University of Wisconsin Library

Manuscript Theses

Unpublished theses submitted for the Master's and Doctor's degrees and deposited in the University of Wisconsin Library are open for inspection, but are to be used only with due regard to the rights of the authors. Bibliographical references may be noted, but passages may be copied only with the permission of the authors, and proper credit must be given in subsequent written or published work. Extensive copying or publication of the thesis in whole or in part requires also the consent of the Dean of the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin.

This thesis by George P. Smith has been used by the following persons, whose signatures attest their acceptance of the above restrictions.

A Library which borrows this thesis for use by its patrons is expected to secure the signature of each user.

NAME AND ADDRESS

DATE
MARYIUS AND AMERICAN INTELLECTUALS IN THE
NINETEEN-Twenties: A CHAPTIR IN THE HISTORY OF
AMERICAN LIBERALISM

BY

GEORGE PHILIP PATRICK

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE
HISTORY
AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

1952
TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PREFACE
   P.1

II. PRELUDE
   p.11

     p.45

IV. THE LEFT WING INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT OF THE NINETEEN-THIRTIES.
     P.86
     A. The liberal press and Marxism, 1930-1936.
        p.90
     B. The intellectuals and the Communist Party, 1930-1935.
        p.103
        p.115
     D. Proletarian literature and Marxist literary criticism.
        p.123
     E. The collectivist movement in progressive education.
        p.133
     F. The Socialist Party moves towards and then away from the Popular Front.
        p.138
     G. The movement away from Stalinism after 1936.
        p.142
     H. The Marxist Quarterly and Science and Society.
        p.156
     I. The Popular Front and American Intellectuals.
        p.161

V. THE AFTERMATH OF THE THIRTIES.
   p.184

VI. CONCLUSION.
   p.206

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY.
I have tried sedulously not to laugh at the acts of men,
nor to lament them, nor to detest them, but to understand them."

—Baruch Spinoza, Tractatus Theologica-politicus. 1677.
PREFACE

Marxian socialism in the United States is a comparatively rare phenomenon today. Once-strong socialist groupings have become minute sects. Socialism no longer is a subject of much serious discussion among American intellectuals. Many of those who formerly wrote for the liberal and radical press on such subjects as Marxist theory, strikes, demonstrations of the unemployed, and political proletarian literature, today offer articles on the falseness of the Marxian philosophy, on the horrors of the Soviet Union, on existentialist philosophy, and on religion.

The Socialist Party is in the process of being decimated by the withdrawal of such leading party members as Maynard Krueger. Only a small, left-wing group of Marxists and pacifists within the Socialist Party is attempting to maintain some degree of political activity.

The Trotskyist movement, which in the depression years had considerable influence, especially among intellectuals who had broken with the Communist Party, has split into two minute warring factions. One of these factions, the Independent Socialist League, realistically
no longer considers itself a political party, concentrating its activities on trade-union work and education, and the other, the Socialist Workers' Party, puts an occasional candidate up for office.

The Communist Party, the strongest of the parties that claim to be of the left, has been completely discredited in the eyes of all except a small handful of the faithful. While it still continues to have a limited appeal, it has not been able to minimize the extent of its decay.

This virtual extinction of the Marxian socialist movement in the United States presents a striking contrast to the rest of the world where anti-capitalist parties, making an appeal to Marxist ideology, are either the dominant voice in national politics, or are in a very strong minority position. While this lack of a socialist movement in the United States is probably largely the result of the comparatively strong position of American capitalism, is this the only reason for the failure of Marxism in the United States?

1. It seems quite certain to me that to speak of the Communist Party as historically of the left, while accurate, is nevertheless misleading. Throughout this thesis I shall operate under the understanding that the Soviet Union is one of the great totalitarian states of history, antithetical to all democratic and socialist values, and that Stalinism, wherever it is found, is little more than an extension of Soviet diplomacy by other means, even though many Party members may not be aware of the Party's control by Soviet foreign policy.
It is only a crude economic determinism or a crude Marxism, that can maintain that radical thought and action are motivated solely by economic realities. While it is possible to roughly assert that in the period since the Enlightenment, and more particularly the final rise of the bourgeoisie to power in Western Europe in the nineteenth century, economic movements have been crucial for the overwhelming majority of significant large-scale events and social movements in the West, it is also true that for relatively small-numbers of people, philosophies, systems of thought and abstract ideologies have been of greater significance than economic motives, although the two have often interacted.

Therefore, while we certainly can attribute a certain degree of this similarity between the Dodo bird and the Marxian socialist movement in the United States to the relative success of the American social system in its own terms, these factors are hardly enough to account for this situation. Radicals in our culture are people who are usually more impressed and concerned with intellectualizing and with abstract ideological symbols than with the less complex material symbols, and therefore are not largely dependent on economic motives for their being.

We must therefore, it would seem, search for those factors which have destroyed the intellectual leadership of the left.
among certain segments of the population, and which has led to the profound disillusionment with the symbols, systems, and patterns of Marxism.

2. Marxism it must be remembered throughout is both a philosophic system and a plan of immediate political action. While this fits the Deweyian concept of an idea as a plan of action, nevertheless the philosophic and the active aspects of Marxism must be distinguished. It is admittedly difficult to separate the two aspects for as Marx himself wrote, "We must not only explain the world, but also find a method to change it."

It is possible to be influenced by Marxism intellectually and to apply Marxian analysis in social science, for example, without in any way being politically a Marxist. In this connection the story, if true, of the group of German industrialists who in an effort to stop the spread of Marxism, adopted Marxian analysis to help them, is highly instructive.

Marxism as a political system has expressed itself in the United States in a number of avowed radical parties. In the period we are considering, the significant groupings were the Communist Party, the Trotskyist and Lovestonite splinters of the Communist movement, and in varying degrees, the Socialist Party. Thus a Marxist in this sense is one who is a member of one of these parties and who works for its goals.

The Socialist Party admittedly presents a difficult problem for it has had only a very few thoroughlygoing Marxists in its ranks in the past thirty years. Nevertheless, most of the Socialist Party members owe a great deal to the analysis of Karl Marx, although they are not, and were not in the thirties, with a few exceptions, Leninists, as were the Stalinists, the Lovestonites, and the Trotskyites.

(By Leninism is meant those teachings of Lenin which deal with Bolshevik tactics, organization, and in particular with the Leninist concept of the monolithic revolutionary party. The Stalinists, Trotskyites, and Lovestonites took as their model as to how to do those things that would lead to a revolution, the Russian Revolution; the Socialists looked upon the Russian Revolution as a model of how not to achieve socialism.)
Radical movements have usually been led by middle-class intellectuals. Nowhere has this leadership of the radical movement been so predominately drawn from the intellectual functional-group as in the United States. The radical movement in the United States in the thirties was not only led by intellectuals, but the followers were also largely intellectuals. Marxist radicalism in the United States was predominantly a middle-class intellectual movement. The middle-class intellectual functional group, dissatisfied with their position in the social order, were "on the make."

For this reason we will study the subject of Marxism in the nineteen-thirties from the vantage point of those intellectuals who were attracted towards Marxism, both philosophically and in terms of their own political action. Marxism and radicalism were one of the major intellectual currents of the nineteen-thirties. While we shall deal almost exclusively with the better known of the left-intelligentsia, they are being used as representative of the larger mass of teachers, social-workers, artists, and writers who also moved to the left.

3. Although definitions can become a substitute for thinking quite often, I must venture a definition. By intellectual, we mean individuals, usually from a middle-class background, who manipulate ideas on a high level of abstraction, and who direct this manipulation of ideas outwardly rather than inwardly as does the artist, who is not primarily interested in affecting anything. Intellectuals perform certain roles for the subcultures within the society which require this skill of dealing with ideas on a high level of abstraction. While it is realized that not all people who are educators, writers, scientists, and social scientists are intellectuals, nevertheless it is assumed that a significantly large number of people playing such roles are intellectuals.
The author does not intend to approach the subject from the vantage point of individual psychology despite the usual tendency to do this. In many studies of radicalism, the individual radical is considered to be a deviant, who in terms of the majority culture is neurotic. For example, one notable American historian has written, "Why should Americans submit themselves to the intolerable discipline of party membership? Yet even America has its quota of lonely and frustrated people, craving social, intellectual and even sexual fulfillment they cannot obtain in existing society. For these people, party discipline is no obstacle—it is an attraction. The great majority of members in America, as in Europe, want to be disciplined."

This statement runs counter to all available testimony and evidence, and merely displays the anti-Marxist bias of the author, which while perhaps admirable, has little place in a work on the subject. It offers us very little in the way of an aid to understand a phenomenon which essentially is a social phenomenon and which consequently must be viewed from the viewpoint of social psychology, not from the viewpoint of pseudo-individual psychology.

It would be most useful if we could work out, utilizing social-psychological methods, a personality typology for this group, the Marxist intellectual, if at all times we remembered David Riesman's warning, "we must try to remember that these types are constructions and that the richness of human potentiality, human discontent, and human variety cannot be imprisoned within a typology."  

However, this matter of social-psychological typology is the province of the trained social-psychologist, and the historian who has had little intensive training in these fields does social-science a disservice by dabbling in an area where scientific precision is demanded. I prefer to leave the psychology to the psychologists and to assume for the purposes of this paper that the conclusion offered by two competent psychologists on the matter is valid. They wrote, "We found no marked tendency among radicals towards neuroses. Our data showed as many symptoms of maladjustment among controls and among radicals."  

The emphasis in this work will be social, rather than individual. The emphasis will be on events, ideologies, and political movements, not on individual psychological motivation, or upon an attempt to develop a typological approach. Individuals will be brought in as illustrations of certain social trends.

We shall deal with the interaction of certain American "political publics" one with another. By political publics we meant those semi-homogeneous groups who are politically vocal, and who shape opinion and fashion ideologies for the great mass. Each of these public has its own audience which it moulds and influences, via one or more publications. The four that concern us are the Leninist-Left, the Independent Left, the liberal-center, and the Communists.

The revolutionary-socialist, but anti-Stalinist Trotskyist and Lovestonite groups, while no longer a force of much significance today, were, in the thirties, important moulders of public opinion on the left. Many prominent intellectuals were part of the Leninist-left or its periphery in the thirties, and this fact strongly influenced the non-affiliated independent leftists. While not accepting any organizational affiliation, many independent leftists became in the thirties the fellow-travelers of the two splinter groups.

The liberal-center is the home of traditional American liberalism and gradual reform. It found its major organs of expression in the Nation, the New Republic, and Common Sense. It never has been doctrinally Marxist, although most of the fellow-travelers of the Stalinist movement in the days of the Popular Front were recruited from the ranks of the liberal center. Due to the uneasy alliance that existed

---

between parts of the Liberal Center and the Stalinists during the nineteen-thirties, it is a significant political public for our discussion.

The fourth of our political publics is that of the Communist Party and its active fellow travelers. C. Wright Mills rejected a historical definition which would make the Communist Party and its periphery objectively part of the radical left, and replaced it with a functional definition. He wrote, "it is very difficult to locate the Communist Party as a specific unit on any U.S. political scale. Its outlook and activities are those of a foreign national bloc within the lineup of U.S. politics, and in any long-term view, it has not had much consistency of position."

In this monograph the Communist Party will be treated as part of the Marxian-Socialist tradition, historically, but functionally will be treated in terms of Mill's analysis. This position is admittedly ambivalent—but this is a result of the nature of the Stalinist movement, which claims to be of the American left, but usually acts as the appendage of Soviet foreign policy.

With this framework, clearly in mind, we can now turn to a discussion of the roots of Marxism among intellectuals in the United States.

8. C. Wright Mills, New Men of Power, 4.
"The all but unanimous repudiation of the accepted economic order by its literary representatives is one of the curious phenomena of American culture."


"Who is there to deny that for fifty years the ethos of American literature at its best has been resignation, attack, escape, but so rarely acceptance? Who is there to deny that the very fame of American writing in the modern era, the very effort to create a responsible literature in America, appropriate to a new age, rests upon a tradition of emnity to the established order, more significantly a profound alienation from it? Modern American literature was born in protest, born in rebellion, born out of the sense of loss and indirection which was imposed upon the new generations out of the realization that the old formal culture—the "New England idea"—could no longer serve."

"...there is a sense of horror and uncertainty before the reality of American life, of fear and inchoate tragedy, that can be found in equal measure in Harold Frederic and James T. Farrell, in Stephen Crane and John Dos Passos, in Edgar Salters and William Faulkner, in Howells and Willa Cather, in Frank Norris and John Steinbeck."

PREFACE

Historians have usually dealt with the subject of radicalism among American intellectuals in the nineteen-thirties, as something more or less unique, directly related to sheer economic necessity. Not only is this crude economic determinism, with little understanding of the historical development of an ideology, but it is highly superficial and erroneous and misleading, as well. If one were to read the books and histories which deal with the subject in passing, or the two works that refer to the matter in greater detail, one would get the impression that American intellectuals had never heard of Marxism before a certain day in October 1929, and that besides for those who obviously were psychotic, had no contact with it after August 22, 1939, the date of the Hitler-Stalin Pact.

To understand the phenomenon of Marxism as an ideology of intellectuals in the United States we must recognize, I believe, that it does not basically stem from the depression of the nineteen-thirties, but rather from the events following the Revolution of 1860-1875, in which the entire course of American democracy was altered by the rise of industrial capitalism. This fairly sudden event drastically altered the role, function, and recruitment patterns of American intellectuals.

1. Donald Egbert and Stow Persons, Socialism and American Life (Princeton, 1952), 2 vols., does suggest an agreement with this approach on the part of the contributors to these volumes, the result of a collective effort on the part of the Princeton American Civilization Program.
Prior to the Civil War the intellectual was for the most part an integral part of American society; not alienated from it, but leading it. Intellectuals were largely involved within the two institutions of politics and education, and had access to power. (It was only the rare figure—the Thoreau or the Melville—who felt cut off from society.) In a pre-capitalist economy, almost all intellectuals came from those classes—the landed aristocracy and the mercantile classes—which had access to power. Consequently, there existed what Professor Curti has called "The Patrician Direction of Thought." The essential qualifications for any intellectual, literacy and an adequate education, were usually denied to the great mass of people, and only granted to those who came from the elites of pre-industrial America. Furthermore, only the elite could afford to engage in intellectual pursuits, for it was virtually impossible to live off one's writings. Printing costs were high, only a small handful were literate, and consequently intellectual life was only slightly commercialized. In a society that did not as yet demand the degree of specialization of talent, the specific skills of the intellectual were not much in demand, and the upper-classes could supply all the intellectual talent needed.

While it is true that there was a considerable degree of democratization in education after the Jacksonian era, nevertheless the intellectuals still were largely drawn from the well-to-do classes. While literacy increased and the Lowell factory girls did publish their own magazine, nevertheless the cultural level of the masses still was not high enough, nor the economic level sufficient to support an intellectual life independent of the well-to-do classes.

The revolution of industrial capitalism changed all this. Increased specialization demanded increased literacy and large-scale industrialization did create a sufficient capital surplus which granted wider sections of the population the means by which they could support intellectual life. In the pre-twentieth century period, there was created a literate class, not of the elite, with sufficient leisure and surplus wealth to both support intellectual life and to produce intellectuals. These were of the small and middle-middle classes—the clerks, the petty officials, the farm boys gone-to-the-city-to-make-good, those engaged in the greatly expanded retail and wholesale trade, the increasing number of trained specialists and experts demanded by an industrial society. These men supported intellectual life, bought the books, the newspapers, listened to the lectures, and even on occasion debated the issues raised. Their sons were the intellectuals—the artists, the writers, the teachers, and the critics of the new society.

Beginning with the creation of this new source of intellectual activity, the new intellectuals, not of the old patrician elite,
and those of the old patrician elite itself, began to feel
a sense of alienation from a society they never made. The
old patrician families felt themselves pitted against the

nouveaux riches in an unequal contest. What did aristocratic
Boston have in common with Pittsburgh, what did Henry Adams
have in common with the crude Jay Gould?

Henry Adams, the son of presidents and patricians,
gave us a bitter review of the reaction of an intellectual
of the old elite to the new world which had appeared. This
review is worth quoting in full. Wrote Adams:

"The American character showed singular limitations
which sometimes drove the student of civilized men to
despair. Crushed by his own ignorance—lost in the
darkness of his own gropings—the scholar finds himself
jostled of a sudden by a crowd of men who seem to him
ignorant that there is a thing called ignorance; who have
forgotten how to amuse themselves; who cannot even
understand that they are bored. The American thought
of himself as a restless, pushing, energetic, ingenious
person, always awake and trying to get ahead of his
neighbors. Perhaps this of the national character
might be correct for New York or Chicago; it was not
correct for Washington. There the American showed
himself, four times in five, as a quiet, peaceful, shy
figure, rather in the mould of Abraham Lincoln, somewhat
sad, sometimes pathetic, once tragic; or like Grant,
articulate, uncertain, distrustful of himself, still
more distrustful of others and awed by money. That
the American, by temperament, worked to excess, was true;
work and whiskey were his stimulants; work was a form of
vice; but he never cared much for money or power
after he earned them. The amusement of the pursuit
was the amusement he got from it; he had no use for
wealth. Jim Fisk alone seemed to know what he wanted;
Jay Gould never did. At Washington one met mostly such
true Americans, but if one wanted to know them better, one
went to study them in Europe. Bored, impatient, helpless,
pathetically dependent on his wife and daughters;
indulgent to excess; mostly a modest, decent, excellent, valuable citizen, the American was to be met at every railway station in Europe, carefully explaining to every listener that the happiest day of his life would be the day he should land on the pier at New York. He was ashamed to be amused; his mind no longer answered to the stimulus of variety; he could not face a new thought. All his immense strength, his intense nervous energy, his keen analytic perceptions, were oriented in one direction, and he could not change it. Congress was full of such men; in the Senate, Sumner was almost the only exception; in the Executive, Grant and Boutwell were varieties of the type—political specimens—pathetic in their helplessness to do anything with power when it came to them. They knew not how to amuse themselves; they could not conceive how other people were amused. Work, Whiskey, and Card were life. The atmosphere of political Washington was theirs—or was supposed by the outside world to be in their control—and this was the reason why the outside world judged that Washington was fatal even for a young man of thirty-two, who had passed through the whole variety of temptations, in every capital of Europe for a dozen years; who had never played cards, and who loathed whiskey."

Many of the new middle-class intellectuals also felt a sense of alienation from industrial America, in the gilded age. Their sensitivity was jarred, their independence stolen, their power limited, by the rising industrial giants. While many made their peace, with the new order, others did not.

The agricultural unrest of the seventies, eighties, and nineties culminated in the Populist movement— the conflict of the agrarian—democracy with the new industrial—elite. Into this movement many intellectuals, outstanding of whom was Hamlin Garland, threw their energies and their pens.

The rise of the Socialist Party at the turn of the century offered the first protest movement, however, that really attracted any segment of the intelligentsia. While
the followers of Marx had first arrived in the United States in
the years following the German revolution of 1848, the large-
scale Socialist movement awaited the beginning of the
twentieth century to appear. With the failure of Populism,
many began to turn to some other outlet for radical activity
and protest.

The years around the turn of the century witnessed the
turn to socialism of a number of writers, notably Edward
All came to socialism via different routes. Edward Bellamy was
in the tradition of the utopian-socialists such as Cabet, Fourier,
and Owen. His appeal was basically non-Marxian, with little
concept of the class-struggle. He made his appeal to the
middle-classes, especially to those same groups to which
George Herron and the other "Social-gospelers" were preaching
the social message of religion.

William Dean Howells, branching off into the new realism
in the American novel, with its rejection of the genteel tradition
in letters, was moved to Socialism by a humanitarianism akin to
that of the Englishmen, William Morris. Howells wrote after the
Haymarket riot of 1887, "Elinor [his wife] and I both no longer care
for the world's life, and would like to be settled somewhere very
humbly and simply, where we could be socially identified with the
principles of progress and sympathy for the struggling mass."

This statement is Tolstoyian in quality, and does not reflect
Marx who did not believe that the individual socialist must become
like the masses in living conditions.

4 Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds, 6.
Jack London came from a working-class background, and due to a broken-home, soon became a "drifter", one of the lumpenproletariat. He did not come to socialism via Christianity or William Morris, but rather through a bitter belief in struggle as the essence of life and through the fear of losing that struggle and "falling into the Pit". London smashed out in raw-violence against the hated system in a manner nearer the anarcho-syndicalism of the Industrial Workers of the World than to the less-violent theorizing of Morris Hillquit, the philosopher of the Socialist Party.

Upton Sinclair came to socialism from the same humanitarian background as did Howells, but through a lifetime of contact with the socialist movement, was able to add head to heart in his understanding of the problems to be faced. Sinclair is the bridge between the humanitarians and utopians on the one hand, and the hard-headed, class-struggle conscious socialist politicians on the other hand. Alfred Kazin said of Sinclair that "...he must always seem one of the original missionaries of the modern spirit in America, one of the last ties we have with that halcyon day when Marxists still sounded like Methodists and a leading socialist like E.V. Debs believed in the "spirit of love".

Both the developing realism in the novel and the muckracking movement provided new recruits and a new impetus to the socialist movement. Theodore Dreiser, Robert Herrick, Lincoln Steffens, Sinclair, Charles Edward Russell, Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Ida Tarbell and others contributed heavily to the development.
Or the new novel of social protest, although at the time only Russell and Sinclair called themselves socialists. (The first five mentioned were, in the thirties, active in the left-wing activities of that decade.)

Not only were many literary-men of the first decade of the century turning into social critics, but a whole group of social scientists appeared who challenged many of the comfortable interpretations of American history. These interpretations were part of the rebellion against the replacement of the old democratic ethos which had prevailed, with that of a society which was dominated by the new forms of industrial organization. While such men as Charles Beard, Vernon Parrington, Thorstein Veblen, James Harvey Robinson, and J. Allen Smith were not socialists in any but the most loose sense of the word, they were indebted to Marxist theorizing to some extent; and they provided materials upon which Marxists could and did build. Such contemporaries of this group as A.M. Simons and Gustavus Myers were both social scientists and avowed Marxists.

The leftward movement of the intellectuals came to its first peak in 1911–1912, with the founding of The Masses. The year 1912 was a crucial one in the history of American socialism, perhaps its greatest year. In that year Eugene Debs running on a Socialist plank polled nearly a million votes, despite 6. Parrington has been quoted as saying, "I was a good deal of a Marxist, and perhaps still am....", in Alfred Kazin, On Native Ground (New York, 1942), 159.
the fact that both Roosevelt and Wilson provided progressives with reasonable political alternatives. It was the year when the names of Joe Attor and Arturo Giovannitti, the successful leaders of the great Lawrence textile strike led by the Wobblies, became household words; and it was also the year in which Emma Goldman could pack meeting halls in any city with lectures on anarchism and free love.

"The flavor of the year 1912 was caught by Floyd Dell when he called it the Lyric Year. A new spirit had come to America, and not in politics alone. Poetry was entering upon its American renaissance with the foundation of Harriet Monroe’s magazine in Chicago; the Irish Players and Maurice Brown were instigating the new American theatre; Marcel Duchamp’s "Nude Descending a Staircase" aroused the rebel sons and daughters of the Babbitry to the meaning of modern art; the emancipated sexual theories of Edward Carpenter, Havelock Ellis and Auguste Forel had emigrated to our shores and followed close on the heels of the army of men and women fighting for woman suffrage; and gay clothing, colored neckties, bobbed-haired and smoking women flaunted the victory of the younger generation of that day over the prostrate body of puritanism. For the next five years, this 'new spirit' was to dominate American intellectual life."

Nowhere was this new spirit better expressed than in

New York's Greenwich Village and in its organ, The Masses, which the masses notoriously never read. "The pre-war Village had been a center for radical thought—not to be sneered at, the fighting Marxism of the East-Side ghetto, but nevertheless, the literary proletarianism of the Masses, the vigor of the suffrage drive, and the challenge of the I.W.W., anarchists and socialists." Progress and protest were one and inseparable—anarchists, socialists, wobblies, the advocates of free-love, and freer sexual expression, the worshippers of the goddess, Isadora Duncan, all were different manifestations of the same mood. In the Village that Max Beerbohm's poet-laureate, typified, advanced thought was advanced thought, and although the socialist and the anarchist would argue with each other for hours over a cheap glass of wine, they would soon go off to bed with one another in perfect friendship.

The Masses represented sexual freedom, revolution, and the Village—the Village which "acted as a magnet" which drew to it a wide variety of people with one quality in common, their repudiation of the social standards of the communities in which they had been reared. Here gathered in these years a whole range of individuals who had abandoned their home pattern in protest against its hollowness or its dominance, and had set out to make for themselves individually civilized lives according to their own conceptions. They had found the traditional Anglo-Saxon Protestant values inapplicable and the money drive offensive."

9. Ibid., 255.
The Masses was the school for the radical leaders of the next twenty-years; it gave its mark to all future intellectual radicalism in America. Edited by Max Eastman, then the rebel poet, Mary Heaton Vorse, one of the few Americans ever to penetrate into the day-by-day reality which is the American labor movement, Louis Untermeyer the poet, and Louis Boudin, the lawyer, scholar, and radical, the Masses attacked with all the weapons at its command. The onslaught was sustained in the articles of Eastman and Vorse, the poems of Louis Untermeyer, Maxwell Bodenheim, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Arturo Giovannitti, John Reed, Witter Bynner, William Rose Benet, Carl Sandburg, Jean Starr Untermeyer, and Florence Ripley Mastin, the stories by Susan Glaspell, Ernest Poole, Sherwood Anderson, Howard Brubaker, Lincoln Steffens, Upton Sinclair, Floyd Dell, Scott Nearing, Amos Pinchot, Freda Kirchway, Margaret Sanger, Walter Lippman, and Helen Keller, and with the cartoons and drawings of Hugo Gellert, George Bellows, Jo Davidson, and, above all, the incomparable Art Young.

Essentially, the Masses was a magazine of personal revolt—the revolt of a strong, vigorous, self-centered, individualistic group. "The editors and contributors to The Masses formed an interesting and curious group in themselves. For them revolt was essentially a personal matter and though Marxism and other forms of socialism did form the background for much of their thinking, they looked upon the constraints of bourgeois society for the most part as
personal inconveniences or as objects of ridicule and satire." Their socialism was a matter of a mixture of social realism and poetic romanticism. None better typified the _Masses_ than its poet-hero-revolutionary, the young Jack Reed, who went from Harvard to the Village to Russia, the founding of the American Communist Party, and his epic report of the Russian Revolution, _The Ten Days That Shook the World._

As the war clouds darkened on America, the forces of the _Masses_ split. Many went to the support of Wilson and the Crusade to Make the World Safe for Democracy; a few wavered, and a handful supported Eugene Debs and remained revolutionary, socialist, and anti-war. Those who continued writing for the _Masses_ remained radical and anti-war, and it soon was closed down by the United States Government under the Espionage Act and its editors indicted, even though some, like Eastman himself, recanted their anti-war stand.

The same optimism that had typified the _Masses_ and which was typified by such statements as "Professor James Harvey Robinson's "beginning of a new period which should surpass that of the last three centuries as much as that surpassed the Greeks" was the key belief of _The Seven Arts._ As Alfred Kazin commented, "...if it seemed to young writers then, as Malcom Cowley had written, that the world was going..."
in their direction, the new standards were winning out, and America in ten or fifty years at most would not only be a fatherland of the arts but also a socialist commonwealth, it was in the Seven Arts, so soon to die in the war, that these hopes burned the brightest."

The Seven Arts represented the revolution in art, in literature, and in society. Around it clustered a group of brilliant and creative young spirits who were to leave their mark on American literary criticism and thought—Walter Lippman, James Oppenheim, Van Wyck Brooks, Louis Mumford, Waldo Frank, Joel Spingarn, Paul Rosenfeld, and above all Randolph Bourne, the hunchbacked meteor who flared up suddenly, and was quickly extinguished at the age of 32.

It may be claimed with a fair degree of accuracy that each generation of critical intellectuals produces one figure who while not at all the most representative of his contemporaries, sums up in this life and work all the major tendencies of that generation, carried to their brutal, logical, relentlessly consistent conclusion. Thoreau while not being the most representative of his generation of Concord intellectuals, summed up in his "On Civil Disobedience" the logic of that generation's thought, even if his compatriots were unable to see the full logic of their own position. Tom Paine who went to England and France to help spread the new gospel of republicanism and revolution, 12. Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds, 172.
went further than Sam Adams or Tom Jefferson, but he summed up and universalized the new message of the Declaration of Independence. Wendell Phillips summed up the revolutionary traditions of the Abolitionists and carried the abolitionist life and logic to its conclusion in his opposition to wage-slavery as well as chattel-slavery.

The generation of the tens of the twentieth century produced such a figure, who by his consistency, ability to think and operate radically, and his courage, performed the same function for this generation of critical intellectuals. This was Randolph Bourne.

Bourne attacked the social-system with strength and enthusiasm, thus typifying the Seven Arts group. A comment by James Oppenheim, the poet editor of the Seven Arts, throws much life on the group and upon Bourne. Wrote Oppenheim:

"Van Wyck Brooks has said of Randolph Bourne that he was the very type of the proletarian-artist which is coming into being. When Brooks and Waldo Frank and Louis Untermeyer and Paul Rosenfeld and I—a nucleus at the heart of a group including so many of the 'younger generation'—were joyfully publishing the Seven Arts we inevitably found the phrase of the "young world", and by this phrase we characterized nothing local, but a new international life, and an interweaving of groups in all countries, the unspoiled forces everywhere who share the same culture and somewhat the same new vision of the world. There was in it the Russian mixture of art and revolution, the one a change in the spirit of man, the other a change in his organized life."

13 James Oppenheim in the introduction to Randolph Bourne, Untimely Papers (New York, 1919), 7.
"...it was inevitable that he should not only join The Seven Arts but actually in himself gather us all together, himself, in America, the very soul of the young world. No nerve of that world was as sensitive to art as to philosophy, as politically minded as he was psychologic, as brave in fighting for the conscientious objector as he was in opposing current American culture. He was a flaming rebel against our crippled life, as if he had taken the cue from the long struggle with his own body."

Bourne's optimism was ended by the war—by the death of that new spirit, by the fact that most of his generation deserted to the war they promised not to fight. He turned then to a biting, radical, pessimistic analysis of modern society, and in his unfinished work, The State, offered us the most biting and brilliant radical statement akin to Marx's epigram "The state is the executive committee of the bourgeoisie" in his "War is the Health of the State."

The Seven Arts disappeared as soon as the United States entered the war, for its subsidy by a private fortune was withdrawn because of its attitude on the war. Society, in many ways, in the face of war, was, as usual, enforcing absolute conformity upon all.

During the war and shortly thereafter the Masses group tried to reconstitute itself around a new magazine, The Liberator, which was socialist, favorable to the Soviet Union, but not officially connected with the early confused years of the American Communist Party, and revolutionary. Such people as Roger Baldwin, Carlo Tresca, Babette Deutsch, James Weldon Johnson, Stuart Chase, Albery Rhys Williams, William Gropper, Genevieve Taggard, Alexander Trachtenberg, Claude
McKay, Joseph Freeman, and Robert Minor wrote for it. However, it never achieved anything near the Masses' standards, and in 1924 its editor, Robert Minor, with the consent of the editorial board turned the magazine over to the Workers' (Communist) Party. It disappeared soon afterwards.

The war had a significant impact on radical thought in America, and in the few years immediately following the war, many critical intellectuals looked elsewhere than to socialism for their intellectual leadership, in particular that generation that had come to maturity at the beginning of the nineteen-twenties. When the intellectual Marxist movement reappeared, it did so in a somewhat different form, based on somewhat different assumptions, but still sharing in the traditions of the young and flamboyant Masses and The Seven Arts.

The young writers who flocked to Europe in the early years of the twenties have been dubbed by Gertrude Stein as the "lost generation". Profoundly disillusioned by the war, they found solace in the revival of the "art for art's sake" tradition. The war to make the world safe for democracy had left in its wake disease, revolution, depression, hatred, and precious little democracy. The war into which the young ambulance drivers such as John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway had thrown themselves had seemingly led to nothing worth all the misery. In Three Soldiers and What Price Glory Dos Passos and Hemingway
had offered the generation of the twenties American versions of the theme of Remarque's classic anti-war book, *All Quiet On the Western Front.*

The intelligentsia awoke from the Greenwich Village-Masses-Seven Arts stage, looked about at the America of the flapper, the speakeasy, the thousands of puritanical small towns, realized that the war had not brought the hoped for progress, that the revolution in art, literature, and society had not turned out the way they had planned, and quickly went into self-exile. A large group of young writers in their twenties went off to Paris. A significant part of a whole generation had turned their backs on America. They "began by writing for magazines with names like *transition, Broom* (to make a clean sweep of it), 1924, *This Quarter* (existing in the pure present), *544,[14a] and secession."[14a]

Malcolm Cowley, one of the "lost generation" has given us a vivid understanding of his group. He wrote: "It was lost, first of all, because it was uprooted, schooled away and almost wrenched away from the attachment to any region or tradition. It was lost because its training had prepared it for another world than existed after the war and because the war prepared it only for travel and excitement. It was lost because it tried to live in exile. It was lost because it accepted no older guides to conduct and because it had formed a false picture of society and the writers' place in it. The generation belonged to a period...

---

of transition from values already fixed to values that had to be created. They were seceding from the old and yet could adhere to nothing new; they groped their way toward another scheme of life, as yet undefined; in the midst of their doubts and uneasy gestures of defiance they felt homesick for the certainties of childhood." Among this group were such figures as Ezra Pound, E. E. Cummings, Edmund Wilson, Allen Tate, Matthew Josephson, Philip Wheelwright, Hart Crane, Archibald MacLeish, Nathan Asch, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Malcolm Cowley, and Joseph Freeman.

Not only did a portion of the intelligentsia retreat to Paris to dabble in poetry, decadism, surrealism, absinthe, and life, but another portion, unable to scrape up the pittance-money, stayed home and attacked "middle-class morality." Following the lead of Henry Mencken, the aristocratic and, if you will, semi-fascist critic, the intelligentsia mocked America's lack of "culture"! attacked middle-class America, and the American small town. The two big words were Mencken's "Booboisie" and Sinclair Lewis' "Babbitry". Much of this protest had no formal political meaning—Mencken's protest itself being that of a somewhat tired, dying self-styled aristocrat, rather than that of a serious and radical social critic. The intellectuals were not looking forward, or even backward. They were in the midst of a situation, and they merely protested out of boredom.

"In the decade of the twenties, few had the heart or the faith to predicate their conduct and their thought on the assumption of a new social order. The negativness of all the forms of protest except the artistic, and the pursuit of art for its own sake rather than its use as a social tool, reflected the eclipse of the revolutionary spirit." Greatly influenced by the war, the positive and forward-looking, action-oriented mood of the tens gave way to cultural nihilism. But even in this nihilism the anti-middle class, anti-capitalist theme was the predominant one. The intellectuals had made only a limited peace with capitalism; they were merely off looking for non-political solutions to their malaise. "In the twenties the trouble with the ruling classes was psychological...."

Not all the intellectuals flocked to Paris or followed Mencken in writing against the "booboisie". Some made their peace with the social order, as did Walter Lippmann. Others, such as those on the Nation and the New Republic, when not engaged in writing manifestoes against the "New Humanists", concerned themselves with ameliorative, piece-meal reform, and with tentative inquiries concerning the Soviet Union.

A few stayed on the active left, and worked for its publications. Notable in this group were Mike Gold, Joseph Freeman, Eugene Lyons, and Louis Fischer.

15. Caroline Ware, Greenwich Village, 261.
From the collapse of the Liberator in 1923-24 until the reviving of the New Masses in late 1926, there was no intellectual periodical that was officially close to the socialist movement, either its Socialist Party or Communist Party wing. However, in late 1923 a magazine appeared in Baltimore which partially filled the gap. It was soon to become the outstanding independent Marxist magazine in the country. This magazine, the *Modern Quarterly* (later the *Modern Monthly*) was to span the period from 1923 to 1940 and therefore provides us with an excellent source in which to see the rise, peak, and decline of Marxism in the United States.

Under the editorship of V.F. Calverton and largely reflecting his views, or at least the views of whoever had managed to capture Calverton's ear, the *Modern Quarterly* was to be lively and at times brilliant bit of independent left-wing journalism. The frontpiece of the first issue indicated that the editors felt that a scientific and non-emotional basis for Marxism in the United States must be found. It read, "The MODERN QUARTERLY is devoted to scientific synthesis—the co-ordination of the discoveries and conclusions of the life and physical sciences into an accurate and comprehensive sociology. This means the creation of a scientific philosophy and a significant philosophic method." It rejected liberalism which was defined as "that state of mind produced by the capitalist regime that looks just half-way at life, that

is willing to admit the badnesses that are in it, but that is unwilling to come and say plainly how they got there and how they must be gotten rid of." The Modern Quarterly after rejecting liberalism declared itself for socialism. Nevertheless, it criticized the Masses-Liberator for never really thinking things through, and for existing on pure emotion. The Modern Quarterly represented a maturing of the radical spirit in America, under the realization that the problems were never as simple as the youthful Jack Reed and the old Masses group believed them to be.

In the first years Calverton, and thus the magazine, were under the influence of a left-wing Socialist, Haim Kantrovitch, who while reluctantly supporting the Russian Revolution was a Menshevik rather than a Bolshevik. Kantrovitch saw himself as a true-proletarian socialist, and looked upon many of the pro-Communist intellectuals as "bourgeois intellectuals who came to hate present society out of sheer ennui". Under Kantrovitch's direction, the magazine was closer to the Socialist Party's left-wing, than to the Communist Party.

The magazine, as always, was a meeting-ground in which radicals of every persuasion could write and debate. For example one issue had articles by C.E. Rubenstein, the head of the Workers' (Communist Party), James O'Neal, the editor of the Socialist New Leader, and by V.I. Reynolds.

17. The Modern Quarterly, I (March 1923), 5.
one of the leaders of the syndicalist Socialist Labor Party.

Calverton's major interest was in a sociological and social-psychoanalytical approach to literary criticism and many of the articles were permeated with this approach. Calverton was one of the originators of the controversy over "proletarian literature" which was to take up so much time and energy in the nineteen-thirties.

The Modern Quarterly displayed particular interest in the "Negro question in the United States. Many outstanding Negro leaders, including W.E.B. DuBois, Franklin Frazier, Charles S. Johnson, Alain Locke, and James Weldon Johnson, wrote for the periodical on aspects of the question. In addition such outstanding non-Negro sociologists as Howard Odum and Melville Herskovits wrote articles on minority problems.

By 1927 Kantrovitch had left the magazine and Samuel Schmalhausen, an amateur Freudian and amateur revolutionist seemingly had captured Calverton's attention and was made co-editor. Schmalhausen, much more favorable to Bolshevism than was Kantrovitch, altered the approach of the magazine, which while completely independent of the Communist Party, and critical of certain aspects of Soviet life, was nevertheless quite favorable to the Soviet Union.

The year 1926 witnessed the creation of what essentially was a new magazine, though it claimed to be the heir of the old Masses. This magazine was the New Masses.

A list of the editors and contributors to the New Masses in the years 1926-1929 is highly significant, for a very large proportion, perhaps even a majority, of those who were contributing to the magazine in the early thirties, wrote for it in this earlier period. There were three groups of contributors: the old Masses-Seventy Arts-Liberator group reactivated; a number who had been part of the "lost generation" in their early twenties; and a group in their very early twenties, who had arrived at maturity and radicalism at the same time.

The Masses-Seventy Arts-Liberator group consisted of:

Robert Dunn
Joseph Freeman
Hugo Gellert
Michael Gold
Walter Gropper
Sherwood Anderson
Van Wyck Brooks
Howard Brubaker
Alfred Kreymborg
Floyd Dell
Max Eastman
Waldo Frank
Adolph Dehn
Arturo Giovannitti
Upton Sinclair
Otto Soglow
Genevieve Taggard
Louis Untermeyer
Claude McKay
Louis Mumford
Charles Yale Harrison

Scott Nearing
Mary Heaton Vorse
Art Young
"The lost generation" returned consisted of:


The group in their early twenties who were to make up the rank and file of the John Reed Clubs in the early thirties were:


While such a list is tedious, it is important for it supplies one of the bits of evidence to substantiate the thesis that the move of the intellectuals left was not as a largely related to the depression as is usually assumed. While writing for the New Masses in this period did not indicate membership in the Communist Party, it did mean that the writer held to a general left-wing and socialist position. A portion of the intelligentsia had moved left in the tens and twenties. Many had become accustomed to thinking about socialism, and to working with Communists.

20. Based on the files of the New Masses 1926-1929.
The late twenties witnessed a further indication of the movement left, the search for a way out of what certain sensitive portions of American society felt to be a crisis situation. Under the impact of the very favorable journalistic reports from the Soviet Union by such sympathetic observers as Albert Rhys Williams, Louis Fischer, Eugene Lyons, Walter Duranty, and Marcus Hindu, many American intellectuals went to the Soviet Union to see for themselves. In the 1927-1930 period most of them came back sympathetic and impressed by the sight of the slumbering colossus on the borders of Asia and Europe arising and modernizing itself. Three representative reports on Russia were by John Dewey, the leading American philosopher and educator, George Counts, one of Dewey's closest pupils, and Roger Baldwin, the founder and for almost thirty years, the director of the American Civil Liberties Union.

John Dewey went to the Soviet Union in 1928 and reported on his experiences in a book published by the "New Republic." To Dewey, the outstanding thing in Russia was the revolution "involving a release of human power on such unprecedented scale that it is of incalculable significance not only for that country, but for the world." Dewey, the educator was most favorably impressed with Soviet education.

and the attempts to develop a mass-culture which compared with
the best of Western non-mass cultures. Dewey wrote in the
first connection, "I have never seen anywhere in the world such
a large proportion of intelligent, happy, and intelligently
occupied children." Dewey believed that Russia had the
will to develop a popular cultivation, especially an
esthetic one, such as the world has never known." Russian
education, Dewey believed, was directed on lines that were
in accordance with his theories, so much so that he commented
that it "is enough to convert one to the idea that only in
a society based upon the cooperative principle can the
ideals of educational reformers be adequately carried into
operation." And Dewey believed he saw something in Russia
which impressed many intellectuals with the desirability
of Communism. Wrote Dewey, "Intellectuals in other countries
have a task that is, if they are sincere, chiefly critical;
those who have identified themselves in Russia with the
new order have a task that is total and constructive. They
are organic members of an organic going movement." Stated
simply, Dewey believed that the alienation of the intellectual
in the West from society was no longer a condition of Russian
life. Russia had seemingly solved the major dilemma of
intellectual life--alienation for the intellectual from society.

24. Ibid., 51.
25. Ibid., 86.
26. Ibid., 121.
Dewey was not blind to the secret police, the inquisitions, deportations of Nepman and Kulaks, but despite all this he believed that Russian life under Communism was certainly better than under the Tsar for "life for the masses goes on with regularity, safety, and decorum." Calling the Soviet Union the "Great Experiment", Dewey adopted a friendly but watchful attitude towards it.

George Counts was even more unrestrained in his praise of the Soviet Union. In 1928 he took a trip across Soviet Russia in a Ford automobile. While he admitted the red-tape and bureaucracy of the Soviet Union, he attributed these to the results of the old order which the Bolsheviks were out to destroy. He was quite happy about the great bursts of industrialization taking place in Russia, the great vitality. A genuine classless society was being built, for "without the shadow of a doubt the old order is gone forever. The popular psychology which tolerated, nurtured, and sustained the privileged classes under the Tsar seems to have disappeared altogether."

Roger Baldwin, the outstanding public advocate of civil liberties in the United States, and at the time an avowed philosophical anarchist, came back from Russia in 1927 and published a little book significantly entitled, Liberty Under the Soviets. Of this title he wrote:

my own prejudices are amply covered by the title of this book. Though over half of it is devoted to a

28. Ibid., 21.
29. George Counts, A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia (Boston, 1929), 183.
description of the controls of the Soviet State, I have chosen to call it Liberty Under the Soviets because I see as far more significant the basic economic freedom of workers and peasants and the abolition of privileged classes based on wealth; and only less important, the release of the non-Russian minorities to develop their national cultures, the new freedom of women, the revolution in education—and, if one counts it significantly, liberty for religion—and anti-religion.

"Against these liberties stand the facts of universal censorship of all means of communication and the complete suppression of any organized opposition to the dictatorship in its program. No civil liberty as we understand it in the West exists in Russia for opponents of the regime—no organized freedom of speech or assemblage, nor of the press. No political liberty is permitted. The Communist Party enjoys an exclusive monopoly.

"Nevertheless, I emphasize by title and the arrangement of the book the outstanding relations, as I see it, between the dictatorships' controls and the new liberties. For although I am an advocate of unrestricted civil liberty as means to effecting even revolutionary changes in society with a minimum of violence, I know that such liberty is always dependent on the possession of economic power. Economic liberty underlies all others. In any society civil liberties are freely exercised only by classes with economic power—or by other classes only at times when the controlling class is too secure to fear opposition. In Soviet Russia, despite the rigid controls and the suppression of opposition, the regime itself is dominated by the economic needs of workers and peasants. Their economic power, even where unorganized, is the force behind it. Their liberties won by the Revolution are the ultimate dictators of Soviet policy. In this lies the chief justification for the hope that, with the increasing share by the masses in all activities of life, the rigors of centralized dictatorship will be lessened and all creative forces by given free rein."

This long quote is justified, I believe, for nothing so clearly shows the almost desperate desire to believe in the Soviet Union than this incredible apology for the denial of the basic concepts of civil liberties in the Soviet Union by the head of the American Civil Liberties Union. It must be carefully stated that Roger Baldwin has publicly repudiated this work on several occasions.
Not only were the favorable reports on the Soviet Union adding justification to the movement of the intellectuals left in the second part of the twenties, but events at home were doing their share in pushing the intellectuals into a radical position. While the "Twenties" are usually looked upon in a fond way, many observers believed that there was an underlying sickness and tiredness in American society even in the nineteen-twenties. Not only had the values of the market-place taken hold of American culture, but lesions appeared upon the surface of American life. The failure of the United States to enter the League of Nations whose advocates claimed that it would bring universal peace and democracy, the evils associated with prohibition, the Palmer raids aimed at persecuting radicals, the Leopold Dome Scandal, the trials of industrialists for corruption and monopolization, the agricultural crisis which was general throughout the twenties, the growing unemployment, the violent strikes in the Southern textile areas, such as Gastonia, North Carolina, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, lynching, and all that went with it, and perhaps above all else the Sacco-Vanzetti case, were signs to the intelligentsia that all was not well with American culture.

The Sacco-Vanzetti case caused the greatest outpouring of liberal-progressive intellectual reaction of the period.
All shades of political persons from conservative civil-libertarians in the tradition of the "Manchester School" to Communists, protested against what seemed to be the legal lynching of two Italian anarchists for a crime they could not have committed. While not many participated actively in the defense of Sacco-Vanzetti, there was a significant emotional reaction at long range.

Of all those involved in the Sacco-Vanzetti case, the novelist, John Dos Passos seemed to have been hit the hardest. Long opposed to the general trend of American society, the Sacco-Vanzetti case settled the matter for Dos Passos. Defiantly he exclaimed:

"They have clubbed us off the streets they are stronger they are rich they hire and fire the politicians the newspaper editors the old judges the small men with reputations the college presidents the wardheelers (listen businessmen college presidents judges America will not forget her betrayers) they hire the men with guns the uniforms the police cars the patrol wagons

"all right you have won you will kill the brave men our friends tonight

"there is nothing left to do we are beaten we the beaten crowd together in these old dingy schoolrooms on Salem Street shuffle up and down the gritty creaking stairs sit hunched with bowed heads on benches and hear the old words of the haters of oppression made new in sweat and agony tonight. our work is done the scribbled phrases the nights typing releases the smell of the print shop the sharp reek of newsprinted leaflets the rush for Western Union stringing words into wires the search for stinging words to make you feel who are your oppressors America

"America, our nation has been beaten by strangers who have turned our language inside out who have taken the clear words our fathers spoke and made them slimy and foul.
"Their hired men sit on the judges' bench
they sit back with their feet on the tables under
the dome of the State House they are ignorant of
our beliefs they have the dollars the guns the
armed forces the powerplants

"they have built the electric chair and hired
the executioners to throw the switch 33

"All right we are two nations"

Dos Passos and other intellectuals now believed in
the reality of the class-struggle in the United States.
For example, Robert Morse Lovett, teacher and author wrote
in 1927 in the Modern Quarterly, after the execution of
Sacco-Vanzetti, "it is no longer possible to deny the
existence of the Class War in the United States....
Now that the war is on and cannot be ignored, liberals
will be compelled to choose between the arrayed classes." 34

In this spirit many intellectuals went into the thirties. While the thirties witnessed a greater outpouring
of radical activity among intellectuals than ever before,
the twenties had provided the foundation. The thirties
witnessed the maturing of the tendencies of the late twenties. Many of the leaders of radical intellectual
thought and action had moved quite far left prior to the
events of late 1929.

However, the rank and file of the liberal-intellectuals had
not yet accepted Marxism and never really would do so.
Instead, the apparent phenomenon of great masses of professionals
moving as far left as the Marxist parties, in particular to
the Communist Party and its periphery can be largely attributed

33. Italics mine (GPR).
34. Robert Morse Lovett in the Modern Quarterly, IV (1927), 194.
to the fact that as the thirties went on the liberal and
Communist political lines began to converge, as the Communists
moved "right", until by 1937 they were virtually identical.
In the following pages we will examine the political line
of the Communist Party in the nineteen-thirties and the
liberal-intellectual reaction to it.
"Ears could not muffle the dinations nor could eyes misread the headlines that daily recorded shocks and agonies, diversions and pleasures. The coldest of hearts was not chill enough to conceal the distempers and resentments surging up in the course of personal and social transactions. Where life was, there was the clamorous insistence of personalities and events. To live was to know—at least something of contemporary fears, hopes, appeals, sufferings, furies, escapes, evaluations, decisions, and aspirations. To think as well as to know was to employ some wisdom related to the elements of the situation. To feel and to wonder were to join the quest for an interpretation of the ways pursued by fortune."

"In short, a critical strain had characterized strong currents of literature previous to the economic crisis of 1929—dissatisfaction with the pecuniary culture produced by the enormous growth and power of the plutocracy and its Philistine imitations. The vulgarisms of conspicuous waste, satirized by Weben at the turn of the century in The Theory of the Leisure Class, had continued to try the spirit of those who worked in imaginative letters. If, as always, censure had been accompanied by belief in some ideal, clear or vague, attained but lost or not yet attained, attainable or perhaps half inevitable, still the censure was unmistakable, sometimes humorous, often bitter.

"Unwilling to endure the stresses and ugliness in the American scene, more than one novelist had fled from the New World to more congenial cultures in the Old World. In his Portrait of the American as Artist, published in 1930, Matthew Josephson dealt sympathetically with the American writers who went beyond the sea to their Holy Grail in England, France, or Italy. For a brief moment at that time an iridescent apparition seemed to be suspended over Moscow.

"If such had been the state of the literary arts in the years before the great depression, if criticism of American economy and culture had long been the insistent motif, what was to be expected after the deluge that followed the general breakdown of 1929?"

THE POLITICAL LINE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY 1928-1939

It is largely on the basis of the public image offered by the publicists and propagandists of any political grouping that it makes contacts, recruits members and gains sympathizers. This public image consists of a large number of verbal symbols, political slogans and statements of principle and purpose. This chapter will set forth the public image—the Party line—offered by the Communist Party to the American public in the years 1928-1939.

The Sixth Congress of the Third International held in August of 1928 marked the beginning of the so-called "third period" of international Communism. This Congress heralded a number of significant changes in the line of the Communist movement. Let us look first, however, at the pre-sixth congress Communist position on a number of key issues.

In the period 1927-August 1928, the Communist Party of the United States looked upon the Socialist Party as a quasi-radical party of left-liberal reformers. They looked upon Socialists as non-Marxist "reformists and opportunists" who might move towards the right or the left under the force of circumstances. The Communist press occasionally sniped at the Socialist Party but did not consider it a major threat to the Communist position. While it is true that Ben Gitlow, Communist Party candidate for vice-president in 1928, commented
emotionally, "The role of the Socialist Party is the role of
the Hangman of the Revolution", nevertheless, the Communists
were usually not much concerned with the Socialist Party--
and were quite amused by this "revolutionary" party which had
as its leader a Protestant clergyman. In this spirit, the
Daily Worker in a column ironically labeled "Reverend
Norman Thomas Goes to the Masses", editorially commented, "Before
the Synod of the Evangelical churches at Dunkirk, New York
on Memorial Day, the Reverend Norman Thomas, candidate of
the Socialist Party for the presidency of the United States,
struggled to win the souls of his fellow Protestant preachers
for the gospel of Hillquit reformism and away from the
reformism of Al Smith. Mr. Thomas is having a hell of a
time with his flock."

In this period, the Communist Party was led by Jay
Lovestone, soon to be expelled from the party with his
followers for being "right deviationists". Lovestone had
long put forth the theory of "American exceptionalism", that
is, that the American working class was less class conscious
than its European counterpart, and therefore, the intermediary
step of a mass non-revolutionary Labor Party was necessary,
before the proletariat would be ready for the revolution.
Lovestone also envisaged the possibility of the triumph of
socialism in the United States without violent revolution.
2. Ibid., (June 1, 1928), 2.
The policy of supporting the Trade Union Educational League, a Communist organization which followed the policy of "boring from within" was related to this analysis of the non-revolutionary nature of the American working-class at that point.

This period witnessed a playing down of revolutionary slogans on the part of the Communist Party. The revolution was not near-at-hand, capitalism was in a period of stabilization, and the task of the Communists was to gain positions of influence within the labor movement so as to be ready to influence it towards Communism when a revolutionary crisis did develop. The mildly-worded masthead of the Daily Worker, which read, "The Daily Worker fights for the organization of the unorganized, the forty hour week, for a labor party", reflected the fact that the Communists did not consider social-revolution to be an immediate possibility.

In this period, the Communist Party accepted most traditional Marxist slogans, including "religion is the opiate of the masses". The Communists were clearly and consistently anti-religious and militant atheists. For example, an article by William Dynne in this period began with the statement, "Religion is the opium of the people."

3. The Daily Worker, January-August, 1928.
4. Ibid., January 24, 1928, 3.
At this time the Communist Party accepted the traditional socialist line on the Negro question. The Negro problem would be solved when the problem of the working-class as a whole was solved. However, the Communist Party, as did the Socialist Party, made special efforts to recruit Negroes at this time, believing that they were the most exploited of the American working-class, and therefore the most susceptible to Communism.

The major slogan of this period was "defend the Soviet Union." The Central task of the Communist Party of the United States was to defend the Soviet Union against imperialist attacks according to the unanimous report of the Political Committee of the Communist Party in 1920.

Thus, in this pre-Sixth Congress period, the Communist Party used the slogans of "reformism and opportunism" in relation to the Socialist Party, manipulated the symbols of the labor party and of work within the non-revolutionary trade unions, utilized the traditional Marxist slogan of "religion is the opiate of the masses" and "the solution of the problem of the Negro masses will come with the solution of the problem of the working class as a whole," and above all, raised the banner of "Defend the Soviet Union."

6 The Daily Worker, February 7, 1923.
The Sixth Congress of the Third International in August 1928 brought about a number of important changes in the political line of the Communist Party of the United States. These changes altered the nature of the Party and prepared it for its role in the early depression years.

As a result of the actions connected with the Sixth Congress all dissident groups within the American Party were isolated and after the Presidential election of 1928, the three leading American followers of Leon Trotsky were expelled from the party. Immediately, these three, James Cannon, Martin Abhern, and Max Shachtman, formed their own group which was eventually to become the nucleus of the Trotskyite movement in the United States.

The story of the expulsion of the second group, consisting of Jay Lovestone, Ben Gitlow, Bertram Wolfe, and Will Herberg, is more complicated. After years of complicated factional quarrels, trials of the various parties to Moscow pleading their case, and directives from Moscow and the Third International, the Lovestonites were finally expelled by the decision of the Comintern for being "right-deviationists," and formed their own group, which was active in the thirties within the labor movement.

The actions of the Sixth Congress and the subsequent expulsion of the Trotskyites and Lovestonites, prepared the way
for significant changes in the line. This new line, which was a complete reversal of Lovestone's theory of exceptionalism, was the public line of the Communist Party in the crucial first four or five years of the depression.

The major change in the Communist line as the result of the Sixth Congress was the slogan of "social fascism". No longer were the American Federation of Labor, the Socialist Party, and other non-Communist left-wing groups to be considered as somewhat ludicrous "reformist and opportunist" groups, but they were now "social fascist" ones. On what was this slogan of social fascism based and what did it mean?

The Communist International had analyzed the world situation as of 1928 as one of increasing crisis in which the entire capitalist structure was menaced by its own developing internal contradictions. The period of capitalist stabilization was over and the revolution was now imminent.

Under these circumstances drastic measures had to be taken by the capitalists to prevent the complete collapse of capitalism. These measures were those embodied in fascism, which was not a new form of ordering society, but the logical manifestation of capitalism in its crisis stage.

In this situation, according to the Communist International, it became imperative for the capitalists to find means of
gaining support of sections of the working class. This was done by the utilization of the non-revolutionary trade unions such as those in the American Federation of Labor and of the reformist social-democratic parties as weapons of growing fascism. The bureaucratic leaders of these groups would utilize socialist slogans when talking to the masses as a mask for their pro-fascist activities. Thus the leaders of these groups were socialist in words, fascist in practice.

The Socialist Party was the primary object for attack. "The Socialist Party," according to a party document, "as the representative of the petty shop keepers, is trying to counteract the transformation of the petty shop keeper into a clerk of the chain store by organizing their forces into social-fascist troops of capitalism against the labor movement." Not only was the Socialist Party social-fascist but its leader, Norman Thomas, was no longer a somewhat ludicrous figure, but now had become "a hypocritical apologists for the bloody rapacities of Wall Street."

The American Federation of Labor was also considered social-fascistic. The Communist, the official theoretical organ of the Communist Party, made the following comment about one of the largest of the American Federation of Labor Unions.

8. "On Social Fascism" in the Communist, IX (1930), 463.
"The International Ladies Garment Workers Union, which is controlled by the Socialist Party, offers an example of social-fascism in an (sic!) advanced stage. An American Mussolini could incorporate this 'union' into his fascist state with little or no modification." In, as could be expected, the Communist press, all the smaller groups on the left such as the group of Marxian-Freudian intellectuals clustered around V.F. Calverton's Modern Quarterly (later the Modern Monthly), A.J. Musten's Brookwood Labor School, and the Trotskyites and Lovestonites were all listed as "left social-fascists" who were the most dangerous groups, for the more radical these non-Stalinist groups sounded, the more fascist they really were. Thus V.F. Calverton was called "reactionary, anti-Marxist and counter-revolutionary."

The Communist Party isolated itself from all other groups on the left. The work within the American Federation of Labor was abandoned and the Trade Union Unity League was formed with the function of building dual revolutionary unions. No longer would the Communists "bore from within" the American Federation of Labor, but instead its members were instructed to create industrial unions which would take members away from the "social-fascist" American Federation.

of Labor unions and which would organize workers who were not already organized. These unions were to be revolutionary, industrial unions affiliated with the Trade Union Unity League.

The slogan of the labor party was gradually abandoned. Paragraph Forty-nine of the "Theses on the International Situation" adopted by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern had talked of the eventual creation of the Labor Party"organized from below". However, the slogan of the labor party was not to be used as an immediate demand but one to be placed in the distant future.

But by 1930 this slogan was given up completely. Earl Browder reasoned that the labor party at that time would be of necessity organized around the American Federation of Labor, the Socialist Party and the other "social-fascist"organizations, and that consequently a "Labor Party made up of social-fascist organizations" would not mean political separation of the workers from the capitalists but would mean the delivery of the workers to capitalist policies under the guise of a Labor Party." Therefore, the Communist Party must become a genuine mass revolutionary party, instead of pushing for a reformist Labor Party.

This period, coinciding with the period of the early depression which witnessed serious class violence in the United 11. The Daily Worker, October 3, 1928, 2. 12. Communist Party, Theses for the Seventh National Convention of the CPUSA (New York, March 31, 1930) 15.
of Labor unions and which would organize workers who were not already organized. These unions were to be revolutionary, industrial unions affiliated with the Trade Union Unity League.

The slogan of the labor party was gradually abandoned. Paragraph Forty-nine of the "Theses on the International Situation" adopted by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern had talked of the eventual creation of the Labor Party"organized from below". However, the slogan of the labor party was not to be used as an immediate demand but one to be placed in the distant future.

But by 1930 this slogan was given up completely. Earl Browder reasoned that the labor party at that time would be of necessity organized around the American Federation of Labor, the Socialist Party and the other "social-fascist"organizations, and that consequently a "Labor Party made up of social-fascist organizations, would not mean political separation of the workers from the capitalists but would mean the delivery of the workers to capitalist policies under the guise of a Labor Party." Therefore, the Communist Party must become a genuine mass revolutionary party, instead of pushing for a reformist Labor Party.

This period, coinciding with the period of the early depression which witnessed serious class violence in the United

11. The Daily Worker, October 3, 1928, 2.
States, saw a great emphasis being placed by the Communist Party on the slogans of class warfare, and of work among the unemployed.

Every article on domestic affairs that appeared in the Daily Worker or the New Masses in the 1930-1933 period emphasized William Z. Foster's statement that "Communist action is based upon the slogan of 'Class against Class'; that is, the working class against the capitalist class."

Such class-warfare and revolutionary phrases as "capitalist press", "capitalist usurers", "the capitalists and their government", "bankrupt capitalist system", "A society in decay", "forthcoming proletarian revolution", the "general crisis of capitalism", "phony bourgeois democracy", "war is inevitable under the capitalist system", and "world revolutionary upsurge" appear again and again in the Communist press in this period. In response to this emphasis on class warfare, the New Masses developed a new type of revolutionary journalism, with such noted writers as John Dos Passos, Erskine Caldwell, John Savak and Robert Cantwell contributing weekly reports from strike areas throughout the country.

The Communist Party in this period developed its own unique analysis of the Negro question which it has maintained until the present. The Negroes in the south were looked upon as constituting a separate national group, exploited as a colonial

minority by white imperialists. Therefore, the slogan of "the right of self-determination for all colonial peoples" applied equally to the Hindu masses in India and to the Negro masses in the South. Consequently, in those areas of the south where the Negroes constituted a continuous majority of the population, the Communist Party demanded the right of these Negro areas to secede from the United States in order to create a distinct Negro republic.

The appeal in this period was to the working class (including the agricultural proletariat) and to the working-class alone. There was no appeal to the white collar classes, to the professionals, or to the intellectuals as such. While it was true that the John Reed Clubs of "revolutionary writers" were begun in this period, that the Communist devoted a number of articles attacking certain groups of intellectuals, and that the New Masses functioned as the organ which was to appeal to middle-class intellectuals among others, the major emphasis of the Party was one of work among the "revolutionary proletarian masses." Slogan-wise, the appeal was to the working-class; middle-class people were attracted to the Communist Party only on the understanding of their being willing to accept subordination to the proletariat.

16. See chapter V.
Harold Lasswell commented in this connection, "a well-dressed individual was looked upon with suspicion at Communist gatherings; middle-class intellectuals connected with the movement donned their old clothes to attend Communist functions."

On the foreign scene, the major slogan still was to defend the Soviet Union against imperialist attacks. The only matters on the foreign scene that the Communist Press devoted much space to were the Chinese Revolution and the success of industrialization in the Soviet Union. This latter theme occupied practically as much attention as did scenes of class violence in the United States. Every article on the Soviet Union played up the comparison between the United States in depression and the success of the Stalin First Five Year Plan. The ideas of Russian advance and American depression were repeated over and over again. For example, "In sharp contrast with the downward trend of production in the capitalist countries, the Soviet Union is driving ahead full speed to the Socialist industrialization of one-sixth of the globe." William Z. Foster wrote, "The most striking and significant political and social fact in the world today is the glaring contrast between the industrial, political and social conditions prevailing in the capitalist countries and those obtaining in the Soviet Union."

Thus the period from the Sixth Congress (August 1928) to the rise of Hitler in Germany (January 1933) was one which emphasized the nearness of the revolution in the United States, class-violence, the complete bankruptcy of all non-Communist parties, revolutionary action on the part of the proletariat, an anti-labor party stand, the defense of the Soviet Union, and the invidious comparison between the industrial depression in the United States and the claimed historical industrial advances in the Soviet Union. The positions of the Communist Party on the Socialist Party, the American Federation of Labor and the other non-Communist labor groups, on dual unionism, and on the depth of the capitalist crisis had been reversed in the "Leftward" turn of the Third International.

The rise to power in Germany of Hitler led to a major change in the policies of the Communist parties of the world. In the years from 1933 to 1935 the Communist parties of Europe and the United States moved away from their isolated position of refusing to work with any non-Communist political groups, began to play down revolutionary slogans, and moved towards the "right". This movement culminated in the Popular Front with the Socialists in France in 1934, and in the Seventh Congress of the Third International in August 1935 where the line of the Popular Front was made the official policy of the Comintern.
The years from 1933 to 1935 represented a partial break with the earlier period of Communist history, but did not display all the manifestations of the Communist line after August 1935. While the impact of Hitler's rise to power in Germany was immediately reflected in Comintern actions, nevertheless Stalin's statement of May 6, 1929 in which he said, "I think the moment is not far off when a revolutionary crisis will develop in America—and when a revolutionary crisis develops in America, that will be the beginning of the end of world capitalism as a whole," was still the determining factor in the Communist Party line in this period.

For example, the *New Masses* bombastically declared in 1934:

"Austria! France! Spain! Europe on the barricades. The world is afire with revolution and harbingers of revolution. Labor is breaking the chains, is rising, is storming the heavens. 'We are entering a period of a new round of revolutions and wars,' the Communist executive declared two months ago. It has begun! Today, tomorrow, or the next day, it will be Great Britain, or Germany, or Italy, or—yes, the United States...."

The major new line of this period was the line of "the united front from above and from below". Not only did the Communist Party call for the joint action of the Communist Party and the masses as it had done in the first years of the depression—the "united front from below"—but it also called for joint action on specific issues with the American Federation of Labor, the Musteists, and the Socialist Party—the "united front from above and below".

This appeal was directly associated with the rise of Hitler to power according to Alex Bittelman, one of the leading party functionaries. The first step in this process came with the issuance by the Communist International in March 1933 of an appeal to the workers of all countries for the organization of the united front. In this appeal the Executive Committee of the Communist International recommended to the Communist Parties of the various countries "to approach the Central Committee of the Social Democratic Parties belonging to the Labor and Socialist International with proposals regarding joint actions against fascism and against the capitalist offensive." This appeal of the Communist International was published in the Daily Worker on March 18, 1933, accompanied by a statement of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPUSA, saying that it "fully agrees with the Manifesto of the Executive Committee of the Communist International for achieving the unity of the workers in the struggle against the capitalist offensive and fascism." It further stated that "the Political Bureau of the Party will, during the next few days, make public concrete proposals for the realization of such united action of all workers" and that "these proposals will be made specifically to the Socialist Party, the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, and the American Federation of Labor". These proposals were made public in a statement by the Central

Comittee of the CPUSA published in the Daily Worker, March 30, 1933.

The proposal offered the following program as the basis for united action:

"1. Against Roosevelt's hunger and war program; for adequate relief to the unemployed; for shorter hours; and for relief for the small farmers.

"2. For federal unemployment insurance....

"3. For the workers' rights, for the release of Tom Mooney, the Scottsboro boys, and all political prisoners....

"4. Against fascist terror and anti-Semitism in Germany....

"5. ... for the defense of the Chinese people... against the imperialist war policy of Wall Street....

"6. For the recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States; against imperialist attacks on the Soviet Union."

This offer of the united front was made on several other occasions in the next fifteen months by the Communist Party. The American Federation completely ignored the proposals, and the Musteists, after flirting with the idea, not only ignored the Stalinist offer, but united their group with the Trotskyites to form the Workers' Party. The sum total of the serious negotiations and flirtations with the idea of a formal united front with the Communists by the Socialist Party, was that the SP rejected the idea. However, in practice local Socialist Party organizations did participate in joint demonstrations, joint May Day parades, and joint action with Communist groups. This type of local joint action was determined by local groups on an issue-by-issue basis and was not the result of the Daily Worker, March 30, 1933.
OF National decisions by the leaders of the Socialist Party.

What were the Stalinists' underlying motives behind the proposition of the united front at this point? It is accurate to state that the Communists did not abandon their position of "social fascism" at this time, for Earl Browder was still using the phrase in 1934. Neither were they interested in cooperating with non-Communist groups, except on their own terms and for their own purposes.

While the Communists did state that they were "ready to sincerely agree to withhold all attacks upon Socialists, the American Federation of Labor, or other working class bodies which sincerely enter into mutual agreements for united struggles around agreed-upon issues and loyally carry through the agreement in practice," other statements in the Communist press indicated that their real attitude was quite different.

For example, an editorial in The Communist stated, "The historic role of the social democracy has not changed. It does not mean that under the present circumstances the social democracy is no longer the main support of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the workers, impeding the development of the revolutionary movement."

To the Communists, the united front in this period of 1933

25, The Daily Worker, March 30, 1933.
26, The Communist, XII (April 1933), 327.
to 1935 was a device to destroy the Socialist Party and the splinter groups, after utilizing them for all they were worth, by capturing their membership. This is not based on mere surmise, but upon the words of Earl Browder and other Communist leaders. For example, in August 1933 Earl Browder issued an "Open Letter to the Party Membership" on the question of the united front. In this letter he clearly stated that the Communists were utilizing the united front as a way to destroy the other organizations and to capture its members. Illustrating this point, Browder rhetorically asked, "Did you think we are making the United front with the Musites for example because we have suddenly been convinced that they are good class-conscious fighters, good leaders of the working class? Have you forgotten that precisely the reason why we make the united front with them is because we have got to take their followers away from them?"

In this period, the Communist Party was militantly anti-Roosevelt, who was continually referred to as a "tool of Wall Street," "the leader of the capitalist offensive," "the initiator of forced labor legislation," and so forth. Browder made a statement in 1934 which the later events were to disprove. In October 1934 he wrote that the Communist Party will never accept the idea of "The extension of the united front to... the Roosevelt governmental machine."

27. Earl Browder in The Communist, XXI (May 1933), 753.
In relationship to this proposal for the united front, the question of the Farmer-Labor Party was brought forth, and discussed in the Party press. Many liberals and progressives had been advocating the formation of such a party, and the Communist Party had steadfastly opposed it, as we have seen, since 1930. In this transitional period, however, the Communists slightly altered their line. They still were opposed to the utilization of the slogan of "For A Farmer-Labor Party" as an immediate demand, but they were considering it as being a possible desirable step in the near future.

The attitude toward the trade unions began to change again. By 1934 the Trade Union Unity League was abandoned and the membership of the Communist Party instructed to work more through the existing American Federation and the independent non-revolutionary unions.

The Communist Party began to display an interest in winning the support of religious groups in this period. While religion was still referred to as an opiate, the Communists stoutly maintained when talking to religious groups that they were not against freedom of religion and that freedom of religion existed in the Soviet Union. For that matter, Browder maintained, Church members can be Communists and that many of them were. In particular, among the Protestant clergy, Browder asserted, the Communists made many converts who performed a valuable service by their radical preaching.

Most significantly of all, this period witnessed the beginning of an intensive appeal to the intellectuals, professionals, and other middle-class groups. This was in contrast with the earlier period where the appeal was directed almost exclusively towards the working class.

The beginning of the appeal to the intellectuals and the middle-class had its roots, of course, in the earlier period, in which many intellectuals, as we shall see in a later chapter, turned towards Communism. But the official party press took hardly any notice of this intellectual movement in the pre-1933 period and rarely exploited it. Beginning in 1933, however, the *New Masses* began to appeal exclusively to the intellectuals. The first weekly issue in 1934 editorially commented, "*The New Masses* must keep in step with our rapidly moving revolutionary epoch. It addresses itself to those in the middle-class who have shed their illusions about bourgeois democracy and are ready to fight for a Communist society in alliance with the vanguard of the workers."

In the 1933-35 period, the Communist Party press made continual appeals to the middle-class, in particular to intellectuals and professionals. This press made continual references to the low economic standard of American intellectuals in depression, as compared to the Soviet Union, which was portrayed as an intellectual's paradise.

The period of 1933-35 can be summed up as a transitional one in the history of the Communist Party in which the emphasis began to be shifted from the closeness of the proletarian revolution, towards the non-revolutionary period of the Popular Front days. It was in this transitional period that the Communist Party began to move away from being solely a party that made its appeal to the working class, and the process that culminated in the non-revolutionary line of the next period, in which a strong appeal was made to all classes, begun. This process of change culminated in the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Third International in August 1935.

Despite the harbingers of the shift of the line that we have seen in the 1933-August 1935 period, the complete emergence of the Popular Front line after the Seventh Congress in August 1935 was a dramatic reversal of the old position. With the exception of the slogan of "Defend the Soviet Union", the period of the Popular Front has little in common with the preceding period in American Communist history.

Under the leadership of Georgi Dimitroff, the head of the Bulgarian Communist Party and of the Third International, the Communist International at the Seventh Congress universalized the policy of the Popular Front which had come into existence on a national level in France, 1934. The major statement of this congress was the resolution which read, "The duty of every Communist Party...is to apply the United Front tactic in a new manner, seeking by all means to reach agreements with the
organizations of the toilers of all political trends for joint action, on a factory, local, district, national and international scale."

When we examine the manner in which the tactic of the Popular Front was applied on the American scene "in a new manner", it becomes obvious that a major change had occurred in Communist policy. While there were to be further changes in the line in the following years, the Communist Party never returned in its public utterances, to the revolutionary, proletarian directed slogan of the pre-1935 period.

From this time on the Communists never solely directed their political appeal to the working-class. In this period, they spent more and more time making an open appeal for the support of the small middle-class. This is most important. The Communist Party public image from this point on, was one conceived of in terms of inclusiveness which would not alienate any class in American society (with the exception, of course, of the small percentage of large industrial and financial capitalists--"Wall Street"--which had been the traditional focus of attack for American populism and progressivism.) The Communist Party from 1935 on played down revolutionary symbols, and, as it shall be shown, by 1938 all traces of revolutionary slogans, Marxist terminology, and even the demand for socialism had been eliminated from the public statements of the Communist Party. In its public image and line, by 1938 the Communist Party had been almost thoroughly de-Marxistized. While it was true that

immediately after the Comintern Congress, Browder had indicated that Communists still advocated communism when he said that the Popular Front could not bring socialism and could only prevent fascism from coming to power, can protect the democratic liberties of the toiling masses, can fight off hunger and economic chaos, and give the toiling masses time to learn through their own experience in order to reach a socialist society. Nevertheless, the important point is that socialism was something that was postponed for the distant future.

In this period, the Communist Party played down the demand of "self-determination" for the Negro people in the Black Belt. In its place, the Communists advocated the more usual liberal and socialist demands for social, political, and economic equality within the framework of the existing order.

There were two stages in the transition to the 1938 democratic front movement of the Communist Party to the right, but both were based on the general outlines of the Resolutions of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International. The two most important paragraphs of that document follow:

"The establishment of a united front with Social Democratic and reformist organizations (party, trade unions, cooperative, sport, and cultural and educational organizations) and with the bulk of their members, as well as with mass national-liberation, religious, democratic and pacifist organizations and their adherents, is of decisive importance for the struggle against war and its fascist instigators in all countries.

"The drawing of pacifist organizations and their adherents into the united front of struggle for peace acquires great

34. Earl Browder in The Communist, XIV (September 1935), 791.
35. "The Tasks of the Commmunist International in Connection with the Preparations of the Imperialists for a New World War" in The Communist, XIV (October 1935), 944.
importance in mobilizing the petty-bourgeois masses, progressive intellectuals, women and youth against war. While constantly subjecting the erroneous views of sincere pacifists to constructive criticism, and vigorously combating those pacifists who by their policy screen the preparations of the...fascists for imperialism war...the Communists must invite the collaboration of all pacifist organizations that are prepared to go with them even if only part of the way towards a genuine struggle against imperialist war."

In implementing this policy, the Communist Party attempted to improve its relationships with the Socialist Party. While the Socialists never fully accepted the plea of the united front, nevertheless they did agree to some joint action with the Communists. Thus on such issues as joint May-Day Parades in 1936, the defense of a young Negro Communist, Angelo Herndon who had been convicted of murder on alleged false evidence, the defense of the Scottsboro Boys, another case of supposedly illegal turns and twists in the trial of a group of Negroes on a charge of rape, the Socialist Party participated in joint action with the Communists. This improvement of relations between the two parties worked both ways and the Communists in some localities in the 1935 election backed the Socialist candidates. A notable example of this was in Reading, Pennsylvania where the Socialists succeeded in winning most of the position under question in the municipal elections due to Communist support.

The most notable example of the new and more friendly relations between the two parties was the Browder-Thomas debate. On November 27, 1935, Norman Thomas, the head of the Socialist Party and Earl Browder, the head of the Communist Party, appeared on the same platform in Madison Square Garden in New York City,
and debated the question, "Which Road for American Workers? Socialist or Communist?" In this debate Browder referred to Thomas as "Comrade Thomas", the two speakers were very friendly to one another and agreed "in principle" that the United Front was desirable, and, at the end of the meeting they both led the joint socialist-communist audience in singing the Internationale. This meeting never could have occurred in the pre-Popular Front period.

Behind all the maneuvers of the Popular Front period, as we can see from the Resolutions of the Seventh Congress, was the question of war and fascism. As soon as Hitler came to power, the Communists began to talk of "collective security" and by 1935 this had become their major political slogan. The American League Against War and Fascism which had been founded as a result of the Amsterdam Congress of August 27, 1932, was backed by the Communists and was under strong indirect Communist influence. Nevertheless, it attracted many liberals, socialists, and pacifists of every shade. Thus such organizations as the Socialist Party, the League for Industrial Democracy, the Musteites, the Lovestonites, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the War Resisters' League, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People were originally affiliated with it. By 1934, however, most of the non-Communist organizations had withdrawn, but many non-Communists stayed in as individuals. From 1934 on, the League never deviated from the Communist Party line, and was strongly supported in the Party press.

In the field of foreign affairs, the Communists appeared particularly as the defenders of the Spanish Republic against the Franco attack. Every issue of the Communist press in this period appealed to the people of the world to come to the aid of the Spanish Republic, as had the Soviet Union, and called for an American embargo on goods for Franco, and American intervention on the side of the Republicans. The Communists indicated that they were the only staunch defenders of Republican Spain, the only organized political force really willing to organize American support for the Spanish people against the Fascist onslaught.

The new line of the Seventh Congress led to many startling changes. The American Communist leaders openly admitted at the Comintern Congress that they had been "mechanical" in their application of Marxism, and had allowed "sectarianism" to influence them. After Dimitroff had called for the formation of a Farmer-Labor Party in the United States, Comrade Browder got up in behalf of the American Party and stated that the rejection after 1930 of the "Farmer-Labor Party" slogan was wrong. However, Browder succeeded in blaming it all on the Trotskyites who had been expelled from the party in 1929. Said Browder, "...we had been influenced by the Trotskyist anti-peasant theories in the rejection of the farmer-labor Party slogan."

Not only did Browder admit that Trotskyism had influenced...

the American Party, but that the Communist Party's former avoidance of legislative action and a minimal program which they had previously branded as "reformist" was the result of "a sectarian refusal to be concrete". Thus, Upton Sinclair's EPIC plan in California which had previously come into extreme Communist disfavor, now, in a doctored-up form, was to be the model for the Communists. In Browder's talk to the Congress, he put forth a program which sounded like a slightly more radical version of the New Deal, a program which was not necessarily socialist or communist. Instead of preaching revolution, the Communist Party came forth with a legislative program of minimal demands. If the distinction between the two traditions of middle-class and agrarian radicalism, and socialist radicalism in the United States has been that the former has tried to reform the system solely through the legislative system, and has made its appeal largely to the small middle-class and to the farmers, while the latter had called for a complete social revolution, had looked askance at purely parliamentary action, and had appealed primarily to the working class, then the Communist Party clearly began to sound in the tradition of Bryan and LaFollette, rather than De Leon, Debs, and Haywood. The Manifesto of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on the Eighteenth Anniversary of the October Revolution, indicated this shift from an appeal to the working class to one to all classes. This Manifesto was addressed to the "Workers, farmers, intellectuals, and small businessmen, and
all friends of freedom and enemies of war."

This period witnessed the "Americanization" of the Communist Party. Responding to the attacks on the Communists as "un American", Earl Browder in the Presidential campaign utilized the slogan "We are the Americans and Communism is the Americanism of the Twentieth Century". Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson became the heroes of the Communist Party, the former being the great liberator and common man and the later being the great revolutionist. Of Jefferson, the New Masses wrote, "He belongs to the mass of the American people; his real heirs today are the Americans who are fighting against the tyranny of Big Business with the revolutionary spirit and boldness with which he fought the tories of that day." And The Communist of November 1935 reminded its readers that the "best revolutionary traditions of America are your traditions." And as Harold Lasswell observed, "As the new 'United Front' policy developed...the Communists began to make more frequent use of the American flag on the Communist platform and in Communist parades."

The Communists put up a candidate, Browder, to oppose Roosevelt, Landon, and Thomas. This was done, however, only after the efforts of a number of groups to unite the various local Farmer-Labor Party groups which had been formed in a number of states, into a national party had failed, and after the Communists had failed to get socialist agreement on a joint presidential ticket in 1936.

40. The New Masses, April 21, 1936, 6.
41. The Communist, XIV (November 1935), 939.
42. Harold Lasswell and Dorothy Blumenstock, World Revolutionary Propaganda, 96.
Browder ran on a platform whose major slogan was "Defeat Landon", and which also included planks for a Farmer-Labor party, unemployment insurance, and social security, free vocational training for all between 16 and 25, "make the rich pay the taxes", the "democratization of the Supreme Court", the defense of civil liberties, full rights for the Negro people, and international peace at all costs.

During the election campaign the Communists reserved most of their attack for Landon and hardly mentioned Roosevelt at all. Although they continued to claim that they were running their own candidate and wanted their friends to vote for Browder, rather than for Roosevelt, they did not succeed in convincing many people that this was their real position. Many of the intellectuals who had supported the Communist Party in this period, such as Theodore Dreiser, publicly declared that they were voting for Roosevelt as the best way to beat Landon and advance communism.

Most important of all, the Communists no longer put forth the social revolution as an immediate demand. In an interview, Karl Browder in answer to the question of whether the Communist Party had completely abandoned revolutionary principles, replied,

"No, the Communists systematically advocate their revolutionary principles.... But until that becomes a practical issue for the majority of the people of the United States the Communists will join hands with all those who fight for a better life under capitalism. The improvement of living conditions, under capitalism...will provide a more peaceful, less difficult, and less painful transition to socialism when the time comes." 44

44. Karl Browder in The New Masses, October 20, 1936, 6.
This indeed was a drastic change in the party line from the early-thirties when the revolution was just around the corner, and the Communists were utilizing every crisis situation to provoke revolution. The Party was now prepared to make its final turnabout and to completely back Franklin Roosevelt who it had previously called a "tool of Wall Street."

The decisive victory of President Roosevelt in the 1936 election, a victory of such magnitude that it had no counterpart in recent history, caused a further move of the Communist Party towards the "right," towards an out and out pro-New Deal position. The complete acceptance of the New Deal by the Communists did not come until after the Chicago speech of October 1937, in which Roosevelt came out clearly for "collective security."

In the period from the election to the Chicago speech, however, the Communist Party put forth a program and line which was still somewhat critical of Roosevelt, and still somewhat to the left of his position. The defeat of Republicanism and Hannon was a major victory for the forces advocating democracy, and a setback to the "Hearst-Liberty League drive toward fascism," according to the Communists. However, this did not mean that the Communists supported Roosevelt at this time. Roosevelt was looked upon as a capitalist whose main concern was with the preservation of the capitalist system.

Nevertheless, the Communists admitted, he steered a middle-course

45. The Communist, XV(December 1936), 1104.
"between the camp of reaction and fascism on the one hand and the camp of democracy and progress on the other hand", and therefore could be pushed either to the right or to the left depending upon the strength of the various forces playing upon him.

On the basis of this analysis of Roosevelt, the Communists believed that the alliance of labor, white-collar workers, small-businessmen, and professionals which had created the Roosevelt victory must be led towards further independent political action. Therefore, the task of the Communist Party was to push for independent political action on the part of labor, the farmers and the other "mass democratic groups", and to help the organizing drives of the C.I.O., thereby creating a powerful labor movement. This labor movement could then either through its independent action push Roosevelt to the left or could create its own independent political party which would dominate national politics.

Earl Browder admitted that the victory of Roosevelt might lead away from a Farmer-Labor Party and towards continuing support for Roosevelt on the part of the coalition of classes which had elected him in 1936. In these circumstances, Browder reasoned, the Communists must conceive of the People's Front on a "broader scale than merely the existing Farmer-Labor Party organizations. We must conceive of it on a scale that will unite the forces in

48. Ibid.
the Farmer-Labor Party and other progressives with those forces crystallized in some form or other but not yet independent of the old parties." Perhaps, Browder suggested, independent political groupings, working through the Democratic Party, such as the EPIC organization in California, and the Washington Commonwealth Association, might be the form which the Farmer-Labor party idea might take.

Towards the end of 1937, the Communist Party began to move to the 'right' of this position and took an openly pro-New Deal stand, personally favorable to Roosevelt. The Communist press from them on continually talked about "resident Roosevelt's Progressive Leadership".

The final step in the change in the Communist attitude came with the "Quarantine the Warmakers" speech of President Roosevelt's campaign in early October 1937, in Chicago. As a result of this speech, which took the same position of "collective security" long advocated by the Communists, the united front and the Popular Front received a face lifting and a new name—the Democratic Front.

This process had begun several months earlier when General Secretary Browder had suggested that perhaps forming a new party was unfeasible in view of the complexities of the American electoral system, and that it might be possible to work entirely

49. Earl Browder, The Results of the Elections, 52.
50. For example see The Communist, XIII (January 1938), 22.
through the Democratic Party. Browder wrote, "The present role and future potentialities of these two peculiarities of the American electoral system, the difficulties of getting new parties on the ballot and the possibilities of work in the direct primaries, have been insufficiently considered by the vanguard of political radicalism in the United States." Finally, Browder admitted that a separate Farmer-Labor party would not appear in all likelihood, for it was "growing within the womb of the disintegrating two old parties."

While they had been coming closer to the New Deal since the 1936 elections, the first time that the Communist Party supported Roosevelt personally was after the Chicago speech. In reporting this speech, the Daily Worker displayed Roosevelt's picture prominently on the first page and the Central Committee of the CPUSA issued a Manifesto calling on all the American people to support Roosevelt's Chicago speech. From this time on, the stage was set for the final metamorphosis of the Communist Party which occurred at the Tenth National Convention of the CP held in New York City on May 28, 1938.

The new Communist line was laid down by Earl Browder, the General Secretary of the CPUSA, at this convention. Browder began by attacking the reactionaries in Congress who had opposed progressive legislation and had prevented "the great potential power of America from being thrown into the balance on the side of democracy and peace" by their refusal to allow the implementation of the Chicago speech. The only way to defeat the

52. Ibid., p. 599.
54. Ibid., October 6, 1937, p. 1.
reactionaries, according to Browder, was by building the democratic front—the unity of all the forces of peace and progress. This progress had been under way since the 1936 election said Browder, and it had come to a climax in the "deepening struggle of progressives against reactionaries within the Democratic Party." The progressive, New Deal wing of the Democratic Party, "created under the leadership of President Roosevelt, is supported by a great following, largely unorganized, of workers, farmers, and city-middle-classes.... With all its weaknesses and inadequacies, its hesitation and confusions, this New Deal wing under the Roosevelt leadership is an essential part of the developing democratic front against monopoly capital."

Not only was the New Deal wing of the Democratic Party part of the Communists' proposed democratic front, but so were many "lesser leaders, who are closer to the masses" of the Republican Party. The democratic front was broad enough to include all forces except the extreme-right-wing, the Trotskyites, and the Socialists if they persisted in refusing to support "collective security". Norman Thomas was attacked by Browder for going too far "left" and for forgetting that "elementary lesson of the grammar-school children, that direction is relative, not absolute; that if you go far enough west you arrive in the Far East; and that if in politics you follow an "extreme left" line you will soon find yourself in the camp of the extreme right."

56. Ibid., 16.
57. Ibid., 16.
58. Ibid., 22.
Under the general slogan of "For Jobs, Security, Democracy, and Peace" the democratic front could push forward the general aims of the New Deal. Of the seventeen demands put forth by the Communists under the democratic front, none were not part of the program of the New Deal.

The Communists even made an attempt to win the Catholic people over to the Democratic front. In Browder's speech, one section was entitled, "We Extend the Hand of Brotherly Cooperation to the Catholics" in which Browder declared that there was no practical difference between the two institutions. Browder remarked, "Catholics as a whole turn to the doctrines and dogmas of their Church for formulation and justification of ethical and moral standards, while Communists base their standards wholly on the needs of society, but in practical life, among the masses, it all comes to the same thing, justice, truth, and fair dealing between man and man."

In the sphere of foreign affairs the Communists clearly stated that if war came it would be a justified war. Robert Minor, one of the party leaders, wrote that war against fascism would not be an imperialist war, but a national-democratic war, and that in such a war the capitalist democracies would be progressive. Therefore the Communists had to support this democratic war in the fight against fascism.

The Communists advocated a policy of American intervention in the world scene. The United States, the New Masses declared,

61. Ibid., 53-54.
cannot stay neutral. "Let the President invoke the Kellogg pact and declare that any attack on Czechoslovakia is a direct concern of the people and government of the United States. Let him make clear to the fascist dictators that this country is prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with Britain, France, and the Soviet Union...in the active defense of peace and the independence of all nations."

The Americanization of the Party continued into this period. The Communists became greatly concerned with the writing of American history and an entire battery of Communist historians, the most notable of which were Philip Foner and Herbert Aptheker, appeared upon the scene. In the Communists' drive to portray the revolutionary and equalitarian heritage of America, they criticized all those who in any way debunked the grammar-school text-book version of American history. For example, Earl Browder attacked Charles Beard for Beard's economic interpretation of the origins of the American constitution. "We must", said Browder to the Party workers, "dissolve the remnants of the old sectarian and nihilistic approach to American national traditions which we inherited from the pre-war Socialist Party, and which the Socialists had taken over uncritically from the mechanical debunking school of historical study founded by Charles Beard...No progress at all was possible until we broke out of this blind alley into which Beard had led progressive study of history in the United States."

63. The New Masses, September 20, 1938, p. 3.
64. Earl Browder, "Concerning American Revolutionary Traditions" in The Communist, XVII (December 1938), 1080.
Socialism was a thing of the past—and "the issue of tomorrow"—but certainly not the issue of the day. While the Communists gave occasional voice to their belief in socialism "eventually," they seemed relieved that they no longer could be publicly called down for being revolutionary. That weather-vane of the Communist line, Earl Browder, declared, "The program of the democratic front is not a socialist program. It is the minimum of those measures necessary, under capitalism, to preserve and extend democracy, and all those things which have been the heart of the American tradition in the past, ever since the revolutionary foundation of the United States. The program of the democratic front is squarely based upon Americanism."

We have seen the complete turn of the wheel. The Communist Party had moved from revolutionary, proletarian, violently socialist, internationalist, anti-Roosevelt, militant slogans to non-revolutionary, middle-class oriented, mildly socialist, pro-New Deal ones. The slogan of "Class against Class" had been replaced by the slogan of "The widest possible Unity—the unity of all democratic forces."

The Communist Party by 1938 was not acting as the "vanguard" of any group, but was rather following the general New Deal trend of American politics. Its public image was no longer a revolutionary, radical one, but was rather within the major stream of American life. This fact made it possible for many people to cooperate with the Communists, perhaps mistaking the public image for the actual reality of the CPUSA.

LET HISTORY BE MY JUDGE
—W.H. Auden

We made all possible preparations,
Drew up a list of firms,
Constantly revised our calculations
And allotted the farms,

Issued all the orders expedient
In this kind of case:
Most, as we expected, were obedient,
Though there were murmurs, of course;

Chiefly against our excercising
Our old right to abuse;
Even some sort of attempt at rising
But these were mere boys.

For never serious misgiving
Occurred to anyone,
Since there could be no question of living
If we did not win.

The generally accepted view teaches
That there was no excuse,
Though in the light of recent researches
Many would find the cause.

In a not uncommon form of terror;
Others, still more astute,
Point to possibilities of error
At the very start.

As for ourselves there is left remaining
Our honor at least,
And a reasonable chance of retaining
Our faculties to the last.

THE LEFT-WING INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT OF THE NINETEEN-THIRTIES

The long-range movement of the intellectuals towards socialism came to its peak in the nineteen-thirties. Faced with the depression, the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy, and their own economic difficulties, the great majority of writers, and many artists, social-workers, and academicians, feeling increasingly alienated from the main-drift of American society, moved left. Not only were many of those who had moved left in the days of the Masses—Seven Arts—Liberator reactivated, but many intellectuals who had come to maturity during the nineteen-twenties and the early thirties were brought into the radical movement in the years after 1929.

The intellectuals, faced with the unprecedented collapse of the American economy, began to cast about in search of a way out of the situation. Imbued with the scientific and pragmatic spirit which demanded that there always be an exit, the intellectuals began to explore a number of possible alternatives.

This movement of the American intelligentsia to the left found parallels and sustenance in France, England, and some of the other European countries in which Marxism had deep roots. Such English intellectuals as C. Day Lewis, W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, George Orwell, John Strachey, and Harold Laski were Marxists and Popular-Front supporters. French intellectual life went left under the inspiration of Andre Malraux, Louis Aragon, Henri Barbusse, Andre Gide, Andre Breton, Pablo Picasso and others.
Central and Southern European intellectuals including Berthold Brecht, Ernst Toller, Arthur Koestler, and Ignazio Silone, were leading figures on the left.

There was a continuous interaction between the European and the American intellectual left-wingers, forming an international Marxist intellectual community, with the works of the European radicals having considerable influence upon American intellectuals. The works of Spender, C. Day Lewis, John Strachey, and Malraux were eagerly read in the United States.

It is believed, however, that the parallel between Europe and the United States in this respect is far from complete. The movement to the left in Europe stemmed from somewhat different historic sources, was deeper and more profound, and was in large part a movement which had already reached high intensity in the nineteen-tens and nineteen-twenties. Strachey and Laski were Marxists in the twenties or earlier, Malraux and Silone were Comintern agents in the twenties, the former in China, the latter in Italy. Toller had led an ill-considered and romantic socialist revolution in Bavaria in 1919, and others had similar contact with the Socialist movement prior to the nineteen-thirties.

While certain intellectuals, faced with the depression, toyed with such political fads as technocracy, the single-tax, Southern agrarianism, and even fascism, the large body of the intellectuals gravitated towards farmer-laborism, socialism, and Communism. It is with these latter groupings that we will primarily deal, for while these positions represent four different
political publics—the liberal-center, the independent left, the Trotskyist movement, and the Communist Party, in the thirties there was a great deal of interaction between these groups, and a temporary blurring of the lines of differentiation.

The Marxism of the period was essentially, if not always explicitly, pragmatic. Faced with a number of possible alternatives, large numbers of intellectuals chose that alternative which seemed the most rational, the most optimistic, and the one in which they would be enabled to best utilize their energies.

This chapter will illustrate and clarify the nature of the turn leftward. It will illustrate and demonstrate the validity of C. Wright Mill's impressionistic account of the role of the intellectual in the nineteen-thirties. Wrote sociologist Mills:

"For a while, during the thirties, there was a widespread model of the intellectual as political agent. Some of the most talented free intellectuals played at being Leninist men. They joined or traveled with splinter parties, with first the Third and then the Fourth International; they wrote in support of the general ideas and policies current in these circles.

"For the first several decades of this century, pragmatism was the nerve of leftward thinking. By the nineteen-thirties, as pragmatism as such began to decline as a common denominator of liberalism, its major theme was given new life by a fashionable Marxism. One idea ran through both ideologies: the optimistic faith in man's rationality. In pragmatism this rationality was formally located in the individual; in Marxism in a class of men, but in both it was a motif so dominant as to set the general mood.

1. Italics mine, GPR.
"Some few joined the organizing staffs of unions, becoming journalists and publicity agents... But also novelists, critics, and poets, historians, both academic and free-lance—the leading intellectuals—became political, went left. If they broke away from the Communist Party, as members or as fellow travelers, still they remained radical, as Trotskyite intellectuals or as independent leftists. For a time, all live intellectual work was derived from leftward circles, or spent its energy defending itself against left views."

Writing and living in the midst of the period of the "cold-war" with Stalinism, in which most liberals and intellectuals are militantly opposed to both the Soviet Union and Marxism, it is important that we try to understand that the decade of the nineteen-thirties witnessed the reverse phenomenon. The liberal-intellectuals in the thirties were quite favorable to both the Soviet Union and to Marxism, many of them becoming avowed Marxists, temporarily.

American intellectuals, as pragmatists were not able to avoid the crude interpretation of pragmatism—the test of the validity of anything was whether it worked. And the public image that the American intellectuals had of the Soviet Union was that it "worked". It was a generation which took Lincoln Steffens' comment on the Soviet Union as its motto: "I have seen the future and it works." From this position of friendliness to the Soviet Union, it was an easy and necessary step towards friendship with the American Communists and with Marxism.

2. Italics mine GPR.
A. The liberal press and Marxism 1930-1936.

The beginning of the 1930s witnessed a building upon the intellectual-radical foundations of the late twenties. No longer was radicalism confined to a group around the Communist and Socialist parties, but the leading organs of American instrumentalist liberalism came close to the Marxist position, as well. Articles on the Soviet Union and Communism became common fare in the liberal press.

The American liberal press as represented in particular by the New Republic and the Nation, and in a somewhat different fashion by Seldon Rodman and Alfred Bingham's magazine, Common Sense, in many ways carried a similar message to that of the Communist Party. The American liberals, at least as represented in the three semi-official organs of liberalism, believed that the capitalist system would have to be replaced by some type of collectivism, and that the Democratic and Republican parties could not claim the enthusiastic support of liberals, who had to turn to socialism, communism, or towards an independent farmer-labor party. The liberal press, in particular the Nation and the New Republic, looked upon the Soviet Union with great favor and hope, and apologized for most of the attacks on civil-liberties in the Soviet Union. The liberal press was particularly enthusiastic about the First Soviet Five Year Plan and about the claimed benefits for the intellectual and professional in the Soviet Union.

4. We feel entitled to use the word liberal to specifically denote that political philosophy which is historically expressed in the United States in the weekly journals, the Nation and the New Republic. Everyone claims to be "liberal" in our society. "...liberalism has been banalized now it is commonly used by everyone who talks in public..." (In the author's opinion the historic liberal position has been inherited by the Nation and the New Republic "liberals". (1 C. Wright Mills, "Liberal Values in the Modern World" in Anvil and Student Partisan (Winter 1952), 5.
The New Republic and the Nation in the early thirties believed that capitalism was defunct and that a new social order was coming into being in the United States. In an editorial at the beginning of 1931, the New Republic commented:

"Neither the progressivism of Roosevelt nor that of La Follette was sufficiently fundamental to meet the challenge of the times and outlast the accidental impulse which started it.

"We are witnessing the decline of individualistic proprietory capitalism which is doomed as surely as was feudalism in its day, by the welling upward of new institutions, new ideas, new groupings of potential power. Capitalism may take a long time to die or to change, just as did feudalism; and the dying or changing will take different courses and occur in different rhythms in different countries. But it will be an absurdity which history can scarcely tolerate if in the United States, alone among the advanced industrial nations of the world, there arises no considerable and conscious force working for something better."

The Nation also advocated the creation of a collectivist society. In June 1933 they editorially commented in an article entitled "Can Controlled Capitalism Save the United States":

"We tend to agree that a collective society offers the best hope for the desirable end [giving labor its fair share of the wealth produced by industry], although the process of achieving complete social ownership and the abolition of profit in the United States is so complex that obviously, given the tradition of the American people, it cannot be achieved in a day. We are therefore not inclined to accept unreservedly ready-made, doctrinaire formulas for achieving ultimate solutions. But since we wish to move toward collectivism as rapidly and as painlessly as possible, we shall examine emergency plans for resuscitating and patching the present moribund system with critical eye. It is far better that the country's steps toward an integrated, socialized industrial society should be deliberate and purposeful than taken grudgingly under pressure of panic or imminent collapse."

6. "Can Controlled Capitalism Save the United States?" in the Nation (June 7, 1933), 630.
In line with this belief in the need for a collectivist society, the Nation at the beginning of the decade had offered their Program for Progressives which included public ownership of power sites, eventual public ownership of all utilities, a low tariff, higher income taxes in the upper brackets in order to equalize wealth, anti-injunction laws, complete disarmament, unemployment insurance and other forms of increased social security. And the Nation conceived of this as only a starter.

Edmund Wilson, writing in the New Republic, argued that liberals must change their tactics under the impact of collapse of capitalism if they were ever to achieve the genuine democracy that Herbert Croly had talked about in his The Promise of American Life.

"It seems to me impossible at the present time for people of Croly's general aims and convictions to continue to believe in the salvation of our society by the gradual and natural approximation to socialism which he himself called progressivism, but which has generally come to be known as liberalism. That benevolent and intelligent capitalism on which liberals have always counted has not merely not materialized to the extent of metamorphosing itself into socialism—it has not even been able to prevent a national disaster of proportions which neither capitalists nor liberals foresaw and which they both profess themselves unable to explain."

Wilson after carefully listing the tragic results of the depression and asking "Who in the United States today really loves our meaningless life...?", compared the United States with the Soviet Union when he bluntly said, "In the course of this winter of our capitalist quagmire, the Soviets have emerged from the back pages of the newspapers..."
and are now to be seen all over the place."

In 1935 the liberals still believed that a socialist society had to be and would be built. Despite the usual belief that the liberal press backed the New Deal from the start, all the evidence decisively shows that the liberal press did not support the New Deal prior to 1936. In January 1935, the New Republic, taking a look at American liberalism twenty years after the founding of the New Republic, wrote, "It is clear that if we are neither to go back nor to buttress the existing system, the only other choice is an advance toward collectivism." The New Republic editors denied Communist charges that they were liberals and New Dealers, protesting that they were radicals. Carefully explaining their position, they wrote:

"The New Republic has not for years described itself as liberal; liberalism in the political sense is certainly not the right name for the views of those who see no hope of permanency for economic individualism or capitalism."

Both the New Republic and the Nation came out for Norman Thomas and the Socialist Party in 1932, although many of the contributors and editors of both magazines had publicly declared themselves for the Communist presidential ticket.

Between 1932 and 1936 both magazines advocated the creation of a labor-party, a broad American radical party, as the next step towards the creation of a democratic collectivist society. The liberals did not believe that the New Deal was capable of turning the Democratic Party into "the ideal liberal-progressive party.


11. See the Nation (July 15, 1932), 22 and the New Republic (October 26, 1932).
for which the liberals had been waiting". Oswald Garrison Villard, the editor and publisher of the Nation, feared that "Rooseveltian Compromise" would not lead to economic rehabilitation but rather would end up squarely as an American fascism.

The Nation and New Republic were somewhat confused in the 1936 election. Should they vote for Roosevelt as the lesser of evils or should they vote for one of the radical candidates? The Nation under the leadership of Villard came out in support of the Socialist candidates, largely in opposition to what Villard claimed was Roosevelt's militarization of the country, and because it foresaw "an increasingly important function for a well-led Socialist Party" in the United States. However, many of the editors and contributors to the Nation agreed with the New Republic that while they did not think much of Roosevelt, they feared Landon more. Therefore, they advocated support of Roosevelt in the election, in the hopes of pushing the entire country towards a genuine labor party.

Many of the intellectuals who had been backing the Communist, including Malcolm Cowley, Henry Pratt Fairchild, Theodore Dreiser, and Fredrick Schuman came out for Roosevelt in 1936 as the lesser-evil. There is little question that many Communists, including Party members, backed Roosevelt in 1936.

On the domestic scene there were not striking differences between the "liberal-press's" and the Communists' position, although the liberal-press never accepted the Communist slogan.

12. Oswald Garrison Villard in the Nation (August 9, 1933), 147.
14. The Nation (June 5, 1936), 694.
of "social-fascism", the Communist sectarianism, and they came out for the popular front a bit earlier than did the Communist movement. The correspondence between the two positions was the result of a two-way process. There is little doubt that the Communists directly influenced the politics of the liberal press; many of the editors and contributors to both the Nation and the New Republic were either Communist Party members or close sympathizers. On the other hand, the liberal position was partially derived from an independent analysis of the situation. There is little doubt, as well, that the turn of the Communist Party to the Popular Front position partially reflected a need to conform with the already-held position of the Liberal Center. Clear evidence of mutual interaction between the Communist and the liberal line is present. It is impossible to evaluate, however, which group had more influence in this quasi-alliance.

In respect to the Soviet Union, both the Nation and the New Republic were universally friendly. Judging the articles on the Soviet Union that appeared in these two journals between 1930 and the beginning of 1936 on a scale from one to six, with one indicating absolute support of the Soviet Union and six indicating absolute opposition, the average for both magazines was approximately 1.5, with only two articles.

15. The editors of the New Republic in this period included Bruce Bliven, Edmund Wilson, R.M. L'Avett, Malcolm Cowley, Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, all of whom were openly pro-Communist. While only Freda Kirchway of the Nation was openly friendly to the Communists in the early part of the thirties, many contributors to the New Masses wrote for both the Nation and New Republic at this time.
with a rating of more than 2. (This was based on a personal evaluation of all the articles that were to appear in these years on the Soviet Union in the New Republic and the Nation.) The great bulk of the articles in The Nation on the Soviet Union were written by Louis Fischer who has since stated that he was not critical of the Soviet Union because he feared that any attack on the Soviet Union would damage the fight against fascism.

To the bulk of the liberals, the Soviet Union was the great experiment. For example, R.M. Lovett wrote in the New Republic in late 1929, "The Soviets have driven a wedge of Socialism into the heart of the great continent." We must carefully support the "Communist Experiment."

The first Five Year Plan in the Soviet Union excited the interest and support of many American liberals. Bruce Eliven estatically wrote from Moscow in 1931:

"I see a nation, the most numerous in the world, a nation occupying one sixth of the earth's land area, whose capital city is nearer to New York than to its own easternmost reaches, marching across a chart from left to right. It has come through the frightful misery of the valley which stretches from the beginning of the War well into the third decade of the century; it has struggled at great cost up the lesser slope of, say, 1923 to 1928; it has scrambled up the heights of 1929 and 1930; and now, breathless but thus far triumphant, it stands looking up at the mountain which lies ahead... certainly no nation since the world began has ever attempted any such feat as that which lies ahead.""
George Soule, not at any time a Communist or a close-sympathizer, believed that there was something quite American in the Five-Year Plan, and that there was much in common between the Soviet Union and the United States.

While somewhat critical of the Soviet Union, the liberals looked upon it as the great hope. Most agreed with Harold Laski:

"The real lesson, I think, of Russia is this. The general principles of its ideal are the inescapable outlines of any future civilization which to retain civilized standards, material and spiritual, of life."

The American liberal audience was repeatedly told not to fear the Soviet Union. O.G. Villard who at no time was even remotely close to the Communist Party, wrote, "Let us do away with our craven fears of the Communist menace." Russia, according to the liberal press, was not even interested in anyway influencing the course of events in other countries. For example, the New Republic in July, 1935 carried an article by Clyde Hunter which absolutely stated, "...for all practical purposes Russia is no more concerned with active participation in the world communist movement than is J.P. Morgan." Events have indicated that at best this statement was a gross exaggeration of reality.

This favorable attitude towards the Soviet Union, at first did not lead to a genuinely favorable attitude towards the American Communist Party. Oswald G. Villard in the Nation in 1930 called the American Communists "annoying and silly".

19. George Soule, "Will the Five Year Plan Succeed", in the New Republic (December 3, 1930), 64.
23. O.G. Villard in the Nation (March 12, 1930), 284.
The New Republic said of the Communist Party: "It is a narrow, intolerant sect, small in numbers and without intellectual independence. It is directed from Moscow by men who know a great deal about the theory of revolutions in general, but very little about the actual situation in America." However, the attitude of the liberal press became less critical of the American Communist Party as the decade progressed. By the time the Popular Front policy was inaugurated most liberals were quite friendly to the Communist Party, although not in complete agreement with it.

The intellectuals were particularly enthusiastic about the supposed heights reached by intellectual and cultural activities in the Soviet Union. They believe that the Soviet Union genuinely utilized the talents of professionals and intellectuals and that a higher culture was being developed there. The liberal press carried articles on all aspects of Soviet culture. For example, William Henry Chamberlain wrote from Russia in 1931 concerning intellectual life in the Soviet Union. Authors, journalists, artists, engineers and doctors, according to Chamberlain were well rewarded and greatly encouraged in Russia. However, lawyers, the parasites of a capitalist society, were in a bad way.

Many correspondents wrote of the heroic efforts to eradicate illiteracy in the Soviet Union and of the strides made by the Soviet educational system. John Dos Passos compared Soviet and American theatre and concluded that there was greater freedom of expression in the Soviet theatre.

There was, however, an occasional dissident note. For example, the New Republic for January 6, 1932 carried an article by Benjamin Ginzburg on science in the Soviet Union. While he praised the remarkable achievements in scientific research made in the Soviet Union, he criticized the Soviet rulers for their attempts to force all theoretical principles of science into the framework of dialectical materialism. However, Ginzburg then apologized for his criticism by saying that, "In Russia the social organization of economic life...is actually being realized, but it is being realized at the price of intellectual freedom.... Elsewhere there is intellectual freedom, but it is without its roots in social reality and without power to lead to action."  

The magazine, Common Sense, edited by Seldon Rodman and Alfred Bingham, in the early thirties held a very radical point of view, in some ways further to the left than that of the Nation and the New Republic. However, Common Sense was not as interested in the Soviet Union as were the other liberal journals, and was comparatively free of any Communist influence. The contributing editors of Common Sense included many who were active in the Muste group that was to form the American Workers’ Party, and many independent radicals. They were: *Louis Adamic, A. Fenner Brockway, John Dewey, Hartley Grattan, Upton Sinclair, Robert Allen, V.F. Calverton, John Dos Passos, Horace Gregory, George Soule, Thomas Amalie, John Chamberlain, J.B.S. Hardman, Benjamin Stolberg, Roger Baldwin, Stuart Chase, Max Eastman, Louis Mumford, Mary Heaton Vorse, and Carlton Beals, A. J. Muste, Robert Flynn, A. F. Whitney, John T. Flynn, Scott Nearing, Lawrence Dennis, and Howard Scott.

Common Sense, first to appear at the end of 1932, declared that it was to be an independent radical magazine. The editors wrote concerning the policy of the magazine, "It will support all movements that promise intelligent, courageous action, whether among labor organizations, farm associations, unemployed councils, student leagues, or political groups. It will stand on a platform of protest, and present a forward-looking program. The editors of the magazine looked forward to the time when, "We the people" will rise against the stupid and the selfish, the crooked men who now sit in the seats of power. Then we will build a new constitution and a new commonwealth, a community where there is no longer the shame of poverty in the midst of wealth. The American then will be able to hold up their heads again."

The magazine in the first part of the decade strongly opposed Franklin Roosevelt who it referred to as "the lying boy from Hyde Park" who was to replace "the great gun engineer of Palo Alto." Yes, said the editors, we received a new deal, "a new deal with the same old cards of political favors. The forgotten man has already been forgotten again and will only be remembered at the next election. The great American business of advertising has sold us just another doubtful article."

30. Common Sense (December 5, 1932), 3.
32. Ibid. (December 5, 1932), 3.
Common Sense supported the League for Independent Political Action, headed by John Dewey, which had grown out of the People's Lobby, and from the United Conference for Progressive Political Action held in Chicago Labor Day weekend, 1933. In an article in Common Sense entitled "The Imperative Need for a New Radical Party," Professor Dewey wrote:

"Power today resides in control of the means of production, exchange, publicity, transportation, and communications. Whoever owns them rules the life of the country, not necessarily by intention, not necessarily by deliberate corruption of the nominal government, but by necessity."

Even America's leading philosopher had accepted a large part of the Marxian analysis, without, however, being sympathetic to the Communist Party. While Dewey saw some good in the New Deal, he felt that it was not able to perform the needed tasks. "The only way to preserve as well as to extend whatever is good in the Rooseveltian measures is the formation of a strong united radical New Party."

Prior to the Communist support of the farmer-labor party movement, Common Sense had been the outstanding proponent of this movement. In the viewpoint of Common Sense, it was wrong to base a radical movement in the United States on the working-class alone. Large sections of the small middle-class could also be made part of a united American radical movement.

Common Sense maintained that the liberal must turn radical. In an introduction to an article by Hartley Gratten 33. John Dewey "The Imperative Need for a New Radical Party" in Common Sense (September 1933), 6.

34. Ibid., 7.
entitled "What is Liberalism", _Common Sense_ declared:

"For almost a century the liberals have been working within the framework of capitalism, trying to eliminate its abuses, criticizing and reforming—when they were allowed to. Today, capitalism throughout the world has come to the point where it can only survive by suppressing its critics and holding to its minority domination with the mailed fist. The liberal, to be effective, must turn radicals."

On the foreign front, the editors of _Common Sense_, while interested in the Soviet Union, felt that it had nothing to teach the United States, and that American radicalism should not be in any way tied to the Soviet Union. If radicalism was to succeed in the United States, it would have to be an American radicalism which talked in terms of the American traditions, not in terms of the European Marxist movement.

One writer for _Common Sense_ declared, "The Russian Revolution has nothing to teach the American rebel in his daily tactic.... We must develop our own radical critique of American culture."

Consequently, _Common Sense_ had no respect for the American Communist Party, which it believed to be a dogmatic, sectarian group which had no real contact with American reality.

However, the editors of _Common Sense_ were influenced by some aspects of Leninism, in particular the Leninist analysis of the "road to power". Analyzing the way to obtain political power, the editors of _Common Sense_ parrotted Lenin when they said, "There are three weapons (on the road to power)... that we have to learn to use: Independent political action as a Third Party, firmer guidance from a disciplined corps trained in secrecy and offensive tactics."

35. C. Hartley Gratten, "What is Liberalism?" in _Common Sense_ (September 1933), 5.
36. Benjamin Stoberg in _Common Sense_ (February 16, 1933), 12.
Thus Common Sense agreed with the Nation and the New Republic in its advocacy of a collectivist society in the United States, the creation of a farmer-labor party to achieve these ends, hostility to the New Deal, but it differed with the Nation and the New Republic in its refusal to tie American radicalism to the Soviet example, its complete and consistent opposition to the American Communist Party, and in its greater concern with a theoretical analysis of the question of the road to power.

B. The intellectuals and the Communist Party, 1930-1935.

Under Communist Party inspiration, many intellectuals in the early thirties began to take an active interest and part in the day by day "class-struggles". The New Masses had moved closer to the Communist Party in 1930, and was no longer an independent magazine with a Communist orientation, but a Communist magazine with a Communist orientation.

The Communists utilized the bloody coal-strikes in Harlan County, Kentucky in order to gain intellectual support. A number of leading intellectuals, including Sherwood Anderson, John Dos Passos, and Theodore Dreiser went to Harlan County in 1931 where they were the victims of physical violence themselves. They returned friendlier to the Communists and became members of the "cult of the proletariat". For example,
Sherwood Anderson wrote that he had rejected the Socialist Party in favor of the Communists because "I guess the communists mean it." Not only did Anderson glorify the Communists, he glorified the proletariat as well. He wrote, "If I had stayed down there with the working-class, never tried to rise, had earned my bread and butter always with the same hand with which I wrote words, I might have had something to say with the words I wrote." However, Anderson admitted that he was not a member of the Communist Party because he was an artist and probably not acceptable to the Communist Party.

Why did the intellectuals move towards the Communist Party in the early thirties? In a very self-conscious set of articles in the New Masses in September 1932, a number of intellectuals, including Waldo Frank, Clifton Fadiman, Granville Hicks, Newton Arvin, Edmund Wilson, and Upton Sinclair, told of how they came to communism.

Both Edmund Wilson and Waldo Frank had come to their position through a long period of thought and study. Edmund Wilson claimed that he had always been a socialist, and that a careful study of Marxism convinced him of the validity of Communism. (Wilson was one of the few intellectuals who came to Marxism, whose work indicated a profound familiarity and knowledge of Marxist theoretical writings. Most of the others had received their Marxism at second hand.)

Waldo Frank stated that he had drifted to socialism via the Seven Arts, Van Wyck Brooks and Randolph Bourne and that his personal revolt against bourgeois society had led him to
the discovery of dynamic forces and values in our modern epoch, potential for the creating of a new revolutionary world." However, Frank admitted that while he believed in Communism he did not completely adhere to Marxism, because he could not accept a materialistic philosophy. "In all my books," he wrote, "...the stress is on the human material that must be recreated—i.e., mankind; and not on the economic and political method that must be the first outward step in the re-creative task." Frank was primarily a moralist, not a political figure.

Meyer Levin, always more on the periphery of the movement, than part of it, was representative of many young intellectuals of the thirties. In his autobiography, Levin offered some insights into the motivations of the fellow-traveler. He wrote:

"From the day I sat in the...library laboring through Das Kapital I had considered myself in agreement with the equalitarian aims of Marxism, and from that day on I was confronted with conscience question before every liberal mind in our generation, if you believe in economic equality, why don't you join the communists, meaning the Communist Party?"

"The gravitational pull towards the party was powerful. At times it seemed to me that most of my friends were members of the party, and at one period membership seemed to be regarded as a certificate of quality for serious young writers, and it was quite apparent that the party could 'make' a young writer, especially in the field of social realism. Several of the writers persistently promoted in the left-wing press were talented, but one could also watch one mediocrity after another puffed into temporary literary eminence by the comrades. Indeed, for a period, talent was a secondary consideration. I suppose that I was considered a fellow traveler, not too reliable."

40. Waldo Frank in the New Masses (September 1932), 7.
The non-Communist fellow-travelers while not agreeing wholeheartedly with the Communist Party, believed that it was genuinely progressive, and that it was the symbol of the revolution, and therefore should not be attacked. In this vein, Meyer Levin wrote: 'I... believed that the Communist Party should not be attacked, but that nevertheless the truly progressive movement in America would have to come through indigenous channels.' Louis Fischer also wrote of this belief in the inviolability of the Soviet Union.

The same attitude is taken by as late as 1936 by such an extremely honest figure as Edmund Wilson. After writing a book that details many of the defects of the Soviet Union, and the terrible toll of human life brought by the Stalin regime, Wilson still found it impossible to completely deny the Soviet Union, for after all it was the heir to Lenin's Revolution. Wilson's comment indicated the great hold over the liberal imagination that the figure of Lenin had. Wilson wrote:

"And in the meantime, in spite of these defects, you feel in the Soviet Union that you are at the moral top of the world where the light never really goes out... The central fact, from which one never can escape, which one is always stumbling upon under all the fluid surface of the casualness, the frivolity, the timidity, the evasiveness, the inexactitude, the apathy of some aspects of Russian life, is the relationship of the Russian people to the tomb of Lenin under the Kremlin wall."

And Eugene Lyons adds the final word, in a book which signified his break with the Soviet Union. After criticizing the Soviet Union throughout the book, Lyons said, "It was chiefly a distaste for giving aid and comfort to capitalist reactionaries that restrained me from being more critical than I have been. The mistakes and faults of those in power in Russia certainly do

43. See p. 96 above.
44. Edmund Wilson, Travel in Two Democracies (New York, 1936), 322.
not justify the crimes of those in power elsewhere. Neither do those mistakes and faults cancel Soviet achievements."

Many came to socialism because they believed that capitalism barbarized culture, and that the Soviet Union, the supposed citadel of socialism, encouraged cultural and intellectual activity. Wrote Joseph Freeman, "Many of us whose trade happens to be literature or art have chosen socialism because we have seen how barbarously fascism devours all that is living and sublime in the world's culture."

Margaret Bourke-White, the famous photographer, in the introductory chapter to a book of photographs she took in the Soviet Union in 1930, told the following fable which indicated the attitudes of many intellectuals towards the Soviet Union, at the time. Wrote Miss Bourke-White:

"A banker walked into my studio, and in the midst of his greeting hastened to ask, characteristically:

I asked, 'Well how are they getting along over there?'

'Shall I answer in five words or five chapters?'

'I'll give you ten words.'

'I replied:

'Little food, no shoes, terrible inefficiency, steady progress, Great Hope.'"

Theodore Dreiser indicated the source of his adherence to Communism in an article significantly entitled "What Has the Great War Taught Me?". Answered Dreiser to this question, "I could limit my reply to one slang American word—plenty. It made changelessly clear that the entire social order that preceded the war was decayed, and worse, rotten to the core."

47. Margaret Bourke-White, *Eyes on Russia* (New York, 1931), 19.
William Saroyan, like Meyer Levin, never came really close to the Communist Party and never played an active role in its activities or the activities of its front groups. Nevertheless, in 1934 he sent a short-story to the *New Masses*. His letter, which by the standards of the present day is amazingly politically naive, sheds a great deal of light on the reverent attitude of many intellectuals towards the Communist Party. It is worth quoting in full:

"Prelude to an American Symphony, a story, is attached. Now this is the point: I do not belong to the Communist Party, and as yet have no intention of belonging... The Communist program is for the most part the most valid and decent that I can think of and I am wholly in sympathy with it. So far I have found members of the Party somewhat dismaying; most of them being opportunists; Communist being almost the style of the moment. My own writing is not a style of any kind; it is the only writing I am able to do or give a damn about doing. If it isn't proletarian, O.K. If you fellows pan hell out of my book, *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, out October 15, O.K. again. That's your privilege. I'm asking no quarter. Do what your principles demand. I am doing what mine demand. I submit this story unsolicited because I believe I should at least offer something of mine to the most important workers' publication in the country. And besides, having sold stories to *Vanity Fair* and *Esquire*, I would like to make up for it; just as a number of proletarian artists make up their pot-boiling drawings for one or another of the publications of their own class.

"If you wish to print the story, I must insist that I receive no payment for it.... I am doing this because I believe I must. My feeling toward the group you represent has always been a lot more than merely friendly and always will be. This is all I know.

"With very good wishes to the whole bunch of you.

William Saroyan"

49. William Saroyan in the *New Masses* (October 23, 1934), 15.
What is significant in this letter was the obvious compulsion to write it. While somewhat defiant of the discipline of the Communist Party, it still was apologetic in tone. Many intellectuals seemed to be both intellectually and emotionally tied to the authority of the Communist Party. (At this point, a Freudian interpretation of the Communist Party as the Father-image for many intellectuals might be in place. But, as always, I will leave this type of interpretation to those who feel competent to deal with such matters.)

Granville Hicks wrote that the example of Lincoln Steffens helped push many intellectuals into communism. According to Hicks, many who were Communists were fighting a rearguard action against a swarm of doubts. Thus Steffens' assurance that "he had seen the future and it had worked," was most important.

According to Hicks, he and Steffens and the others who followed them, turned to communism in the thirties because the then current liberalism had failed. Communism was a solution—the abandonment of the pluralistic and experimental liberalism of Bertrand Russell, Morris Cohen, and John Dewey. Hicks had written while still a Communist in the same vein.

He said in 1932:

"I emerged from college... a fairly typical liberal, with a mild interest in socialism, a strong faith in pacifism, and the usual conviction that the desired changes in the social order could be brought about by the dissemination of social ideas."

51. Ibid.
52. Granville Hicks in the New Masses, (September 1932), 5.
However, the pragmatic liberal faith was destroyed by the impact of the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, the depression, and by the fact that in his study of American literature in the period since the Civil War he had found Marxist analysis to offer an accurate methodology.

In the early thirties, many intellectuals began to appear as sponsors of a variety of Communist sponsored organizations, even though in the first three years of the decade, the Communist Party operated under a "proletarian emphasis". For example, Theodore Dreiser, Melvin Levy, Matthew Josephson, and Lincoln Steffens were sponsors of the Communist inspired "National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners." Malcom Cowley, Dreiser, Alfred Kreyborg, Josephine Herbst, Waldo Frank, Elmer Rice, and Lewis Mumford were members of the Communist led Scottsboro Defense Committee.

In 1932, a number of Communist-oriented intellectuals formed The League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford, the Communist presidential ticket in 1932. The list included some of the outstanding American writers, critics, artists, and social scientists. The following intellectual figures signed the following "Open Letter to the Writers, Artists, Teachers, Physicians, and Scientists, and other professional workers of America": "Believing that the only effective way to protest against the chaos,

53. Granville Hicks, "Lincoln Steffens", in Commentary (March 1952), 155.
54. See the files of the New Masses for the year 1932.
the appalling wastefulness, and the indescribable misery

inherent in the present economic system is to vote for the
55 Communist candidates." The signers were:

Leonie Adams
Sherwood Anderson, playwright
Newton Arvin, critic
Emjo Basse, novelist
Maurice Becker
Slater Brown
Fielding Burke, critic and poet
Erskine Caldwell, novelist
Robert Cantwell, poet and critic
Lester Cohen, publicist
Winifred L. Chappell
Louis Colman
Lewsi Corey, social scientist
Henry Cowell
Malcom Cowley, poet and critic
Bruce Crawford, editor
Kyle S. Crichton, critic
Countee Cullen, poet
Henry W. Dana
Adolf Dehn, artist
John Dos Passos, novelist
Howard Doughty, Jr.
Miriam Allen De Ford
Waldo Frank, novelist
Alfred Frank
Murray Godwin, publicist

Eugene Gordon, novelist
Horace Gregory, poet
Louis Grudin
John Herrenan
Granville Hicks, critic
Sidney Hook, philosopher
Sidney Howard, playwright
Langston Hughes, poet
Orrick Johns, critic
Matthew Josephson, social scientist
Alfred Kreymborg, poet
Louis Lozowick, poet
Grace Lumpkin, novelist
Felix Morrow, publicist
Samuel Ornitz, novelist
James Rorty, writer
Isidor Schneider, poet
Frederick Schuman, social scientist
Edwin Seaver, novelist
Herman Simpson, philosopher
Lincoln Steffens, publicist
Charles Walker
Robert Whitaker
Edmund Wilson, critic
Ella Winter, publicist

The coming of fascism to Germany brought more intellectuals close to the Communist Party. Non-party intellectuals and those that had been close to the Socialist Party called for collaboration with the Communists in the fight against fascism. In the April 1933 New Masses a large number of leading intellectuals wrote against the Fascist Terror in Germany, and called for a united front against Hitler.

Roger N. Baldwin of the American Civil Liberties Union wrote, "Today's victors in the class war, the Hitlerites."

55. League of Professional Groups for Poor and Ford, Culture and the Crisis (New York, 1932), 51. 56. Ibid.
serve the frightened propertied class by attacking its enemies through a lawless armed youth, disciplined only to violence. The extremes of that violence are the measure of its fear of working-class power, and especially its Communist vanguard."

Heywood Broun, the columnist, who had as late as 1932 when he had run for Congress on the Socialist Party ticket, been attacked as a "social-fascist" by the Communist press, wrote a short piece in this issue, voicing the wish that the advanced and radical parties could get together in the fight against German fascism. Waldo Frank called for the Popular Front of all left-wing parties and wrote, "Let the German people, whether they follow Communist, Socialist or liberal leaders know that the workers of the world look to them who stand now, in the forefront of the battle against reaction." Michael Gold, a leading Communist Party writer wrote:

"It is war time. We must close ranks or be annihilated. Hitlerism will spread over Europe and sweep America, unless we unite. Unless there is a united front of all working-class parties and liberal groups. Every anti-fascist is needed in this united front. There must be no factional quarrels. Leaders who stand in the way of a united front should be swept aside by the rank and file. We are faced with the death of the whole working-class movement. We cannot waste time."

Newton Arvin, Granville Hicks, Horace Gregory, Sidney Hook, Horace Kallen, Edwin Seaver, and James Rorty all made similar appeals.

57. Roger Baldwin in the New Masses (April 1933), 10.
60. Michael Gold, ibid., 11, 12.
In the years between 1933 and 1935 in which the Popular Front was beginning to emerge, the Communists made an intensified appeal to the middle-class intellectuals and professionals. This intensified drive was begun with the emergence of the *New Masses* as a weekly instead of a monthly magazine at the beginning of 1934. In the first weekly issue at the beginning of 1934, the *New Masses* stated that it was to be primarily directed at the middle class. After recognizing that "culture is a pretty much middle-class phenomenon," the *New Masses* editors declared that "The *New Masses* must keep in step with our rapidly moving revolutionary epoch. It addresses itself to those in the middle-class who have shed their illusions about bourgeois democracy and are ready to fight for a Communist society in alliance with the vanguard of the workers."  

1934 witnessed the first large-scale deviation of intellectuals from the Communist ranks. On February 16, 1934 the Socialist Party held a rally in Madison Square Garden, New York City, protesting the Fascist terror, to which the Communists had been invited to be co-sponsors. The meeting, instead of becoming a joint rally against fascism, turned into a "free-for-all" fight. The Communists entered the Garden in a bloc and a riot followed which destroyed the meeting. A large number of leading left-wing intellectuals who had been sympathetic to the Communist Party.

wrote an open letter protesting what they claimed to have been Communist responsibility for the riot. This group included Felix Morrow, George Novack, Meyer Schapiro, Edmund Wilson, Elliot Cohen, John Dos Passos, James Rorty, Robert Morss Lawett, and Clifton Fadiman. Of this group four entered the Trotskyist movement, two became independent radicals, and the others continued to flirt with the Communist Party in the days of the Popular Front.

The New Masses answered this letter in an attack which became the pattern for criticism of all "deviationists". The New Masses, unable perhaps to conceive of honest disagreement with its position, claimed that all those who had signed the letter had been fascists merely playing with "Communism. The New Masses wrote: "...those vacillating intellectuals who overnight have become metamorphosed from their academic cocoons into revolutionary butterflies, flit dizzyingly from Zionism to internationalism, from Lovestonism to Trotskyism and Musteism. When the crucial movement comes they will no doubt fall in an attempt to save their beautiful multi-colored wings from the fire." While there is some truth for some of the generation of the thirties in this statement, I would doubt that it is based on anything much more than one polemicist's whim.

52. New Masses (March 6, 1934), 9.

The early thirties witnessed the birth of numerous John Reed literary clubs, named after the Harvard man, turned radical poet, who is buried in the Kremlin, in the major cities of the United States. These clubs provided a meeting ground and audience for the young radicalized poets and authors who were beginning to create a new form of social realism, "proletarian literature". By 1934-35 many literary magazines were beginning to appear carrying the work of the members of the John Reed Clubs. In Chicago, the magazine was called Left Front, in California, the Partisan, in Philadelphia, Left Review, in Boston, Leftward, and in New York City, Partisan Review. (In addition, there were other "proletarian" magazines: Anvil, edited by Jack Conroy in Kansas City, Earth appeared in Wheaton, Illinois, the Dubuque Dial appeared in Dubuque, Iowa, the poets had their own magazine known as Dynamo, and Langston Huges and Richard Wright, two young Negro writers, founded Challenge, which published the works of Negro radicals.) The outstanding one of these magazines was the New York Partisan Review.

We shall devote a considerable degree of space to this magazine for it is the best source for the understanding of the nature and content of "proletarian literature". It's history is the history of the group of creative writers who went "left" in the thirties.
Fredrick J. Hoffman, the authority on the American "little magazine" wrote, "The spectacle of the thirties—the dilemma of the artist solved and yet not solved—is nowhere better portrayed for us than in the career of that most interesting of all little literary magazines, the Partisan Review. One of its chief aims was to provide a place for creative writers of leftist character, who were gradually being crowded out of the New Masses by the urgent demands of political and economic discussion." "Best of all left-wing literary magazines, Partisan Review demonstrates pari passu the contradictions, real and imagined, of the revolutionary writer of the thirties."

Partisan Review, a bi-monthly of Revolutionary Literature, published by the John Reed Club of New York, first appeared in February-March 1934 as a semi-monthly. Its editorial board consisted of a number of writers including Joseph Freeman, Edward Dahlberg, and Joshua Kunitz who had been connected with the New Masses, and of a number of young writers in their twenties, such as Philip Rahv, Edwin Rolfe, and Alfred Hayes. The purposes of the magazine were stated at the beginning of the first issue:

"PARTISAN REVIEW appears at a time when American literature is undergoing profound changes. The economic and political crisis of capitalism, the growth of the revolutionary movement the world over, and the successful building of socialism in the Soviet Union have deeply affected American life, thought and art.

64. Ibid., 325.
which was presented to display the miserable existence of the sheep-herder. Arthur Pence contributed a story of a strike in a New York City garment trades sweat shop.

Tillie Lerner wrote a short story concerning a coal miner, filled with such revolutionary thoughts as "the stomach of the miner revolted at the thought of a mine boss." Isidor Schneider wrote of the birth of a son to a working-class family at the same time that "the American Empire was more lavishly being born." J.S. Blach wrote a story of the violent arrest of a communist.

Peter Quince wrote of a Young Communist League organizer who taught the Communist Manifesto to a sixteen-year-old farm boy. James Farrell wrote of a Greek immigrant who came to the United States with great dreams, only to find that America was not a country with gold on the streets for every immigrant boy. In addition, there were a number of stories which concerned "Jim-Crowing of Negroes. For example, Joseph Wilson's story, "Education of a Texan" told of a group of Texas workers who join the Communist Party, and in it learn to treat Negroes as equals.

While it is true that many of these stories are artificially constructed, with the political "line" being

66. Ibid., 35-43.
68. Ibid. (September-October 1934), 43-47.
69. Ibid. (November-December 1934), 25-27.
70. Ibid. (January-February 1935), 6-14.
71. Ibid. (June-July 1934 and Jan-February 1935 for example).
tagged on, many of them, it would seem, did arise out of the personal experiences of the authors. Most of the contributors were young writers in their twenties who had grown to maturity in the midst of the first years of the depression. They were, usually, active members of the Communist Party, who spent much of their time organizing strikes, demonstrations of the unemployed, and participating in other Communist Party activities. For example, Partisan Review reported in one issue that Tillie Lerner, a frequent contributor, had been arrested for Communist activities in San Francisco. In the next issue there was a story by Miss Lerner concerning a striker who had been arrested.

The poetry reflected much the same attitudes and drives as did the prose. All the poems were concerned with aspects of working-class and radical experience. They were blunt, and directly opposed to capitalism. Many of the poems were slogan filled and were written as if they were to appear in leaflets to be distributed in the hundreds of thousands to the American working-class. For example, Alfred Hayes' poem "In A Coffee Shop" ended with, "We shall not sit forever here and wait, We shall not sit forever here and rot."

Edwin Rolfe's "A Poem for May Day" exhorted, "This May Day has deeper meaning than ever, Close your ranks, touch shoulders--ready?, There's our signal--March!"

119.

76. Ibid. (February-March 1934), 23.
77. Ibid., 32.
The July-August issue of Partisan Review for the year 1935 marked a slight change. "Beginning with this issue Partisan Review will not be published as the organ of the John Reed Club of New York, but as a revolutionary literary magazine edited by a group of young Communist writers, whose purpose will be to print the best revolutionary literature and Marxist criticism in this country, and abroad." This change had two immediate consequences; the amount of space devoted to literary criticism was increased, and the policy of printing the works of foreign left-wing authors and critics was begun. Thus in the October-November issue of 1935 the editors printed translations of three papers delivered by three left-wing foreign writers—John Strachey, André Gide, and André Malraux—at the First International Conference of Writers for the Defense of Culture at Paris in June 1935, and a short story by the French Communist, Louis Aragon.

In February 1936, Partisan Review combined with Anvil, the left-wing literary magazine that had been edited by Jack Conroy in Kansas City. This gave the magazine a broader, more national horizon, in the hope of countering the parochialism of New York City.

This shift in policy occurred at the same time as the shift in the line of the Third International. At the Seventh Congress of the Comintern held in August 1935 the new line was laid down. The militant left policy of refusing any collaboration with other left-wing groups was abandoned and in its place the policy of the Popular Front against war and Fascism was substituted.

79. See pp. 69-72 above.
The attempt to broaden the base of Partisan Review reflected the turn of the "line" to the Popular Front position. In the first issue of the combined Partisan Review and Anvil, which appeared in February 1936, the works of a number of fellow-travelers were included.

For example, Carl Van Doren, the literary critic, contributed an essay, which dealt with his belief that the creative artist must turn to the left to be able to understand American life. The article was entitled "To the Left: to the Subsoil." Wrote Van Doren, "Poets, playwrights, and novelists must go on reaching to the American subsoil for materials for American literature. They must concern themselves with the lives of men working in factories and mines, with starving and drifting sharecroppers, with the dispossed, the underprivileged, the unemployed."

Louis Kronenberger, another important critic, also wrote for Partisan Review in the "honeymoon" period of the first years of the Popular Front. Kronenberger bowed before what he considered to be the sense of Marxist literary criticism. He wrote, "Let us make no bones about the fact that it is impossible to write, or to write about social literature without taking sides. Culture itself demands that we put the right social values ahead of the right literary values...."

80. Partisan Review (February 1936), 9.
81. Ibid., 7.
The stories in the revised *Partisan Review* were, in general, of superior quality, in that they were less slogan-filled, and less obviously "revolutionary". For example, Nathan Asch's sketches of travel cross-country on a Greyhound bus did not contain tagged-on political messages. The political message was there, but it was not grafted on, but rather formed an inegral part of the sketches.

The floor had been thrown open to both Marxists and non Marxists and *Partisan Review* became, at least on the surface, a broad leftist magazine. For example, in a symposium on Marxism and Americanism, the editors even published the following anti-Marxist comment by the physician and poet, William Carlos Williams:

"My opinion is that the American tradition is completely opposed to Marxism. America is progressing through difficult mechanistic readjustments which it is confident it can take care of. But Marxism is a static philosophy of a hundred years ago which has not yet kept up—as the democratic spirit has—through the stresses of an actual trial."

The change in attitude towards America's "poet-laureate", Archibald MacLeish was indicative of the change of *Partisan Review* and of the Communist line. In the early thirties, Mike Gold, the dean of Communist literary critics had said of MacLeish's "Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City," that it displays that MacLeish has a fascist mentality. By 1936, however, *Partisan Review* began to publish MacLeish's poetry, and Alan Calmer's favorable article "MacLeish and Proletarian Poetry" appeared in the Marxist literary journal.

---

83. Ibid., 6-10.
D. Proletarian literature and Marxist literary criticism.

At the end of October 1936, *Partisan Review* and *Anvil* suddenly ceased publication. The full story of this suspension is not known, but it is obvious that it was one of the results of the debate over "proletarian literature" and "Marxist literary criticism" that had raged in the left-wing journals and in the literary journals in the Soviet Union in the preceding ten years.

Let us look ahead to the reappearance of *Partisan Review* in December 1937, under new ideological "management". After more than a year's silence, *Partisan Review* reappeared at the end of 1937 with following editors: F.W. Dupee, formerly a contributor to the *New Masses*, but by then a member of the Trotskyist intellectual fringe, Dwight Macdonald, a former editor of *Fortune* magazine, who had become one of the editors of the Trotskyist theoretical journal, *The New International*, George L.K. Morris, a young artist on the Trotskyist periphery, and William Phillips and Philip Rahv, who had been among the original editors of *Partisan Review* in its Stalinist days and who had percpitiated the original suspension of the magazine by their attack on the Stalinist position of "proletarian literature".

Let us summarize the editorial statement of this first issue of the new *Partisan Review*, for it clearly indicates the issues upon which the old *Partisan Review* floundered, and the principles upon which it was refounded. Then, with this as our starting point, we can go back and recapitulate the arguments concerning proletarian literature which caused the split.
The new Partisan Review offered the following statement of its position:

"1) The Partisan Review will be independent of any organizational control for "literature in our period should be free of all factional dependence."

2) However, this does not mean that the magazine is not "aware of its responsibility to the revolutionary movement in general", but that it "disclaim obligation to any of the organized political parties."

3) "There is already a tendency in America for the more conscious social writers to identify themselves with a single organization, the Communist Party; with the result that they grow automatic in their political responses, but increasingly less responsible in all artistic senses. And the Party literary critics, equipped with the zeal of vigilantes, begin to consolidate into aggressive political-literary amalgams as many tendencies as possible and to outlaw all dissenting opinion. This projection on the cultural field of factionism in politics makes for literary cleavages, which, in most instances, have little to do with literary issues and which are more and more provocative of a ruinous bitterness among writers. Formerly associated with the Communist Party, PARTISAN REVIEW strove from the first against its drive to equate the interests of literature with those of factional politics. Our reappearance on an independent basis signifies our conviction that the totalitarian trend is inherent in that movement and that it can no longer be combatted from within."

4) Partisan Review looked forward to a new, free revolutionary culture. They realized that they would be called "fascists" and "Trotskyites" for their actions,

5) "but PARTISAN REVIEW aspires to represent a new and dissident generation in American letters; it will not be dislodged from its independent position by any political campaign against it. And without ignoring the importance of the official movement as a sign of the times we shall know how to estimate its authority in literature. But we shall also distinguish, wherever possible, between the tendencies of this faction itself and the work of writers associated with it. For our editorial accent falls chiefly on culture and its broader social determinants. Conformity to a given social ideology or to a prescribed attitude or technique, will not be asked of our writers. On the contrary, our pages will

84. Partisan Review (December 1937), 3-4.
be open to any tendency which is relevant to literature in our time. Marxism in culture, we think, is first of all an instrument of analysis and evaluation; and if, in the last instance, it prevails over other disciplines, it does so through the medium of democratic controversy. Such is the medium that Partisan Review will want to provide in its pages."

What is the story behind this Manifesto? In what circumstances did the discussion arise?

Literature and art, according to Marx, is part of the superstructure of any society and is subordinate to the economic base—the ownership of the means of production. Much more than this simple analysis is hard to find in the writings of Marx, Engels, or Lenin. While it is true that Marx, Engels, and Lenin did casually make statements which could be applied to literature (and both sides of the argument have appealed to the scattered sayings of the founding fathers for support of their claims), no fully developed Marxist theory of literature has ever appeared.

There was more discussion of the problem in the Soviet Union after the Revolution, and this discussion was the starting point of the discussion elsewhere, including the United States. The discussion revolved about these two polar opposites: the theory that all art is propaganda, that is, art must be solely created for use in the class struggle, and the theory that art must develop free of any doctrinal controls, as long as it is not openly anti-revolutionary. The "all art is propaganda" developed around Stalin, who supported the group, RAAP, which put forth this line; the opposing position was developed by Trotsky and his followers.
Leon Trotsky had written a short work entitled *Literature and Revolution* in which he had written:

"Art must make its own way and by its own means.... The party leads the proletariat, but not the basic processes of history. There are domains in which the party leads, directly and imperatively. There domains in which it only cooperates. There are finally, domains in which it can only orientate itself. The domain of art is not one in which the party is called upon to command. It can and must protect and help, but it can only lead indirectly....

"Does not such a policy mean, however, that the party is going to have an unprotected flank on the side of art? This is a great exaggeration. The party will repel any clearly poisonous, disintegrating tendencies in art.... If the revolution had the right to destroy bridges and monuments whenever necessary, it will stop less from laying its hand on any tendency in art which, no matter how great its achievement in form, threatens to disintegrate the revolutionary environment or to arouse the internal forces of the revolution, that is, the proletariat, the peasantry, and the intelligentsia, to a hostile opposition to one another. Our standard is clearly, political, imperative, and intolerant. But for this very reason, it must define the limits of its activity clearly. For a more precise expression of my meaning, I will say: we ought to have a watchful revolutionary censorship, and a broad and flexible policy in the field of art, free from petty partisan maliciousness."

It must be understood that Trotsky's position, while opposed to the "all art is propaganda" line, did not support a defense of art which was clearly anti-revolutionary. The editors of *Partisan Review* were to accept Trotsky's position until the end of the thirties, when they began to believe in an art where only aesthetic values prevailed. However, in the late thirties, *Partisan Review* supported the Trotskyist position with its belief in a socially-responsible, revolutionary art, which, however, was free of any particular sectarian domination and free to deal with any subject matter.

The Communist dominated John Reed Clubs took for their motto the slogan "all art is propaganda". The artist in his work must clearly and consciously advance revolutionary thoughts and emotions. Each piece of literature was to be a piece of propaganda. The creative artist as propagandist had a special role to play in behalf of the socialist revolution. Maxim Gorky, the Russian author, writing in the New Masses, said, "The development of the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat, his love for the fatherland created by him and the defense of that fatherland is one of the essential duties of literature."

Not only must the artist consciously advance revolutionary thought and emotions but he must build a "proletarian culture". If bourgeois society has a bourgeois culture, then a proletarian culture must be developed to oppose that bourgeois culture.

The writers of this school constantly searched for the answers to two questions. The first was, "What is proletarian art? Is it the art created by the proletariat? Is it the art created for the proletariat? Is it the art created by anyone which is about the proletariat? Or is it art which advances the proletarian cause, i.e. socialism?"

The second question was, "What is the proper subject matter for proletarian literature?" Maxim Gorky had written, "We must select labor as the main hero of our books, i.e. man.

St. Maxim Gorky in the New Masses (October 2, 1934), 32.
organized by the processes of labor."

These two questions were never adequately answered. The only answer that all could agree on to the first question was that all art must be doctrinally pure. While there was no agreement as to whether literature had to be by, or about the proletariat, there was common agreement that proletarian literature must advance the cause of the proletariat, i.e. socialism.

The second question in particular seemed to occupy much of the time of the Stalinist literary critic, Granville Hicks. Periodically, he would write a piece for the New Masses which offered his latest insights and inspirations on the matter. For example, in the August 17, 1934 New Masses Hicks offered several answers to the question. In the first place, literature which has as its hero a mass of workers, rather than a single worker, is preferable, if that work of art shows the mass of workers struggling towards socialism. Literature, however, may "properly" have as its subject matter middle-class life, as this was an inevitable consequence of the fact that most "revolutionary" writers came from middle-class homes. However, they must not pessimistically criticize and analyze middle-class life, as some many bourgeois writers, such as Sinclair Lewis, had done. Rather, they must optimistically show that in the degeneracy of middle-class life, lies the seeds of the new socialist society.

37. Maxim Gorky in the New Masses (October 2, 1934), 32.
There was much discussion of the creation of a school of Marxist literary criticism, but no one was quite able to agree as to what would constitute a specifically Marxist literary criticism other than that it would discuss literature partially in terms of its class origins and relationships. The thorny problem of developing a politically oriented aesthetic was continuously attacked, but never even vaguely solved. While the Marxist literary critics knew that they were against any variation of the "art for art’s sake" criticism, such as the so-called New Criticism then developing under the inspiration of T.S. Eliot, and that they were against V.F. Calverton’s attempts at Marxist criticism because he was an "opportunist, unable to understand any of the fundamental principles of Marxism" and because he had "indiscriminately associated with social-fascists" (This criticism of Calverton cannot be taken as a serious attack on his work, but rather was based on the fact of Calverton’s lack of complete agreement with the Communist Party. One of the critiques of Calverton was aimed, for example, at proving that Calverton, the man, was over-sexed and corrupt, and that his work was a mass of plagiarism. They were unable to come to what they could consider agreement as to what they were for. The most that can be said is that Marxist literary criticism was that criticism that Granville Hicks agreed with.

89. Hicks was the literary editor of the New Masses.
The whole range of problems that were created by this approach to literature received an airing at the 1935 American Writer's Congress which was called by a list of sponsors including:


It is important to note that five members of the Executive Committee of the American Communist Party (Browder, Hart, Hathaway, Olgin, and Trachtenberg) signed this call, and were prominent figures connected with the Congress — Browder, Trachtenberg, and Hathaway addressing the Congress. Hart edited the book which carried the summation of the proceedings.

The primary reason for calling the congress was to create the League of American Writers, to be affiliated with the Communist-dominated International Union of Revolutionary Writers. However, a good many of those who were present at the Congress were not Communists, and several, including Louis Mumford and Edmund Wilson, had drawn the fire of the Communist Press. James T. Farrell and John Dos Passos were on their way out of the Communist Party's periphery at the time of the Congress.
There were three groups discernable at the Congress; those who followed what we have labeled "the all art is propaganda" school, those who followed what we have described as the "Trotskyist line in literature", and those non-Marxists who went along, it would seem, for the ride.

The "art is propaganda" school was well represented.

To Isidor Schneider, poetry was the minstrel's weapon in the class struggle:

"The revolutionary movement asks for lyrics, for songs, for mass recitations, agit-prop plays in which poetry has proved extremely effective, poetry in the larger forms, narrative and drama to give that public circulation to revolutionary history and ideas that creative literature must successfully provide."

Jack Conroy, one of the few proletarian writers who really came from the proletariat wrote:

"To me a strike bulletin or an impassioned leaflet are of more moment than three-hundred perfectly and faultlessly written pages about the private woes of a gigolo or the biological ferment of a society dame as useful to society as the buck brush that infests Missouri cow pastures and takes all the sustenance out of the soil."

There was some serious soul-searching by middle-class writers about their role. Malcom Cowley admitted that he regretably came from the middle-class and therefore could not write accurately about the proletariat. However, he believed that there was a role in the revolutionary movement for even a "highly class-conscious petty bourgeois critic. Those who can write good middle-class revolutionary novels should not feel it a duty to write poor workingclass novels. They can serve in other ways."

132. Henry Hart, American Writers' Congress, 118.
133. Ibid., 118.
134. Ibid., 65, 60.
There were at least three critics of the official position present, but as it has usually been the case with heretics, they did not agree among themselves. John Dos Passos rejected all necessary connections between art and politics. He said:

"It is the business of the writers to supply, to make, to take part, if he can, in the struggle against oppression, but that his function as a citizen and his function as a technician are different, although the eventual end aimed at may in both cases be the same. The dilemma that faces the honest technicians all over the world today is how to combat the imperial and bureaucratic tendencies of the group whose aims they believe in, without giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

"No matter how narrow a set of convictions you start with, you will find yourself in your effort to probe deeper and deeper into men and events as you find them, less and less able to work with the minute prescriptions of doctrine; and you will find more and more that you are on the side of the men, women, and children alive right now against all the contraptions and organizations, however magnificent their aims may be, that bedevil them; and that you are on the side, not with phrases and opinions, but really and truly, of liberty, fraternity, and humanity."

James T. Farrell at the Writers' Congress and in his book _A Note on Literary Criticism_ developed his own independent position, which in general, however, was in agreement with the position on the question formulated by Leon Trotsky.

Edwin Seaver put forth an interesting argument, one which he believed would eliminate all the discussion and all censorship of art. He simply defined proletarian literature as that literature which is oriented towards socialism, and said that consequently any discussion of subject matter, style, form, plot or characters is irrelevant to a Marxist discussion of literature (as distinguished from...

---

137. See pp. 125–126 above.
a non-Marxist discussion of literature). "By making the
matter of political orientation," he claimed, "fundamental
in the distinction between the proletarian and the bourgeois
novel, I am not being sectarian, but am striving to eliminate
the menace of sectarianism by leaving the whole matter of
the novel's superstructure, which is to say the novel as art,
entirely up the individual writer."

E. The collectivist movement in Progressive education.

Marxism also influenced the intellectual in ways
that were not officially connected with the Communist
Party. Not only literature, but educational philosophy,
as well, came under the influence of Marxism.

In the early thirties, a number of philosophers and
educators, trained in the Deweyian tradition, attempted to
make a synthesis between instrumentalism and Marxism. The
three leading members of this school were Sidney Hook,
Theodore Berghold, and George Counts.

Hook had begun to work on a reinterpretation of
Marx in the middle-twenties and had offered a number of
articles on the subject in V.F. Calverton's Modern Quarterly
at that period; Hook argued that Marxism was not a bona
fide theory of history at all, but a methodological framework
useful for economic and social analysis when applied to
the period since the Industrial Revolution. Hook, summing up
his approach to Marxism, wrote, "It accepts the facts of
historical change on which the theory of social evolution is based but rejects the belief in the universality of any pattern of social development. It believes that knowledge makes a difference, and therefore emphasizes the activity and moral responsibility of man in helping to redetermine the direction of historical change. It denies that there is a law of progress but asserts the possibility of human progress—which it interprets as a value term." Hook rejected completely the Marxian dialectic of inevitable progress towards socialism, and substituted the instrumentalist approach to social change in its place.

In line with Hook's and other similar interpretations of Marxism, a number of educators founded a magazine in 1934, called Social Frontier, which was edited by George Counts, of the Columbia School of Education. This group believed that a reorientation of the educational system was possible along "collectivist lines" and that it would lead to a democratic collectivist society.

George S. Counts, today vice-chairman of the anti-Communist Liberal Party, and an expert on the Soviet educational system which he today opposes, and other members of the group, were quite favorable in the thirties to the Soviet Union, although they had no tie to it or the American Communist Party.

Of the Soviet "experiment" Counts wrote in 1931;

140. George Counts, The Soviet Challenge to America (New York, 1931), ix.
"The world today is full of social experimentation. There is one experiment, however, that dwarfs all others—so bold indeed in its ideals and its program that few can contemplate it without emotion."

To Counts, as well as to many other American instrumentalists, the great virtue of the Soviet Union was its rational planning. In America society moved chaotically without a plan, but in Russia the "Soviet government has sought to promote the rational and orderly development of the entire social economy".

Counts, as well as other defenders of the Soviet Union, defended the Soviet Union's attacks on civil liberties in two different, even contradictory ways. The first was the usual "what about the Negroes in the South" answer to questionings on freedom in the Soviet Union. Counts simply stated that as there was no economic equality in the United States, there was no real freedom. Therefore, we should not attack the Soviet Union on this count. The second defense denied that there had been great attacks on civil liberties in Russia, and stated that when they had been made they had been necessary for the defense of the Revolution. Of the OGPU, the Russian Secret Police, Counts wrote, "While no doubt it has made mistakes in individual cases, it has on the whole served well to the purpose for which it was created—it has given solid support of the revolutionary cause during the critical years of infancy."

With the Soviet educational system in mind, Counts developed a plan for American education. In two works,

142. Ibid., 54.
143. Ibid., 50.
one written as Part IX of the Report of the Commission on the Social Studies of the American Historical Association 144, in 1934, Counts sounded as if he had accepted the Marxian dialectic rather than instrumentalism, for he talked of things being "decided by the movement of history". Wrote Counts:

"If the argument presented in this volume is essentially valid, then the trend from individualism to collectivism in economy must be recognized by educational statesmen as fundamental in the preparation of their policies. It should, of course, be made entirely clear that there is no desire here to argue the respective merits of the two forms of economy. Such an issue is purely academic in character. It has been decided by the movement of history. The practical man has no choice but to make his peace with the great trend toward an interdependent society. To attempt to restore the economy of a century ago or to erect an individualistic superstructure on socialized foundations would be utterly Utopian. To move in this direction would be to court disaster. The hands of the clock of cultural evolution cannot be turned back. Already men have been irrevocably changed by the new forces."

"If the argument up to this point is sound, then the purpose of public education in the present epoch of American history is clear. It is to prepare the younger generation for labor and sacrifice in building a democratic civilization and culture on the foundations of a collective economy." 146

The magazine Social Frontier, however, was not committed to any political program, and while many of its sponsors and contributors were in the first part of the thirties favorable to Soviet Union and Communism, a good many were not, following instead John Dewey's lead of working towards a non-Marxist radical party. While such figures who wrote for the magazine as Henry Pratt Fairchild, Lewis Corey, George Counts, and Lewis Mumford were sympathetic to the Soviet Union and to the

146. Ibid., 541.
Communist Party, others such as John Dewey himself, Merle Curti, Broadus Mitchell, William V. Kilpatrick, George Partman, Alfred Bingham, Seldon Rodman and other liberals were sympathetic to all the active forces of non-dogmatic progress including the New Deal, the Socialist Party, and Dewey's movement for a new American progressive party.

The history of Social Frontier is significant for it shows that in the thirties, non-Communists and even anti-Communist liberals, would freely associate in a venture with those who were pro-Communist. The non-Communist treated the Communists as a group of sectarian, dogmatic radicals, who were mistaken in their absolute allegiance to the Soviet Union. They were not thought of as enemies of democracy or liberalism. The intellectual atmosphere of the Popular Front in which the differentiation between Communists and non-Communist "liberals" was blurred, encouraged this attitude towards the Communist Party.

The impact of the movement towards the Popular Front can be well seen, also, in the history of the Socialist Party in the early part of the thirties. As with Socialist parties in other countries, the American Socialist Party, after a decade of opposition to Communism and the Soviet Union, flirted with the Communists, although the affair never reached the proportions that it did in the virtual marriage between the Socialist and the Communists in France.

147. See pp67-58 above.
F. The Socialist Party moves towards and then away from the Popular Front.

The early thirties witnessed a three-way split in the American Socialist Party. Many of the older members of the Socialist Party constituted a small right-wing, which did not believe in co-operating with the Stalinists or other left-wing groups, such as the Trotskyites and Lovestonites, and was absolutely opposed to the Soviet Union. This group, on domestic matters was not much further left than the anti-socialist New Deal. This right-wing group was finally pushed out of the Socialist Party in 1936 and formed the Social Democratic Federation, which opposed the Communists and supported the New Deal, without entering the Democratic Party. (Many of the elements of the Social Democratic Federation were active in the creation of the American Labor Party. When that organization came under Communist control, this group and others left the ALP and formed the Liberal Party in New York State.) The Social Democratic Party kept control of the party organ, the New Leader.

The great majority of the members of the Socialist Party formed what was known as the Militant caucus, led by such men as Norman Thomas, whose program was more revolutionary, friendlier to the Soviet Union, and more willing to cooperate with the American Communist Party. The Militants talked in Marxian terminology, did not reject revolutionary action as a method of bringing about socialism if need be, and in general, held to a position that corresponded to that of the great European, in particular Austrian, "centrists" such as Otto Bauer and Karl Kautsky.
In the first issue of the Socialist Call, established by the Militants due to the control of the Party's official organ, the New Leader, by the Old Guard, the Militants stated their position:

"The SOCIALIST CALL is the organ of revolutionary socialism. Revolutionary socialism aims at nothing less than the transfer of power to the working-class. This, and this alone, can save the workers from tyranny and starvation, from wage-slavery and war." 4

They further elaborated their position, especially in relation to the Communists, later that year:

"We are interested in the defense of the Soviet Union, not out of patriotic reasons, but because we consider the Soviet Union to be a force for world revolution. But to give up rich opportunities for revolution outside of Russia in order to defend the Soviet Union will in the long run mean the defeat both of the Soviet Union and the world revolution!"

The Socialist Party platform at this point sounded more radical than that of the Communist Party. The Socialist Party objected to the toning down of Communist demands in the period of the Popular Front and believed that if the Popular Front meant the abandonment of the world-revolution in order to defend the Soviet Union, the Popular Front must be abandoned itself. However, while the Socialist Party made revolutionary sounding statements, it must be stated that in the opinion of this author "the voice was the voice of Basu, but the hands were the hands of Isaac."

To the left of the Militants was the Revolutionary Policy Committee, which unlike the Militants, was avowedly Leninist in orientation, but not completely Stalinist. While a small group, it attracted a number of figures who were to become important in the labor and radical movement. Such men as Irving Brown and Roy Reuther who at
Present are leading American trade union representatives in Europe, Francis Henson, David Felix, and Hal Draper who continued to be active in left-wing movements, and such intellectuals as William Henry Chamberlain and the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, were sympathetic to it.

The RPC differed with the "Militant" group over the latter's refusal to accept Leninism, in particular Lenin's conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Bolshevik organization of the revolutionary party. Wrote Irving Brown, then the RPC's leading theoretician,

"It must be the task of revolutionary socialists to smash the bourgeois set-up (not merely to get control of 'state-machinery' and I use it for the purposes of establishing socialism) and to substitute the workers' state through the soviets which grow up and develop in the struggle for power and are not super-imposed from above at the supposedly 'opportunite' moment, dictated by an attitude of idealism as opposed to materialist analysis."

The second issue of the Revolutionary Socialist Review, contained an article by Reinhold Niebuhr, leading Protestant theologian, and at the time one of the leading left-wing members of the Socialist Party, entitled "A Criticism of the R.P.C. Program." Niebuhr, while not afraid of revolutionary action, stated what at least this author believes to be the traditional Marxist approach to the problem. He criticized the RPC for advocating revolutionary action in a "romantic" way. Niebuhr advocated that socialists act as if the capitalist class will not fight back at the time the

socialists take power. If the capitalists resist, then the use of violence is permissible. Nie\nber believed that violence was only to be used as a political weapon if absolutely necessary—it was romantic nonsense to believe that socialism need not be brought about through violent revolution. (An accurate discussion of Nie\nber's approach to socialism in relationship to his theology is needed, for he has participated actively in the socialist movement, still classifies himself as a social-democrat, and has been one of the most penetrating commentators on Marxism in the United States.)

The Revolutionary Policy Committee found itself quite close to the position of the Communist Party and in support of the Soviet Union. In their first issue and in all succeeding issues they came out in defense of the Soviet Union, although they reserved the right to criticize the Soviet Union in a friendly fashion. However, the RPC criticized the American Communist Party for its theory of "social fascism", for its policy of dual unionism, for its somewhat insincere offer of the united front, and for the mechanical domination of the American Party by the Russian Party. They disagreed with the Lovestonites, Trotskyites, and Musteites because of the "abandonment" of these groups of the Third International, for their sectarianism, and their "mechanical domination by lone figures", Lovestone, Trotsky, and Muste.

152. A series of political biographies of certain key figures is necessary to give balance to the group picture that I have been able to offer. It is highly conceivable that such biographies would mute certain points, and would highlight others.
Thus the Socialist Party found itself quite friendly to the Communist Party, in many ways, and the opposition between Communists and Socialists in the period between 1933-1936 was on the surface a friendly one—in great contrast to the bitterness that prevailed between the two groups both before and after this short period.

G. The movement away from Stalinism after 1935.

1935-1936 marked a turning point in the history of Marxism among intellectuals in the United States. A large number of intellectuals left the Communist Party or its periphery for the Trotskyist movement and its periphery; and at the same time, probably an equally large, but probably less significant group, came near to the Communist Party in the period of the Popular Front. Those intellectuals who had been with the Communist movement from the first years of the thirties, and even, in many cases, from the middle-twenties or earlier, who moved towards the Trotskyists or who became part of the independent-left in this period did so largely under the impact of the increasing evidence of the lack of freedom and civil liberties in the Soviet Union, which became apparent after the purges following the Kirov assassination of 1935 and in the Moscow trials of 1935-38. In addition, some of the intellectuals who had received a Marxist theoretical education, believed that the Popular Front tactic was "un-Marxian" and that the Communist party had deserted revolutionary action. On the other hand, those intellectuals who had been part of the liberal center found themselves able to cooperate with Communists in the
period of the Popular Front when it seemed that the Communists were the most effective shock-troops of the New Deal's domestic and foreign policies.

The Trotskyist movement had consisted of a small handful of ex-Communists in the period between 1929 and 1934. Very few of the intellectuals came near to it in the early years. However, its forces were greatly expanded by the merger with A. J. Muste's American Workers' Party in 1934. The AWP had grown out of the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, a left-wing group of intellectuals and labor officials, which had advocated the application in America of Marxist principles adapted to meet American circumstances. The AWP was led by a number of former Communist leaders including Ludwig Lore, and J.B.S. Hardman, Louis Budenz, soon to enter the Communist Party where he stayed until he reentered the Catholic Church in 1946, James McKinney, P.J. Sapos, Lucille Kohn, and A.J. Muste, a former minister. (Muste today is still a radical, although he has returned to the Christian Church, and is the leading pacifist leader in the United States.)

(In the same period the Lovestonite movement continued to keep alive. Under the direction of Lovestone, Ben Gitlow, Will Herberg, Bertram Wolfe, Herbert Zam, and Jim Cork, the Lovestonites continued to have some influence in the trade union movement. When the intellectuals began to leave the Communist Party in the middle-thirties many of them
stopped momentarily on the Lovestonite fringe. Regrettably, I have been unable to find adequate documentation for the Lovestonite influence, although I am certain that the history of the American labor-movement in the thirties would have been different without the presence of an active Lovestonite group.)

The Trotskyites after their merger with the American Workers' Party began to cast about for further political allies. They succeeded in making a number of contacts with leading Socialist Party members, and in July 1936 they entered the Socialist Party. The entering of the Socialist Party was a publicly executed maneuver which has been called the French Turn, paralleling the entering of the Socialist Party in France by the French Trotskyites. The Trotskyites stayed in the Socialist Party until September 1937, when they left the Socialist Party by "mutual consent" (there are conflicting reports as to whether they were expelled or quit), taking with them a number of people who were to remain active in the Trotskyist movement, and a group of intellectuals who had been on the periphery of the Socialist movement.

The formation of the Independent Committee for Norman Thomas in 1936, which consisted of a number of leading intellectuals, was indicative of the break of a number of intellectuals from the Communist Party. The list is interesting for it included former Communists and fellow travelers, Trotskyites, Socialist Party members and independent liberals. The signers included the following independents: Frank Boas, the anthropologist, Louis Gannet, the literary critic, Louis Hacker, the Marxist historian,
Sidney Hook, philosopher, James Horney and John T. Flynn, freelance writer (Horney now spends his energy attacking the vice of smoking and Flynn is now on the far right, writing attacks upon the New Deal and "creeping socialism"), and Art Young, the famous radical-cartoonist. A number of independent Marxists and Trotskyites including V. F. Calverton, Max Eastman, James T. Farrell, Sherry Magnan, Felix Morrow, George Novack, Meyer Schapiro, John Wheelwright, and Dwight Macdonald also came out in support of Thomas. A number of liberals including the philosophers Morris Cohen and John Dewey, the Christian leaders Sherwood Eddy, Kirby Page, John Haynes Holmes, and Reinhold Niebuhr, the teachers Tucker Smith and Robert M. Lovett, and the editor and publisher of the Nation, Oswald Garrison Villard, also supported Thomas. In addition, Van Wyck Brooks, Freda Kirchway, and Jerome Davis, who were to continue to flirt with the Popular Front and the Communists, also backed Thomas in 1936.

Most of the intellectuals who began to leave the Communist movement and its periphery in 1935-36 became independent leftists, somewhat sympathetic to the Trotskyite movement, but usually unwilling to submit themselves to the discipline of the American Trotskyite movement. Some of them, including Sidney Hook, Max Eastman, and James T. Farrell wrote on occasion for the Trotskyite magazine, the New International, usually,
however, in order to take issue with Trotsky or some one of the American Trotskyite leaders. A few, including Dwight Macdonald, Philip Wheelwright, and James Burnham, joined the Trotskyist movement, where they were to become leading members, and editors of the New International. The great mass, however, who quit the Communist movement acted as independent leftists, sympathetic to Trotsky, personally, and to much of his analysis of the Soviet Union and the world situation. They wrote for the independent radical (but non-Marxist) magazine Common-Sense, for VF Calverton's Marxist journal, Modern Monthly, which was sympathetic to Trotskyism, and after its reappearance, for Partisan Review.

The Modern Monthly agreed with the Trotskyist critique of the Soviet Union. Both Calverton and Trotsky agreed that the Stalinist dictatorship in the Soviet Union had to be defeated if the Revolution was not to be completely betrayed, but that, nevertheless, the Soviet Union had to be defended against capitalist attack. Wrote Calverton in early 1934:

Modern Monthly accepts the Trotskyist critique of the Communist Party and the USSR. However, "Despite all this, the Modern Monthly believes that the Soviet Union is building the civilization of the future. It believes that Soviet Russia is the only country in the world today where economic planning can be successful, because it is the only country which is built upon a sane, scientific, economic foundation. It believes that in spite of all its political defects the social and economic accomplishments of the Soviet Union are a living inspiration to the workers of the world."

"The Modern Monthly wants an effective Communist

154. See pp. 99-103 above.
155. See pp. 30-33 above.
156. See pp. 120-125 above.
movement in America. This can only be achieved when American Communists begin to think first of American needs and opportunities instead of the anticipated reaction of Moscow to every measure undertaken. The role of Russia should be inspiration, not dictation."

Calverton's magazine supported both the Musteite American Workers' Party and the Trotskyite Workers' Party and applauded the merger of the two groups in 1934. Calverton and Trotsky were in constant touch with one another and the Modern Monthly on occasion printed friendly exchanges between the two. Calverton accepted much of Trotsky's analysis, but differed with him somewhat concerning Bolshevik tactics.

Trotsky often wrote for the Modern Monthly. For example, in March 1935, the exiled Bolshevik leader offered the following satirical portrait of many so-called radicals:

"The petty bourgeois radical (in America they seem to be wearing out the threadbare name of liberals) who is ready to accept the boldest social conclusion on condition that they involve no political obligation. Socialism? Communism? Anarchism? All very good but in no other way than that of reform... Splendid! But by all means with the permission of the White House and of Tammany."

The Modern Monthly in line with the Socialist Party and the Trotskyites, did not support the Popular Front, believing that it was a Stalinist device aimed only at the protection of the immediate interest of the Soviet Union and that it entailed an abandonment of revolutionary aims. The anti-Stalinists became increasingly critical of both Stalinism.

158. V.F. Calverton, "The Pulse of Modernity" in Modern Monthly (December 1933), 845-47.
159. V.F. Calverton in the Modern Monthly (April 1933), 140-145.
160. Leon Trotsky, "On the Revolutionary Intellectuals" in the Modern Monthly (March 1933), 82.
and the Popular Front during the War in Spain. The Modern Monthly in line with many left-wing groups and individuals accused the Communists of betraying the Spanish people, of being more interested in killing off anarchists, socialists, Trotskyites, and members of the independent socialist group, the Partida Obrea de Unificacion Marxista (POUM), than in fighting Fascism. According to the anti-Stalinist left, not only were the Popular Front tactics in Spain wrong, but in reality there was no Popular Front—the Popular Front being merely an excuse to flood Republican Spain with Stalinist political commissars who ordered the assassination of the leftist leaders who refused to accept the absolute domination of Stalinism. The Modern Monthly offered many articles on the Stalinist treachery in Spain, devoting a whole issue to an attack on the Communist Party in Spain by Anita Brenner and others.

The Modern Monthly attacked both the Nation and the New Republic, their apologetics for Stalinism. Lillian Symes wrote in the Modern Monthly:

"When the social historian of the future seeks to epitomize in a chapter heading the intellectual atmosphere of the decade between 1930 and 1940, he will undoubtedly hit upon some such phrase as "The Great Confusion". In point of time the year 1936 will stand out as a highlight—the year in which Communists became progressives, Socialists—hesitantly—revolutionists, liberalism a protective coloration for fellow-travelers, "class collaboration" the People's Front, the Revolutionary Fatherland, salesman to an invading Fascist Army, Lenin's "Thieves' Kitchen at Geneva" a bulwark against war and fascism etc. But in point of space our hypothetical historian will strike his richest pay dirt in the back files of our 'liberal' weeklies. Here he will find..."

162. The Modern Monthly (September 1937).
163. Lillian Symes, "Our Liberal Weeklies" in the Modern Monthly (October 1936)."
both the reflection of an a major contribution to the political contradictions, the economic absurdities and the intellectual milling about that characterize to-day's radical labor movement and what is euphemistically called its cultural front. And he will undoubtedly underscore the phenomenon that in 1936, the phrase our "liberal weeklies" was still a generally accepted designation for the Nation and the New Republic.


The thirties were a period of intellectual catholicism, with all forms of radicalism, liberalism, and protest being served up in the pages of a magazine which officially was close to the Trotskyist movement. The history of the American left-wing, past, present, and future, could be found in the pages and contributors to the Modern Monthly.
when Partisan Review reappeared at the end of 1937 many of the intellectuals who had broken with the Communist Party, and who were still sincerely interested in socialism and Marxism, gravitated to the pages of this revised journal. While more than a half of its pages were devoted to non-political poetry, essays, and short stories, Partisan Review was still a Marxist left-wing journal. While the Communist press continually accused the magazine of being "Trotskyist," while some of the editors were Trotskyists, and the magazine held to a position which was close to that of the Trotskyists, it nevertheless did not kowtow to the Trotskyist movement, often criticizing it, or require any type of sectarian conformity from its contributors. Among the contributors were Trotskyists, Lovestoneites, independent radicals and liberals of all persuasions, and many who were relatively non-political poets and novelists. Fred Dupee, one of the editors, claimed that "...we do not consider ourselves 'Trotskyites'" and that Partisan Review had been founded "precisely to fight the tendency to confuse literature and party politics." (Nevertheless, there was general agreement between the Partisan Review and Trotskyite positions, and several of the editors of Partisan Review were also editors of the Trotskyite theoretical journal, the New International.)

Much of the political writing in the magazine concerned itself with attacking the Stalinist interpretation of proletarian literature. The line put forth by Partisan Review was the same as that in its declaration at the time of its reappearance.

164. Fred Dupee in Partisan Review (December 1938), 75.
There was a considerable reconsideration of Marxism and socialism undertaken within the pages of the Partisan Review, with most contributors tending to reject the Marxian dialectic as a mystical and metaphysical concept and to accept an interpretation of Marxism similar to that propounded by Sidney Hook and Edmund Wilson. Wilson had written of the dialectic:

"He (Marx) still believed in the triad of Hegel: the These, the Antithese, and the Synthese; and this triad was simply the old Trinity, taken over from the Christian theology, as the Christians had taken it over from Plato. It was the mythical and magical triangle which from the time of Pythagoras and before had stood as a symbol of fertility and power ...."

However, Wilson did not reject Marxism, but restated it with the mystical quality of the dialectic removed from it.

William Phillips, one of the editors of Partisan Review summed up the attitude of his fellow editors when he wrote, "Marxism...has at least an experimental claim to our attention." This interpretation he claimed, could allow us to apply Marxism to literary criticism, not in a sterile and sectarian manner, but in a critical and experimental fashion. Marxism in literary criticism could supply a "method not only for finding the social origins of values but also for determining their contemporary significance." He offered an illustration of Marxist criticism as applied to literature as it had been applied to historical studies in a non-sectarian, non-political fashion. Wrote editor Phillips:

166. See above pp. 133-134.
167. Edmund Wilson, To the Finland Station (New York, 1940), 190.
"To illustrate: take Valery's idea of the universal man: an idea which might be enjoyed purely as a daring speculation—a poem. The Marxian method, however, by directing us to Valery's intellectual environment, would suggest a possible relation between Valery's paralysis of scepticism and the fact that his universal man, occupied solely with the mechanics of thinking, made a specific contribution to thought. And his peculiar scepticism, which might be traced to the exhaustion of an entire tradition, is of a piece with the suspension of belief which the modern flight from romanticism has produced."

I must admit that it is hard to see what is specifically Marxian about this interpretation. While it is admittedly one that the "New Criticism" would not make, such literary criticism goes back in the United States to the work of Van Wyck Brooks, and in Europe at least as far back as Taine. It would seem to me that if this is Marxian criticism, it is a conceit to label it as specifically Marxian.

The contributors to Partisan Review were stunned by the Moscow trials of the old Bolsheviks. Editor Philip Rahv wrote

169

disconsolately:

"The first world war ended two decades ago, and its end was preceded by the first workers' revolution. Ninety years have passed since the most subversive document of all times, the Communist Manifesto, injected its directive images into the nascent consciousness of the proletariat, we were not prepared for defeat. The future had our confidence, which we granted freely, sustained the tradition of Marxism. In that tradition, we saw the marriage of science and humanism. But now, amidst all these ferocious surprises, who has the strength to re-affirm his beliefs, to transcend the feeling that he has been duped? One is afraid of one's fear. Will it soon become so precise as to exclude hope?"

Partisan Review, as did the Trotskyites and the Modern Monthly, opposed the Popular Front tactics of the Communists and the

169 Philip Rahv, "Trials of the Mind" (April 1935), 5.
Liberal Center, and rejected the major line of the Popular Front, "collective security." Sidney Hook, writing in the Partisan Review, believed that the Popular Front was a denial of the possibility of socialism. He wrote:

"Those who made a principle out of "no-principles" are making a virtue out of their bewilderment. Instead of seeking from new leading principles of interpretation and action, instead of consciously modifying or revising the old principles, they have abandoned themselves to a course of political confusion—the Popular Front."

While it was true, Hook argued, that the working class could alone never win political power, it was also true that the "working class and its mass organizations must be the base of the socialist movement." This second proposition, according to Hook, was denied by the Popular Fronters, who had created an amorphous movement of all those willing to oppose fascism. What would occur, according to Hook, in such a situation and amorphous alliance of classes is that "The program of the group farthest to the right would prevail and must prevail for this is the purchase price of its alliance. Everything else is rhetoric." Thus the Popular Front could not advance socialism, which was the only real solution to the societal problem, but could only advance the cause of the liberal bourgeoisie.

The Partisan Review accused the popular fronters of preaching a "holy war against fascism" and thereby abandoning the fight for socialism. Dwight Macdonald, one of the editors 170, Sidney Hook, "The Anatomy of the Popular Front" in Partisan Review (Spring 1939), 30-39. 170a. Ibid., 30. 171. Ibid., 37.
of Partisan Review summed up the attitude of the magazine toward the collective security program of the Popular Front and offered a "Marxist alternative", wrote Macdonald, also an editor of the Trotskyite New International:

"Today, as in 1917, the intellectuals have one set of war aims, the Administration they support, another. The intellectuals would rescue Western civilization from fascism and restore it to the ways of progress and democracy. Their government, however, as a serious capitalist enterprise, of necessity takes a less romantic view of the affair. Its aims are the destruction of a threatening competitor in world markets and the defense of a status quo, both international and domestic, which is greatly to the advantage of the ruling bourgeoisie. The intellectuals, in a word, want to crush fascism, the State Department thinks rather of Germany."

173 "The great objection to the war program of the intellectuals is not so much that it will get us into a war—the bourgeoisie will decide that question for themselves, when the proper moment comes, without any help from the Nation—but that it is diverting us from the main task to work with the masses for socialism, which alone can save our civilization. A crusade against fascism abroad means political and cultural submission to the ruling class at home. And so in all the current discussions on the war question, nothing is ever said about the revolutionary alternative to capitalism and its product, war. Social revolution is no longer thought about. The body has vanished."

174 "Whichever side wins will impose a new Versailles on the loser, and the Third world war will begin to grow before the ink is dry on the treaty."

The question that the left-wing intellectual in Partisan Review kept asking, in effect, and never satisfactorily answering, was the question asked in Ignazio Silone's novel, Bread and Wine, by the hero, the returning revolutionist, Spina.

173. Ibid., 16.
174. Ibid., 18.
175. Lionel Abel in Partisan Review (December 1937), as quoted, 38.
"Is it possible to take part in political life, to devote oneself to a party, and remain sincere?

"Has not truth for me become party truth? Has not justice for me become party justice?

"Have not party interests ended by deadening all my discrimination between moral values? Do I, too, not despise them as petty bourgeois prejudices?

"Have I escaped from the opportunism of a decadent church to fall into bondage to the opportunism of a party."

H. The Marxist Quarterly and Science and Society.

The second part of the thirties witnessed the birth of two magazines devoted to scholarly articles by Marxist historians, social scientists, and philosophers. This provided an outlet for those Marxists whose field of endeavor was not literature in the narrow sense.

The first of these magazines was the Marxist Quarterly. This was an independent venture, whose contributors were largely Lovestonites, Trotskyites, independent Marxists, with a few contributors who were close to the Communist Party. The magazine did not engage in current political discussion or the factional fights between the various political parties of the left. Instead it devoted itself to the reprinting of Marxist theoretical works and to the publishing of the new works written by contemporary Marxists. The president of the American Marxist Association, which published the magazine, was Louis Hacker, the Marxist historian. The Board of editors included James Burnham, Lewis Corey, Francis Henson, formerly of the AWP, Will Herberg, leading Lovestonite, Sidney Hook, Corliss Lamont, Communist fellow-traveler, George Novack, Bertram Wolfe, Lovestonite leader, and Herbert Zem, left-wing member of the Socialist Party.
A cross-section of the articles in the four issues of the magazine that were published in 1936-37 will indicate the nature of the magazine. Benjamin Ginzburg of the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences offered an article on the relationship between Science and Socialism, Sidney Hook offered an article on Marxism and values, Louis Hacker offered two articles which were to be the basis for a Marxist interpretation of American History. Meyer Schapiro, professor of art history at Columbia University wrote an article on the nature of abstract art. Edward Conze, a professional Marxist philosopher, offered an article on the social origins of nominalism. Karl Korsch, a leading European centrist offered an article in defense of Rosa Luxembourg's opposition to Lenin, and Max Raphael took up the cudgel against Thomistic philosophy. Other contributors included Lewis Corey, Theodore Brameld, George Simpson, noted anthropologist, James Rorty, Abraham Edel, Delmore Schwartz the poet, Eliseo Vivas of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Wisconsin, and Jim Cork, leading Lovestonite intellectual.

The other intellectual, non-literary magazine published by Marxists was Science and Society, was semi-officially affiliated with the Communist Party, and its contributors were

176. "Science and Socialism" in the Marxist Quarterly (Fall 1936).
177. Ibid. "Marxism and Values".
179. Ibid. "On the Nature of Abstract Art".
180. Ibid. "The Social Origins of Nominalism".
181. Ibid. (Winter 1937), "A reevaluation of Marxism".
182. Ibid. (Fall 1936), "A Marxist Critique of Thomism".
usually sympathetic to the Communist Party. The magazine published a number of historical, philosophical, and sociological articles which are of great scholarly interest. While *Science and Society* in the forties became a somewhat sterile mouthpiece of the Stalinist movement, in the thirties its standards of scholarship were quite high, and many non-Marxists wrote book reviews and other short pieces for it, in the same way and for the same reasons that they would contribute to any other reputable scholarly journal.

A sample of the articles contained in the magazine would include such items as "The Social Basis of Linguistic" by Margaret Schlauch, associate professor of English at New York University, Fall 1936, "An Evaluation of Logical Positivism" by J. McGill, Associate professor of philosophy at Hunter College, "A Note on Comte" by Bernhard J. Stern, associate professor of sociology at Columbia University, "The Southern Agrarians" by Broadus Mitchell, associate professor of economics at Johns Hopkins, an evaluation of William James by Kenneth Burke, "American Education and the Social Struggle" by Theodore Brameld, chairman of the department of philosophy at Adelphi College, "Henry Adams: the last liberal" by Edgar Johnson, lecturer in English literature at the City College of New York and the New School, "The Supreme Court and Civil Rights" by Louis Blouin, a constitutional lawyer, "Economic Facets in Primitive Religion" by Paul Radin, ethnologist, "The Daumier Myth" by Oliver Larkin, Chairman of the Department of Fine Arts at Smith College, "Degree of Freedom of Social Locomotion" by J. F. Browne, associate professor of psychology, the University of Kansas, "The Birth of Western Philosophy" by A. D. Winspear,
Professor of Classics, the University of Wisconsin, "Science and the Economy of Seventeenth Century England" by Robert K. Merton, instructor in sociology at Harvard University, and "The Literary Opposition to Utilitarianism" by Granville Hicks, associate professor of English, at Rensaller Polytechnic Institute. Others who wrote for the magazine included D.J. Struik, Associate professor of mathematics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, E. Franklin Frazier, Chairman of the department of sociology, Howard University, Curtis Nettels, Professor of History, the University of Wisconsin, Harold Lasik of the University of London, Paul Birdsell, Associate Professor of History at Williams College, Paul Swezy, instructor in economics at Harvard University, Matthew Josephson, Corliss Lamont, professor of philosophy, Columbia University, Ralph J. Bunche, associate professor of Government, Howard University, Robert Morss Lovett, Professor of English, the University of Chicago, Henry David, Instructor in History at Queens College, Harold C. Brown, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Stanford University, Lyman Bradley, associate professor of German at Brooklyn College, Simon Kuznets, Professor of Economics at the University of Pennsylvania, Fredrick Schuman, Assistant Professor of political science, the University of Chicago, and T.A. Bisson of the Institute of Pacific Relations.
While this list is long and tedious to read, and the listing of names in these times serves no apparent scholarly function, it is nevertheless necessary in order to show the wide range of people who were willing to write for a Marxist publication, without being Marxists or in any way sympathetic to Communism themselves. In the atmosphere of the thirties, most intellectuals did not hesitate for a moment to write for a scholarly Marxist publication, anymore than they would today hesitate to write for the Atlantic Monthly or many of the professional journals. Such men as Broadus Mitchell, Robert Merton, Curtis Nettels, Ralph Bunche and Simon Kuznets were clearly not then Communists. They were asked to contribute an article or book-review to what was then considered a reputable journal in academic and intellectual circles, and therefore they contributed, for payment, such articles and reviews. The various committees on subversive activities notwithstanding, many of those who wrote for Science and Society did so for much the same motives that prompted them to publish in any other journal. For many, it did not mean a commitment to Stalinism in any way. However, for others it did indicate agreement with Marxism and with Stalinism.
I. The Popular Front and American intellectuals.

The Second Writers' Congress in the spring of 1937 typified the Popular Front period in which non-Communist 183 freely associated with Communists. The League of American Writers which sponsored this second congress, as well as the first and third such congresses, was led by Communists or avowed fellow travelers. The first Congress had concerned itself almost exclusively with discussions of the "nature of proletarian literature" and under the suggestion of James Farrell had ended with the singing of the revolutionary anthem, the Internationale.

While the Second Congress did discuss the political role of the writer, the specifically Marxist content was eliminated. A large number of new fellow travelers appeared on the scene, and a number of former Stalinist intellectuals were not on hand, or were there in order to "heckle". Joseph Freeman set the keynote to this Congress when he declared: "The Writers' Congress joined the two tendencies in American letters which, during the Twenties, had carried forward the democratic tradition—one along liberal, the other still further along Marxist lines." The liberal and the Communist were both defending democracy, Freeman suggested, so why could they not cooperate in the fight for democracy. This was the lulling and persuasive message of the Congress. After reminding

183. See pp. 68-65 above.
his listeners that the armies of the Spanish Republic included liberals, anarchists, socialists, Catholics, republicans and communists, Freeman suggested that the same alliance on the "Cultural front" was possible as on the battlefield against fascism.

Many of the speakers at the Second Congress had been active in Stalinist activities for years, and had participated in the first congress in 1935. However, there were also a number of new figures present who were not Stalinists, but liberals "in the honeymoon period". Notable among this group were Paul de Kruif, the scientific writer, Ernest Hemingway, moved by his experiences in Spain, and the poet, Archibald MacLeish. Neither Hemingway or MacLeish were Communists, or even Communist sympathizers at any time.

To both of them, as to many liberals, the major threat was fascism, and in the war against fascism all anti-fascists; including Communists, must unite. Wrote Hemingway:

"Really good writers are always rewarded under almost any existing system of government that they can tolerate. There is only one form of government that cannot produce good writers and that is that system is fascism. For fascism is a lie told by bullies, a writer who will not lie cannot live or work under fascism."

Macleish carried this argument still further in an article entitled "Spain and the American Writers". MacLeish, moved by the defense of the Spanish republic against Franco's fascist legions, although not a Communist, stated

that he would cooperate with Communists and any other anti-fascists because "...the man who refuses to defend his convictions for fear he may defend them in the wrong company, has no convictions."

Henry G. Alsbert, Director of the Federal Writers' Project spoke at the Congress. This fact gives some substance to the often-heard claim that the Communists had considerable influence upon the Federal Arts Project. This influence has not been claimed solely by right-wing critics of the New Deal, but by many former Communists who have remained on the left.

The call to this congress contained no mention of "proletarian literature" and only listed agreement on the fight for peace, democracy, and against fascism as the prerequisites for membership. Moved by a fight for such noble aims, such leading world intellectuals as Albert Einstein, the mathematician, and Thomas Mann, the exiled German novelist, sent messages of support to the Congress. Even the somewhat cynical pro-Soviet reporter for the New York Times, Walter Duranty, spoke at the congress and in this talk attempted to turn the focus of attention away from the Soviet Union and towards fascism. Wrote Duranty, "What do the Russians want? They want to cultivate their own garden, continue what they are doing. They want to live as freemen. They want to live happily at home. They don't want to invade other people's countries. It's fascism that does that."

187. Ibid., 205.
However, not all the left-wing writers supported this Congress. A group consisting of a number of former Stalinist sympathizers who had moved over to the Trotskyist camp, including Dwight Macdonald, James T. Farrell, Felix Morrow, Philip Wheelwright, and James Burnham attended the conference but clearly indicated their opposition to the Stalinist rulers of the Soviet Union and to the American Communist Party and its cultural line.

In addition, such prominent figures, as Waldo Frank, the first president of the League of American Writers, and John Dos Passos, did not attend the congress in protest against its pro-Soviet and Stalinist slant, and its refusal to condemn the Moscow trials of the leading Bolshevik leaders. Donald Ogden Stewart, a Hollywood screenwriter and detective story author, much closer to and amenable to the Communist Party line, was "chosen" as president of the League of American Writers to replace Waldo Frank.

There was a Third Congress of the League of American Writers in May of 1939 which put forth in its call typical Popular Front demands, for democracy, peace, and prosperity. Nothing much of note was accomplished, the proceedings being universally dull. The backers of the Congress included a large number of screenwriters, humorists, and others who worked in the field of popular culture and whose standing in any intellectual community would have been of lesser rank than those who had been members of the left-wing movement of the early thirties.
The intellectual height of the Third Congress came with the speech of Dorothy Parker, the humorist, who declared, "The day of the individual is dead... there is no longer 'I', there is 'we'.... You know the mighty words of Joe Hill: 'Don't Moan, Organize.'"

Thomas Mann was the honorary president of this congress, Donald O. Stewart continued as president, and Van Wyck Brooks, Louis Bromfield, Malcolm Cowley, Langston Hughes, Ernest Hemingway, Vincent Sheean, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, George Seldes, Upton Sinclair, and John Steinbeck were the vice-presidents. Others present included Ellen Brant, Newton Arvin, Sidney Burnshaw, Kenneth Burke, Erskine Caldwell, Lester Cohen, Henry Pratt Fairchild, Kenneath Fearing, Mauritz Hallgreen, Lillian Hellman, Alfred Kreymborg, Jesse Lasky, Jr., John Howard Lawson, Meyer Levin, Alain Locke, Helen Lynd, Albert Märtz, Ruth McKenney, Carey McWilliams, Harvey O'Connor, S.J. Perlman, Samuel Putnam, Irwin Shaw, Vincent Sheean, Genevieve Taggard, James Thurber, Irving Stone, Louis Untermeyer, Carl Van Doren, William C. Williams, Ella Winter and Richard Wright.

188. New Masses (June 27, 1939).
190. Ibid. (May 16, 1939).
In addition to the Writers' Congress, there were Artists' Congresses and the Congress and Festival of American Dance. Participating in the Artists' Congress of February 1936, and December 1937, were such well known American artists as Stuart Davis, Margaret Bourke-White, Rockwell Kent, George Biddle, Max Weber, Ralph Pearson, and Erika Mann.

The left-wing movement also had as one of its parts a student organization—the American Student Union, led by James Wechsler, now editor of the anti-Communist liberal paper, the New York Post (Wechsler admits to having been a member of the Young Communist League at this time), and Joseph Lash, at present a feature writer for the same paper. Regretably an analysis of this group as the American League against War and Fascism would require a full-scale study, and they will have to be disposed of merely in passing.

In the Popular Front period, the Nation and the New Republic continued to be friendly to the Soviet Union, defended the Stalinist trials of the Old Bolsheviks, and became more friendly to the American Communists, although their faith in the Soviet Union was somewhat shattered by the Stalinist trials of the Bolshevik leaders.

The Nation and the New Republic, operating within the tradition, which believed that the more people you have on your side, the
greater the chance of prevailing in a political arena, had throughout the early thirties aimed at getting a wider and wider base for "progressive" politics in the United States. They had constantly advocated a united front of all progressives, even in the early years of the decade when the Communists were pushing the "social-fascist" line and refusing to cooperate with anyone but 191 Communists.

Thus when the Communist Party in 1936 came out with the full grown Popular Front or United Front line, the Nation and the New Republic, already quite used to working with Communists and in supporting the Soviet Union, supported the Popular Front. The Nation believed, or at least stated, that they were not supporting the Communist Party's united front, but that the Communists were supporting their united front. In March 1936, for example, the Nation accepted Browder's support of the United Front.

The liberal-press believed that they could cooperate with the Communists and all others who agreed with them on any specific issue, without becoming tools of the Communists. In a debate between David Scheyer and Heywood Broun in the 191. See pp. 50-52 above.
Nation at the beginning of 1936 over the Popular Front, Brown answered all of Scheyer's doubts about the united front by saying that it seemed simple common sense to him to join with anyone who will join with you on any issue.

Despite the liberal belief in their independence, the Communists were able to gain control over most of the institutions of the Popular Front. The liberals were willing to be the theoreticians and the backers of many groups such as the American League Against War and Fascism, the American Student Union and the League of American Writers, but they left the actual day-by-day operations of these organizations to the Communists. The liberals marveled at the Communists organizing ability. Kenneth Burke, for example, wrote:

"While attempting to enlist cultural allies on the basis of the widest possible latitude, this congress of the first writers' Congress was unquestionably made possible only by the vitality and organizational ability of the Communist Party. As one who is not a member of the Communist Party, and indeed whose theories of propaganda, expressed at one session, even called down upon him the wrath of the Party's most demonic orators, I can state with some claim to impartiality my belief that no other organization in the world could have assembled and carried through a congress of this sort. The results justify the assertion that those who approach the issues of today from the standpoint of cultural survival must have sympathy at least with communism as a historical direction."

The Communists, unlike the liberals, seemed to understand the primary maxim of politics: what really counts is the day-by-day application of 'principles' drawn up by the theoreticians, for any principle can be interpreted in any desired fashion, in order to condone practically any action. The intellectuals were interested in being intellectually impressive; the Communists seemed to be more interested in achieving certain concrete political results that were in line with their own needs.

The Communists were further helped in their fairly successful attempts to gain control over the institutions of the Popular Front by the fact that many liberals believed that one could never attack the Communists in public. Said the Nation in this respect, "...once you begin attacking Communists as such, your next step...is to attack progressives for 'following the line'. The step after that, as the British experience has shown, is to attack all progressives."

The liberals seemed to believe that the Communist Party was no longer under the control of the Communist International. Joint activity with the Communists was palatable to the non-Communist liberals, by the careful building up of the myth that there was little difference between the aims of the New Deal and the real aims of the Communists. Said the New Republic of the Communist Party, "It appears to be roughly as far to the left as the Roosevelt wing of the Democrats". The New Republic could not believe that there was anything Machiavellian about the Communist Party's espousal of the "Democratic Front" in 1938. In great glee, the New Republic attacked Max Eastman who did not trust the Communists. They chortled:

"On its face, then, the Communist Party seems a good deal less revolutionary than the socialists whom it was calling, four years ago, "Social Fascist". It appears to be as far to the left as the Roosevelt wing of the Democrats."

"...it would be well to remember that a sinister

195. The Nation (February 12, 1938), 171.
196. The New Republic (June 15, 1938), 144-45.
197. See above pp. 79-85.
198. The New Republic (June 15, 1938), 144-45.
ulterior purpose that remains hidden away in a dark closet in reasonably sure in the course of time to wither away and die of neglect."

"In instance after instance they[the Communists] have fought and are fighting for civil liberties, for union principles, for social legislation. It would be ridiculous for others to abandon their beliefs simply because these are supported by Communists, when the Communists come to the aid of what we regard as a worthy cause, we propose to welcome their help as we would that of anyone else. If they advocate what we consider wrong, we shall attack them as we would anyone else. We do not believe American democracy is endangered by the use of such tactics on either side."

However, the Nation did not trust the Communists as much as did the editors of the New Republic. They wrote on the "Americanization" of the Party:

"It would be presumptuous for us to pass on the motivations of the party in its present approach, but because that approach involves the co-operation of all progressive forces, it is not amiss to comment on the strategy involved. It is definitely a foolish strategy because it is too clumsy to be taken seriously and too devious to be practiced wholeheartedly. The party's protestations that it has always been in the main stream of the American democratic traditions have ex post facto order; the Roosevelt's, LaGuardias, and even the sacred Farmer-Laborites might well ask with the poet: 'Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love, but did you kick me downstairs?'

The People's Front in the United States received its kickoff at the Third Congress of the Communist dominated American League Against War And Fascism held in Cleveland in the first days of 1936. The two main speakers were..."
Harold Burton, then Mayor of Cleveland, and now a conservative member of the United States Supreme Court, and Earl Browder, the executive secretary of the Communist Party.

The New Republic supported the aims of the group. Of its aims they commented:

"They recognized war and fascism as twin evils stemming from a common root, capitalism. In realistic fashion, therefore, their program places small faith in the ability of capitalism or capitalistic governments to prevent war. It calls, instead, for the building of a powerful body, not unlike the People's Front in France, alert and ready to resist the forces of militarism and reaction wherever they show."

The Nation also supported the League against all comers. The New Republic and the Nation, with the exception of the publisher of the latter, Oswald Garrison Villard, both supported the collective security principle, the leading principle of the Popular Front. Wrote the Nation in regards to neutrality as the way to peace, "Neutrality is frequently regarded as a means of preventing war. This gives it its popular appeal. A simple common-sense analysis, however, must show that neutrality leads to war."

The Popular Front is in position in effect believed in

200. The New Republic (January 22, 1936), 311.
201. The Nation (January 22, 1936), 87.
202. The Nation (February 2, 1936), 127.
203. The Nation (February 20, 1937), 200.
a crusade against fascism, if need be one that might easily lead to open war—"diplomacy carried on by other means."

The supporters of this position believed in active intervention of a combine of states against Germany, willing in their diplomatic actions to take the risk of war. They were not desirous of war, but they were willing to take risks in order to stop fascism.

Many of the proponents of the neutrality position were equally anti-fascist but they were unwilling to further endanger American democracy, which they believed already weakened by the first world war and the depression. Charles Beard, the great democratic historian, an advocate of neutrality, summed up the position quite well. "We tried," he said, "once to right European wrongs, to make the world safe for democracy. And even in the rosiest view the experiment was not a great success. Mandatory neutrality may be no better, for aught anyone actually knows. But we nearly burnt our house down with one experiment; so it seems not wholly irrational to try another line." 204

The magazine Common Sense could not make up its mind as to its position. Usually opposed to the collective security principle, and the popular front, occasionally they moved temporarily in the other direction. However, they usually took the position taken by John Dos Passos in his article "Farewell to Europe!". Wrote the magazine of Dos Passos:^205^ article:

205. John Dos Passos, "Farewell to Europe!" in Common Sense (July 1937), 9-11.
"Mr. Dos Passos ..." as just returned from Spain, France, and England. His reactions coming home from Europe are those of an acute pragmatic American. For all the heroism he saw in Loyalist Spain and the sympathy he felt for those in the democratic countries who really believe in democracy, his pessimism over Europe's future is profound. By contrast his optimism about America's destiny, if this country can avoid the toils that have gripped Europe, is equally great. He strikingly corroborates the view of those who feel that at all costs America must not be embroiled in another war 'to save democracy.'" 206

After the overwhelming victory of the New Deal at the polls in 1936 indicating its strength among organized labor, and after Roosevelt's "Quarantine the Agressors" speech in Chicago in October 1937, both the New Republic and the Nation came out in favor of the New Deal. The Communist Party also backed the Roosevelt government after this. Common Sense reluctantly gave a grudging support to the New Deal, but still looked forward to the creation of a farmer-labor party.

However, Max Lerner, one of the editors of the Nation, at this time, and an ardent Popular Fronter, immediately after the 1936 election warned progressives not to tie permanently to the Democratic Party. The progressives, according to Lerner, had backed Roosevelt only to stave off reaction and buy time. They should go along with Roosevelt only temporarily until they could gather the strength to build a labor party.

By 1938, however, the 'liberals' and 'progressives' were wholeheartedly backing the New Deal.

206. The editors of Common Sense commenting on John Dos Passos, "Farewell to Europe!" in Common Sense (July 1937), 9-11.
207. See above pp. 79-81.
208. Max Lerner in the Nation (October 24, 1936 and November 14, 1936), 469-472 and 569-570.
The liberal-Stalinoid amalgam was hard hit by the Moscow trials of the old Bolsheviks. After the first trials of Zinoviev and another leading Bolshevik, Kamenev, the New Republic stated that it was somewhat disturbed by the trials, but that it still believed that the defendants were guilty.

After the second series of trials in 1937, a New Republic correspondent believed that the trials had met "with the unquestioning approval of a vast majority of the population. The trials and arrests definitely strengthened the Soviet Union...."

Still trying to rationalize the trials away, the Nation regretted that they had to happen, but believed that at worst they were the dying throes of the old dictatorship and that a new democratic society was about to be born. However, they felt that the trials and executions had "provided a field day for the enemies of Moscow at a time when Soviet policy in Europe needs all the friends it can find."

In February 1937, the Nation came out even more strongly against the implications of the trials, although they still accepted the guilt of the accused. Their analysis indicated to them that the defendants were guilty, but that the situation was initially caused by the lack of political democracy in the Soviet Union. However, they looked forward to the near future when the Soviet State could afford the luxury of political freedom. They wrote:

209. The New Republic (August 26, 1936), 89.
211. The Nation (August 22, 1937), 201 and (June 19, 1937), 691.
212. The Nation (February 8, 1937), 145.
"The plain fact is that under a proletarian dictatorship men who differ fundamentally from the government cannot express their differences through political action. When a regime makes opposition illegal it sows the seeds of conspiracy; the inevitable result is the growth of plots which find their sequel in ruthless repression and in trials like the one just concluded. This circle can probably be broken only when stability—domestic and international—has existed long enough to allow the realization of the democratic aims embodied in the new Soviet constitution, and by further additions of democratic procedures in even larger doses in the future. Ultimately in a proletarian dictatorship, as distinguished from a fascist state, no ruling group can remain in power unless it uses its energy and strength for purposes of which the working-class approves. That must be the final test of the Soviet system. Meanwhile the sympathetic outside observer must offer the Russian government a measure of that criticism which a legal opposition provides the government of a democracy. He must point out the dangers inherent in a privileged dictatorship, while refusing to use the trial as the enemies of the Soviet Union are using it—as a curtain which they draw down upon Russia's positive achievements, in building a collective economy and culture."

The trials led to a confusion in regards to the Soviet Union, and a questioning of the basic assumptions of the Soviet political system. The New Republic sadly acknowledged that "the trials have disrupted and disheartened the movements on the left; but more than that, they have sent a chill over suggestion of faith in, and cooperation with, the Stalin regime." The Nation wrote:

"Out of the anxiety and shock of the present trial will come, we believe, a new determination on the part of political thinkers to examine the premises of revolutionary doctrine. The Russian dictatorship has challenged the whole theory of dictatorship and demands an honest revaluation of its own history and achievement.

"What remains? One hears no rumors of internal unrest in the Soviet Union, despite the political cannibalism of its ruling group. The solid material achievements of the revolution still stand. So do the need and desire of the Soviet government for peace, and its opposition to fascist aggression, East and West."

While the liberal-press was shocked and discouraged by the full impact of the trials, they still looked to the industrial achievements of the Soviet Union and its supposed anti-fascist leadership in an attempt to justify continued support of the Communist regime. The faith in the Communist experiment which had been built up for more than a decade, was to die hard. It took a demonstration of the Soviet's failure to be the anti-fascist leader to kill the liberals' faith in the Soviet Union.

The liberals had to resort to an artificial separation of democracy in order to defend the Soviet Union. Many liberals argued that the Soviet Union had economic democracy, the United States had political democracy, and the two nations would eventually learn from each other, the Soviet Union accepting political democracy, the United States, economic democracy.

The direction in which the Soviet Union was moving was all-important. "...it is the direction that counts, and there can be no doubt that the direction in which the Soviets are traveling is diametrically opposite to that taken by the fascist countries, or that the speed of development has accelerated in the past five years." 215

The trials and the entire relationship of the liberal-center to the Soviet Union created a deep gash in the American liberal-center-radical amalgam. On one side were those who supported, in many cases with reservations and doubts, the Soviet Union; on the other side, were those who were equally opposed to both Stalinism and fascism. In 1938 and 1939 this led to a battle of declarations, statements, and manifestos. The pro-Soviet intellectuals declared on May 7, 1938:

"American liberals must not permit their outlook ... to be confused by the Moscow trials/.... We call upon them to support the efforts of the Soviet Union to free itself from insidious internal dangers, and to rally support for the international fight against fascism—the principle menace to peace and democracy."


216. The New Masses (May 3, 1938), 19.
Two groups were formed to oppose the Stalinist cultural front. The largest of the two was the Committee for Cultural Freedom, which included John Dewey as its chairman, Norman Thomas as vice-chairman, and John Chamberlain, Sidney Hook, Lillian Symes, and other contributors to Common Sense, the Modern Monthly and Partisan Review. The group opposed the Communist Party and deplored the lack of civil liberties in the Soviet Union; consequently, they called for a clear differentiation on the left between Stalinists and anti-Stalinists.

Freda Kirchway, the editor of the Nation, answered this group which had called for "clearest differentiation on the left."

217 Miss Kirchway wrote:

"The Communist Party is a nuisance and menace to all its opponents. Whatever its line may be, its tactics are invariably provocative and often destructive. Not only do Communists try to inject partisan ideas into the program of most organizations in which they are active; not only do they fight ruthlessly and tenaciously to make these ideas prevail; they also have been guilty, in many known instances, of using against their enemies methods of attack that were both unscrupulous and callous. Their verbal technique is evident in the pages of the party press; vituperation and downright slander have been weapons frequently employed, whether against the "social fascists" of yesteryear or the "Trotskyites" of today. The result has been to create a bitterness in the left which can be drawn upon whenever a convenient occasion arises."

"It can be drawn upon, but it should not be. To advocate a policy of "clearest differentiation" on the left is a council of disruption. With all their faults the Communists perform necessary functions in the confused struggles of our time. They have helped to build up and to run a string of organizations known as "fronts" by their opponents—which clearly serve the cause not of totalitarian doctrine but of a more workable democracy. And the value of these organizations lies largely on the energy and discipline and zeal of their Communist elements."

The liberals still believed that the Communists were essential to the fight against fascism. It might be suggested that the fear that "liberal" organizations would fall apart without the work of the Communists, which may well have been true, was a sorry comment on the state of American liberalism.

A second group to appear was the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism. This group consisted of Trotskyites, Lovestonites, Socialists, and those independent leftists who wrote for Partisan Review and the Modern Monthly. They advocated a "third camp" position which would be independent of both Stalinism and fascism. They declared of the Stalinists and those liberals who were still sympathetic to the Soviet Union:

"Cultural circles, formerly progressive, are now capitulating to the spirit of fascism while ostensibly combating its letter. They fight one falsehood with another. To the deification of Hitler and Mussolini they counterpose the deification of Stalin, the unqualified support of Roosevelt."

"...in the name of a spurious anti-fascist unity, numerous intellectuals are destroying their hard-won critical independence. They are giving up their opposition to capitalist exploitation and oppression, to imperialist domination of colonial lands... In the name of a "democratic front" against tyranny abroad they put up with increasing tyranny at home."

This letter was signed by: James Burnham, V. F. Calverton, Eleanor Clark, Fred Dupee, James Farrell, Clement Greenberg, Melvin Lasky, Dwight Macdonald, Charles Malamuth, Sherry Mangan, Clark Mills, George L. K. Morris, George Novack, Kenneth Patchen, William Phillips, Philip Rahv, James Rorty, Harold Rosenberg, Paul Rosenfeld, Meyer Schapiro, ZIB. League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism; Letter to the Nation, in the Nation (July 15, 1939), 83-84.
Delmore Schwartz, Winfield T. Scott, John Wheelwright, and Bertram Wolfe.

As late as August 26, 1939, a letter appeared in the Nation attacking the Committee for Cultural Freedom and defending the Soviet Union, which said in part, "...Soviet aims and achievements make it clear that there exists a sound and permanent basis in mutual ideals for cooperation between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R...." This letter was written on August 10 and was printed before the news of the Hitler-Stalin pact was made public. It was signed by Marc Blitzstein, Millen Brand, Robert Brady, Robert Coates, Ken:net Fearing, Irving Fineman, Waldo Frank, Wanda Gag, George S. Kaufman, Rockwell Kent, Matthew Josephson, Granville Hicks, Corliss Lamont, Alfred Loomis, Max Lerner, R.M. Lovett, Clifford Odets, S.J. Perlman, I.F. Stone, James Thurber, William Carlos Williams, and Harry Ward, among others.

One week later, after the Hitler-Stalin pact had been signed, the Nation angrily commented:

"Last week we printed a letter signed by 400 persons sympathetic to the Soviet regime, attacking the Committee for Cultural Freedom, and denouncing as "fascists and their allies" the persons who organized that group and drew up its manifesto...."

"Even when it was received it seemed uncritical; today we wonder how many of the 400 would have signed could they have foreseen what was to come."

After a decade which had ended in tragedy, Miss Kirchway could only lamely reply to the question of why the Nation had never clearly been anti-Stalinist, "we agreed with Stalin in other words, as long as he agreed with us. When he shifted sides, we stayed put."

219. The Nation (August 26, 1939), 228.
220. The Nation (September 2, 1939), 231.
221. The Nation (September 30, 1939), 359.
The decade came to its conclusion with the Hitler-Stalin pact on August 21, 1939, and the simultaneous invasion of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union on September 1, 1939. In the next few months, after some time for consideration, most of the intellectuals who had been near to the Stalinists, left the Stalinist movement for good. A decade had come to an end—the next years were to witness the attempt to pick up the pieces.
September 1, 1939

--W.H. Auden

I sit in one of the dives
On Fifty-second Street
Uncertain and afraid
As the clever hopes expire
Of a low dishonest decade:
Waves of anger and fear
Circulate over the bright
And darkened lands of the earth,
Obsessing our private lives;
The unmentionable odour of death
Offends the September night.

Accurate scholarship can
Unearth the whole offence
From Luther until now
That has driven a culture mad,
What huge imago made
A psychopathic god:
I and the public know
What all schoolchildren learn,
Those to whom evil is done
Do evil in return.

Exiled Thucydides knew
All that a speech can say
About Democracy,
And what dictators do,
The elderly rubbish they talk
To an apathetic grave;
Analysed all in his book,
The enlightenment driven away,
The habit-forming pain,
Mismanagement and grief:
We must suffer them all again.

Into this neutral air
Where blind skyscrapers use
Their full height to proclaim
The strength of Collective Man,
Each language pours its vain
Competitive excuse;
But who can live for long
In an euphoric dream;
Out of the mirror they state,
Imperialism's face
And the international wrong.
Faces along the bar
Cling to their average day:
The lights must never go out,
The music must always play,
All the conventions conspire
To make this fort assume
The furniture of home;
Lest we should see where we are,
Lest in a haunted wood,
Children afraid of the night
Who have never been happy or good.

The windiest militant trash
Important Persons shout
Is not so crude as our wish;
What mad Nijinsky wrote
About Diaghilev
Is ture of the normal heart;
For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone.

From the conservative dark
Into the ethical life
The dense commuters come,
Repeating thei morning vow;
I will be true to the wife,
I'll concentrate more on my work,"
And helpless governors wake
To resume their compulsory game;
Who can release them now,
Who can reach the deaf,
Who can speak for the dumb?

Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Iranic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleagured by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.
THE AFTERTHATH OF THE THIRTIES

In the thirties with its depression, strikes, fascism, and threat of war, paradoxically, a new optimism and faith in human rationality prevailed intellectual life. The brave new world was 'a comin' and the intellectuals were to be the vanguard of the movement. Important sectors of the intellectual population participated heavily in political life—many of them as the "bright young men" of the New Deal, others in various Stalinist and other Marxist organizations or "fronts".

This experience provided a political education for those who shared in it, and no matter in which direction they went thereafter, their political experiences of the thirties were crucial.

Perhaps the one significant political movement of the forties and the early fifties has been anti-Stalinism. Under the pressure of the cold-war, widespread attacks upon the Stalinists and the "fellow-travelers" have taken place. They have been subjected to both verbal attack and governmental persecution. Anti-Stalinism colors and pervades the entire political life of the United States. It is the one stable point of reference, the common denominator that links all political groups.

The most significant aspect of this anti-Stalinist movement is that it has been able to recruit large numbers of former Marxist-intellectuals to the leadership of the cause.
(This does not mean to imply that many of these ex-Communists have become the camp-followers of the extreme form of anti-Stalinism that has come to be linked with the personage of Senator McCarthy of Wisconsin. Most of the former Marxists have also attacked "McCarthyism" as well as Communism.)

The leading anti-Stalinist magazine is *Plain Talk*, published by Alfred Kohlberg, a New York importer of Chinese textiles, and a supporter of Senator McCarthy. *Plain Talk* has succeeded in recruiting a number of former Marxists as contributors, including Victor Serge, a former Russian Bolshevik leader, Max Eastman, Ruth Fischer, the former head of the German Communist Party, and Freda Utley, a former British Communist.

Most anti-Stalinist intellectuals however have stayed clear of *Plain Talk*. They have found their outlets in the *New Leader*, in *Commentary*, and the *Partisan Review*. An examination of the files of the *New Leader*, *Commentary*, and the *Partisan Review* from 1940 to the present will indicate the general nature of the political position of those former-Marxists who still maintain some degree of political activity.

The *New Leader*, formerly the organ of the Socialist Party, then of its splinter group, the Social-Democratic Federation, and now an independent magazine supported by the former members of the Social-Democratic Federation, has now become largely a magazine devoted to anti-Stalinism.

1. See the files of *Plain Talk*, 1947-51.
In the first part of the nineteen-forties, the New Leader maintained an interest in other matters than Stalinism, concerning itself primarily with support of the war against fascism. However, even in this period it made itself a center of anti-Stalinist activity, determined to root out Stalinist influence wherever it seemed to exist. While reluctantly accepting the fact that Russia was in the war against Germany, the New Leader opposed any tendency to whitewash Russia "for the sake of the war-effort". For example, in the period from 1942 to 1946 the New Leader campaigned against what it called the pro-Soviet position of the Nation, the New Republic, the Atlantic Monthly, and the newspaper PM. They referred to PM as the uptown edition of the Daily Worker, accused the Nation, the New Republic, and the Atlantic Monthly of refusing to print public criticism of the Soviet Union, and condemned the film version of Ambassador Davies' Mission to Moscow as a whitewash of the Moscow trials of 1936.

In addition, the weekly still carried a great deal of news on the labor movement, legislation, and racial and religious discrimination, and was not solely devoted to anti-Stalinism.

In the latter part of the forties and in the early fifties, the New Leader devoted most of its attention to Stalinism. For example, in the New Leader for January 1, 1951, of the thirteen articles in the magazine other than book, stage and concert

2. See the New Leader for May 28, 1943, March 2, 1946, and January 16, 1945, in particular.
reviews, all but one, dealt with Stalinism and with Russia.

This anti-Stalinist line is neither unusual nor surprising in the present era. What is important is that almost all of the writers for the New Leader were formerly socialists and Marxists. In the past six years, such former Stalinists as Granville Hicks, Louis Core, Charles Yale Harrison, and John Dos Passos have written for the magazine. Many who had traveled the route from being fellow-travelers of the Communist Party, to being Trotskyites or on the Trotskyite fringe, to complete disillusionment, such as James Farrell, James Burnham, Max Eastman, Sidney Hook, Dwight Macdonald, William Phillips, Philip Rahv and others, were frequent contributors. Former Lovestonites such as Bertram Wolfe, Will Herberg, and Ben Oitlaw, have written for it. Former fellow-travelers and independent leftists such as Van Wyck Brooks, John Dos Passos, Waldo Frank, and James Rorty wrote pieces for the New Leaders. Most of the articles written by this group were on Marxism, the Soviet Union, Stalinism.

Commentary is an independent magazine and an important one for our survey. It was first published in 1946 by the American Jewish Committee "to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues." It was to be neither pro-Zionist or anti-Zionist, nor was it to be a magazine with a specific religious orientation.

This broad outlook provided the opportunity to create a
magazine whose interests were wide and not specifically confined to subjects of specifically Jewish interest. The works of many young authors and poets, many of them Jewish, have been published in Commentary, in addition to many articles devoted to matters of general cultural and political interest. This magazine would have no importance for this work if it weren't for the fact that it has recruited the work of many Jewish intellectuals who had been active in the Marxist movement in the thirties, and has published the work of non-Jewish ex-Marxists on Stalinism.

The editor of the magazine is Elliot Cohen. Cohen in the early thirties revolved around the New Masses, but by 1934, he had become openly critical of the Communist Party and within a few years was revolving in the wider periphery of the intellectual Trotskyite fringe.

The managing editor is Irving Kristol who under the name of Jule Ferry has moved in left-wing circles for many years. In the late thirties he was in the Trotskyist movement. In 1944 we find him as an editor of Enquiry, a small left wing, anti-Stalinist, non-Trotskyist magazine—one of the efforts of the former Marxists to find a new base for their political action.

Clement Greenberg, one of the associate editors, was one of the editors of Partisan Review—another one of the Trotskyite fringe. He and Dwight MacDonald were the left-wing of the editorial board of Partisan Review. In the summer of 1941 they were the co-authors of an article entitled "Ten Propositions on the War", which were a slight variation on the anti-war, revolutionary socialist position of the Socialist 4, New Masses, March 6, 1934.
faction of the Trotskyist movement. (At the time, Macdonald
was the leader of one group within the Shachtanite movement.)

Thus *Commentary* in its personal has direct roots in the
Marxist movement of the thirties. The editors have made
*Commentary* into a vehicle for anti-Stalinist literature,
of a much more sophisticated and realistic variety than that
published in *Plain Talk*. They have published articles by
such ex-Marxists or fellow travelers as Waldo Frank, Granville
Hicks, William Barrett, Louis Corey, Arthur Koestler, Will
Herberg, Bertram Wolfe, and Lionel Trilling on the general subject of the Marxist
movement in the thirties. They have recently openly dedicated
themselves to an open war with Stalinism. In the March 1952
issue of the magazine, four articles were printed on Stalinism.
One dealt with the Katyn Massacre, the execution of thousands
of Polish Army officers, which the author claimed was done
by the Russians, although the Russians claim it was the work
of the Germans. The second article by a former Polish
socialist leader is a discussion of the new managerial elite
in the Soviet Union and attempts to disprove the theory
that Soviet imperialism is merely an extension of Czarist
expansionism. The third article by Lionel Trilling is
a brilliant portrait of George Orwell, who saw sooner than
the majority the totalitarianism of Stalinism, but who
nevertheless found himself able to continue as a socialist.

The fourth article, which has aroused considerable controversy

---

5. *Partisan Review*, VII (July-August 1941), 278.
6. Trilling, while never a Stalinist, is one of the best liberal
   critics of Stalinism.
in concerning ourselves with the civil-liberties of Stalinists and that we can safely curtail the civil-liberties of Stalinists without damaging American democracy.

*Partisan Review* is the most important of the magazines under consideration, of course. It is one of the most important avant-garde literary magazines in the United States, whose appeal is directed to the most sensitive sector of the intelligentsia. It is the little-magazine, the magazine of the serious literary intellectual. It, in its history, fully displays the dilemma of the left-wing intellectual who has gone from Stalinism to anti-Stalinism to the total-avoidance-of-politics-when-possible position.

In the nineteen-thirties it was one of the primary literary and intellectual Marxist organs. Until 1936 it was committed to the political position of the Communist Party and devoted much space to the development of the Stalinist theory of proletarian literature. At the beginning of 1937 it suspended publication and did not reappear until the end of the year. By this time its editors, most of whom are still with the magazine in 1952, had become anti-Stalinist and pro-Trotskyist. In the years between 1939 and 1943, the magazine gradually moved away from Marxism, and when Dwight Macdonald left the editorial board in 1943, the last Marxist influence on *Partisan Review* was gone.

In the years between 1943 and 1948, *Partisan Review* published a large number of articles which seriously considered the problems of socialism and which attempted to reevaluate Socialist goals and means in light of the experience of the thirties.

The important thing to notice in this period is the attempt of the *Partisan Review* contributors, although greatly disillusioned and embittered, to find meaning in their experiences and for a continued existence as politicalized intellectuals. They tried to make sense out of their past experience and to find a way to go on from where they were.

By 1946, anti-Stalinism, of the kind we saw with *Commentary* began to replace discussions of the Future of Socialism. By 1946, most of the contributors to *Partisan Review*, while still vaguely socialists, had completely finished the process of abandoning the optimistic, rationalist faith of Marxism, were tired of reevaluating their experiences of the thirties, and had come under the influence of the pessimistic, non-rationalistic philosophy of Existentialism. Within the pages of *Partisan Review* the works of Kafka, Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Camus took the place of the discussions of Leninist theory.

Not only must we look at some of the major organs of the intellectual expression of the former Marxist intellectuals, but we must also look at a select group of these intellectuals, individually.
Philip Rahv wrote of this group of ex-Marxists, "...the writers who broke with Communism do not all form a group with a unified outlook or program. Some, like Gide, and Edmund Wilson, to a lesser extent have apparently set aside political interests and returned to the old-style literary life; Malraux and Burnham have gone in for Realpolitik with a vengenance; others, like Silone, Koestler, Orwell, Farrell, and Hook, retain though each in his own distinct way a basic hope of Socialism, while a few have adopted an anarcho-utopian position consoling in its purity but devoid of historical actuality. John Dos Passos' disillusionment has carried him beyond radicalism to the other side...."

John Dos Passos, while never a member of the Communist Party or any of the splinter groups, was one of the first American intellectuals to go left. Out of the cynical, anti-bourgeois "lost generation" of the twenties, Dos Passos came to hold an active leftwing political position. From 1928 to 1934, he wrote practically an article per issue for the "New Masses. He turned his brilliant reporting skill—it has been often said that Dos Passos was a journalist rather than a novelist—to the use of the "revolutionary movement," dealing with strikes, union meetings, and lynchings with great precision and feeling.

He gradually became disillusioned with the Communist Party and after a brief period in the late-thirties where he thought of himself as an independent leftist, with anarchist leanings, he turned bitterly to the right, condemning the communists, the socialists, II. Philip Rahv in the Partisan Review, XV (May 1948), 520.
and the New Dealers as being all dangerous to the freedom of the individual. Dos Passos wrote, "Both Socialism and Communism as they actually work out, betray the hopes for the better life they once inspired and the New Deal achieved nothing better. His political ideal—he is still against "the too great concentration of power that is the curse of capitalism"—seems to be in a small, middle-class community, where power is decentralized and the maximum of self-government is provided. All bureaucratic controls or federal governmental power defeats this goal. Dos Passos has adopted the ideology of the small-businessmen, opposed to bureaucracy and the "boys in Washington", and in fact has become a supporter of the small-business elements within the Republican Party.

James Burnham in the United States, and André Malraux in France, represent that group of ex-Marxists who today advocate a consistent, hard, day-by-day active fight against Stalinism. They have moved logically from the Marxist system and have ended up on what might be termed the Realistic Right. Malraux has become an active supporter of Charles de Gaulle and Burnham has become an advocate of Henry Luce's "American Century" idea.

Burnham, a professor of philosophy at New York University, was long active in the Marxist movement. In the early thirties, he edited a left-wing literary magazine called *Symposium* and was a contributor to the *New Masses*. With the Moscow Trials

13. Ibid., 108.
Burnham broke completely with the Stalinists and moved into the Trotskyite camp, where he soon became one of the editors of the New International and one of the leading Trotskyites. In 1939 and 1940, Burnham broke with Leon Trotsky over the issue of the Soviet Union. Trotsky maintained up until his death that Russia was a degenerate workers' state in which a counter-revolution had occurred, but which, because of the existence of nationalized property, was superior to a capitalist state. Burnham and Max Shachtman, one of the three founders of the American Trotskyite movement, led a faction which disagreed with Trotsky's analysis and declared that the Soviet Union was not in any way a workers' state. Rather, they contended, a new class society, which they called bureaucratic collectivism, had been created by the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia. If this was so, Shachtman, Burnham and company declared, then the traditional Trotskyist slogan of "defend the Soviet Union from attacks from without and overthrow the Stalinists from within" was no longer valid. Stalinism and capitalism were equally non-socialistic and both must be equally opposed. This debate led to the first split within the Trotskyist movement of major consequence, the Shachtman-Burnham group leaving the Socialist Workers' Party and forming the Workers' Party.

Within two months of the SWP-WP split in 1940, Burnham had left the party he had helped form. Several months later the advance notices of Burnham's new book came out. In this
book, *The Managerial Revolution*, Burnham generalized this theory of bureaucratic collectivism to include all the countries of the Western World. In a general theory of society, Burnham claimed that capitalism was being replaced by bureaucratic collectivism, the rule of the managers envisioned by the Technocrats, rather than by socialism.

Burnham eventually largely abandoned this position, though the basic underlying political philosophy of *Realpolitik* remained constant in his latter work. His next book, *The Machiavellians*, developed the thesis that only those theoreticians who had an amoral attitude towards society and who had recognized power and were willing to use it, had been able to function successfully in a political fashion.

Burnham applied this principle to the current world situation in *The Struggle for the World* and *The Coming Defeat of Communism*. Western civilization, according to Burnham, is in a crisis only equal to that of the time of the fall of the Roman Empire. "We are," he wrote, "historically in an extreme situation. It requires a novel and extreme solution."

This solution, according to Burnham, is the complete dominance of the world by the United States—the "Pax Americana". Burnham called for the complete offensive against Stalinism at every point. Thus, he demands the suppression of the Communist Parties of all the North Atlantic Treaty countries, the use of mass propaganda techniques against Stalinism, the support of anti-Stalinist emigré governments of all the

---

countries within the Soviet sphere, rather than the de facto governments of those countries, the suppression of Stalinist advance wherever it appears, and the alliance of all anti-Stalinist forces under the hegemony of the United States. Thus Burnham has gone from the support of the universal socialist-revolution to support of the "Pax Americana".

Many of the former Marxists have not fully turned their backs on socialism as did Burnham and Dos Passos. While differing among themselves such men as Sidney Hook, Philip Rahv, Granville Hicks, Waldo Frank and Lewis Corey have worked out a number of fundamental, common attitudes towards socialism. In the first place, they all agree on the need to rehabilitate morality in left-wing political thinking. For example, Granville Hicks wrote, "The rehabilitation of morality might begin with self-analysis. That is, the individual leftist might state his ideas of the good society as explicitly, as he can, and then try to discover whence they derive." Here, Hicks frankly advocated the setting up of ideal goals for a socialist society in advance of the triumph of socialism.

In the second place, socialism must give up the historic tradition of inevitability, which stemmed from the rigid application of Marxism, with its belief in a scientific predictability of the future course of society. Ignazio Silone, the Italian author and former Communist leader, at present the leader of one of the factions of Italian socialism, summed up the thought of many former Marxists when he stated, "I do not conceive Socialist policy as tied to any particular theory, but to a faith. The more Socialist theories claim to be 'scientific', the more transitory they are; but Socialist values are permanent. The distinction between theories and values is not sufficiently recognized, but it is fundamental. On a group of theories one can found a school; but on a group of values one can found a culture, civilization, a new way of living together among men."

In the third instance, this group abandoned the entire Leninist–Bolshevik tradition. Socialism needs the fullest and most complete democracy within which to survive. Sidney Hook has summed up the position of this group on democracy. Hook wrote, "The day-by-day struggle for human decency, and a better social-order, within the maximum of democratic rights, seems to me to be more important than the 'ultimate' victory of the total program."

In the fourth place, this group abandoned absolute collectivism and nationalization. Not only is the classless society impossible, it is also undesirable, for the attempt to create such a society has led to totalitarianism. What must be

is a mild, middle-of-the-road socialism. Only certain areas of the economy are to be socialized and even these areas are to be controlled in such a way so that the absolute centralization of power is avoided. This type of socialism is not to be based on the working-class alone but on an alliance of the working-class, the farmer, the small businessman and the professionals. Hook wrote, "It was a mistake to conceive of a socialist economy as controlled and planned in its entirety. There is good reason now to believe that some form of mixed economy can more reliably be a source of the goals of democracy without the inefficiency, bureaucracy, and evasion of responsibility that seems attendant upon a completely planned system of production."  

Lewis Corey, former Communist Party leader and an important figure on the American left for many years is one of the most important spokesmen for the group. He summed up the major tenents of what he called Liberal Socialism as," Public enterprise in the area of monopoly large scale industry including public utilities. Private and cooperative enterprise in the areas of small and medium business, with agriculture exclusively in this category as well as the 'opinion' industries (publishing, newspapers, radio). Free unions, in all economic areas."

The break with Marxism took many forms. Of the most interesting—and in many ways most significant for the future of American radicalism—is that typified by Inquirey Magazine and by Dwight Macdonald's personal organ, Politics.

This we may call the moral-radical left. It has retreated from political realism to moral utopianism, a characteristic which Macdonald admits sums up the position.

The moral radical-left found itself disillusioned with Bolshevism. Lenin's theories provided insight into political events, but Bolshevik organization and tactics did not lead to the classless society, according to the members of the moral-left, but to a new form of barbarism—Stalinism. The old answers did not seem satisfactory; therefore, new ones had to be found.

Enquiry first appeared in November 1942. All the contributors were concerned, above all, with the problem of socialism and morality. If socialism was not inevitable, then the moral correctness of the position now became important. Socialism had to be bedecked with a firm moral foundation.

The first problem was the continuance of democracy. In the first issue, the editors of Enquiry outlined the outlook of the magazine. "Our orientation", they wrote, "couples a revolutionary outlook with a thoroughgoing concern for the maintenance and extension of the procedures and institutions of democracy." Therefore, Bolshevism had to be abandoned, even if it were the most likely road to power.

The Enquiry group, therefore, began to believe that the pattern of social change was moving against them. Socialized collectivism was going to lead to totalitarianism, not to the maximum of democracy. Thus socialism and power seemed to be not the same, but opposed concepts. The socialist, therefore, must give up believing in socialism as inevitable, and most believe in it for its own sake, as a moral man. No other alternative was possible if the triumph of socialism was as seriously questioned as the Enquiry radicals were doing. Philip Selznick simply stated the problem when he wrote in Enquiry, "One of the gravest problems of modern idealism will be that of winning the old ranks away from the idea that only the prospect of political dominance can justify action." Moral man must carry on the struggle even if he knows he is to be defeated.

Dwight Macdonald and Politics magazine moved in the same direction. This venture, initially started by a group of independent Marxists, ended up by being a journal which advocated a quasi-religious anarcho-pacifism. The new line began to appear in 1946 when Macdonald began to publish a series of articles by himself and others entitled "New Roads in Politics". The general tone of all these articles was the same. Bolshevism was rejected. Socialism as a system of beliefs as to the nature of the world was to be abandoned.

21. Philip Selznick had been the leader of one of the factions of the Trotskyite movement under the name of Philip Sherman. He is at present a leading sociologist on the faculty of the University of California and has recently published a work which is supposedly a definitive objective analysis of Bolshevism (The Organizational Weapon, New York, 1952). I feel that this book cannot be considered to be anything more than one man's reactions to his former commitment to Marxism.

Marxism was not any more scientific than any other orthodoxy and must consequently be only carefully utilized. "The rehabilitation of socialism as a moral idea is the only way out of the contemporary confusion among socialists."

The majority of the contributors to the magazine eventually accepted a variety of anarche-pacifism. In the first place, absolute non-violence replaced revolutionary action. Only the non-violent social revolution was desirable. In the second place, all giant, tight-knit, permanent organizations by the nature of their being organizations, were anti-democratic. The radical was to act with his fellows in co-operative activities only in ad hoc bodies set up for specific principles. In the third place, the final triumph of socialism was no longer an issue under consideration. Macdonald took his clue from Leon Trotsky who had written concerning future possible developments, "However onerous the...perspective may be, if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except only to recognize that the socialist PROGRAM based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society ended as a Utopia. It is self-evident that a new minimum program would be required--for the defense of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society."

23. Dwight Macdonald "The Root is Man", Politics, XV (June 1947), 22.
Macdonald argued that Trotsky's prognosis had come true, socialism had ended as a Utopia and all that could be done was to defend the interests of the slaves. The radical must devote himself to small day-by-day events which work towards the alleviation of human misery. Thus, the struggle against racial and religious discrimination, the support of the rights of dissidents, the fight for civil liberties, and the sending of Care packages to the socialist victims of Stalinist terror, and the victims of Francoism, became the significant lines of political action. All talk of the classless society is grandiose nonsense.

If socialists could not change society, Macdonald argued, they could change the individual. Thus, the creation of small, isolated frankly Utopian socialist communities within the structure of capitalist society was advocated in order to save at least a few souls. One section of American socialism had gone the full circle from Owen, Brisbane, and the Utopians of Brook Farm and was frankly back where they had started one hundred or more years ago.

The greatest number of former Marxists, it seems, have deserted politics altogether. It is hard to find any statement of their political beliefs for they have left active politics, usually silently and without recording their departure. Their only political statement is their lack of political activity at present. They concentrate today on
being good teachers, good poets, playwrights, authors, critics, and artists. Only rarely do they perform a political act, such as that of writing a public statement, and when they do so, it is reluctantly—and the act of a non-political person. They are attempting to create private, small worlds of their own out of personal relationships, based on personal values, instead of engaging in public, political activity.

Many of the former Marxists have turned to one variety of religious experience or another, quite often under the impetus of Existentialism or Reinhold Niebuhr, himself a leading socialist in the thirties. For example, Will Herberg, a former leading Communist and Lovestonite, under the direction of Niebuhr’s general theology, has become the leading lay-Jewish theologians. Many of the editors of Partisan Review also have turned to Existentialism or Neo-Orthodoxy.

A few have turned to the Catholic Church for their new line and creed. The outstanding examples have been Louis Budenz, the former editor of the Daily Worker, and Grace Carlson, the former vice-presidential candidate of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers’ Party. A number such as Whitteker Chambers, and if Chambers is honest about his accusation, Alger Hiss, have become practicing members of the Society of Friends.
A few of the generation of the thirties have not left the radical and pseudo-radical movements. A number including W.E.B. DuBois, Fredrick Vanderbilt Field, William Gropper, John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Meridel Le Sueur, Herbert Aptheker, Harry W. Ward, Dirk Struik, Rockwell Kent, Michael Gold, Dashiell Hammett, Michelle Morgan, Alfred Kreymborg, Langston Hughes, Genevieve Taggard, A.B. Magil, Hugo Gellert, Morris Schappes, and Ring Lardner, Junior, continued into the late forties as members of the Communist Party or as active Stalinist fellow-travelers. Theodore Dreiser joined the Communist Party officially in 1947, just prior to his death. A number are still friendly to the minuscule Trotskyist movement. The Socialist Party still finds a few adherents among the intellectuals, but they are as tired as is the Socialist Party.

The most lasting impact, perhaps, that the former Marxists have had on American life is their impact on American liberalism. Those former Marxists who are still active politically have a unique and separate existence within the general sphere of American liberalism. They have returned to liberalism, reluctantly, and still find that political faith incapable, without many modifications, of meeting contemporary problems. This has led to a situation in which those intellectuals who went through the Marxist
movement in the thirties, consider that they are the only ones who fully understand the major political problem of the forties and fifties, Stalinism. Those liberals who never dabbled in Marxism call the former Marxists "hysterical". The former Marxists in turn call the other liberals "unrealistic", "sentimental", and "naive". The split between the two segments of present American liberalism came out clearly in the debate over the Alger Hiss case. All the former Marxists were willing to believe in Hiss' guilt; the other liberals generally doubted it.

NOTE: After the completion of this work, I read a series of articles in the May-June, July-August, September-October issues of Partisan Review for the year 1952 which might have altered some of the emphasis in this chapter. This discovery is one more bit of evidence that few, if any, historical works are definitive. (See "Our Country and Our Culture: a Symposium" in Partisan Review, XIX (May-June, July-August, September-October 1952). The contributors included: Newton Arvin, James Burnham, Reinhold Niebuhr, Philip Rahv, David Riesman, Lionel Trilling, William Barrett, Horace Gregory, Louis Kronenberger, C. Wright Mills, Louise Bogdan, Sidney Hook, Irving Howe, Max Lerner, William Phillips, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and Delmore Schwartz among others.)
CONCLUSIONS

At the end of any large work the author is expected to offer some conclusions on the issues raised and discussed. However, in any such work there are a host of questions raised, most of which must remain at best partially answered. While it would be important to understand the precise reasons for the movement to the left, for example, in the story here unfolded, the data available at the present does not warrant any precise answer. We may, with considerable accuracy, state that the general social-psychological phenomenon that "caused" the movement of large segments of the intellectuals to the left was the almost universal feeling among American intellectuals of alienation from the real power sources of American society, a feeling which began with the rise of industrial capitalism in the United States. Many American intellectuals, in particular in the twentieth century, have felt rejected by American society and in turn have rejected it, looking elsewhere for new sources of inspiration and recreation.  

1. See Chapter II above, 11-14.
In this process of a search for a new ideology, a combination of circumstances led to the adoption for a while by many intellectuals of one variety or another of Marxism or near-Marxism.

While we have been able to indicate the general social-psychological basis for the movement of the American intellectuals to the left, we have been unable to offer much in the way of explaining individual psychological motivations. This is in part due to my belief that individual psychological motivations for the adoption of any particular ideology—such as becoming a Marxist—are probably as numerous and different as are the individuals involved. Individuals perform the same act for a variety of personal and often conflicting psychological reasons in order to fulfill certain individual psychological needs. While Dwight Macdonald, Louis Budenz, Corliss Lamont, and Michael Gold all were affiliated with Marxist movements in the twenties and thirties, their backgrounds and

2. This position is admittedly opposed to that of the authors of a recent important social-psychological work, *The Authoritarian Personality*. My position is partially based on my belief that the only thing the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* proved was that they could not demonstrate that there really was any such syndrome as "the authoritarian personality."
life-histories were as different as could be imagined—Lamont being the son of the J.P. Morgan partner, and Gold being the son of a penniless Jewish immigrant. In a study made for this work of seventy-five of the leading intellectuals that moved to the left, no significant correlations could be found between movement to the left and family background, class status, religious background, educational institutions attended, or any other relevant indices of individual status.

While it might be possible to classify the members of this group under individual psychological headings such as "neurotic", "psychotic", "self-directed", "other-directed", "insecure" and a host of other ill-defined terms, the individual data simply is not available. What would be needed to satisfactorily offer any valid conclusions on this matter, would be a complete set of case-studies made by competent psychologists and psychoanalysts for all of the members of the group under consideration, and, of course, such case-studies do not exist.
Even biographies and autobiographies do not exist in any great number (perhaps ten in all could be located), and to make anything of these works in terms of individual psychological traits would require detailed theoretical psychological knowledge, only possessed by those who are professional psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychanalysts. Thus the task would have to be the joint undertaking of historians and psychologists.

I must further argue that even if all this personal data were available, and there were scholars competent to read such data, I believe the results would probably be inconclusive.

I have rejected an attempt at answering the question as to why the individual intellectual moved to the left, not because of any rationalist bias, but because nothing resembling reasonable data exists. The desire of historians to find out individual motivations is quite admirable. However, many of the attempts to answer such questions have been based on insufficient evidence and display

3. A number of the members of the Harvard University Social Relations Center have been working on the problem of the motivations of Marxists for a number of years. So far they have published nothing on the subject.
insufficient training on the part of the historians. Rather than offering airy generalizations, it might be best for the historian to be honest enough to admit that he does not know the answers to many questions, even such important ones.

We originally set out to answer the question of why socialism has failed in the United States? While, as we have stated at the beginning of the work, this was partially due to the success of the American economic and social system in its own terms, this was far from the complete answer. We must return to the internal workings of the American left-wing in the nineteen-thirties in order to find the other part of the answer to this question.

The thirties witnessed a great increase in left-wing affiliation and interest among American intellectuals. It appeared to many, with great justification, that all intellectual life was determined by its relationship to Marxism and to the Marxist parties.

There were three related factors in addition to the revival of the American economic system, which caused the loss of prestige of socialism among intellectuals in the United States: the Soviet Union, the Stalinist movement, and the Popular
Front. Not only is Stalinism dangerous to capitalism; it is dangerous to socialism as well. Rather than being a socialist philosophy and the Soviet Union being a socialist society, Stalinism is the ideology of a new class society in which the old ruling elite has been replaced by a new one composed of bureaucrats and party members.

What justification can we offer for this claim that the impact of Stalinism, the Soviet Union, and the Popular Front greatly contributed to the destruction of the socialist movement in the United States?

At the beginning of the nineteen-thirties a socialist ideology was in a position to offer an acceptable alternative to many Americans. The New Deal, despite the claims of its advocates, never in reality solved the social crisis in the United States. While it did a great deal to ameliorate conditions, it took a labor movement, which may or may not have been encouraged by Section 7-A of the National Recovery Act and by the Wagner Act, and the coming of a war threat
with the consequent lend-lease program, to really bring any considerable degree of economic recovery to the United States. A socialist movement, which was united and had clearcut goals, could have made a more lasting impact on American society in the nineteen thirties, if it had not been fragmentized and compromised by the Soviet Union, the Communist Party, and its creature, the Popular Front.

The left-wing movements in the thirties, including the Stalinists, never were able to make any considerable headway among the masses. Rather, the socialist movement became largely a middle-class intellectual and professional movement, more interested in writing proletarian novels to be read by five thousand other intellectuals (few of the readers of the proletariat novels were proletarians—the proletariat preferred "bourgeois" periodicals), than in undertaking the day-by-day political tasks that would have to go into the building of a socialism movement.

Into a situation in which the long-standing antipathy of the American working-class toward
any sort of working-class political action prevailed, the Communist Party was plummeted, unable to modify its Russian terminology and tactics to meet the American situation. The American Communist Party changed its tactics not in response to American conditions, but in response to the needs and demands of the Soviet Union.

The Socialist Party, unable to get rid of the pessimism and factionalism which had caused it to decline in the early twenties, did not succeed in making any sustained appeal to the large segments of the population. The traditionally socialist members of the garment trades unions, and college professors made up the bulk of the socialist movement.

The three way split in the Socialist movement in the nineteen thirties, which consumed much of the energies of Socialist Party members in the thirties, was caused by a number of problems, many of which had little reference to the American scene. The Socialists discussed

5. See pp. 138-141 above.
such problems as whether they believed in workers' soviets or not, not recognizing the fact that the soviets were a particularly Russian development and that if socialism came to the United States, a heavily industrialized and technically advanced country, it would not come through the application of the "principles" which had been the rationalizations after the fact for the Bolshevik Revolution.

While few proletarians joined the proletarian party ranks, the professionals and intellectuals flocked in droves to the red standard. While some of them joined the Socialist Party, the great bulk of them revolved in or near the Communist Party in the early thirties. To them, perhaps moved by the neophytes' desire to be more orthodox than the old believers, the socialists were not revolutionary enough, while the Communists "meant it", were the real thing. While many sincere individuals joined the Communist Party because of an understanding of the difference between the Socialist Party which did not believe in
revolutionary action, and one which spoke in terms of revolutionary Marxism, the understanding of most of the intellectuals was not as clear.

The intellectuals, searching essentially for power in a society which had denied them any power, felt that the Communist Party with its tie up with the Soviet Union, was of greater significance than the Socialist Party which had no connection with any genuinely successful movement anywhere else. The Russian Revolution and the "Soviet Experiment" had captured the attention of the American liberal intellectuals.

The question of the Soviet Union and Stalinism succeeded in splitting the radical movement in many different ways. Without the confusion created by the Soviet Union, and the Stalinists dictatorship, the Socialist Party might well have been pushed to a more active and realistic position. Many intellectuals would not have been forced to quit the Communist
movement if it had not been completely Stalinized, and the split among the left-wing intelligentsia, need not have occurred. (The history of the American Socialist Party prior to its decimation by the Communist Party in 1919, however, might indicate that the inability of the American Socialist Party to prevent the splitting off of dissident groups might have continued to operate, even without the presence of Stalinism.)

Soviet policies and Soviet events continued to influence the history of American socialism in the Popular Front period. While it seemed reasonable at the time to many to unite with all those who opposed fascism, historical hindsight leads us to suggest that the Stalinist opposition to fascism was quite a different thing than the liberal opposition to fascism. This was indicated by the overnight switch of the Communist line after the consummation of the marriage between Stalinism and Hitlerism.

The Popular Front had a further unwholesome impact on the American liberal and socialist movements. While the liberal press had been quite friendly to the Soviet Union in the twenties and early thirties, this was largely
due to the impact of the Russian Revolution, and the reports brought back by many intellectuals in the late twenties and early thirties on Soviet progress. In view of the tremendous strides that Russia had made in industrialization, literacy, and culture in the twenties, the liberals could regret the dictatorship and the persecution of the kulaks and counter-revolutionaries without turning against the Soviet Union. Thus the liberal friendliness to the Soviet Union in the early thirties, especially with the existence of the great contrast between Soviet economic progress with the American depression, is one that is partially understandable, and by those who work under the same value system, as did the liberals in the early thirties, defendable.

However, the trials of the Old Bolshevik leaders shook the liberal press. Nevertheless, this shock was not enough to destroy the alliance with the Soviet Union and the American Communists. The Communist dominated Popular Front seemed to be a justification for the liberals to continue to support the Soviet Union. The liberal press
clearly stated that while it could not support the attacks on freedom in the Soviet Union, the great economic progress, and more important, the supposed leadership of the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties in the fight against fascism, was of greater importance. The liberals felt that if they could only unite with all anti-fascists to defeat fascism, they would then be able to worry about the blots on the otherwise progressive record of the Soviet Union. The liberals were blinded by the world situation to the fact that there were more than mere blots on the record of the Soviet Union.

Large segments of the radicalized intellectual movement were compromised by the rejection of the immediate fight for socialism by the Popular Front. To the generation of the late thirties, there seemed little difference between the Stalinists and the New Dealers—they both talked in terms of the same domestic reforms and they both were advocates of collective-security.
This correspondence between the New Deal and the Stalinist lines in the late thirties largely explains the reason for the allegiance at this period of many intellectuals, new to left-wing politics, to the Stalinist led Popular Front after 1936. These non-radicals who joined the Stalinist fronts at this time, did so not because they espoused revolutionary socialism, but because of the confusion and blurring of the lines of differentiation between the New Deal and the Stalinist lines due to the concerted efforts of the Stalinists to sound no more revolutionary than the New Deal.

The period of the late nineteen-thirties was not a period of radicalization of many intellectuals. Most of those who were to become genuinely radicalized and to become Marxists in the nineteen-thirties were brought into the movement in the late twenties and early thirties. With the Moscow trials and the Popular Front, many of these left the Stalinist movement and became wanderers for a period on
the independent left. Some stayed with
the Stalinists, due to an acceptance of the
Popular Front as a desirable tactical move.
Those who were brought into contact with the
Stalinist movement for the first time after
1936-37, never became genuinely radicalized.
While many of them learned enough Marxist
cliches to become acceptable, they never became
Marxists. With the Hitler-Stalin pact they
did not reject Marxism, for they had never been
Marxists, but rather rejected the alliance with
the Communists. After the pact their line
remained the same—they were anti-fascists
and if the Stalinists were not anti-fascists
any longer, they would leave them behind.

The Hitler-Stalin pact completely destroyed
the leftwing-movements to all extents and purposes.
The complete desertion of the Popular Front by
its creator destroyed the faith of all but a
hard core in Stalinism and the Soviet Union.
Even the socialist and Trotskyite movements
fell with the fall of Stalinism’s reputation
among American intellectuals. The Soviet Union
was considered part of the Socialist community,
and with its loss of prestige, the entire socialist movement fell into disgrace. The revaluation of Marxism and Leninism by former Trotskyites, Lovestonites, and independent leftists, stemmed from the fact that the Soviet Union seemed to be not only not a degenerate workers' state, as Trotsky had maintained, but [that it was] merely another totalitarian class society.

The various Marxist movements and Marxism as a world philosophy, we must conclude, had a very significant impact on American intellectual life in the nineteen-thirties. While few in number, perhaps, the Marxists of the nineteen-thirties had a considerable influence on American life. Literature, art, the social sciences, the Federal Arts Project, the publishing business, and educational philosophy, all were greatly influenced by Marxism in this period. It is accurate to state that in these listed areas, Marxism was the greatest single influence at this period.

Perhaps, however, the greatest impact Marxism had in this period was its influence upon the Liberal-Center. Official American liberalism in the nineteen-thirties becomes a murky chapter in the general story of American liberalism, if we are not aware at every point
of the influence of Marxism upon such publications as the Nation, the New Republic, and Common Sense. Someone might well specifically study the interrelationships between Marxism and the American instrumentalist tradition in the nineteen-thirties. It might well lead to an awareness of the changing nature of American instrumentalism.

The decade of the thirties is still with us. Many men prominent in American intellectual and political life today were moulded within the crucible of the thirties. While they have almost universally rejected Marxism and Stalinism, the experiences of the thirties still have great influence over them today. As many of them are among the most important moulders of present public opinion, and as their attitudes towards current world-problems were moulded, in part, in the thirties, it is not too much to claim that in many important ways, the intellectual and political atmosphere of present day American is to a great extent a reaction to the experiences of the nineteen-thirties.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:


———, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx, a Revolutionary Interpretation*. New York: John Day, 1936.


---


---

The Life and Death of Sacco and Vanzetti. London: Martin, Lawrence, Ltd., 1928.

---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---

The Coming Struggle for Power. New York: Covici, Friede, 1933.

---

Symes, Lillian, "What is This Communism" (in: Harpers' Magazine, 162:22-33, December 1930).


Utley, Freda, The Dream We Lost: Soviet Russia, Then and Now. New York: John Day, 1940.


Wechsler, James, Revolt on the Campus. New York: Covici, Friede, & Co., 1935.

Wilson, Edmund, To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1940.

White, Margaret Bourke, Eyes on Russia. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931.


Addendum:


Secondary Sources:


Addendum:


Primary Sources, Periodicals:

Commentary, New York: 1946–May 1952. This magazine, published by the American Jewish Committee, has as its editors a number of former Stalinists and Trotskyites, and reflects one branch of the present anti-Stalinism of the former left-wing intellectuals.

Common Sense, New York: December 1932–December 1939. This magazine reflected the opinion of those non-Marxist Deweyian liberal intellectuals who looked for a radical but democratic transformation of American society.


Enquiry, San Francisco: 1942–44. A short-lived venture founded by a number of ex-Trotskyites and Socialists in an effort to reevaluate the socialist position in the light of the experience of the nineteen-thirties.


The Masses, New York: 1911–1917. The first American Marxist intellectual journal. With its emphasis on Bohemianism, sexual freedom, and Marxism it became the spiritual father of all later radical intellectuals.

Masses and Mainstream, New York: 1948–51. The current Stalinist successor to the New Masses.


Militant, New York: 1955–1951. Until 1940, the Militant was the weekly journal of the Trotskyite movement. Since the split in the movement in 1940, it has been the organ of the Socialist Workers' Party, the Cannonite wing of the movement.
Modern Monthly, New York: 1923-1940. An independent Marxist intellectual journal, reflecting the Freudian-Marxism of V.F. Calverton, and providing a "meeting-ground" for all Marxist tendencies.

The Nation, New York: October 1929-December 1951. The outstanding left-liberal intellectual magazine, reflecting in the nineteen-thirties the attitudes of a large body of left-liberal intellectuals who were sympathetic towards the Soviet Union.

The New International, 1936-1941. The theoretical journal of the Trotskyite movement, edited by such intellectual leaders as James T. Farrell, James Burnham, and Dwight MacDonald.

The New Leader, January 1935-May 1952. Originally the organ of the Socialist Party, with the creation of the Social-Democratic Federation, the right wing splinter of the Socialist Party, in the middle-thirties it came to reflect the right-wing Pro-New Deal wing of the Socialist Party. In the past seven years it has been the leading outlet for the works of the former Marxist intellectuals who have made a career of anti-Stalinism.

The New Republic, New York: October 1929-December 1951. With the Nation, the outstanding left-liberal intellectual magazine, even friendlier towards the Soviet Union than its sister journal during the nineteen-thirties.

The New Masses, New York: January 1929-December 1939. The Communist literary magazine which brought the CPUSA message to the middle-classes.

Partisan Review, New York: 1934-1952. Fredrick J. Hoffman writes, "The spectacle of the thirties and of the forties and fifties—the dilemma of the artist solved and yet not solved—is nowhere better portrayed for us than in the career of that most interesting of all little literary magazines, The Partisan Review." The history of the Partisan Review is most of the history of the Marxist intellectual in the United States.

Politics, New York: 1944-June 1949. The personal journal of Dwight Macdonald, former editor of The New International and of Partisan Review. It was devoted to the development of a radical, non-Bolshevik orientation, eventually arriving at pacifism and anarchism. The most honest and searching, if oftentimes absurd, of the periodicals examined. Macdonald and Politics honestly tried to meet the basic problem of American socialism—how to come to power without the use of Bolshevik tactics and organization—and failed in the attempt.
Science and Society, New York: 1937-1945. Devoted to historical, sociological and philosophical articles by leading American Marxists. In general it has been in agreement with the Communist Party, and probably is subsidized by the CPUSA. Contains a wealth of important essays.

Seven Arts, 1916-1917, New York. The magazine founded by Philip Openheim to give the young radicals a platform. In this magazine, suspended by the government for its anti-war position, Van Wyck Brooks, Paul Rosenfeld, Waldo Frank, Louis Mumford, and Randolph Bourne gave the American intelligentsia a rationale for a radical position.

Social Frontier, New York: 1935-1940. A magazine of educational theory and practical advice, largely devoted to the development of education for a collective society. It largely reflected the outlook of such educators as George Counts, Sidney Hook, and Theodore Dreier, who attempted to merge Marxism and Deweyism, although many non-Marxists, including John Dewey himself wrote for it.

Symposium, Concord, N.H., 1930-1933. A "little-magazine" edited by James Burnham and John Wheelwright, which made the transition from the "lost-generation" of the twenties to the leftward moving generation of the thirties.

Addendum:

The Revolutionary Age (formerly Workers' Age), New York: 1930-38. The official organ of the Lovestone movement.

The Revolutionary Policy Committee Review, New York: 1935-54. The magazine put out occasionally by the far-left caucus of the Socialist Party, the Revolutionary Policy Committee.
NOTE

Pages 33, 53, 54, 62, 82, 151, and 176 have been omitted in the numbering. These were errors in numbering and do not indicate that any of the body of the thesis has been omitted.
MARXISM AND AMERICAN INTELLECTUALS IN THE NINETEEN-THIRTIES: A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LIBERALISM.

GEORGE PHILIP RAWICK

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in History at the University of Wisconsin

Approved, Sept. 15, 1953