

COMMUNIST HEARD ON PACIFIST FORUM

Dennis Pleads for a Leftist Alliance—Idea Rejected by Norman Thomas

Eugene Dennis, general secretary of the Communist party here, had his first opportunity last night to share a non-Communist platform since his release from imprisonment on Smith Act charges.

Two thousand listeners—well divided—attended a forum under auspices of the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation at Carnegie Hall.

They heard Norman Thomas, six times Socialist candidate for President, sharply reject a Dennis appeal for a "revitalized, chastened and strengthened" democratic American left alliance as the path to a better America and world peace.

Mr. Thomas called on Dennis to repudiate past Communist publications representing the Soviet Union as "the only fatherland," rejecting parliamentarism and forecasting inevitable war against capitalism. He challenged him to urge Communist regimes to end one-party rule, rehabilitate political prisoners, free subject peoples and accept controlled disarmament.

Belgian Socialist Quoted

In turn, Dennis retorted that Camille Huysmans, Belgian Socialist leader, had returned from a Soviet visit to call for restoring "working class unity in Europe."

The quoted documents, he asserted, had been "repudiated" by the party here and made "obsolete" by developments. He rejected any idea of peace slogans as deceptions. If anyone had been imprisoned in Communist countries "solely" because of ideas, he said such person should be freed.

The single-party question is "an old one," Dennis declared, adding: "It so happens that in most of the new Socialist countries—Poland, Hungary, also China—there is more than one party."

In a Communist America, he

declared, he would favor more than one.

Mr. Thomas yawned.

Dr. Charles R. Lawrence Jr., national chairman of the 41-year-old fellowship and a Brooklyn College sociologist, said his organization disagreed fundamentally with Communist philosophy. He said it believed "truth presented in the spirit of love" was the way to combat error.

The forum was called to examine "America's Road to Democracy and World Peace." Participants included the Rev. A. J. Muste, 71-year-old secretary emeritus of the fellowship; Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, 88, Negro author and American Labor party candidate for Senator in 1950, and Roger N. Baldwin, 72, chairman of the International League for the Rights of Man, as moderator.

Dennis in Prison Over 3 Years

Dennis served three years and eight months in Federal prison for conspiracy to teach and advocate violent overthrow of the Government. After a ten-month "conditional release" under which he was barred from political activities until last Dec. 26, his only public appearance had been at a Communist Daily Worker celebration last Jan. 27 here.

Outside, arriving crowds had been welcomed with hawked literature of a wide variety of left-wing organizations. One was a weekly of the Independent Socialist League headed by Max Shachtman, carrying a challenge to debate assertedly ignored by the Communists for three weeks.

Dennis ignored occasional heckling and was applauded thirteen times in a twenty-minute opening. He conceded past Communist mistakes in failing to defend civil liberties of such opponents as Trotskyites here.

He had one question for his opponents: Would it serve world peace if the United Nations admitted Communist China?

Mr. Thomas said the United Nations should be universal to be effective in such problems as disarmament; he would agree to admitting Communist China—as soon as it signed a peace treaty instead of a mere truce in Korea, plus non-aggression treaties with all its neighbors, including Formosa.