
Ruthenberg Dead!

Farewell Comrade Ruthenberg; Farewell Our Leader

by Jay Lovestone

Published in *Young Worker*, vol. 6, no. 6 (March 15, 1927), pp. 1, 4.

Comrade Lovestone was perhaps closer to Ruthenberg than any comrade now living. For the last ten years they have worked closely together, beginning with the first efforts to organize a left wing, and throughout the entire period of the existence of the Communist movement.

[—Herbert Zam, ed.]

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The severest shock I have ever had in my life came with the death of my closest guide, leader, and friend, Comrade Ruthenberg.

To me, Comrade Ruthenberg was more than an individual — even more than a Party Comrade.

“C.E.,” as I called Comrade Ruthenberg, was to me the symbol of our Party, fighting unceasingly an uphill battle against tremendous odds, against the most brutal, the most powerful imperialism the world has known.

In the passing of Comrade Ruthenberg, our Party has suffered the greatest loss in its history. All American labor, the entire American working class has suffered the greatest loss in its history.

Our pain is as great as our loss. Comrade Ruthenberg has been and will remain an immortal example for our whole Party, for the entire working class to follow. Comrade Ruthenberg’s whole life was one of immortal service to the American working class.

Comrade Ruthenberg was the first man in the history of the various left wing movements in the Socialist Party to realize the value of organization. It was Comrade Ruthenberg who first understood that if the Socialist Party was to be a Party of revolutionary Socialism, the

left wing forces had to stay within the Party and to organize themselves.

Comrade Ruthenberg was the first one in the United States to be convicted and sent to jail for inspiring and organizing masses of workers to resist the drive of our imperialists to throw the American working class into the death orgy of the great war. The 10 months Comrade Ruthenberg spent in Canton jail for his courageous anti-war activities are 10 months which will forever live as an inspiring sacrifice to the American workers. These 10 months will be a powerful force for arousing the American proletariat to turn our next imperialist war into a civil war against the exploiters and oppressors of the workers.

Comrade Ruthenberg was the driving force behind the nationwide organized basis to the sweeping left wing movement of the Socialist Party after the Proletarian Revolution in Russia in November 1917.

Well do I remember how I was sitting with John Reed and others in our left wing headquarters in West 29th Street, New York City, anxiously awaiting to hear as to how decisive a victory Comrade Ruthenberg was leading the left wing of Cleveland. When we learned of the magnificent success in the Cleveland Socialist Party under the able leadership of Comrade Ruthenberg, we felt and we knew that now we were assured of a national organized left wing movement.

Then at the Left Wing National Conference [New York, June 21-24, 1919]. Here I vividly recall how it was Comrade Ruthenberg who stood out as the towering revolutionist. He gave us a certain concreteness, positiveness, and Bolshevik poise and confidence in our deliberations.

At the first Communist Party convention in the Smolny House on Blue Island Avenue, Chicago, in September 1919. Here he led the struggle for unity of all Communist forces and against the left sickness of infantile Communism. It was only when Comrade Ruthenberg declared that he would serve as secretary of the Communist Party that our first Communist Central Executive Committee in America felt sure that we were going to lay the foundations for the development of a Mass Communist Party in the United States.

The greatest forward step in the history of the American labor movement was the founding of the Communist Party. Comrade Ruthenberg was the leader of this forward step. When we speak of a Communist Party in America, the bulwark, the citadel of world im-

perialism, we speak of a Communist Party living and fighting under the most tremendous difficulties. The existence and growth of a Communist Party in America is of paramount international significance. Comrade Ruthenberg's decisive role in the American Communist movement, as its founder and leader, makes him an outstanding leader of the international working class movement.

No wonder that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union tells us:

We deeply grieve with you at the loss of Comrade Ruthenberg, leader of your Party and of the international labor movement, whose ashes will rest beneath the Kremlin together with the heroes of the October Revolution.

Yes, Comrade Ruthenberg died fighting and working for the victory of the American proletariat and the working class of the world.

Came the great steel strike. General Wood is leading his cohorts of highly armed, uniformed, strikebreakers — American soldiers — to smash the ranks of the workers. Comrade Ruthenberg's mighty revolutionary appeal in the slogan "Fight against the government — strikebreaker" aroused and inspired the thousands of steel workers of Gary to the most valiant resistance displayed in the whole strike.

Comrade Ruthenberg's courage in the class war was unbounded. Some of the best years of his life he spent in jail. There was an imperialist war; Comrade Ruthenberg was the first to go to jail in resisting it. The left wing of the Socialist Party was to be organized; Comrade Ruthenberg went to jail for playing the leading role in organizing the revolutionary forces.

I recall a scene at Bridgman [Michigan, Aug. 22, 1922]. Comrade Ruthenberg was directing the organization of the comrades leaving the grounds. I said, "Come along." I begged Comrade Ruthenberg to go in our troupe. He said, "No, I'll stay until all are gone. I must do that." The splendid services Comrade Ruthenberg rendered to the American working class in his exemplary conduct in the Bridgman trial are inestimable. It was these services of Comrade Ruthenberg that made possible the legalization, at least for the present, of Communism in America.

Then the Labor Party. Here Comrade Ruthenberg was the pacesetter. The Labor Party movement in America is of immeasurable importance not only for the American working class but for the workers of the world. We need only look at America's role today to see why

this is so. Above all others Comrade Ruthenberg was free from error and was the undisputed leader of our Party in arriving at a correct policy on this most important question which our Party has faced and is still facing.

Comrade Ruthenberg was a realist, in the Marxist-Leninist sense of the word. The greatest progress in the history of our Party has been made since the 1925 convention. This progress of breaking the isolation in which our Party found itself after the 1924 election, of beating back the drive to expel our members from the unions, of reorganizing the Party on the Bolshevik basis, of penetrating the basic unions of the American Federation of Labor, of leading strikes, of organizing the unorganized, in all these activities, in all this progress, Comrade Ruthenberg was the undisputed leader.

Let us listen again to some of his realistic slogans: The bourgeoisie had ordered the war; Comrade Ruthenberg replied "Down with conscription!"

There was an election campaign; Comrade Ruthenberg said to the workers: "Make this election count in your fight!"

The American army was mobilized against Mexico; Comrade Ruthenberg inspired and organized thousands of workers with the slogan: "Stop the invasion of Mexico!"

Our imperialists yelled "Make the world safe for democracy!"; Comrade Ruthenberg mobilized thousands of workers under the slogan: "Make the world safe for the workers!"

Workers were being sent to jail by our war profiteers; Comrade Ruthenberg heroically replied: "We will win even in jail."

Yes, Comrade Ruthenberg was a Leninist. He understood the essence of and possessed the key to Leninism, the science of the World Revolution. Comrade Ruthenberg knew how to link up the smallest, immediate, most elementary, everyday need of the workers with the biggest, most fundamental, revolutionary objectives of the whole proletariat.

Last but not least, the American working class owes primarily to the untiring energies of Comrade Ruthenberg that we today have a militant fighting Communist daily — *The Daily Worker*.

We will consolidate our ranks for carrying on the revolutionary work in the indomitable spirit of Comrade Ruthenberg. His unbounded revolutionary courage will forever encourage us.

The American working class has never before witnessed so great a devotion to its class interests. This we will remember because Com-

rade Ruthenberg was and remains the undisputed leader of our Party — the undisputed and outstanding fighter for the interests of the working class. Comrade Ruthenberg died in overworking himself for the living cause of the international working class — Communism.

When we feel the pains so unbearable, Comrades, we must remember that our responsibilities are increased by many, many times.

For myself, as an active Party member, I have to be worthy in my future Party work of my guide and leader, Comrade Ruthenberg. Than this, I have no other wish. I give thanks that I have had the priceless opportunity of working so closely with the heroic leader of our Party for so many years.

Let us close our ranks in this moment of our unfathomable grief. Comrade Ruthenberg is no more. Comrade Ruthenberg has gone from our midst. My consciousness somehow or other refuses to accept his being gone. To me, the death of Comrade Ruthenberg is the most horrible crime of nature.

But let us go forward to battle with unbounded determination to win.

Yes, farewell Comrade Ruthenberg, farewell our leader!

Edited by Tim Davenport

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