

Thoughts on Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's Autobiography

By William Z. Foster

THE LONG-AWAITED autobiography of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn has finally appeared. Its title is *I Speak My Own Piece** and it covers Comrade Flynn's life and activities from her birth in 1890 down to the post-World War I period of 1920-27. It will be followed eventually by another volume, which will deal with her later role, especially her experiences as a Communist fighter and leader. The present very important and moving book appears while Comrade Flynn is serving a three-year term in the Federal Women's Reformatory in Alderson, West Virginia, a frame-up victim under the infamous Smith Act. The book is written in the typically clear, warm, colorful style of our Comrade Flynn and shows her unquenchable fighting spirit. It is a vital document of the American class struggle.

Comrade Flynn's book is a grass-roots account of a front-line fighter in one of the most important eras in the history of the working-class movement in this country. It makes no elaborate statistical or theoretical presentation of the period, but instead takes the reader right onto the blazing firing line of the class struggle. The book contains a wealth of

valuable human and historical material, written by one who was a very active participant in the many bitter struggles described and analyzed. It is a book which should be read by all worker-fighters, especially by the young, and particularly in this period when so many misleaders of labor are trying to confuse the workers into believing that the class struggle has virtually ceased to exist in the United States.

I Speak My Own Piece has as its basic structure the life and work of Comrade Flynn, and it is built upon the foundation of the bitter American class warfare of the period. In its larger aspects it is the story of the making of a Communist leader in the furnace of the class battles of the working class.

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who is one of the great labor women of America, comes of a proletarian Irish family with a long record of struggle in the old country. Indeed, many of the finest passages in the book relate to the national revolutionary movement in Ireland. Elizabeth took naturally to the struggle of the

* Masses & Mainstream, Inc., New York. 332 pages. Cloth \$2.75, paper \$1.75.

American workers. Already at the age of 16 she had become a brilliant and well-known labor speaker and had embarked upon her principal work in the working-class struggle. Almost immediately, she blossomed forth as one of the most effective orators and agitators ever produced by the American labor movement. Beautiful, eloquent, glowing with fighting spirit, and infused with a boundless revolutionary enthusiasm, Comrade Elizabeth was a real inspiration and a power in all the strikes and other struggles of the workers in which she participated. She was indeed "The Rebel Girl," as Joe Hill called her. Over the period dealt with in the book she had a most effective setting for her activities in the heroic Industrial Workers of the World, of which she was long a member. It was the writer's good fortune to meet her for the first time in 1909, during the hard-fought free speech fight in Spokane, Washington, in which she played an active role.

Among the most important features in Comrade Flynn's new book are the many vivid pictures she paints of the great strikes of those times. With her warm and vibrant personality, she has caught the true working-class spirit of these struggles, and with great skill she has pictured them faithfully in the pages of her book. Her portrayal of such epochal strikes as those of Lawrence, Paterson, McKeesport, and elsewhere, of the many bitter free speech

battles, and of the heroic fight of the I.W.W. against World War I, are unforgettable pictures of the workers' indomitable struggle against cold-blooded and ruthless American capitalism.

Other high points in the book are the many detailed and colorful studies which Comrade Flynn presents of working-class leaders in the crucial period of labor history with which she is dealing. Such brave and effective figures as Bill Haywood, Gene Debs, Vincent St. John, Frank Little, Joe Hill, Mother Jones, Mother Bloor, Tom Mooney, James Connolly, Jim Larkin, Anita Whitney, Daniel De Leon, Charles E. Ruthenberg, and many others, come alive again in her book and carry on their vital work. Miss Flynn's volume is one of the very best sources for the young workers of the present times to come to know, to appreciate, and to understand these fighters who did so much to build the American labor movement.

The present article makes no attempt at being a formal or detailed review of Comrade Flynn's book. It aims rather to estimate generally the period with which the book deals, to analyze the position of the labor movement at the time, to sum up the work of the militant fighters, among whom Elizabeth Flynn was such a shining figure, and to indicate the extent to which the labor movement of today has solved the problems which then occupied the attention of the working class.

AMERICAN LABOR PRIOR TO THE WORLD WAR I PERIOD

The period of 1905 to 1927, roughly the years covered by Elizabeth Flynn in her book, was one of stormy and ruthless advance by American imperialism. From the mid-nineties, the big trusts had been growing rapidly, pushing aside small business, smashing down the rebellious farmers, and subjugating the working class to the most ruthless exploitation and oppression. During World War I, American monopoly capital, the only real victor in that war, took another long leap ahead toward its goal of domination of the world, to which it was already bending its attention. This deceptive path it was to follow with increasing avidity and aggressiveness, until it ran into its first major obstacle in the great world economic crisis beginning in late 1929.

In this drive ahead for international mastery, American imperialism had definitely set as an objective to keep the American working class and other toiling elements thoroughly disorganized, confused, and repressed. This was a time when the open-shop drive was going on at full blast, the basic, trustified industries were almost completely unorganized, and the trade unions, blasted by the courts with injunctions, attacked by hordes of strike-breakers, company unions, company gunmen and undercover spies, and betrayed by reactionary leaders, embraced only the more skilled fringes of the working

class. Upon the eve of the United States entering World War I, in April, 1917, the A. F. of L., Railroad Unions, I.W.W. and Independents, all told, totaled less than 3,000,000 members.

The two decades covered by Miss Flynn's book were crowded with bitter and fiercely fought struggles: strikes, organizing drives, labor defense cases, political campaigns, and anti-war struggles. She deals eloquently with many of the most outstanding of these class battles, including such memorable fights as the fierce struggle of the Chicago Teamsters in 1905, the semi-civil wars of the metal miners of the West between 1895-1910, the bloodily repressed strikes of the coal miners of Colorado, Alabama, and West Virginia all through this period, the great Lawrence strike of 1912 and the big Passaic and Paterson strikes of textile workers shortly afterward, the historic four-year strike of the workers on the Harriman Lines, beginning in 1911, the many wartime strikes, and the big series of strikes in the years immediately following World War I, in meat packing, steel, auto, railroads, printing, textile, building trades, clothing, etc. During the war, by active struggle, the unions ran their total membership up to some 4,500,000 members; but in the big 1918-1922 attempt of the open-shop employers to destroy the labor movement, they lost almost all of their wartime gains. In this massive class warfare, no organization covered itself with more glory than did

the I.W.A., in which Elizabeth Flynn was a prominent fighter.

In this period the industries were veritable slaughterhouses, with safety precautions at a minimum. The workers in the basic industries, overwhelmingly foreign born, hard-driven and underpaid, were treated little better than working cattle. Against these frightful conditions, they fought back in many great strikes, with a courage and determination which set the tone for the whole labor movement. The American class struggle of the time was extremely violent, with the employers sticking at nothing to crush labor.

The most brutally outraged section of the people were the Negro masses, who were overwhelmingly sharecroppers and common laborers. Almost daily, reports came of Negroes being lynched in the South—shot, burned, or hanged. The shameful Jim Crow system prevailed all over the country in its crassest forms, worst of all in the South. And the tragedy was that the trade unions generally did not realize that all these outrages against the Negro people were also the basic concern of the white workers. As Comrade Flynn says, they did little or nothing to combat and to correct the whole monstrous situation. Especially the I.W.W., the United Mine Workers, the Left wing in the A. F. of L. unions in meat packing, and, during the twenties, the developing Communist movement, fought to protect the trade union and other rights of Negro workers.

THE MILITANT FIGHT OF THE LEFT WING

One of the most basic aspects of the labor movement during the period described by Elizabeth Flynn was the vigorous and relentless struggle conducted by the broad Left wing against the corrupt and reactionary Gompers bureaucracy, which dominated the labor movement throughout these years. The Gompers clique, whose blatant and open corruption amazed and shocked the labor movement of all countries, was locked in class collaboration with the bosses, and was a definite part of the employers' machinery for dominating and exploiting the working class.

Already at the turn of the century, the monopoly capitalists had become quite aware that if they were to keep the working class weak and demoralized, they must incorporate the treacherous trade-union leadership into their service. Their first big organized step in this direction was the formation of the National Civic Federation, launched in 1896 in Chicago. The plan was to cripple organized labor by enveloping the union leadership in a network of its committees, which would preach the stifling doctrine of "the identity of interests of capital and labor," and would strive to strangle every manifestation of working class militancy. Mark Hanna, August Belmont, and many other big capitalists backed the new organization. Sam Gompers became its vice president,

while John Mitchell and numerous other key union leaders also walked into this trap for the working class.

The broad Left wing for many years carried on the sharpest struggle against the Gompers machine, the worst expression of which was its affiliation to the hated Civic Federation. The Socialist Party, particularly its more Left-wing elements, fought the Gompersites tirelessly. This fight reached a high point in the 1912 Convention of the A. F. of L., where Max Hayes, the Socialist candidate against Gompers for A. F. of L. President, polled 5073 votes against 11,974 for Gompers. With the rise of the Communist movement in 1919, the Right-wing Socialists abandoned their "fight" against the Gompers machine and made their peace with that corrupt clique. Thenceforth, the struggle against the Gompers machine was led by the Communists, and by the Trade Union Educational League—a body with a Syndicalist origin, but which worked cooperatively with the Communists.

The I.W.W. was one of the most vital aspects of the general Left-wing war against Gompersism, both organizationally and ideologically. This fight was also directed, not less militantly, against the Right Socialist allies and appeasers of the Gompers outfit. The I.W.W., however, took the sectarian line of trying to eliminate Gompersism and its craft unionism, by launching a new labor movement based upon industrial unionism, thus making a head-on attack upon the A. F. of L. and other reactionary craft unions and leaders.

The I.W.W. waged many heroic struggles along the lines of this general program. These Elizabeth Flynn portrays in her new book, and she makes the characteristic indomitable spirit of the I.W.W. pulsate through her pages. But all its heroism could not make the I.W.W. succeed in the face of its powerful enemies and especially of its own basic mistakes in policy, which were generally of a Leftist character. By the early 1920's, that organization was no longer a real factor in the American labor movement.

The I.W.W. was the chief American manifestation of the strong Syndicalist trend which developed upon a world scale during the first two decades of the twentieth century. This movement received its clearest expression at the 1906 Amiens congress of the General Confederation of Labor of France. Following the marked successes of that organization, the Syndicalist trend spread to many countries, including the United States, where it decisively shaped the doctrines of the I.W.W. and also deeply influenced the Left wing of the American Socialist Party.

Historically, the Syndicalist trend tried to replace the reactionary Right Social Democracy, which then dominated the world labor movement. Syndicalism set as its ultimate revolutionary goal a trade-union state, and it proposed to achieve its goal by the general strike. But in its drive for world working-class leadership Syndicalism failed, a victim of its many semi-anarchist failings, including a gross underestimation of political ac-

tion, its dual unionism, a lack of centralized organization and firm discipline, its reckless handling of the general strike weapon, its sectarian methods of dealing with the question of religion in the labor movement, and its various other deviations and shortcomings. The eventual successful Left challenge to world-wide Right-wing Social Democracy came not from Anarcho-Syndicalism, but from Communism, based upon the teachings of the great Lenin. This is attested to by the fact that today the big majority of the world's labor movement has Communist leadership.

Significantly, in summing up her experiences down to the years of the ending of her book, Comrade Flynn thus explains her affiliation with the Communist Party. She says, "My twenty-one years of previous activities . . . led me irrevocably to join the Communist Party in 1937." This was the correct basic conclusion to be drawn from her life experience in the class struggle. It was the conclusion arrived at by vast numbers of Syndicalists and Left Socialists all over the world, including the present writer.

PROGRESS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

Anticipating somewhat Comrade Flynn's eventual second volume, it may be fitting for us to review here briefly the general progress that has been made by the labor movement during the generation that has elapsed since the time at which she ends

her first volume. This will enable us to measure the harvest, in the shape of labor's advances, that has come from the militants' sowing of the seed during that period of struggle of 1905 to 1927, which Elizabeth Flynn has covered in her book. The progress achieved has been primarily a victory of the Left-wing forces over Right-wing trends in the labor movement.

During the past thirty years the labor movement in this country has registered very important progress. But this has by no means been even and uniform in character; upon some fronts of the movement, organizational and ideological, there has been much greater progress than upon others. Nor has the progress been a steady growth; rather it has developed in fits and starts, with some lesser periods of retrogression, as during the late 1920's, sandwiched in between. The basic progress was made during the years of 1933-46, in tune with the current world struggle of the workers against menacing fascism. At present, despite the approaching A. F. of L.-C.I.O. merger, however, the advance of the labor movement is proceeding at a relatively much slower pace.

The most important progress of organized labor in this country during the past generation has been in the matter of the organization of the unorganized. During the period so vividly portrayed by Comrade Flynn, this was the most urgent and heart-breaking of all labor questions, with only a tiny fraction of the working class organized. But since then the

movement has leaped up numerically from about 3,000,000 to 16,000,000, a spectacular increase. The company union, a menace a generation ago, is now a relatively minor evil. This vast trade-union growth is all the more significant because it brought about the organization of the great open-shop, trustified industries, and because it linked together in organization the skilled and unskilled masses, including large numbers of Negro and women workers. It has also virtually solved, for the time being at least, the knotty question of industrial unionism, over which the Left wing—typified by Haywood, Debs, and De Leon—fought for forty years against the reactionary Gompersite craft unionists.

Along with the enormous growth and consolidation of the labor movement, there has also grown a new conception of working-class solidarity. During the period portrayed by Comrade Flynn, one of the worst of all evils was the Gompersite doctrine of the "sacredness" of trade-union contracts, a reactionary conception, which caused one set of unions in a given industry to remain at work while other related unions were striking. This "union scabbing" cost the workers the loss of hundreds, if not thousands, of strikes. One of the most valuable manifestations of the new industrial solidarity is the widespread refusal of union workers, despite their own separate contracts, to cross the picket lines of striking workers. This is rank and file industrial unionism

on the firing line. During this period, strike tactics have been also much improved, with mass picketing, involvement of the strikers' families, worker-singing, and the like, all of which methods, common today, were anathema to the Gompersite bureaucrats of a generation ago.

One of the greatest steps forward by organized labor during the past generation has been its more enlightened attitude toward the Negro people, although there is still room for much improvement in this sphere. As Comrade Flynn indicates, during the period with which she deals, the Gompersite and Right Socialists were callous to the bitter oppression and intensified exploitation to which the Negroes were being subjected. They even systematically barred Negro workers from industry and from most of the unions. But the labor movement of today presents a much-changed and more favorable picture. Over 1,500,000 Negroes are now members of trade unions. Trade union Jim-Crowism, expressed in color-bar constitutional provisions and the like, has been largely broken down. A new, brotherly, class spirit has developed between Negro and white workers. After tremendous struggles Negroes are newly entering into one industry after another, a beginning has been made in their entry into skilled trades, increasingly they are occupying official union positions, and the labor movement is becoming more sensitive to defending the Negro people against Jim Crowism of all

sorts. Of course, a great degree of advance is still necessary and yet to be won, and the attacks of the bosses are increasing, but the fact is that the credit for the big improvement in labor's solidarity is due primarily to the work of the Left-wing and the progressives; first of all, to the Communists. It has been won only in the face of systematic opposition and sabotage from the conservative top bureaucratic leadership.

The advance of the labor movement during the last generation has also registered itself in substantial economic and political concessions, wrung from the employers and their government. The most important of these has been the shortening of the workday from about 50 hours a week to about 40 hours. There has also been real progress in developing the system of social security and health and accident legislation; to most of which the reactionary Gompers machine, during the period covered by Comrade Flynn's book, was flatly opposed. There has also been an increased recognition by the employers and the government of the workers' right to organize. In the matter of real wages the workers, although they have at least maintained their ground, have not been able to curtail nor diminish the fabulous flow of profits into the pockets of the parasitic exploiters, who are now literally reeking with stolen wealth.

One of the fronts upon which, however, the workers have distinctly less progress to record has been in the creation of a more progressive

working-class leadership. This was one of the most militant fighting efforts of the Left wing and the mass of workers, in their never-ending struggle against the corrupt Gompers machine leaders of the time. These corrupt elements freely and openly peddled away strikes, robbed the union treasuries, ruled the unions at the point of the gun, often had open gangster affiliations, took bribes from employers, conspired with the companies to keep the workers unorganized, sabotaged the struggles of the unskilled, Negro and women workers, violently opposed the propagation of class consciousness and Socialism among the workers, assailed independent working class action, and left no stone unturned to hold the workers firmly under the control of the reactionary Republican and Democratic parties.

In this leadership sphere, too, there has undoubtedly been some progress, but not much. It is hard to discover any improvement in a Meany of today over a Gompers or a Green of yesterday. However, some of the worst, gangster-like features of the Gompers officialdom have been mitigated, and in at least some unions there is now definitely more trade-union democracy than before.

In any case, the demands and needs of the membership can no longer be ruthlessly ignored nor sold out as brazenly as before, particularly where economic struggle is concerned. These advances are largely due to the influx of the great masses of unskilled workers into the unions

and to the continual fight of the Left-wing and other progressives for union democracy. The trade-union movement, however, is still in the grip of reactionary officials, many of them actually capitalists. They are violent enemies of Socialism and ardent defenders of capitalism. Class collaboration is still the dominant philosophy of this top labor leadership. True, no longer is there such a crass exposition of the Gompersite doctrine of the "identity of the interests of capital and labor," nor the formation of such crude organs of capitalist control over the workers as the National Civil Federation of a generation ago; but the present close class collaboration tie-up of the imperialist-minded top A. F. of L. and C.I.O. leadership with monopoly capital, on the basis of an active support of Wall Street's drive for imperialist expansion and world domination, even at the cost of a world war, is no less dangerous and disastrous to the workers' basic class interests. Negative features of the generally progressive merger now taking place between the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. are the reactionary clauses in the proposed constitution, which would still further strengthen the hold of the Meany labor bureaucracy.

THE QUESTION OF WORKING CLASS POLITICAL ACTION

One of the spheres where American organized labor has the least progress to show over the situation of a generation ago is in the related

areas of working-class ideology and class political action. The United States is, in fact, the only major capitalist country in the world where the workers have not yet developed a powerful anti-capitalist consciousness and where the working class still has not produced its own mass class political party. In this vital respect, the intense campaign carried on by the militants of a generation ago for Socialism and for a broad working class party, as portrayed in Elizabeth Flynn's book, has borne only stunted fruit.

The present ideological-political backwardness of the American working class is due primarily to the economic factor. It is mainly a reflection of the restraining influence upon the workers of the rise of American imperialism, which expresses itself in relatively higher wages, in steadier employment, and the like. These influences, while affecting most deeply the upper, skilled aristocracy of labor, also react upon the less favored categories of workers. The whole working class is adversely affected by imperialist "prosperity" in both a material and an ideological way. That is, as the workers secure certain economic concessions without serious struggle, they lose much of their militancy and class consciousness, and begin to absorb paralyzing bourgeois illusions. Marx and Engels long ago noted these negative effects of imperialism upon the British working class. During the 1840's the English workers, in their historic Chartist movement, displayed a strong, revolutionary fighting spirit;

but in succeeding decades, with the current upward swing of British imperialism, their labor movement and its leadership lost very much of the fighting spirit and proletarian outlook. This passing period was what Engels called the forty years sleep of the British working class.

The American working class is now passing through a somewhat similar experience, based upon the temporary rise of American imperialism. While the workers of this country undoubtedly have much economic militancy, and a strong sense of their class power and of their class position in society, and no longer is there to be heard among them the primitive Gompers' slogan, "No politics in the unions," they have nevertheless lost much in militant class consciousness and they have become deeply infected by bourgeois (Keynesian - Rooseveltian) illusions about capitalism being a progressive society. Forty years ago unquestionably there was a far more extensive propagation of Marxist principles in the trade unions and a much more ready reception of them by the workers than there is today. All this constitutes a dangerous setback for Marxism-Leninism, one which must be noted, studied, understood, and combatted. Keynesism is the most serious challenge ever faced by Marxism in this country.

A dramatic expression of the lessened receptiveness by the workers in the United States to Marxism in recent years has been especially demonstrated by the slow growth of

Marxist political organizations. The Socialist Party, which was once the Marxist party, dried up and disintegrated until now it has practically disappeared. And the real workers' Marxist organization, the Communist Party, whose very foundation in 1919 represented a great step forward by the workers, has had a relatively slow growth. The Socialist Party failed to defend the working class, and the Communist Party made many sectarian mistakes and it has been bitterly persecuted by the government. But these factors of themselves could not have brought about the disintegration of the former party, and the retarded pace of the latter. The underlying cause has been the corrupting influence upon the working class of American imperialism.

POLITICAL WEAKNESS OF WORKING CLASS

The political weakness of the American working class is especially dramatized by its failure to produce a broad mass Labor-Farmer Party. Forty years ago this situation was usually explained upon the grounds that the American working class was too feebly organized in the trade-union field, that the working class was lacking in solidarity, being made up of workers speaking different languages, from all over the world, and that millions of these workers, foreign born, were without the vote. But in the interim since that time these negative conditions have been practically overcome—the

workers have built powerful trade unions, the foreign-born toilers have in the main learned English and have also secured the vote—but still there is no mass Labor-Farmer Party.

After about 1907 a strong working-class political movement was developed under the leadership of the Socialist Party which, with Debs as its Presidential candidate, eventually polled 919,551 votes in 1920. This movement was later topped when the Conference for Progressive Political Action, made up of trade unionists, farmers, and middle class elements, rolled up 4,822,323 votes for LaFollette in 1924. However, these movements were largely washed out by the counter influences of rising American imperialism, aided, as always, by the opposition of their capitalist aides, the reactionary trade-union bureaucracy.

But signs indicate that the American working class will soon step up its political progress to a scale comparable with its marked trade union progress of the past two decades. This new political movement manifests itself by the organization and activities of labor and other progressive forces inside the old parties, particularly the Democratic Party. The development of this movement is being brought about basically because of the steadily worsening position of American imperialism. The latter's program of world domination through war is obviously bankrupt and its economic situation is displaying signals of fatal disease. These

signs indicate that the American economic and political system is becoming more and more entangled in the coils of the fatal general crisis of the world capitalist system. The current American "prosperity" is based upon sand. Despite its imposing and seemingly solid facade, American imperialism is stricken with fundamental weakness.

The general crisis of capitalism, implying a progressive breakdown of that world system, began to manifest itself with the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and the onset of the great Russian Revolution. This universal capitalist crisis has two major aspects, organically related. The first of these is the enormous intensification of all the internal contradictions of capitalism—that is, strikes, colonial revolts, economic crises, dog-eat-dog competition, and imperialist wars; and the second aspect is the world growth of the Socialist nations which have split away from the orbit of the international capitalist system. Both of these forces combined are growing fatal to world capitalism, of which American imperialism is a part.

CAPITALIST AND SOCIALIST SECTORS

What is being witnessed in the world at the present time is, on the one hand, a rapid decline of world capitalism, marked by the splitting away of many countries from the system and the breaking down of the capitalist colonial system; and

on the other hand, a swift increase in strength of the Socialist sector of the world. Already it is being discussed as to which of these two world sectors is now actually the stronger.

Capitalism, of course, still is very strong, and it controls considerably the greater portion of the world's territory, of its population, and especially of its industrial output—that is, if we include in its score the big colonial and semi-colonial lands, which, however, are tending more and more away from capitalism. It would be the gravest error to underestimate this great capitalist strength and with it the workers' continuing hard struggle against that system.

On the other hand, the Socialist world is also very strong and it would be no less a serious blow to fail to take this strength fully into account. The Socialist countries, embracing about 900,000,000 people and occupying some one-third of the earth, now have much stronger economic systems intrinsically and also far more solid political governments than have the countries of capitalism. The peoples within the nations of the Socialist world are closely knit together ideologically, in contrast to those of the capitalist world, which are ravaged with class antagonisms and hostilities. In the military arena, too, so strong have the Socialist countries now become that, undoubtedly, were decadent capitalism to force the outbreak of a world war, the Socialist forces would emerge from it the victors. The Socialist peoples also

have a real solidarity among themselves upon an international scale, whereas the capitalist lands are honeycombed with innumerable contradictions and conflicts. And their ideological support of Socialism is far more solid than is the allegiance of the peoples under capitalism toward the social system under which they are living.

What is more vital to understand is that the relationships of strength in all these world spheres—regarding territorial extent, number of population, size of industrial output, political stability, strength, international cohesion, and ideological unity and firmness—the balance is swinging ever faster to the side of the Socialist sector of the world. And when the capitalist world becomes involved in the great economic crisis which is now brewing, and to which the Socialist countries are immune, the swing of the world's peoples toward Socialism will become even more accentuated.

As the social system of capitalism goes down, the other world system, Socialism, goes up. Just how and when the passing point between the two systems will be reached, in their constantly shifting relationships, and at what stage Socialism will become definitely the world's dominant social system, is still a matter of speculation. But it has now, nevertheless, become a question for practical political consideration. Marxists will have to give this important matter increasing attention. Certainly, the point where capitalism will sink in-

to the minor position, in respect to its general strength, will soon be reached. Only when this new center of world political gravity has obviously shifted to the Socialist side will it be possible properly to evaluate historically such important events as the ending of the Korean war by popular pressure and the enforced laying aside of the war threat of American imperialism at the July, 1955, conference of the Big Four at Geneva.

Once world Socialism passes the "summit," or balance point of strength, in its historical relationships with world capitalism and it moves, so to speak, into the "downhill pull," its rate of progress will be greatly stepped up. From then on the world will witness even faster shifts in the ratios between the two systems in all spheres. The workers in the capitalist countries, facing the hardships of a decaying system, will become irresistibly attracted to Socialism. At the same time solidarity of the underdeveloped countries with the Socialist lands will constantly increase. We must contemplate important changes in working-class strategy and

tactics in such a situation. By the same general token, ideological decay in the capitalist countries will increase, and every feature and phase of the general crisis of capitalism will be deeply intensified. Kaganovich, Soviet Communist leader, said recently, "Whereas the nineteenth century was the century of capitalism, the twentieth century is the century of the triumph of Socialism and Communism."

* * *

It has taken the international Socialist world about a century, since Marx and Engels, in the *Communist Manifesto*, first gave the movement form, program, and consciousness, to reach its present status of development; but once the "summit" of its task is passed, it will take far less time, only a fraction of it, in fact, to accomplish the rest of the job. We are probably much closer than we calculate to the full realization of the great goal, towards which the brave men and women in Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's book were so gallantly struggling in the face of seemingly impossible odds.