces in their pamphlets. Instead, they concentrated on publicising the tactics and ideology of the 'Marxist' Loyalist forces—especially what they described as its 'foreign' element—such as in the America Press pamphlet *Communism in Spain* (1937) and Paulist Press' *Spain's Struggle Against Anarchism and Communism* (1938). The latter only at one point acknowledges the Nationalists in order to clumsily defend them against charges of fascism:

> And why Fascist? Because they rose against a tyrannical and factious government, because they opposed armed force and the establishment in their country, where individual, personal freedom has always been sacred, of a Marxist dictatorship? If that were enough to make one a Fascist, then the word Fascist would be a title of honor.[656]

Other pamphlets which did discuss the Nationalists tended to be defensive, and play down or distort the Nationalists' political allegiances and intentions. In the NCWC's pamphlet, *Insurrection in Spain* (1937), the author William F. Montavon, while diffident in his support for Franco, refers to the American War of Independence to justify the Nationalist insurrection:

> …at the very foundation and root-stem of our own political independence, lies the doctrines that a people has the right to defend itself against an unjust aggressor, even when that aggressor is the legally constituted government. A just war of defense is not rebellion.[657]

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[656] Genadius Diez, *Spain's Struggle Against Anarchism and Communism* (New York, NY.: Paulist Press, 1938), 16.

[657] William F. Montavon, *Insurrection in Spain* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1937)

America Press' 1937 pamphlet *Spain in Chains*, authored by leader of the Nationalist-supporting Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA) and Acción Popular in Spain, Jose Maria Gil Robles, claims that 'temporary' implementation of a military regime in Spain will be necessary to repair the 'immense material damage caused by international Communism,' and denies accusations of fascism; a label the author claims has been given an 'unjust and derogatory meaning' by international Communists.[658] America Press were likely confident that readers would not have been aware of author Gil Robles' background; in particular, his enthusiastic attendance of the 1933 Nuremberg rallies, whereafter he asserted that '[I]n racist and fascist movements, apart from certain unacceptable things, there is much that is useful, provided that we mould it to our nature and immerse it within our doctrine.'[659]

Other pamphlets were more open in admiration for the Nationalists. Paulist Press' *The War in Spain* celebrates how the '[Nationalist] Movement has strengthened the patriotic sense against the exotic nature of the forces which are against it. … Whilst in the Marxist-held Spain people are living without God, in the unhurt or unvanquished regions Divine worship

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[658] Gil Robles, *Spain in Chains* (New York, NY.: America Press, 1937), 18-19.

[659] Translation my own. Original: 'En los movimientos racista y fascista, aparte de ciertas cosas inadmisibles, hay mucho de aprovechable, a condición de amoldarlo a nuestro temperamento y empaparlo de nuestra doctrina.' Roberto Mesa, 'La CEDA y la Segunda República', *El Pais*, 12 October 1977. See also Paul Preston, 'Spain's October Revolution and the Rightist Grasp for Power,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 10:4 (1975), 556.

is celebrated profusely and new manifestations of Christian life abound and flourish.'[660] Nevertheless, the pamphlet still fails to go into any detail of who the Nationalists are, or what they stand for.

Another common approach was to convey that readers had not been getting the 'full story,' due to biased or inaccurate reporting by other media outlets; 'we must state to you our sorrow for the ignorance which obscures the truth of what is happening in Spain. It is a fact … that the thought of a great sector of foreign opinion is disassociated from the reality of the events which have occurred in our country,' laments one Bishop in the America press pamphlet *Joint Letter of the Spanish Bishops*[661] Coughlin, in his infamous pamphlet *Persecution—Jewish and Christia*n, states that the press of America has 'succeeded in muzzling the truth' about Spain—'the battleground of Communism versus Christianity.'[662] *How Communism Works* goes even further, claiming that the Soviets had told a reporter that '[i]t will be impossible for you to tell in America the conditions as they are in Spain, for we (the Communist Propagandists) control 80% of the press in the United States…'.[663]

Other publishers, however, showed completely uninhibited support for Franco and the Nationalists. None conveyed such unwavering support for the Generalissimo within their pamphlets as Father Edward Lodge Curran, whose International Catholic Truth Society

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[660] *The War in Spain* (New York, NY.: Paulist Press, 1937), 22-3. Also printed by America Press as *Joint Letter of the Spanish Bishops To the Bishops of the Whole World: The War in Spain* (New York, NY.: America Press, 1937)

[661] *Joint Letter of the Spanish Bishops,* 1.

[662] Coughlin, *Persecution--Jewish and Christian* (1938)

[663] *How Communism Works,* 3.

published numerous appraisals of him and his military campaign. In the 1937 pamphlet *Franco: Who is He? What does he fight for?* Curran lambasts the media in America throughout the pamphlet, which he claims has overwhelmingly 'thrown the weight of its influence on the side of the Spanish Loyalists,' and has 'emphasized the presence of German and Italian troops on the side of Franco.'[664] The pamphlet features numerous quotations from Franco himself, and goes into fawning detail about Franco's life and background:

> Small of stature—five feet five or six—he is large in mind. He is at home when working. Nothing escapes his attention. Clean of body, he is clean of soul. … He is humble, courageous, courteous and intelligent. He is calm in the face of fire. He is quiet in the presence of popular demonstrations. He is forgiving to his enemies. He is beloved by the Spanish people. He belongs to them.[665]

Curran, who also ran a campaign whereby '500 young women' collected funds for medical supplies to be sent to Franco's forces, even apologises to Franco himself, 'for the odious picture that the American Press has too often drawn of him.' Nevertheless, it is the 'real Americans,' Curran asserts, who sympathise with the Nationalists.[666] In fact, Curran was almost surprisingly transparent; in his pamphlet *Spain in Arms* (1937), presented as a catechism, he plainly states:

> The Rebels consist of Right Republicans, Liberals, Conservatives, Monarchists, Fascists, and all those, including the Catholics, who refused to stand for the

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[664] Edward Lodge Curran, *Franco: Who is he, what does he fight for?* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1937), 23-4.

[665] *ibid.*, 47.

666 'To Aid Spanish Fascists: 500 young women to seek funds here for medical supplies,' *New York Times,* 1 December 1936, 15; Curran, *Franco: Who is he, what does he fight for?,* 4-7.

> surrender of the Spanish government to Communism. … Since the fascists form only a part of the Rebels it is not correct to call them all Fascists.[667]

Though Curran's pamphlets were especially obsequious, they weren't anomalies in their full-throated support for Franco. Our Sunday Visitor published a similarly fawning appraisal of Franco in *Christian Civilization Versus Bolshevist Barbarism* by a Reverend M. D. Forrest, who informs readers how the 'the brave, chivalrous, patriotic Francisco Franco,' who he compares to George Washington, is waging a 'just war and acting as a chivalrous, Christian officer' against the 'Spanish gang that took the reins of government in February, 1936.'[668] Even those pamphlets which avoided the mention of Franco or the background of the Nationalists would recommend the more unabashedly pro-Franco pamphlets for further reading.[669]

Certainly, if pamphlets were hesitant to go into detail about the ideology of the Nationalist forces in Spain, mention of Franco's military backing from Italy and Germany was even less common. One priest who defied this taboo, however, was the popular Daniel A. Lord, in what was likely his most idiosyncratic pamphlet, *What's the Matter with Europe?* (1937):

> We hear the objection also that, because Hitler and Mussolini are aiding Franco and his forces, the latter must be Fascists. One might just as well 'contend that,

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[667] Edward Lodge Curran, *Spain in Arms* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1936), 4-5

[668] M. D. Forrest, *Christian Civilization Versus Bolshevist Barbarism* (Detroit, MI.: Our Sunday Visitor, c. 1937), 8.

[669] For example, the National Catholic Welfare Conference's *Bibliography on Communism* recommends two of Curran's pamphlets, while America Press' *Joint Letter of the Spanish Bishops* (1937) references Curran's *Franco: Who Is He? What Does He Fight For?* (1937)

Figure 26: the front (left) and back (right) covers of Daniel Lord, *What's the Matter With Europe?* (St Louis, MO.: Queen's Work, 1937). Image courtesy of the Catholic University of America's Rare Books Collection.

> if Catholics accepted any help from Jews and Negroes in a just struggle against the Ku Klux Klan, Catholics would thereby become Jews and Negroes.[670]

The cover of Lord's pamphlet featured a map of Eastern Europe and an illustration of a bear, spitting blood from his mouth and brandishing a hammer and sickle (*fig.* 26). The back cover continues this map into Western Europe, where cartoon explosions are found on top of Spain and France, while Italy and Germany feature characters of Mussolini and Hitler respectively. That the front page of the pamphlet is the Soviet 'bear' while Hitler and Mussolini are relegated to the back is likely no mistake; Lord makes clear throughout the

[670] Forrest, *Christian Civilization Versus Bolshevist Barbarism*, 22.

pamphlet the primacy of the Communist threat above all, and as mentioned, Lord's particularity about the design of his pamphlets indicates that this presentation had been at least partially intended.

What's the Matter with Europe? Begins with Lord conveying the situation in Europe to the reader in a colloquial, almost light-hearted tone: 'It seems that Europe has suddenly gone crazy. … What made Europe turn from democracy to dictatorship?'[671] Yet it soon descends into a largely incoherent diatribe which parallels the world situation with the first 'Red Peril' — that is, 'the anti-moral, anti-Christ, tyrannical, warlike, international power known as Mohammedanism' against which the Popes launched the Crusades — 'the most misunderstood and most misinterpreted wars of history.' Lord explains that Spain is where 'the Moor conquered' turning 'churches into mosques' and, regarding Jews as 'the natural enemy of Christianity, made friends with the Jews and won them over to his side.'[672] Under the heading 'How Explain Antisemitism?' (*sic*.) Lord laments:

> Sadly enough—and oddly too—for the millions of decent members of the Jewish race… the Jew has in many cases been connected in the European mind with the radical enemy …Outstanding Jewish communists have been at the head of Russian groups. Leon Blum of France, leader of the Popular Front, is a Jewish socialist. Austria had its share of Jews who were communistic and Red. It was a regrettably easy thing, then, for the dictators, notably Hitler, Dolfuss and Pilsudski, to join the cry of anticommunism the cry of antisemitism. … This, I repeat, is a sad condition when one remembers that the vast majority of the Jewish world has little or no sympathy with communistic radicalism.[673]

Such 'naming and shaming' of Jews on the Left only served to help promote the conspiracy theories rapidly gaining popularity at the time, and the posing of the issue in such a way

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[671] Daniel A. Lord, *What's the Matter With Europe?* (St Louis, MO.: Queen's Work, 1937), 1.

[672] *ibid.,* 6.

[673] *ibid*., 21-22.

throughout the pamphlet essentially follows the logic of Coughlin's infamous sermon, in which he also made the distinction between the 'good' and the 'bad' Jew. While Coughlin was criticised by some Jesuits for linking Jewish persecution in Germany to Communism, Lord repeated the same logic in his pamphlet without backlash; perhaps, as Lord notes, because he was following the example of the Pope himself:

> In the same way, the Holy Father has made overtures toward Hitler, a tyrant, possibly a paranoiac, certainly a man who is himself and is in many of his policies anti-Christian. Yet Hitler is at war with the common enemy. He is relentless in his attack upon communism. Even scamps may sometimes serve the greater cause. Is it not more than likely that the Holy Father sees things in this light?[674]

Indeed, as Peter McDonough writes, there was some acknowledgement that, while 'condemnations of communism alone could lead the [Jesuits] society into uncomfortable alliances,' at the same time senior Church figures saw that a 'strategy that tried to balance attacks on communism with criticism of fascism was also tenuous' due at least partly to the fact, as John LaFarge had noted at the time, that the 'Father General [Wlodimir Ledóchowski] will not approve a direct stand against Fascism.' Although LaFarge proposed to instead advocate 'a Christian program, positive and negative, that of itself will exclude Fascism. … Therefore it is not a nominal attack, but positive in our own program, and negative by the repudiation of the totalitarian state.'[675] In spite of this, LaFarge still failed to avoid indicating his ultimate preference for fascist methods in his 1937 pamphlet *Communism's Threat to Democracy*:

> Fascism as the use of strong-armed force and a dictatorial regime, may well be the only alternative when Communism has proceeded to overt acts. If legitimate government is reduced to impotence, as happened in Spain during

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[674] *ibid.,* 24.

[675] McDonough, *Men Astutely Trained,* 79.

> the first months of 1936, and Communism or anarchy, to use Mr. Trotzky's nice expression, seized power with a rifle in hand, then against overt acts overt force may be the only means for salvaging some semblance of order. Thereby I am not attempting to justify any existing dictatorial regimes in Europe. I merely say that as a general proposition, that it is perfectly conceivable that such a crisis might arise, … And I am convinced that the crisis did arise in Spain, and could only be met in the way that it is being met now.[676]

This line of thinking was applied across numerous Catholic pamphlets on Communism; for example, the author of Our Sunday Visitor's pamphlet *World War on God* declares:

> Let it be understood that in America we want neither Naziism, Fascism, Communism, nor any other form of dictatorship … However, we must keep in mind that Naziism and Fascism are the logical outcome of the reaction against Communism … Naziism and Fascism are, therefore, the indirect result of Communism: they are for the nations the natural expressions of the law of self-preservation, and are really emergency measures. … Neither Naziism nor Fascism however can be compared in ruthless destructiveness to Communism.[677]

While Coughlin may have been more brazen than others when he stated 'we are at the crossroads. One road leads toward fascism, the other toward Communism. I take the road to fascism,' he was not especially at odds with others in the Church.[678] Nevertheless, though one would be hard-pressed to find any pamphlets produced by an American Catholic publisher that didn't support the Francoist forces in Spain, there were two notable Catholic newspapers which refused to back ether side. The *Catholic Worker*, run by Dorothy Day, and *Commonweal*, edited by George N. Shuster, though unsupportive of the Loyalists, were highly critical of the fascist-backed Nationalists, and instead appealed for a negotiated

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[676] John LaFarge, *Communism's Threat to Democracy* (New York, NY.: America Press, 1937), 3.

[677] Victoria Booth Demarest, *World War on God* (Huntington, IN.: Our Sunday Visitor, n.d.), 20.

[678] Coughlin cited in Miscamble, 'The Limits of American Catholic Antifascism,' 533.

peace.[679] As Shuster of *Commonweal* declared, 'One's human affections for embattled priests … leads one to side with Franco, but one's love for the timeless mission of the Church leads one to believe that he may, after all, prove to be the greater of two evils.'[680] However, this was not an easy position to maintain, as they faced a severe backlash over this stance, with *Commonweal* losing more than a quarter of its subscriptions and Shuster eventually resigning his position at the magazine.[681]

Upon Franco's victory in Spain in 1939, the Catholic Press Association received a letter of thanks from the Spanish Ambassador to the United States, 'for presenting to its readers the underlying facts in the recent conflict in Spain.'[682] Several triumphant pamphlets were released celebrating the new Spanish leadership. America Press' 1939 pamphlet *New Spain* tells stories of triumphant reconstruction, 'social justice' and describes General Franco as 'nothing less than a great man'.[683] Despite its eventual triumph in Franco's victory, the Church's campaign remained relatively unpopular throughout, even among Catholics. Only around 39 per cent of the Catholics in America supported Franco's Nationalist Forces, and oral historian Donald F. Crosby notes that, in interviewing Boston Catholics about the

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[679] For more on *Commonweal,* see Rodger Van Allan, '"Commonweal" and the Catholic Intellectual Life,' *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 13:2 (1995), 71-86.

[680] *Commonweal,* April 23, 1937, 716, cited in Patrick J. McNamara, 'Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., and Catholic Anticommunism in the United States, 1917-1952,' Doctoral Thesis, Catholic University of America (2003), 157.

[681] Valaik, 'American Catholic Dissenters and the Spanish Civil War,' 541; *ibid.,* 158.

[682] Mary Lonan Reilly, *A History of the Catholic Press Association, 1911-1968* (Metuchen, NJ.: Scarecrow Press, 1971), 115.

[683] citation

Spanish Civil War he found 'people who said that they had disagreed with the Church's policy, but had been unwilling to form an organized movement of opposition.'[684] This was likely linked to a wider concern among the American public of the Church's prioritisation of fighting communism above fascism, which is perhaps best illustrated in a 1937 *New York Times* report on a street campaign to raise funds for Father Curran's American Association Against Communism:

> More than a score of youths and girls, rattling collection boxes and passing out circulars, took part in the campaign on Broadway. The circulars bore the heading: "Save the United States of America from Communism …" Knots of curious gather about the collectors as passersby plied them with questions, *many asking why the association did not also fight fascism*.'[685]

To be sure, there were almost no pamphlets produced by Catholic publishers exclusively on the topic of fascism; one of the only pamphlets to do so, John LaFarge's *Fascism in*

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[684] "A Gallup poll taken in December 1938 indicated that 39 percent of all American Catholics favored Franco and 20 percent favored the Loyalists; for Protestants the figures were 40 percent for the Loyalists and 10 percent for Franco. Among Catholics and Protestants who took sides (discounting those who favored neither side or had no opinion), 58 percent of the Catholics supported Franco and 42 percent supported the Loyalists,' Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict*, 91; Donald F. Crosby, 'Boston's Catholics and the Spanish Civil War: 1936-1939,' T*he New England Quarterly*, 44:1 (1971), 95-6.

[685] Emphasis my own. 'ANTI-REDS START DRIVE: Brooklyn Group Opens Street Corner Appeal for Funds' *New York Times*, 12 June 1937, 3.

Government and in Society (1938), praises the Italian government's fascist labour laws.[686] But of course, as has been demonstrated, Catholic pamphlets were abundant and uncompromising in their condemnation of Communism. But the pamphlets of American Catholics were not exceptional in their weak stance against fascism; in many ways they simply followed the instruction and example of the Vatican, whose campaign became 'imbricated with the racialized and nationalistic anti-communism of Nazi and Fascist forces' and whose key protagonists 'cooperated with Nazi, Fascist and proto-Fascist forces on the ground.'[687]

But indeed, as events unravelled and the Second World War broke out, the Church's position in international affairs could not be sustained. As Giuliana Chamedes writes, the Secretariat on Atheism would 'struggle to reconcile the contradictions that defined its anti-communist crusade,' and maintaining 'the fiction of an independent and genuinely supra-national anti-communist movement' became untenable, and the Secretariat on Atheism was abolished, as the Vatican declared neutrality in the war.[688]

Conclusion

Within many of these pamphlets, the intensity of anti-Communism bled into an implicit support for fascistic tactics and ideas. Though the likes of Father Coughlin, for example,

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[686] John P. Diggins, 'American Catholics and Italian Fascism,' *Journal of Contemporary History,* 2:4 (1967), 68; John LaFarge, *Fascism in Government and in Society* (New York, NY.: America Press, 1938). One of the few other pamphlets to focus on fascism was Lucey Cornelius, *What is Fascism?* (New York, NY.: America Press, 1939).

[687] Chamedes, 'The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, …,' 261.

[688] *ibid.*, 288.

were certainly more forthcoming in their support for fascism as a means of defeating communism and were problematic for Jesuits in America, the pamphlets of more moderate, or 'acceptable,' members of the Clergy failed to adequately challenge this approach, and in some cases tacitly endorsed such logic with little outcry. It is arguable that an anti-communism which could not adequately critique fascism could push readers to the more extremist arms of the likes of Coughlin and beyond. But there was also a potential inverse affect: as Earl Browder bragged in his 1939 pamphlet *Religion and Communism* the ferocity of such anti-communism leaves audiences 'curious to really learn something about this much-talked-of Communism, with the result that the circulation of our literature among Catholics is increasing by leaps and bounds.'[689]

Although the pro-Nationalist position held by most Catholic groups during the Spanish Civil War may have been a relatively unpopular position in America at the time, it would demonstrate a consistent and reliable anti-communism which would help contribute to Catholic assimilation into the 1950s.[690] The Vatican wasted no time restarting its anti-communist campaign once the war came to a close, and particularly worked to convince the American government that the Soviet Union was a threat to 'Christian civilisation.'[691] Joseph McCarthy would become the personification of Catholic anti-communism in the post-war era; as Diane Kirby put it, 'McCarthyism reflected the hallmarks of Catholic anti-communism and reflected the way in which the Christian struggle against secularization, the bête noir of the church in the nineteenth century, became merged in the twentieth with

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[689] Earl Browder, *Religion and Communism* (New York, NY.: Workers Library Publishers, 1939), 12.

[690] Moreno, 'The National Catholic Welfare Conference and Catholic Americanism,' iv.

[691] Chamedes, 'The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, …,' 288.

that against communism.'[692] In fact, 'to be an Irish Catholic became prima facie evidence of loyalty;' so much so that J. Edgar Hoover would seek out alumni of Catholic colleges as recruits for the FBI.[693] It would not be until the presidential inauguration of John F. Kennedy in 1961 that the intensity of anti-communism among American Catholics would begin to diminish.[694]

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[692] Kirby, 'The Roots of the Religious Cold War,' 4.

[693] Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture in America*, 153-4.

[694] See Richard Gid Powers, 'American Catholics and Catholic Americans: The Rise and Fall of Catholic Anticommunism,' *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 22:4 (2004), 17–35.

Conclusion

The Communist Party renamed its pamphlet publishing house after the war to the more innocuous 'New Century Publishers'. But it would not be much of a new century for the CPUSA, as its press entered a severe decline, reaching what the FBI described as a 'desperate situation' by the late 1950s. Although the heyday of the communist pamphlet was over, and the Second Red Scare and McCarthyite witch hunts were by now in full swing, the FBI remained cautious:

> [F]alling circulation and lack of funds are not new problems to communist propagandists. They have operated under adverse and critical conditions during practically the entire history of the American communist movement, but somehow the communist press has continued to function. When funds are lacking, publication is suspended for a period of time or the publication is reduced in size. When money is available, normal publication is resumed. If one publication is discontinued, another one usually takes its place. … [It] is making—and will continue to make—strenuous and unceasing efforts to revitalize its press and publications in order to reassert its power and influence over the American people via the printed word.[695]

The FBI's remarks about the communist movement's flexibility and resilience similarly applies to the historical role of the radical pamphlet, which despite its history of suppression was a persistent thorn in the side of the state and other authorities.

This thesis has mapped out the development and evolution of the pamphlet since its early modern inception, through to the pamphlet's development alongside the American labour movement and the creation of the modern communist pamphlet. Though often seen as a declining form of media in the twentieth century, this thesis has demonstrated that political pamphlets were still being printed and distributed in the hundreds of millions between the years 1917 and 1945 in America, and continued to fulfil a very specific role in political

[695] FBI, *Communist Propaganda in the United States*, 66-7.

discourse, even with the rise of cinema and radio. For Communists especially, the pamphlet was interconnected with its periodicals and the spoken word: newspaper and magazine articles and speeches would be purposely reformatted into pamphlets in order to spread the message as far as possible, while inversely the pamphlet could be used by speakers on the soapbox and as a means for public discussion and debate.

For historians, pamphlets bring alive the history of the Communist movement and can render it far more comprehensible than conventional historical narrative. The thesis illustrates how pamphlets were adopted by the Communist Party as part of their network of literature to teach and to propagandise, as well as to aid in carrying out internal leadership manoeuvres and factional battles. Through the pamphlet we are given a visual and literary understanding of the Party's evolution during the interwar period, and can trace the dramatic ideological changes in the Party and map its struggles to articulate its role and aims within American society.

The relationship between the Communist and anti-Communist pamphlets very much echoed that of pamphlet wars of previous centuries; initiated by a radical call and followed with a reactionary response. As this thesis has shown, this was particularly the case with regard to the topic of Americanism and the efforts by both sides to recruit working-class Catholics. It also has demonstrated that, despite the Communist Party's efforts to soften its image and moderate its rhetoric through its publications during its Popular Front period, its adversaries in many ways simply viewed the Party with even more suspicion.

Those with power and money still found pamphlets to be valuable tools for spreading counter-propaganda against Communists despite access to more popular mediums. These anti-communist pamphlets reveal how heavily the Bolshevik Revolution weighed on the minds of those with vested interests, and just how much they were willing to endorse in order to eliminate the threat of Communism at home. The plentiful pamphlets produced by Catholic publishers reflected the Catholic desire to assimilate into American society through anti-communism, but also show how the Spanish Civil War made this dichotomy more problematic and how pro-Franco Catholics contorted themselves to try justify their position.

By the outbreak of the Second World War, the pamphlet of twentieth century America had become distinct from its predecessors of centuries past: it had become a far more organised, coordinated affair with frequent integration of photography and illustration which particularly helped to build the appeal of the pamphlet and bring it to less literate audiences. Yet pamphlets still very much retained the rebelliousness that had made them such a controversial medium in early modern Europe: they still proliferated during times of political upheaval and uncertainty, they remained a vital medium for ideological disputes, and governments and reactionaries continued to attempt to suppress them in order to stifle political debate.

There is still a wealth of pamphlet material yet to be explored, and further research may help towards increasing awareness of the historical importance of pamphlets and of improving their preservation, categorisation and accessibility in archives and libraries. The pamphlets explored throughout this thesis are extremely engaging material and remain pertinent to many prominent debates in American political discourse today, including issues

of women's liberation, race and civil rights, the strategies of the left, and the rise of the far right. Moreover, they prompt questions about the way in which we communicate and spread ideas.

Certainly, while pamphlets are still used by political organisations today, it is in far smaller quantities and with much more limited reach than those of the period explored in this thesis. Though the rise of the internet likely has a lot to do with such a decline, there is no online medium that entirely replaces the pamphlet's unique qualities, and internet discourses can very often be confined to restricted readership from which the pamphlet usually seeks to free itself. If privacy online becomes more restricted, we may see a new upsurge in pamphleteering from radicals. Yet the decline of the pamphlet may also be a sign of a relative disorganisation of radicalism in contemporary society, and perhaps the return of the pamphlet will rely on a resurgence of a coordinated international movement as appeared in the interwar years.

Appendix:

American Political Pamphlets 1917-1945 at the British Library

The bibliography of American political pamphlets at the British Library began to be collated in 2017 as part of an AHRC-funded doctoral project, with the intention of promoting the material to researchers and the wider public. As of 2021, over 600 of the Library's American political pamphlets published between 1917 and 1945 have been collated. This is believed to be a near-exhaustive list of the Library's political pamphlet material pertaining to this period in American history. Approximately three-quarters of these pamphlets were purchased by the Library, with around 23 per cent being donations, and a dozen or so acquired through international exchange or legal deposit. As mentioned, a large proportion of these pamphlets were produced by left-wing, socialist, communist, and communist-affiliated organisations. The collection featured well-known literary figures such as John Steinbeck and John Dos Passos, three pamphlets of poetry by Langston Hughes, nine written by Upton Sinclair, and journalist Josephine Herbst also authors a pamphlet for the Anti-Nazi Federation.

The difficulty in defining the pamphlet can be observed in the British Library's catalogue, which does not have a specific classification for pamphlet material; a pamphlet appears simply as 'book' to readers exploring the catalogue. Certainly, the pamphlet is a *type* of book, but a reader hoping to specifically explore the Library's collection of American pamphlets would need to interrogate a plethora of search results, and would need to limit their search to specific authors or publishers. This ambiguity of the pamphlet's definition, as

discussed in this thesis, is also reflected in the various ways in which pamphlets have been preserved and stored by the British Library. With regard to its holdings of twentieth century American political pamphlets, a handful have been bound together to make a large book of pamphlets, all sharing the same shelf mark. These will either be part of a series published by the same publisher, or even just a collection of pamphlets which are by the same author or are of a similar period or topic. Though this can certainly be an effective way of preserving these items, it does in some ways undermine the pamphlet as a format and a piece of work in itself. More importantly, it can sometimes cause confusion in finding a specific item, and the tighter binding of the book can limit the accessibility and readability of the individual pamphlets. Other pamphlets will be available in the collection individually, in paper, cardboard or plastic pouches, or, unfortunately, no pouch at all. Those without adequate protection will inevitably suffer greater damage and decay over time.

The Library, however, appears to be becoming more conscious of the necessity to preserve pamphlet material with more care, and in 2009 the British Library's Conservation Department began an official assessment of pamphlet treatment in order clarify confusion among pamphlet material and advise ways in which to help remedy conservation issues.[696] The in-depth review recommended that pamphlets should no longer be 'bound in rigid, rounded and backed volumes,' as the practice was 'unsympathetic to pamphlet material,' and 'demonstrably detrimental to the individual items.' Instead, it was advised that, while they may take up more space, acid-free envelopes and polyester sleeves should ideally be used to 'secure the longevity of and access to the collection.'[697] Certainly, improvements to

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[696] Isabelle Egan and Ruth Stevens, 'A review of pamphlet treatments at the British Library—a collaborative approach,' *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, 34:2 (2011), 186-201.

[697] *ibid*., 196-7.

the categorisation and conservation of pamphlets would greatly improve accessibility and allow for more research on the pamphlet to be undertaken at the British Library.

An article further discussing the American political pamphlet project at the British Library is due to be published in the Electronic British Library Journal (eBLJ) in 2022, which includes a list of over 600 American political pamphlets collated from the Library's holdings.

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