Darcy, S.

Dimitrov, Stalin and the 1936 Presidential Elections in the United States

Introduction

Samuel Darcy was a leading member of the Communist Party (USA) from the 1920s to the mid-1940s. He was actively involved in building the strike of West Coast longshore workers and the subsequent San Francisco general strike in 1934, when he headed the CPUSA's California District and was correspondent for its paper, the Daily Worker. He later was in charge of the CPUSA's work in Eastern Pennsylvania. He travelled to the Soviet Union twice, first in 1928 when he was a youth delegate to the 6th Congress of the Comintern, and again in 1935 as a delegate to the famous 7th Congress of the Comintern, which proclaimed the united front against fascism. Darcy died in the late 1990s, at more than 90 years of age.

Darcy is chiefly remembered as one of the two members of the National Committee of the CPUSA who opposed the motion by Earl Browder, then General Secretary of the CPUSA, to dissolve the Party in 1944. The other opponent of the motion was its national chair, William Foster. While Foster heeded Browder's warning not to take the struggle over the liquidation of the Party to the membership, Darcy did not, and was therefore expelled by Browder. After criticism in the international communist movement of the CPUSA's dissolution the following year, the Party was reorganized with Foster in the leadership and Browder was subsequently expelled. However, Darcy was never readmitted to the Party.

During the first years after World War II, Darcy was in contact with other early anti-revisionist fighters, including William Dunne. Darcy did not long take up the work of building a new genuine communist party in the USA, though he remained a progressive to the end of his life. His main political work seems to have involved writing of his experiences in the CPUSA, providing valuable insight into the positions and personalities of leading members of the CPUSA, the Comintern and other parties. The excerpt below is from the Samuel A. Darcy papers, Box 3, Folder 33 in the Tamiment Library, located in New York University and is reprinted with thanks for the permission of Tamiment.

There are several important political points in these excerpts. The first is the position of Browder in regard to Roosevelt. Browder's right opportunism and liquidationism during World War II is well known. But his 'left' opportunism, in particular the fact that he was the leading force in the CPUSA during the mid-

1930s who attacked Roosevelt and the New Deal as ‘fascist,’ is very little known.

Another valuable lesson is the distortion of Darcy’s speech at the 7th Comintern Congress that he describes here. It is a fascinating example of the type of intrigue carried out by hidden counter-revolutionary elements within the Soviet Union, in league with the Nazis as well as reactionary forces in the U.S., such as the Hearst press.

Of course, the most important issue raised here is the application of the united front against fascism, particularly in the United States. This question is rapidly coming to the fore today, as U.S. imperialism prepares to engage in ‘endless war’ in an effort to maintain its status as the only superpower in the world, while at the same time restricting if not eliminating the democratic rights of working people at home. Dimitrov in his speech at the 1935 Comintern Congress suggested that working people in the U.S. form a Workers’ and Farmers’ Party as a suitable form of the united front against fascism. However, under Darcy’s influence, with the agreement of both Foster and Browder, as well as of Dimitrov and other leading members of the Comintern, and apparently also of Stalin, the CPUSA called for support to Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1936 presidential elections. It is important to note that this support was carried out at that time together with strong, public criticism of many of Roosevelt’s policies.

In the U.S. today, the overwhelming majority of the members of Congress from the Democratic Party have gone along with Bush’s policy of ‘endless war.’ The Congressional vote authorizing Bush to declare war was passed with only one opposing vote, that of Democratic Representative Barbara Lee, an African-American woman from Oakland, California. It was necessary for genuine revolutionaries in the U.S. to call for support for her re-election, as well as for support for Cynthia McKinney of Georgia and Earl Hilliard of Alabama, two other African-American members of Congress who took some positions against the war and were defeated in their re-election bids in the Democratic Party primary elections in 2002 by massive financial and other support from reactionary forces outside their districts.

The united front against fascism may involve giving certain tactical support to representatives of other classes, including members of the bourgeoisie. It is a form of temporary alliance of representatives of different classes for specific objectives, e.g. to prevent or delay a particular war of aggression, or to preserve

certain democratic rights. It is not a merger of opposing programmes, and certainly not a liquidation of the class stand of the proletariat. The CPUSA during the period of the united front against fascism before and during the Second World War made many right opportunist errors, from liquidating its factory nuclei to dropping support for the right to self-determination of the African-American nation in the Black Belt South, and finally to the dissolution of the CPUSA into a Communist Political Association. As we move forward into a new period of war and reaction, we will have to learn how to build a united front while avoiding or minimizing such errors.

George Gruenthal

New York City, USA

…Suddenly, in April 1935 I was notified that I had been elected a delegate by the American Communist Party to the Seventh Congress of the Communist International….

'We chose you,' Minor told me with a great show of being on the inside of things, 'because you need to have some horse manure rubbed in into your head; it will do you good.' I found out later that he had in fact opposed my selection but the rest of the Browder group were afraid that the Comintern leadership would then invite me directly.

In July, 1935, I was on my way to the U.S.S.R. for the second time.

Much has been written of the 'American Dream.' Vague as it is in definition, it is nevertheless there, and we all know about it. I learned about it when I went to Europe, for that's really where the American dream began. It began in the yearning to be free of the shackles that the history of Europe put upon its peoples in fifty centuries of slavery and feudalism, clerical tyranny, provincial and national chauvinism and hates, the horror and waste of war, the limiting of economic progress by vested interest, and overcrowding.

America was the land over the rainbow and the pot of gold which was more than money, as the poet E.Y. Harburg says, where all this wickedness could be left behind. It was true of the time of Columbus and it was true in the summer of l935.

The impending catastrophe of Nazi aggression cast an awesome shadow over all Europe that year. Even the pleasure-bent American tourist, hurrying from art gallery to old church to nude show to famous eating place, could not help but see the hordes of wretched refugees from Germany, Hungary, Austria, Italy and Poland desperately running, as defenceless people always run, in advance of marching conquering brutal Hitlerite armies.

But for every one you saw in Paris, there were ten in Moscow. Whole units of Austrian Schutzbunders [Austrian social-democratic militia - GG], who momentarily swallowed their social-democratic prejudices to accept hospitality from the Communists, who allowed them to wear their uniforms and gave them housing, food and jobs. More and more hotels and homes were set aside for these refugees. Yet there was never enough.

The Soviet government had begun the process of locating them in centres away from Moscow. Refugee colonies were set up in the Ukraine for escapees from Romania, Poland and the Balkans. Leningrad took in the Finlanders, for Finland was then being infiltrated by German military and espionage experts and from the Baltic peoples. Escaped Jews from Nazi-dominated countries were encouraged to go to warmer Southern climates and to the Amur and Maritime provinces near the Pacific. Some of the German refugees were assigned to the Volga region where other German-speaking people had lived for many generations.

But even more than the presence of refugees, the political atmosphere of Moscow, always a most sensitive barometer to the state of the world, was charged with foreboding over the rise of the Nazis.

Most of all we felt it in the Comintern. In preparing for my trip to the Soviet Union, I remembered Stalin’s fondness for Edgeworth tobacco and I brought him a pound can of it. I found him buoyant. He moved with solid step, yet efficiently, was genial yet crisp in his speech, and appeared as if trimmed down for a fight. He wanted to know whether I had been given a nice room at the hotel, was the trip good, was my health good, and them asked numerous questions about things American, many things so especially American it surprised me that he knew about them. He thanked me for the tobacco but said that he didn’t know how much longer the doctors would let him smoke. His goodbye at the end was cordial; he made me feel that he appreciated my visit. In

the late 1920's I remembered him as being preoccupied and moody. There was no sign of it in the mid-1930's. He was cheerful and busy.

Looking for friends I had made on previous trips I found many had perished in struggle or even by being passive. The conversation of those who came veered in the first few minutes to the coming of the Nazis to power. The great German Communist Party, which had had six hundred thousand dues paying members in 1932, was in tenuous contact with about ten thousand. Thousands of its best leaders were imprisoned and thousands more scattered to other countries.

Under the impact of the rising Axis power, some Communists lost all hope; a few even joined their enemies. The head of the Communist caucus of seventy members in the old German Reichstag, Torgler, accepted employment from the Nazis as a 'research' expert. Doriot, one of the outstanding leaders of the French Communist Party, who had taught me my first French on my previous visit, had become a close associate of the French Fascists and had cynically joined the chorus of anti-Semitism, anti-Democracy and anti-Communism, to help him gain power in politics. Some months before we American delegates arrived, the representative of the Polish Communist Party to the Comintern had been arrested, tried and shot as a spy 'for a foreign government.' Rumour had it that Soviet counter-espionage had bought from a Polish government official the list of their spies in the U.S.S.R. and his name was among them. Confronted by evidence turned up in the course of the inevitable investigation, he confessed. Following normal practice in such dirty business the Polish government denied that they had ever heard of him. These were some of the more extreme examples.

Also there were present many who had become heroes of the anti-Nazi struggle.

Outstanding, of course, was George Dimitrov. Dimitrov had been a delegate to the Sixth Congress in 1928. But I had no well-delineated recollection of him. The then head of the Bulgarian delegation of which he was a member was Kolarov, who was known to all the delegates. Dimitrov was one of those Balkan leaders who, so far as we uninformed Americans were concerned, was not especially distinguished from any other Balkan revolutionary; all of whom in those years had prices on their heads and had against them convictions on all sorts of unbelievable charges that the dictatorships of those oppressed lands could trump up.

Even before his German experience, Dimitrov had a remarkable history. He was condemned to death in absentia for an explosion that occurred in the great Sofia Cathedral - with which he had had nothing to do. But he did have almost forty years of activity mostly in the illegal underground revolutionary movements of the Balkans. During momentary legal intervals he had been elected to the Bulgarian parliament.

In 1935, he was in his early 50's. In appearance he was stockily built, heavy jawed, irascible (probably due to a bad case of stomach ulcers), and not given to easy smiling. A heavy head of hair gave him a shaggy appearance. When aroused he was a difficult man to be with. Until he made his mind up on any subject he was a good listener - but once that was done, he brooked no contradiction; the jaw squared, the eyes became fierce and his manner bull-doggish. He was a fighter whose devotion to the cause of his people knew no limit and if you were untroubled by his manner - you could see the full man he was, the full man he had to be to win against Goering and all Hitlerdom, so great a victory as he won in his heroic and historic battle at Leipzig, in the world-famous Reichstag fire trial.

The main report to any Congress of the Communist International was delivered by its General Secretary, in this instance, George Dimitrov. And if that report made reference to any specific country, it was, prior to its delivery, reviewed in a joint meeting of the General Secretary and the delegation concerned. If agreed to, it was delivered; if differences remained they were reported to the Congress. I had been elected secretary of our delegation and so was invited to arrange with Dimitrov's secretary for the time and place of our conference.

To set the stage, Browder's fawning circle had hung around the walls of the conference room samples of scores of publications put out by the Communist Party in the U.S., more than half of which were written by - surprise? - Earl Browder. Their titles conveyed the idea that the New Deal was Nazi-like, NRA was fascist, Roosevelt was promoting imperialist war, etc. When we entered the room Dimitrov called me aside and showed me, written in German on a piece of paper, the following:

'Roosevelt policies are carrying the United States in a fascist direction.'

'Does this fairly represent the line of propaganda of your Party,' he demanded.

Yes.' It was the only truthful answer possible.

'I've read a great deal of your Party's literature and I know it does. I just wanted to know if we needed to argue about the facts.' He looked very grim and very unfriendly.

He spoke in German. Our delegation, about forty people, were distributed around the room in small groups, each with a translator. I sat between Wm. Z. Foster and Earl Browder and since neither spoke German I acted as their translator.

Dimitrov spoke briefly indicating what the general line of his report was to be. He summarized the growth of the Nazi monster and the inadequacy of the fight against it. Then to the astonishment of the delegation he praised Franklin Roosevelt's policies. He criticized Communists in general and American Communists in particular for attacking all those who didn't agree with them to every dotting of every 'i,' and every crossing of every 't.' As he spoke his bull neck kept getting redder and redder, his voice showed increasing anger, until he reached a climax when he read from his projected report:

'One must indeed be a confirmed idiot not to see that it is the most reactionary pro-Nazi circles of American finance capital which are attacking Roosevelt,... that the anti-Nazi forces must rally around Roosevelt...' etc.

The delegation sat stunned. This could only be an all out repudiation of Browder. It was a complete rejection of his policy. Dimitrov sat down, wiped his face, and looking at no one in particular said: 'Now, comrades, I'd like to hear your comments.'

There was dead silence. He waited a minute, then turning to me he said: 'Comrade Darcy, would you like to take the floor?' I had been thrilled by his talk. Not only was it wrong to attack Upton Sinclair, the man of the Left, as a Fascist. It was even wrong to attack Franklin Roosevelt, the man of the Centre, who was considerably to the Right of Sinclair. Anything I would say would only lessen the effect that Dimitrov had created. I shook my head, trying not to be too obvious in my delight.

‘Comrade Darcy, ask Comrade Foster if he wishes to speak.’ I did. Foster hated Browder personally and was very glad to let matters stand.

‘Please ask Comrade Browder if he wishes to speak.’ For the first time I trusted myself to look at Browder. He sat pale and stiff, his face frozen in a mask. I asked him loud and clear - but he also shook his head negatively.

Dimitrov seemed to soften. ‘If your silence means assent, then I’ll reword this section of my report as follows’ (he had that written out also):

‘When some comrades assert that Roosevelt’s ‘New Deal’ represents a.… pronounced form of the development of the bourgeoisie towards fascism... is this not a manifestation of a stereotyped approach to the question?

‘One must indeed be a confirmed addict of the use of hackneyed phrases not to see that the most reactionary circles of American finance capital, which are attacking Roosevelt, represent first and foremost the very force which is stimulating and organizing the fascist movement in the U.S.’

Then, as if in afterthought, he added ‘It might emphasize this point if it was said in closing the discussion rather than in the presentation.’

I suppose it is better to be regarded as a ‘confirmed addict of hackneyed phrases’ than to be called a ‘confirmed idiot.’ The point is debatable, but not important. In the amended form Dimitrov included it in his closing address. I knew then I had nothing to fear from Minor’s threat of horse manure.

Each day new delegations arrived, many in their native costumes, many greeted with deep emotion since they came from underground movements where the casualties were staggering, many who were old friends, until on the day the Congress actually opened about eight hundred delegates were present. I little thought at that time, that in less than fifteen years almost half of these delegates would constitute the core of governments in control of their countries, governing forty per cent of the world’s population! Our thoughts then were all with the problem of how to keep from being engulfed by Hitlerism.

At the centre of everything done at the Congress was the idea that all anti-Nazi forces must unite. In a brilliantly delivered and penetrating report Dimitrov appealed to the world for unity against the Axis. The Russian delegates explained their government's programme of collective security. It was expected that each delegation would try to think through the road to achieving democratic anti-Nazi unity for their own country. It was not as easy as it now tells. Delegations were torn with doubts and controversy. There was an undercurrent of opposition. The debate ran for several weeks. But in the end Dimitrov's, and as we later learned, Stalin's, idea prevailed.

There was also an unhappy by-play at the Congress which, while very secondary, yet created a tremendous sensation at the time. I was involved. And this is the first opportunity I have to tell my version of it. There had been great interest at the Congress in the West Coast Maritime Strike and the San Francisco General Strike. It was requested that in my address to the gathering I should speak of those events.

Mindful of the fact that I was not on American soil, I prepared my address, so as to stick to the generally accepted and publicly known facts, omitting such questions as might cause controversy or bring exceptional attention. Following the general practice in the Congress, my speech was duplicated and distributed among the members of our delegation for approval or suggestions before actual delivery on the Congress floor.

In the course of usual procedure I delivered it, attracting only mild attention, for ours was a comparatively minor delegation. I concluded my narrative by pointing out that 'the maritime workers had won a contract for only one year, and we are not certain whether the shipowners will not again question their right to collective bargaining; that their contract would terminate in September 1935 and we will then find out.' It seemed like a rather innocuous statement of the facts.

Pravda, the leading Soviet newspaper, selected it for publication in an abridged version. The next day, one of our colleagues who read Russian brought a copy of Pravda to our delegation meeting. There below my picture was what purported to be a summary of my speech. Most of it was fairly accurate.

‘This last sentence,’ he said, ‘wasn’t in your speech.’

‘What does it say?’

‘This coming September we will have a showdown between the proletariat and bourgeoisie in the U.S.,’ he translated.

It was customary to submit to a delegate for his approval any material quoting him, meant for publication. This hadn’t been done in this instance. This was unusual. Some thought we should send in a protest and correction. But the prevailing sentiment at the meeting was that the whole thing wasn’t important and it would be best to let it go, lest we attract more attention than it deserved.

I forgot about it - that is, until about three days later. A German delegate telephoned me to say that the ‘Angriff,’ Goebbel’s paper, had just arrived and I was a featured sensation. Could he bring it over?

He hadn’t exaggerated. A bold headline across the top of the page announced that I ‘headed a conspiracy to launch a civil war to overthrow the U.S. Government the following September.’ It had a great deal of yellow journalistic nonsense in it - but it also quoted the unhappy last sentence which had been inserted into my speech in Pravda.

A second Nazi paper carried a personal attack on me, alleging me to be a professional German baiter, Bolshevik, etc. etc. citing the part I played in the ‘Karlsruhe’ incident.

This last referred to an occurrence earlier that year. The Nazi government sent a naval training ship, the ‘Karlsruhe,’ on a ‘good-will’ (meaning Nazi propaganda) tour of U.S. ports. In San Francisco, we launched an energetic campaign against receiving them. In radio addresses, leaflets, mass meetings, and by organizing all-day picketing at the German consulate, we urged that Mayor Rossi refuse to receive the officers and cadets. Rossi had previously been decorated by Mussolini for his ‘good works’ and rejected our pleas, instead, announced a full programme of receptions at City Hall and at a Grand Ball to which Burlingame’s debutantes were to be ‘dates’ to the young Nazis. I must

confess that this Grand Ball hit me like a deliberately planned personal insult. I have difficulty explaining that, even to myself, probably my idealized romantic view of all American girls, surely too good to be dirtied by contact with Nazis. My old friends the longshoremen responded to our campaign. They agreed to strike for the entire time from the moment the ship passed the Golden Gate to the time she was tied up. That takes one to one and one-half hours.

The 'Karlsruhe' came in one morning at nine o'clock. Through binoculars we could see about four hundred cadets in their flashy uniform lined up on deck, at ease. One group held brass musical instruments.

Almost four thousand men came from all the piers to where the 'Karlsruhe' was to dock. As we were standing there a large car flying the old German Republican (Weimar) flag and the Nazi Swastika drew up. Inside were several men in formal attire including silk toppers. A group of longshoremen surged forward and tore the Nazi flag off the car and threw it into the bay. The Weimar flag was not touched. Neither police nor dock guards interfered. The men sitting in the car looked angry but didn't dare try anything.

At last the ship began manoeuvring into dock. The cadets were now at attention looking pleased at such a large gathering to receive them. Their band blared noisily. Some of their ship's hands threw their lines onto the dock. No one moved and the lines fell into the harbour. They realized something was wrong.

Soon the fancily dressed cadets had their shiny coats off and were perspiring, going about the business of tying up their own boat.

That job completed, they marched up Market Street to City Hall. The longshoremen marched along - all of them, but especially those of German descent who knew the language, shouting appropriate comments that reviewed the legality of Hitler's birth, the sexual aspects of the Hitler-Roehm relationship, and pertinent commentaries of a political nature with accompanying expressions of ill-will. At City Hall, while Mayor Rossi made his speech of welcome, anti-Hitler leaflets were pressed into the hands of the young Nazis - these, among other things, inquired about the whereabouts of Ernst Thaelman, the great longshore labour leader who headed the Communist Party of Germany and had been incarcerated in a Nazi dungeon. The people along the streets were handed explanatory leaflets.

Their reception was spoiled. Their ‘good will’ visit boomeranged. It became an occasion for making known to all San Francisco, some of the more blatant Nazi crimes.

All this (angled differently) the Nazi papers retold - heaping upon me the blame for the entire incident; concluding that now, i.e., in view of my speech at the Comintern Congress, the American Government can see my nefarious character.

I realize that this was no momentary and spontaneous outburst. It must have taken many days to prepare all that material for publication. Still it turned out to be only the beginning.

The Angriff story was cabled to the Hearst press. There it appeared with such sensational if falsified embellishments, as is characteristic of the yellow press. California journalism was dominated by Hearst. He really outdid himself. The San Francisco Examiner ran some twenty-eight columns of personal attack on me in a single week beginning each day with front-page scare heads. Other newspapers fell in line with this campaign although in somewhat less provocative language.

The Nazi as well as the American press then followed through with distorted and coloured stories about Browder’s speech at the Congress. Their aim was to raise as much dust as was necessary to becloud, and draw attention away from, the clear analysis and great appeal of Dimitrov and the Congress for democratic anti-Nazi unity.

Then William C. Bullitt, American Ambassador to the Soviet Union entered the picture.

Bullitt had been manifestly sour on the U.S.S.R. and should not have been Ambassador. Some said it was out of personal peeve, others believed he wanted to become an anti-Soviet hero at home to further his political career. Whichever was true, he leaped at this opportunity.

He cabled Pravda's published version to the State Department with some additions of his own, and recommended a note of protest to the Soviet Government. With pressure from the press, pressure from the Nazi government, and now pressure from Bullitt, the State Department yielded. It permitted him to file a protest over his own signature - not that of Secretary of State Hull. The note protested not only our speaking, but the presence of the entire delegation of Americans on Soviet soil.

I later had described to me what happened at the Soviet Foreign Office on the presentation of the note. Bullitt, dressed in the best that Philadelphia-gentleman-of-elegant-social-standing-when-in-high-dudgeon affords, including spats, gloves, cane and cravat, stormed into the Foreign Office and was announced to Krestinsky, then Assistant Commissar of Foreign Affairs, which is a post analogous to our Under Secretary in the State Department. Krestinsky was not an attractive person. He wore thick-lensed glasses through which he peered in what looked like a perpetual scowl. He did not even rise as Bullitt entered, nor look up from his writing (an unnecessary and studied insult I didn't understand until later); and before Bullitt could utter his first word, said:

'If this is about the Comintern Congress we reject whatever you have to say.'

At that Bullitt slammed his note onto Krestinsky's desk and stalked out, livid with anger.

A large section of the American press was calling for a break in relations with the Soviet Government. Bullitt was feeding the Moscow correspondents a daily dose of anti-Soviet propaganda. The Labor Department called Harry Bridges in, and showed him the cabled version of my speech, demanding that he publicly repudiate it. Since he had nothing to do with it, he wisely demurred. Several members of Congress held forth on the subject. All the pro-Nazi, anti-Soviet and red-baiting outfits created loud clamour for at least a break with the U.S.S.R., some demanding a declaration of war.

The Soviet people were furious. The foreign delegates sadly shook their heads and asked us Americans whether there were some hidden facts or was the American Government just stupid. The Congress had been very conciliatory towards the United States Government. Dimitrov's speech was an endorsement of F. D. R. The official resolutions were all for United States and World Unity

against Nazism. The Soviet Union, and Stalin, spoke only words of friendship towards the U.S.A. Why then this hysterical outburst which served only the Hitlerites?

In the meantime in Moscow I begged to be allowed to publish the original version in full, to correct the falsification which was the excuse for all the excitement.

'It's useless (zwecklos),' Manuilsky said. 'Anything you say now will only feed the fire. They'll say you are trying to cover up.'

So there the matter lay. Apparently someone in Washington held the reins tightly and this campaign against the Soviet Union did not result in a break.

I was very dissatisfied with the status in which the matter was left. Several things remained unexplained. Who inserted the sentence at the end of the speech as it appeared in Pravda? It was too far from the original to be a mere error in translation. And why wasn't the custom followed of showing me the copy prior to publication? And most of all why did Krestinsky act in such an unfriendly manner when the protest note was brought? While Bullitt didn't deserve any better treatment since his conduct in Moscow was in many ways obnoxious, the United States Government was involved, and the heart of all our thinking was to promote friendly relations between the Soviet Government and ours. Finally, I deeply regretted having been any part at all of such a harmful incident, and felt out of countenance with all concerned.

The delegation elected me permanent American representative to the Comintern which usually ran for a period of one to two years. And Manuilsky, as always magnificent, went out of his way to make things pleasant so that I soon felt quite comforted.

A few months later Roy Howard, head of the Scripps-Howard chain of newspapers, came to Moscow. Howard apparently felt that Hearst had made a big coup with his campaign at the time of the Comintern Congress and was determined to create a little furor on his own. He obtained an interview with Stalin.

Stalin reaffirmed Socialist principles and programme, he pointed to capitalist contradictions and the specific imperialist conflicts as the source of the accumulating factors that were making for war. He said because the worst aggressions are being prepared by Germany and Japan, the Soviet Union would gladly unite with the capitalist democracies for peace and defence. He pleaded for that.

Howard kept probing for a weak spot. All he could think of was the outrage that anti-capitalist Americans are permitted on the soil of the Soviet Union.

Don't you permit anti-Soviet White guards on the soil of the U.S., Stalin asked him, preparing acts of terror against the Soviet Union? We would never tolerate that against anyone on Soviet soil.

But the speeches of the American Communists? Didn't the American Communists, Howard insisted, 'appeal for the overthrow by force of the American Government?' Howard was looking for a repudiation, which would have been sensational. Of course the question contained a plain untruth for even the erroneous published version did not say that. But Stalin remained as unshaken as the world has come to know him:

'I confess I do not remember the speeches of Comrades Browder and Darcy; I do not even remember what they spoke about. Perhaps they did say something of the kind. But it was not Soviet people who formed the American Communist Party. It was formed by Americans... If Comrades Browder and Darcy made speeches in Moscow once, they made hundreds of similar, and certainly stronger speeches at home, in the U.S.A.'

A great deal was at stake for Stalin in that interview. Winning the friendliness of the American Government was the keystone without which the entire programme of anti-Nazi collective security could not be achieved. After all, we American Communists were from a very minor organization, and for the sake of his main objectives, he could have repudiated us and thrown us to the wolves for 'Reasons of State.' Statesmen have done that before. It is common practice. And had he done that, I do not think we would have resented it. We would have understood. But he didn't do it. He had been informed of the error in the published version in Pravda and he didn't even use that to get out from under. Instead he stood for our right to speak. And while we were under such fire,

though there was so much at stake for his objectives, he deliberately and demonstratively called us ‘comrades.’

It took another year however before the last missing pieces of the mystery became clear and gave me the whole picture. It revealed a nasty intrigue.

Krestinsky, the assistant foreign commissar, was some time later arrested and charged with treason for his activities as a secret member of the Trotskyite organization. Part of his disloyal duties was to promote as much friction as possible between the Soviet Union and countries abroad so as to bring the U.S.S.R. into war as early as possible and create for themselves an opportunity to seize power. In pursuance of that he had through his assistant Mironov contact with a number of German correspondents through the Press Department of the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, which department he controlled. Among them were Baum, Guenther Stein, William Stein and others. Also among his group were several ‘specialists in foreign affairs’ including Bukhartsev, who worked in the foreign department of Pravda and Izvestia. It was one of these worthies who faked the sentence; it was then given to the German correspondents who got it through the cable censor as a Pravda translation. Having done the damage via his press contacts, Krestinsky then tried to finish the job by increasing the friction instead of minimizing it in his role as Assistant Foreign Commissar when he received Bullitt.

Litvinov was then head of the Foreign Department, and he was above suspicion. There was criticism of him for his ‘lack of vigilance,’ however, in that such vicious intrigues went on under his nose and he was not aware of them.

I have no evidence which indicates whether Bullitt played his part in full cognizance of the facts. Considering his closeness to and, as events later showed, sympathy for the enemies of the Soviet Union and his easy relations with the Nazis, he is at least not above suspicion. But if he was innocent, if he too was unaware of the conniving, then he must be condemned as the most inept ambassador our country ever had abroad for having acted with so little investigation - he never even asked the Congress staff for official copies of the stenograms which they were eager to spread abroad but created all that animosity on the basis of a newspaper report.

American newspapers normally arrived in Moscow two to three weeks after their appearance in the United States. I was therefore well set in my new post in the Comintern, when I saw by those papers that, following the prolonged campaign against me by Hearst, I had been indicted in San Francisco on some technical election charge arising out of the 1934 elections.

A stay in Moscow can be a fascinating experience. I tried, and to an extent succeeded, in being with the Soviet people, shared their joys and sorrows, and made them know my gratitude when they accepted me. One pays for it in homesickness, a longing to hear American spoken, see American scenes, touch things American, and be with one's own people.

But mainly, inevitably my stay in Moscow, was a period of self-examination, rethinking American problems from a point of view that provided perspective, especially trying to perceive where the paths, various currents of our population were travelling, might lead. I listened to what Britishers, Asiatics, Africans, Latin Americans and Europeans were saying about us. Staying in Moscow helped me understand my own country better.

The first half of 1935 was a period of the disintegration of the Roosevelt Administration. By mid-year F.D.R. found a path for his leadership of the nation through pro-labour legislation and clearly spoken anti-Nazi policies which yet had to find equivalent action. But even that served to rally the American people. Disturbed by the campaign the American Communists and Negro groups were making to defend Negro rights, especially in the Scottsboro case and the campaign against lynching, the National Democratic Party Committee set up its first Negro division, which proved effective. But the trade unions, especially the more active ones, still smarting under the indifference and even hostility of F.D.R. administrators the year preceding, middle class and professional people who yet saw no solution to their problems in the milder but nevertheless continuing depression, the Left groups, especially those influenced by Marxist thinking, all regarded F.D.R. with great suspicion.

In Moscow, reading the newspapers and material that came from the United States, I could see that while the American Communists had changed their attitude towards the New Deal, their publicity and the publicity in channels influenced by the Communist Party kept urging the formation of a third party, i.e., a Farmer-Labour Party. For that period it was the worst possible news. Instead of uniting the forces Left of Centre around F.D.R., they would splinter

them even worse than they were. I had looked with great eagerness to the Coughlin-Long right-wing elements, hoping they would form a third party. If they had, it would have split the vote Right of Centre while we press for unity of all forces Left of Centre thus insuring an anti-Nazi outcome. All material coming out of the United States indicated that the exact opposite was about to happen.

Andre Marty, the French representative, was a member of the Comintern Secretariat of nine, its leading daily functioning body. I went to him. He said, 'let's talk to Manu.' Manuilsky asked me: 'What do you propose? You know that in his report to the Seventh Congress Dimitrov praised the American Party's idea of a Farmer-Labour Party.' I argued that there were times when a Farmer-Labour Party could be a good thing. But in the circumstances now maturing for the United States presidential elections in 1936 it would elect another Rightist, and that would be either pro-Nazi or at best bring a pro-Nazi neutrality.

Manuilsky seemed impressed.

'Prepare a short statement of your position,' he said, 'and we'll all go to Dimitrov with it and see what he says.'

That was tough. For me to change that man's mind seemed too much to ask. Yet it was important. So much was at stake.

Dimitrov had a disconcerting habit when listening to an argument in private - he would sometimes turn his chair to the wall so that he heard you but didn't see you, nor could you watch his face, you spoke to his back or side. I was to witness that quirk in him several times later and I adjusted to it, but this was my first experience and it was upsetting. Furthermore, I had written out what I had to say. When he saw me with the sheets of paper in my hand he asked for them, laid them face down on the table and told me to speak. Marty and Manuilsky sat by impassively. German is an acquired language for me and in those rattling circumstances I forgot many of the words I needed to translate my thinking which was naturally in English. It took twenty minutes and I was weary and not altogether happy at the end.

‘You show all the dangers in the American situation,’ he said, ‘but you don’t propose what to do.’

At this stage my German wasn’t up to a subtly stated complicated answer. So I proposed:

‘We must find a way to support Franklin Roosevelt even while we criticize some shortcomings.’

‘And in the presidential elections?’

‘I think we should support Roosevelt. No Farmer-Labour Party, we just support F.D.R, we and all our friends.’

Dimitrov was very thoughtful. After a while he said.

‘We can’t discuss this without Foster and Browder. In fact, the Congress decision was that we were not to intercede in the affairs of individual countries. But if you say that a letter from you will be ignored by Browder, then maybe we can have a discussion here to help them think it through without us making any decision. I want to hear what Browder and Foster have to say on this. Send them a cable to come. In the meantime bring me the Constitution of the United States, your election laws, and any other material that might have a bearing on the question.’

I had no idea whether Dimitrov had made a judgment about what I said. From previous experience I knew that whenever Browder learned that any proposal came from me his deep factional instinct was to oppose it. And if Dimitrov joined him, it was doomed.

At that time, 1935, for Communists to give support to a candidate of a pro-capitalist party was a startling departure from all previous practice and policy. Even if Browder were to read my letter without his habitual hostility, he would be afraid to support F.D.R. in any election for fear of criticism from other

Communists. If, however, it had the blessing of Communists abroad, it would stiffen his spine.

I was fortunate to be in Moscow - if I could get some important support here, it would at least get a hearing, and we might bring about some unity on the American Left to re-elect Roosevelt.

One day early in December, Manuilsky called me to an office he kept in the Lux Hotel and amid a good deal of chuckling he asked whether I was worried. Didn't I know that Dimitrov would be likely to support whatever Browder wanted since Browder was Party secretary? Didn't I think I had made a mistake contradicting the opinion given by Dimitrov at the Congress about the proposed Farmer-Labour Party?, etc., etc. The more he talked the more disconcerted I became. When I was beginning to wonder whether I had acted too brashly, he suddenly roared with laughter:

'Don't worry. Dimitrov and I talked to the Old Man about this and the Old Man thinks you have the right idea. It's not yet official so keep it a secret.'

The 'Old Man' was Stalin. He hated to be referred to that way but Manuilsky was feeling impish.

'You know why I think Comrade Stalin agrees with you?' he continued. 'It's because he wants to keep Eleanor in office.' Manuilsky laughed heartily at his own joke. He was making pleasantries to give me time to gather my thoughts.

Yet that became a sort of continuing subject of merriment with both of them. Whenever I met Manuilsky, which was often, or Stalin which on this trip was occasional, they'd greet me with:

'How is Eleanor's health today?'

Or, 'Tell me, Comrade Darcy, Eleanor is the real brains in the Government, isn't she?'

Or, ‘Are the American people responding to Eleanor?’

Or, ‘Is Eleanor keeping Roosevelt on the correct line?’

And always there were broad smiles and laughter.

There must have been some story behind this good-humoured teasing about Mrs. Roosevelt but I never learned what it was. I do know they all admired her and thought she helped the President.

Foster and Browder came later in December. They agreed that it would he good to support F.D.R. as independents, to get the trade union people we influenced, the farmer, professional and middle class groups, all to do the same. Also that as a formality the Communist Party should put up its own candidates and use the campaign to centre the attack on the Republican ticket which had to be defeated at all costs. Orally we would urge people to vote, not for our ticket but for the New Deal ticket. We needed to put our ticket in the field to minimize unjustified red-baiting against F.D.R. Browder was to call a National Committee meeting on his return and lay these proposals before them with a favourable recommendation. It all worked out as planned.

What this accomplished chiefly was to unite the trade unions behind F.D.R. They were then on a great upswing and that almost unanimous support created a pro-F.D.R. bandwagon throughout the country. With almost 100% Left support F.D.R. concentrated on his Right opponents. It eliminated the doubts of early 1935 as to his re-election, and in the final count gave him a landslide victory.

What progress we had made from the meeting January previous, where Browder had put his hatchet man Minor to ‘rub horse-manure in my head’ because I refused to attack Upton Sinclair as a fascist! From January to December 1935 it was a good year; tumultuous, still it ended o.k. The year opened full of disastrous portends for F.D.R. and ended in a larger defeat of the Rightists than ever they suffered in all our previous electoral history.

The epilogue to all this is ironical - sometime later I learned that in the very months when I was campaigning for F.D.R., he was instructing the Attorney-

General to see if some action couldn't be taken against me on the grounds that I was a Communist 'trying to overthrow the government'! To quote Bill Bendix, 'What a revoltin' development.' The Rightists were calling F.D.R. a Communist. F.D.R. was calling me a Communist. All I was doing was shouting 'Help, help, the Nazis are coming.'

I started with deep suspicion of Liberals, but they couldn't be all that bad, – else why did I finally support the greatest Liberal of them all, one who apparently didn't even like me? In the end, it was more than mere support, for later, when F.D.R. died, my sorrow was deep and only a little intellectual. Yet, I cannot forget the relentless fury with which they pursued Harry Bridges, who was saved by the stalwart stevedore support and the brilliance of his defence attorneys headed by the skilful Richard Gladstein. Needless to say there was no pursuit, not even any scolding of those who murdered the strikers…