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Roosevelt's 'Security' Program  
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Why the Saar Was Lost  
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Reviews of Wells, Schmalhausen,  
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**A MONTHLY ORGAN OF REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM**

# THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

(With which is merged *Labor Action*)

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# The Problem of the Labor Party

**A** GREAT CHANGE has come over the policies of the communist party in the United States, in consonance with the Rightward swing of the whole Third International. Where, only yesterday, the party elders thundered against the blasphemous suggestion that the united front should be made from organization to organization, that the leadership of the socialist party and other labor organizations should be directly and formally approached—they now pant pathetically at the heels of the National Executive Committee of the S. P. Whereas the C. P. convention as late as the spring of 1934 set itself the task of building up the “revolutionary T.U.U.L.” and of establishing the “Independent Federation of Labor”, it now hastens to dissolve every non-A. F. of L. union it ever had its hands on. But nowhere is the change as startling, both for completeness and abruptness, as in its policy with regard to a Labor party.

Best evidence on this score is offered by examining its old policy. In 1928, the prevailing line of advocating a labor party was laid on the table. By 1930, that is, at the height of the now totally ignored but unforgettable “third period”, it was taken off the table and slashed to ribbons. In the theses and resolutions presented by the March-April 1930 Plenum for the 7th national convention, we were told that the results of the economic crisis “destroy the reformist illusions with which the bourgeoisie attempted to deceive and pacify the workers [and] continually accelerates the narrowing of the very social basis of reformism” (p. 8). Reformism and its illusions are not only dying of social inanition, but “a revolutionary upsurge grips the working masses” (p. 9). There is precious little difference among the tottering “reformist organizations and elements, some of which (A. F. of L.) are *outright Fascist*,\* while others (socialist party, *Muste group* [!]) cover their Fascist activities with pseudo-radical phrases” (p. 11). The reactionaries have turned “the labor unions from instruments of struggle on behalf of the workers into instruments against the working masses and into *Fascist troops of capitalism*” (p. 11). If the C. P. has been at fault at all in this situation, then only because “it has been a mistake on our part that we did not sooner clearly analyze and characterize the *open Fascism of the A. F. of L.*” (p. 33).

Conclusion: “Any Labor party crystallization at this moment could have only [only!] the A. F. of L. unions, the socialist party and other social reformist organizations as a basis, or would be composed only of those already in sympathy with the communist party. A Labor party made up of social-Fascist organizations would not mean political separation of the workers from the capitalists but would mean the delivery of the workers to capitalist politics under the guise of a Labor party.” (P. 15.)

Neither the analysis nor the conclusion could be more sober, lucid or unassailable. Be that as it may, here was the C. P. policy on the Labor party till the end of 1934. It was so completely interred, that neither in his political report nor his summary at the April 1934 convention of the C. P., did Browder so much as mention the words “Labor party” or hint that it was or might become an issue. At the end of that very year, however, finding himself by chance in the city of Moscow, the same Browder was suddenly stunned by the realization that the workers of the United States, till then in the grip of a revolutionary upsurge, had begun to break away from the capitalist parties and were at the same

instant in the equally merciless grip of a Labor party upsurge.

Bursting with the new knowledge, he rushed home with such an effervescent anxiety to impart it to the masses that he felt it would be unjust to keep it from them long enough to consult with the presumable leadership of the party, the Central Committee, or the membership, much less to wait for their decision. The first revelation of the fact that the “party” had changed “its” policy and now favored the formation of a Labor party, was made at a public gathering in Washington on January 6. The Central Committee of the party, subsequently convened, put its predestined stamp of approval on the new line about two weeks later. Whether the formal detail of discussion and approval by the membership was attended to in the hustle and bustle has not yet been fully established—in any case, it could not have been considered very important. Only an incorrigible petty bourgeois democrat, we are now taught, wants to discuss a policy before executing it; your modern revolutionist carries it out first and then discusses it, if at all.

“We must change our negative position towards the Labor party question,” Browder explains, “which was determined by the absence of a practical mass movement which made it a practical problem.” (*Daily Worker*, Jan. 19, 1935.) But it was determined by exactly opposite considerations in 1930; the mass movement was indeed there, but the Labor party then could have as its base merely the A. F. of L., which was “outright Fascist”, the trade unions, which had been turned into “Fascist troops” and the “social Fascist” S. P. Trusting to short memories, Browder continues to point out that “Now there is a mass movement and it is a question of our party’s participation among these masses and influencing their course”.

With that gift of contempt for consistency which elevates Browder above the common run of men, he nonchalantly denies the above assertion a few weeks later, and points out: “There does not yet exist a clearly-defined Labor party movement. There is only the beginning mass break-away, within which a struggle is going on between two main class forces.” (*Daily Worker*, Feb. 14, 1935.)

But regardless for the moment of whether the mass movement for the Labor party does or does not yet exist, the new policy of the C. P. most certainly does. It merits an examination which we think will not prove fruitless.

\* \* \* \*

One need not go far afield to study the background of the question: what is the relationship between a revolutionary Marxian party and a Labor party? The American movement has a rich and instructive history in this field, and even a condensed recapitulation of it here will greatly facilitate an appraisal of the problem as presented today. Indeed, the latter cannot be achieved without the former.

In 1922, the just organized legal communist party (the Workers party) put forward for the first time the slogan for a Labor party and launched a campaign to realize it. The reasons for the new policy were fourfold: 1) there was not only a strong Labor party sentiment among the workers, but a national Farmer-Labor party, strongly supported by many trade union bodies, actually existed; 2) the railroad Brotherhoods, together with other national unions and farm organizations, had launched the Conference for Progressive Political Action in Chicago in February 1922; 3) the recently

\*All italics in this article are the author’s.

adopted united front tactic of the Third International; 4) Lenin's conditional advice to the British Communists to seek affiliation with the Labour party.

Easier to understand in retrospect than to have perceived it at that time, the so-called Labor party movement developed simultaneously and in significant combination with the so-called Third party movement. The former may be summed up as the first post-war reformist political expression of the discontent of the workers with the capitalist régime and its two parties, dissatisfaction with the hoary official policy of "reward your friends and punish your enemies", a groping towards independent working class expression on the political field. The latter was the movement of middle class protest, chafing under the yoke of the parties of monopolist capitalism, dominated by the labor bureaucracy, the survivors of Bull Moose Progressivism and the latter-day representatives of western Populism, all of whom piously abhorred the idea of independent working class political organization and action with sufficient zeal to counteract any movement in that direction. Anxious to break with the sectarian past of their underground existence, apprehensive lest they remain isolated from the political development of the masses, the communists flung themselves into the campaign for a Labor party, with a rising overestimation of its hold upon the masses, its distinctive class character, its possibilities and its virtues.

The original conception of the Labor party was that it would be, roughly, the American equivalent of its British namesake, based on the trade union movement whose political organization it would be, reformist in character, afflicted with all the fundamental defects of its British counterpart, but representing, as did the latter in its early days, the separation of the working class from the bourgeoisie on the political field. In it, the communists would play the rôle corresponding in this country to that suggested by Lenin to the communists in England. "A Labor party will grow because of its formation by the organized workers," read the official party pamphlet in October 1922. "A Labor party would deserve that name only if it were formed by the trade unions. A Labor party of any other form would be a mere caricature, a political swindle, and a miscarriage. A Labor party should be launched *only if it is created by the trade unions.*" The basis for such a Labor party seemed to exist in virtue of the fact that the idea had been formally endorsed by any number of international unions, state federations, local unions, central bodies, etc.

In December 1922, the second conference of the C.P.P.A. took place in Cleveland, where the labor bureaucracy in control, with the collaboration of the socialist party, kicked out the official communist delegation which had come there to advocate the formation of the Labor party. The C.P.P.A., which really danced at the end of strings held in the grip of the LaFollette gang in the Senate, rejected the Labor party idea out of hand. From that time on, the Workers party's conceptions underwent an imperceptible but important modification. Whereas it had originally been thought that if not the whole then at least the bulk of the A. F. of L. would launch the Labor party, a turn was now made according to which the new party would be launched upon the initiative of the W. P. and the pro-Labor party minority in the A. F. of L. The center of the latter was the leadership of the Chicago Federation of Labor—Fitzpatrick, Nockels, Buck—who were also the leaders of the existing Farmer-Labor party. With this somewhat altered policy, the W.P. commenced what became known as the "Chicago orientation".

Significantly enough, the closer the communists came to an organizational realization of their slogan, the further away from it moved the fundamentally pro-Labor party elements (that is, those who did not regard it merely as a tactical step forward, but as the all-sufficient goal—the "pure and simple" Labor or Farmer-Labor partyites). The enthusiasm of Fitzpatrick and Co. for the

Labor party, in which they saw the communists participating ever more actively if not decisively, waned in direct proportion as the enthusiasm waxed in the Workers party over the enchanting prospect of getting rich quickly by manoeuvring the non-communists into forming a Labor party dominated by it. For the convention called to launch the new party, the W. P. toiled like Trojans to round up delegates from all conceivable organizations under its control. The Fitzpatrick crowd came to the July 4, 1923 convention only with credentials from the masses behind them—that is, whatever masses there were—whereas the W.P. came with masses of credentials. And credentials were trumps. Horrified by the red monster they had nurtured and the prospect that now stared them grimly in the face of forming a Labor party controlled by communists who demanded little more than an endorsement of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Fitzpatrick, Nockels and their associates made a right-about-face, denounced their friends of yesterday for having "injected themselves into the picture" and—in a word—withdrawn from the whole enterprise. Unabashed?—no, that is too negative; let us rather say: deliriously enthusiastic over the conquest, the W. P. and its assembled communist auxiliaries founded the famous "Federated Farmer-Labor party".

The estimate of 500,000 organized members of the F.F.-L.P., arrived at by counting communist noses over and over again in a closed circle, did not help the still-born product of the July 4 parturition break out of the increasing isolation that hemmed it in from all sides of the labor movement. Where yesterday, the average trade unionist or third-rank union official had spoken quite favorably about a Labor party, the mere appearance of the F.F.-L.P. in the vicinity now brought him (unless, of course, he was already sympathetic to the communists and their party) to a frigid silence or, in many cases, to a heated repudiation of his old pro-Labor party views. The actually formed party was, alas! not at all like the robust creature of the first communist conception, and it shivered in the icy atmosphere that encircled it. Indeed, it painfully resembled the W. P. in too many respects, and the political or organizational distinction between the two was not heightened by the fact that the national secretary of the F.F.-L.P. was a prominent communist or that its weekly paper was written in the same office, printed in the same plant, and contained the self-same views as the weekly paper of the W.P. In the Moscow discussions later on, Karl Radek said that the Federated was seven-eighths fantasy. The other eighth, he it added, was composed of the communists trying to look respectable.

The real father, mother and midwife of the Federated was John Pepper, international adventurer, intriguer *par excellence*, destroyer of revolutions and movements in Hungary, Germany, America and China, man of many principles and none at all, and in that period the political leader of the W. P. At the meeting of the party Central Committee on August 24, 1923, he presented a document which was at once a justification of the Federated and a rationalization of its narrowness unique in the radical movement. Not only because of its cabinet history at the time, but even more because it has such a direct bearing on the Labor party discussion today, the document, known thenceforward as the "August thesis", deserves a few explanatory remarks.

"The development of the Labor party in America," it read, "takes a different form from that in Great Britain. The British Labour party was formed . . . from above by the officials of the trade union movement. . . . The Labor party movement in the United States today is a rank and file movement."

The large trade union movement which was expected to be the base of the party was not represented in the Federated? Yes. "The July 3 convention revealed the fact that the big International unions did not come, that only local unions and city central bodies were represented, that in fact the Labor party today is a rank and file proposition. It also showed another fact, namely, that the

rank and file is permeated with communist influence." It also showed, he added, that "not a single organized political group outside of the Workers party exists today which wishes to take up the fight for the Labor party on a national scale. . . . The Workers party has the historical task of becoming the leader of the Labor party movement in America".

What about the socialist party, and the rueful remnants of Fitzpatrick's organization, both of which continued to defend the idea of a Labor party? Let them go their way and we go ours, answered Pepper. "In America we have a number of political groups which fight for influence within the trade union movement. The attempt to gain influence upon the workers assumes in America the organizational expression of forming various labor parties. *The socialist party tries to form a Labor party. The old Farmer-Labor party tries to form another Labor party, the Workers party has helped in the formation of the Federated party.*"

Every party would have a Labor party of its own! Not only would each of them vary in the degree of its revolutionism or reformism in accordance with its patron, but—in view of the fact that the Federated was also trying to form a "wider" Labor party—the possibilities for expanding the number of rings in this bewildering circus were positively unlimited. But if the Federated did not become the mass Labor party originally dreamed of—what then? The fascinating genius of Pepper had a reply even for those who were being gnawed at by insidious doubt: "Its development may be the nucleus around which the mass party of labor will be formed or as a mass communist party." Come what might, you couldn't lose; a more air-tight proposition could not be imagined. If God were with us, and somehow the masses *did* stream to the Federated—why, we would have control of the mass party of labor; for had we not been thoughtful enough to get a communist majority elected to the executive committee in advance? If God were not with us but with one of the other Labor parties—why, then we would throw off the now needless disguise and reveal the Federated as the mass communist party! . . .

Some of the startled party leaders had by that time begun to meditate on what must have been the theme of the play on Napoleon which Pepper had written for production on the Budapest stage several years earlier. More important was the fact that they also meditated on the great changes that had come over the old Labor party policy of the party, the changes in the Labor party movement itself, and the concomitant growth of the distinctly Third party movement. The "August thesis" appeared more and more fantastic and devoid of reality, to say nothing of revolutionary Marxism. The thesis was vigorously defended by Pepper, Ruthenberg, Lovestone, Wolfe and Gitlow, and just as vigorously opposed by Foster, Cannon, Browder, Bittelman and Dunne. At the November 1923 meeting of the Central Committee, the thesis, under the barrage of the opposition, was reluctantly shelved and what later proved to be an unsatisfactory compromise resolution was adopted in its stead.

From this meeting on, however, the W.P. entered the third phase of its Labor party policy, subsequently designated as the ill-fated "Northwestern orientation". The original trade union, that is, proletarian support considered by the W.P. as the basis for the Labor party (which had, in passing, now become a Farmer-Labor party), had experienced such a drastic decline since the Federated convention as to be virtually non-existent. Labor party sentiment, and even more so Labor party organization, had never been more than negligible throughout the highly-industrialized, proletarian East—in New England, along the Atlantic Seaboard and as far inland as Pennsylvania and Ohio. Now, even the central western Labor party movement had waned. In pursuit of what was becoming more and more of a will-o'-the-wisp, the W. P. and its *alter ego*, the Federated, turned feverishly to the agrarian Northwest.

All that was left of an organized movement (they had always

been the really *organized* force) were the so-called Farmer-Labor parties of Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Washington, with groups of various sizes and importance in other agricultural states. As the ally of the communists in founding the national movement, the farmers now appeared in place of the Chicago Federation of Labor. The substitution was highly significant. The W.P. and its shadow continued to write emphatic resolutions about how quintessential it was for the new party to be a "class Farmer-Labor party" and "not a Third party", but the weighty theses left no visible impression upon the northwestern successors to the classic movements of middle class agrarian protest. Regardless of the speeches that may have swayed them at this or that meeting, or even the carefully prepared resolutions for which they may have been cajoled into voting, these groups were and remained—it could not have been otherwise—adjuncts of LaFollettism, a Third party movement. In real life, they no more fitted into the grandiose, over-clever manœuvres of Pepper to concoct a mass Labor party or a mass communist party behind the backs of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, than Pepper fitted into the communist movement. The incompatibility of the two partners in the new plan was realized dimly and even with some uneasiness by the W.P. leaders. Yet they hoped to cheat their way out of an inexorable antagonism of social movements by a bureaucratic opportunist manœuver. The results of it are a lesson and a warning to this very day!

The Wisconsin Sphinx, carefully playing his cards, had not yet committed himself openly to any course. He had not yet even concurred publicly in the growing clamor for "LaFollette for President". Although the "Farmer-Labor" parties of the Northwest were ever more obviously leaning in LaFollette's direction, Pepper figured out that by racing with time, these parties could be spurred to the organization of a national "mass, class Farmer-Labor party", together with the Federated; LaFollette would thus be cut off at the rear and the W.P. would not only have its national party but would ward off or weaken the possibilities of forming the "Third party". To take care of all eventualities, the November meeting of the Central Committee decided to enter into an "alliance" with the Third party movement. The decision was an involuntary acknowledgment that the movement to form a "class" Labor party, distinct from the revolutionary proletarian party as well as from the Third party, was lost. The decision in favor of the alliance "under certain specified conditions," wrote Bittelman subsequently, "*even to the extent of supporting LaFollette for the presidency*, was exclusively designed as a manœuver to combat LaFollettism and to save the Farmer-Labor elements for a Farmer-Labor party".

This last phase of the Labor party policy of the W.P. created an international scandal. Under pressure from Trotsky, the executive of the Third International rudely yanked the American party out of the morass into which it had plunged like a diver groping at the bottom for the pearls of a Labor party. The humiliating retreat was not made pleasanter by the fact that LaFollette himself unappreciatively launched a broadside at his self-sacrificing "allies", the communists, and at the idea of a Farmer-Labor party, even before the St. Paul convention at which it was to be formed. On June 17, 1924, the convention assembled with the massively credentialed hosts of the W.P. and its standard auxiliaries, plus the ragtag and bobtail of its agrarian confederates. The communists went unsmilingly through the solemn ritual of acting like innocent Farmer-Laborites and nominated a former Illinois miners' union official, Duncan MacDonald, for president, and a Washington cherry farmer, William Bouck, for vice-president. The Political Committee of the W.P. wrote a respectable, reformist program for them to run on. The first "monster campaign rally" in Chicago to launch the national campaign, was more than enough. The local campaign committee was 100% communist; the literature was distributed exclusively by communists; the hall was hired, paid for, and attended only by communists, who loyally shouted

themselves hoarse for "our candidates". On July 8, a greatly sobered Political Committee publicly announced that the Farmer-Labor party candidates would be withdrawn (much to the relief of both of them!) and that the campaign would henceforward be made by William Z. Foster and Ben Gitlow on an open communist ticket and in the name of the W.P. Ninety percent of the communist workers gave their first honest cheer in months. The "Farmer-Labor" masses never noticed the change—they had all gone over to LaFollette.

"The Farmer-Labor movement which we wanted to save from being swallowed by LaFollette was substantially a LaFollette movement," wrote a penitent and much wiser Bittelman in the official *post mortem* on the whole campaign. "To save it from LaFollette meant to win it for class struggle which, under the prevailing conditions, was the same as accepting the leadership of the Workers (Communist) party. And such a step the Farmer-Labor movement of the Northwest, predominantly agrarian and petty bourgeois, was very far from being ready to take. Our wrong decision with regard to the Third party, later corrected by the Communist International, was a direct result of our orientation upon the Farmer-Labor movement of the Northwest which was substantially a LaFollette movement. We attempted to save a Farmer-Labor soul which didn't exist and in the process we nearly lost our own communist soul." (*Workers Monthly*, Dec. 1924, p. 90.)

In the pamphlet just issued by the C.P., this development is entitled by Stachel "The LaFollette Trick" (*The Problem of a Labor Party*, p. 9). Bureaucrats accustomed to solving all problems and dispelling all obstacles by means of "tricks", fall naturally into the same superficial explanation of social or political phenomena in which others appear to have dealt similarly with problems and obstacles. But there was not much of a "trick" to LaFollette's easy success. Whoever hasn't learned more than that from the 1922-1925 events, hasn't learned much, and is sure to reproduce the same tragi-comedies in the year 1935. What appears to us to follow plainly from the experiences of the past, substantiated also by what can be seen in the country today, is the following conclusion:

There is no room in the present conditions of the class struggle for the stable, unartificial existence of a "class Labor" party (to say nothing of the fantastic two-class "class Farmer-Labor party") which is distinct from a third capitalist party as well as from the revolutionary party of the proletariat. The only genuine labor party is the party of revolutionary Marxism. Past experiences in this country—not to mention the experiences in other lands!—show that the evolution of the British Labour party, namely, its degeneration from a great progressive force which separated the proletariat politically from the bourgeoisie to a reactionary obstacle to progress which ties the proletariat politically to the bourgeoisie, is accomplished in the United States under conditions of capitalist decline in a far more telescoped period of time.

To attempt to foist upon the American revolutionary movement the obsolete advice given by Engels to the Marxist emigrants in the United States of fifty years ago, and to conclude from it that it is our task to found a Labor party now, is to do violence to the whole spirit of Marxism, is to ignore the tremendous changes that have taken place throughout the world (the United States not excepted) in capitalism, in the labor movement and in the revolutionary movement. Lovestone, for example, is perfectly willing to start at exactly the point where Engels left off in his letters to Florence Wischnewetzky in 1887, as if nothing had happened since that time!

The attempt, in theory and practise, to force the American working class, in 1935, to go through a faithful, mechanical repetition of every stage through which the British working class was obliged to pass at the beginning of the century, is to reveal a

blatant ignorance of scientific socialism and the laws of development of the labor movement. The British Labour party rose and was an indisputably progressive factor in the working class in the period of the rise of capitalism. Not only was it a "unique party", a bloc of organizations, with no program of its own, with no special discipline, with liberty of agitation for revolutionary groups within it, but, like all the reformist parties of the Second International before the war and regardless of how defectively, it contributed to the historical advancement of the proletariat as a class.

*Conditionally*, Lenin considered it possible even after the war to advise the British communists to seek affiliation with it because of its "unique" character, even though he emphasized that properly speaking it was a bourgeois party of workers and not a proletarian party. The opportunists are aiming to make it a "real party with local organizations and a program", argued the Communist International in Lenin's time, to "create a large opportunist party which is to retard the revolutionary development of the masses. If this tendency were to succeed, the Labour party would never afford the socialist organizations which form part of it the right to an individual communist policy, nor to the propagation of the revolutionary struggle. It would bind their freedom of action hand and foot. It is thus evident that no kind of organization seeking to carry out a communist policy could possibly belong to the Labour party. It would then become necessary, after a most energetic struggle against this tendency, to leave the Labour party and to endeavor to keep in touch with the working masses by means of increasing the communist activity in the trade unions, by detaching these trade unions from the Labour opportunist parties and persuading them to go over directly to communism". (*The I.L.P. and the Third International*, p. 53.)

As what would the American "Labor" party start: as the British Labour party of 1906 or of 1935? Closer, far closer to the latter date and condition than to the former! We mean of course a genuine "Labor" party, that is, a reformist party, with a reformist program, with a reformist leadership, and with the reformist unions (organizations, not individuals) at its base—assuming that one is to be established. Would such a party, in view of the British experiences and what we know to be the situation in this country, be of a kind that would meet the requirements for affiliation by a revolutionary Marxian party set out in 1920 by Lenin? In all likelihood, No. In any case, the attitude of the revolutionary party towards a genuine, mass "Labor" party would have to be determined not by what it may or may not be if and when it is formed, not by what we would like to have it be, but by what it would be once it was formed. For, *it is not the business of the revolutionary Marxists, above all in the present stage of the relationship between capitalist disintegration and social reformism, to initiate or to help organize and found in addition to their own party another party for the "second class citizens", for the "backward workers", a "Labor" party, i.e., a third capitalist party, even if composed predominantly of workers.*

Wherein would that golden-haired dream child common to the aspirations of Louis Waldman, Norman Thomas, Jay Lovestone and Earl Browder differ fundamentally from a "Third party", say from the 1924 LaFollette party or the Farmer-Labor party of Minnesota? In respect to program? Leadership? Composition? Methods? Goal? It would be interesting to learn what the concrete and detailed difference is presumed to be in all five respects!

Whoever hopes to establish or invent an essential difference is simply disregarding the unambiguous lessons of the past. What was clearly revealed more than ten years ago gives no reason for pessimism. It was not proved that the working class and even the farmers must inevitably fall under the influence of petty bourgeois demagogues of Third partyism in the struggle for hegemony between the latter and the revolutionary Marxists. Not at all! What

was proved is that in the battle between the revolutionary party and the third capitalist party for the support of the masses who are breaking away from the old bourgeois parties, the slogan of the "Labor" party—or even the slogan of the "mass, class Labor party" (whatever that is)—does not possess sufficient class vitality or distinction from the Third party to make it possible to wean the masses away from the latter by means of it. That vitally important task can only be accomplished under the banner and on the fighting program of the revolutionary proletarian party. Not, it goes without saying, by mere recruiting campaigns, but by the concrete leadership which such a party is able to offer the workers (in contrast to the petty bourgeois politicians and the trade union bureaucracy) in the course of their daily struggles for immediate demands.

The Labor party is not an abstraction; it must be considered concretely. Assuming that it is formed in the United States (and its creation is by no means a foreordained certainty, an inevitable stage the American workers must experience before they can think of revolutionary struggle!), it is more likely than not that it will take shape as a directly anti-revolutionary (*ergo*, anti-progressive) party. With a stormy forward march of the American masses, in the course of which they may skip "stages" with even greater ease and speed than their Russian brothers, the petty bourgeois reformers plus the socialist and trade union bureaucracy might conceivably form a "Labor" party for the express purpose of thwarting the progress of the working class. Those pseudo-revolutionists who are so frenziedly anxious to see a Labor party in the U. S. so long as it looks something like its British predecessor, undoubtedly have some "exceptional" surprises in store for them.

We speak of course of a "Labor" party in the true sense of the word. If it does not greatly resemble the fantasmagoria just brewed out of the witches' cauldron of Stalinism, that is hardly our fault, for such a "Labor" party as the C.P. now proposes to inflict upon the proletariat, never has been and never will be seen by God or man or beast or the elfin folk who see pretty near everything. "There is only one revolutionary party," declares the *Daily Worker* (February 16), "and that is the communist party." So the Labor party will be reformist? No, it continues. "This does not mean that the Labor party that the communists propose would be reformist." Then it will be revolutionary? No, answers Stachel, the "Labor party is not a revolutionary party" (*loc. cit.*, p. 19). Not revolutionary, not reformist! Won't this be a crea-

ture compared with which a live-historic ichthyosaurus would deserve as much attention as a sparrow? Then what will it be? According to Stachel again, it will be nothing more or less than "a genuine Labor party". A barrel of tar would be clearer than a Stalinist explanation. And what is its function? It will, to return to the *Daily Worker*, "lead the masses in their struggle for immediate demands. . . . Communists will point out to the workers that their revolutionary program is the further development of the minimum policy of the Labor party. They will always advocate the full revolutionary program of the communist party". If this galimathias means anything, it is that there is to be a strict division of labor: the Labor party is to lead the workers every day in their struggles for all their immediate demands—that's its job; the C.P. is to lead the workers on the day of the insurrection—that's its job. Whence it is clear that neither separately nor together are they capable of leading the workers in any struggle. According to Stachel, (p. 16), who drips light with every drop of ink, this Labor party, which is not revolutionary, it is true, but not reformist either, which is to exclude the trade union bureaucrats, Sinclair, Olson, the S.P. bureaucracy and even the Lovestoneites, which is, in a word, something we'd give a pretty penny to see in the flesh—will "really carry on the struggle for the workers for wage increases, for the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill, for the 30-hour week without reduction in pay, for the needs of the farmers, for the rights of the Negro masses, for the right to organize, strike, etc., against the growing menace of war and Fascism"! The Labor party that carries on a struggle (and a real one, too) against war and Fascism! If it can do all this (and probably other things as well), what worker will ask for more? What will be his need for the communist party? What indeed?

A veritable resurrection of Pepperism is what we have here, a little cruder, a little more vulgar, a little more opportunistic if that were possible. (By the way, it is touching to hear Lovestone damn Browder's queer Labor party policy; it is a clear case of author's envy, for Browder has merely plagiarized the Pepper-Lovestone August thesis!) Having liquidated all the theories of revolutionary Marxism, the C.P. is now engaged in liquidating itself. Another "Federated" is already projected. How long before we are offered another "LaFollette maneuver"? The patient are never unrewarded. Meanwhile, in its work of self-liquidation, we cannot but wish the Stalinists god-speed. M.S.

## Where Is Stalinism Leading Russia?

**T**HE GENERAL Turn to the Right. A new chapter is being opened in the history of the Soviet Union. To the majority, the shot which was fired at Kirov struck like thunder from a clear sky. Yet the sky was not at all clear. In Soviet economic life, despite its successes, to a large measure because of its successes, profound contradictions have accumulated which it is impossible not only to eliminate but even to mitigate by the sole means of issuing decrees and orders from above. At the same time there has been an extreme sharpening of the contradiction between the bureaucratic methods of management and the needs of economic and cultural development as a whole. The unexpected terroristic act, and particularly the trials, the administrative reprisals, and the new cleansing of the party which followed it, provided only an external and dramatic form to that general turn in Soviet policies which has been unfolding during the last year and a half. The general direction of this turn is to the Right, more to the Right, and still further to the Right.

*The Policy of Maintaining the Status Quo.* The crushing of the German proletariat which resulted from the fatal policies of the

Communist International that supplemented the perfidious rôle of the social democracy, has led to the entry of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations. With its characteristic cynicism, the bureaucracy represented this action not as a forced retreat necessitated by the worsening of the international position of the Soviets, but on the contrary as a supreme success. In Hitler's victory over the German proletariat, the Soviet workers and peasants are duty-bound to see the victory of Stalin over the League of Nations. The essence of the turn is amply disclosed by the speeches, the votes at Geneva, and the interviews by Litvinov: if Soviet diplomacy did score a victory over anything, it was, perhaps, only a victory over its last vestiges of restraint in the face of the public opinion of the proletariat. In international policies, all class, and national-liberationist criteria have been entirely discarded. The sole, guiding principle is—the preservation of the *status quo!*

In harmony with this, the Communist International—without any discussion, and without the promised Congress of course (after all, of what service are Congresses in serious matters?)—

has executed the most breakneck turn-about in its entire history. From the theory and practise of the "third period" and "social-Fascism", it has gone over to permanent coalitions not only with the social democracy but with Radical Socialists, the main prop of the national government in France. The program of the struggle for power is today decreed to be counter-revolutionary provocation. The policies of the vassal "alliance" with the Kuo Min Tang (1925-1927) are transferred without a hitch to the soil of Europe. The turn has the very same goal of—preserving the European *status quo!*

*The Turn Toward the Market.* In the sphere of Soviet economic life, the turn is no less profound in its tendencies. The planned beginning has demonstrated what forces were latent in it. But at the same time, it has also indicated the limits within which it can be applied. An *a priori* economic plan in general—all the more so, in a backward country with a population of 170 million, and a profound contradiction between the city and the village—is not a military decree but a working hypothesis which must be painstakingly checked and recast in the process of fulfillment. Two levers must serve to regulate the plan, the financial and political levers: a stable monetary system, and an active response on the part of the interested groups in the populace to the incompatibilities and gaps in the plan. But the political self-action on the part of the population has been stifled. And at the last party convention, Stalin proclaimed that the need for a stable currency was a "bourgeois superstition". This happy aphorism had to be revised together with another and no less famous one—about the "twins", Fascism and social democracy.

How long ago was it that this very same Stalin promised to send the N.E.P., that is to say, the market to "the devil"? How long ago was it that the entire press trumpeted that buying and selling were to be completely supplanted by "direct socialist distribution"? It was proclaimed that the consumers' card was the external symbol of this "distribution". According to this theory, the Soviet currency itself, by the close of the second Five Year Plan, was already to be transformed into mere consumers' tokens like theater or street car tickets. Indeed, is there really room for money in a socialist society where no classes, no social contradictions exist, and where products are distributed in accordance with a provided plan?

But all these promises grew dimmer as the second Five Year Plan drew closer to its conclusion. Today, the bureaucracy finds itself compelled to apply to "the devil" with a very humble request that the market given over to his safekeeping be returned. True, according to the blueprints, trading is to take place only through the organs of the state apparatus. The future will show to what extent it will be possible to adhere to this system. If the collective farm engages in trading, the collective farmer will also trade. It is not easy to fix the boundaries beyond which the trading collective farmer becomes transformed into a tradesman. The market has laws of its own.

*The Change to Monetary Calculation.* The system of consumers' cards, beginning with bread cards, is being eliminated gradually. The relations between the city and the village are to be regulated in an increasing measure by monetary calculation. For this, a stable chervonetz is required. Colossal and not unsuccessful efforts are being made in the production of gold.

The translation of economic relations into the language of money is absolutely necessary at the given, initial stage of socialist development in order to have the basis for calculating the actual social usefulness and economic effectiveness of the labor energy expended by workers and peasants; only in this way is it possible to rationalize economic life by regulating the plans.

For the last few years we have dozens of times pointed out the need for a stable monetary unit, the purchasing power of which

would not depend upon plans but which would be of assistance in checking them. The Soviet theoreticians saw in this proposal only our urge to "restore capitalism". Now they are compelled to reëducate themselves in a hurry. The A B C of Marxism has its superior points.

*Who Will Pay for the Mistakes?* The transition to the system of monetary calculation implies inevitably and primarily the translation into the ringing language of gold of all the hidden and masked contradictions in the economic life. Someone, however, will have to pay for the accumulated miscalculations and disproportions. Will it be the bureaucracy? Of course not; for, indeed, the keeping of accounts and the treasury will remain in its hands. The peasantry? But the reform is taking place to a large measure under pressure of the peasantry, and at least during the period immediately ahead it will prove most profitable for the *tops in the village*. The workers are those who will have to pay; the mistakes of the bureaucracy will be corrected at the expense of their vital needs. The repeal of the consumers' cards hits the workers directly and immediately, especially the lowest, and most poorly paid sections, that is, the vast majority.

*But Where Is the Complete "Abolition of Classes"?* The primary aim of returning to the market and to the stable monetary system (the latter is still in project) consists in interesting the collective farmers directly in the results of their own labor, and thus eliminating the most negative consequences of forced collectivization. This retreat is dictated unconditionally by the mistakes of preceding policies. We must not close our eyes, however, to the fact that the regeneration of market relations inevitably implies the strengthening of individualistic and centrifugal tendencies in rural economy, and the growth of differentiation between the collective farms, as well as inside the collectives.

The political sections were instituted in the village, according to Stalin's report, as supra-party and supra-Soviet militarized apparatuses to exercise ruthless control over the collective farms. The party press celebrated the political sections as the ripest product of the "Leader's genial mind". Today, after a year's labor, the political sections have been liquidated on the sly, almost without any obituaries: the bureaucracy is retreating before the moujik; administrative pressure is being supplanted by a "smytchka" through the chervonetz; and because of this very fact, the forced levelling must give place to differentiation.

Thus, towards the conclusion of the second Five Year Plan, we have not the liquidation of the "last remnants" of class society, as the conceited and ignorant bureaucrats had promised, but on the contrary new processes of class stratification. The epic period of the *administrative* "liquidation of the kulak as a class" is followed by entry into the belt of *economic* concessions to the kulak tendencies of the "well-to-do collective farmer". In the very heat of 100% collectivization, the Bolshevik-Leninists forecasted the inevitability of retreat. Zinoviev was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment for having dared to express doubts as to the possibility of realizing 100% collectivization (no other accusations are brought against him!). But what did experience prove? The retreat has begun. Where it will stop cannot be known as yet. Once again the Stalinist bureaucracy has shown that it is never able to foresee the day after tomorrow. It's short-sighted empiricism, the product of crushing all criticism and thought, plays dirty tricks upon its own self, and, what is much worse, upon the country of socialist construction.

*The Neo-N.E.P. and the Alarm Within the Country.* Even before the Neo-N.E.P., which was unprovided for in any of the plans, has had a chance to manifest any economic results, it has called forth very acute political consequences. The turn to the *Right* in foreign and domestic policies could not fail to arouse alarm among the more class conscious elements of the proletariat. To alarm there was added dissatisfaction, because of the consider-

able rise in the cost of living. The mood of the peasantry remains unstable and tense. To this must be added the dull rumbling among the youth, particularly among that section which, being close to the bureaucracy, observes its arbitrariness, its privileges, and abuses. In this thick atmosphere, the shot of Nicolaiev exploded.

*The Opposition and Terrorism.* The Stalinist press strives to deduce the terrorist act of 1934 from the opposition platform of 1926. "Every opposition [we are told] leads inevitably to counter-revolution." Should one seek to locate here a political idea, it would turn out to be approximately the following: although the platform as such excludes the idea of individual terror, it, nevertheless, awakens criticism and dissatisfaction: and since dissatisfaction can find no normal outlet through party, Soviet, or trade union channels, it must in the end, inevitably lead those who are unbalanced to terroristic acts. There is a kernel of truth in such a supposition, only one must know how to husk it. As is well known, criticism and dissatisfaction do not always lead to terroristic attempts and to assassinations, which arise only under those exceptional circumstances when the contradictions become strained to the utmost, when the atmosphere is surcharged electrically, when dissatisfaction is very widespread, and when the bureaucracy holds the advanced elements of the country by the throat. In its aphorism: "every opposition leads inevitably to counter-revolution", the Stalinist press supplies the most merciless and somber criticism possible of the Stalinist régime. And this time it speaks the truth.

*To Insure the Turn to the Right—A Blow to the Left.* The bureaucracy's reply to the shot of Nicolaiev was a rabid attack against the Left wing of the party and the working class. It almost seems as if Stalin only awaited a pretext for the onslaught upon Zinoviev, Kamenev and their friends. The newspapers, just as in 1924-1929, are waging an absolutely inconceivable campaign against "Trotskyism". Enough to say that Trotsky is now being depicted in *Pravda* as the planter of "counter-revolutionary nests" within the Red Army during the period of the civil war; and, of course, the salvaging of the revolution from these "nests" is the heroic feat of Stalin. In schools, universities, periodicals and commissariats are being discovered ever new "Trotskyists", in many instances backsliders. Arrests and exiles have once again assumed a mass character. About 300,000 individuals, 15-20%, have again been removed from the many times cleansed party. Does this mean that the Bolshevik-Leninists have had such large successes during the recent period? Such a conclusion would be too premature. The dissatisfaction among workers has indubitably grown; there has also been a growth in the sympathy toward the Left Opposition. But suspicion and fear of the bureaucracy have grown still greater. The bureaucracy is already incapable of assimilating even capitulators who are sincere. For its sharp turn to the Right it requires a massive amputation on the Left. Nicolaiev's shot served to provide the external justification for Stalin's political surgery.

*The Adventurism of Individual Terror.* Individual terror is adventuristic by its very essence: its political consequences cannot be foreseen, and they almost never serve its goals. What did Nicolaiev want? This we do not know. Very likely he wished to protest against the party régime, the uncontrollability of the bureaucracy, or the course to the Right. But what were the results? The crushing of the Lefts and semi-Lefts by the bureaucracy, the intensification of the pressure and of uncontrollability, and a preventive terror against all those who might be dissatisfied with the turn to the Right. In any case, the fact that Nicolaiev's shot could have called forth such disproportionately great consequences is indubitable testimony that these "consequences" were already lodged in the political situation, and were only awaiting a reason to break out into the open.

*Insurance On Two Fronts.* The bureaucracy is entering the

period for checking the balance of the two Five Year Plans, and it hastens to insure itself beforehand. It is ready to make economic concessions to the peasantry, that is to say, to its petty bourgeois interests and tendencies. But it does not want to make any concessions to the political interests of the proletarian vanguard. On the contrary, it begins its new turn towards the "well-to-do collective farmer" with a wild police raid against every living and thinking element in the working class and the student youth.

Today, one can already forecast that after the raid against the Lefts, there will sooner or later follow a raid against the Rights. Bureaucratic Centrism, which has developed into the *Soviet form of Bonapartism*, would not be what it is, if it could maintain its equilibrium in any other manner save by continual attacks on "two fronts", i.e., in the last analysis, against proletarian internationalism, and against the tendencies of capitalist restoration. The basic task of the bureaucracy is—to hold its own. The enemies and the opponents of the ruling clique, or merely those friends who are not quite reliable are classified as Left or Right "agencies of the intervention", often depending only upon the technical conveniences of the amalgam. The expulsion of Smirnov, the former People's Commissar of Agriculture, from the party is a subtle warning to the Rights: "Don't bestir yourselves. Remember there is a tomorrow!" Today, at any rate, the blows are being directed entirely at the Left.

*The Tripartite Formula of Stalinist Bonapartism. The Diplomatic retreat before the world bourgeoisie and before reformism; the economic retreat before the petty bourgeois tendencies within the country; the political offensive against the vanguard of the proletariat*—such is the tripartite formula of the new chapter in the development of Stalinist Bonapartism. With what does this chapter close? In any case, not with a classless society, and a bureaucracy peacefully dissolving within it. On the contrary, the workers' state is again entering a period of an open political crisis. What endows it with an unheard-of acuteness today is not the contradictions of the transitional economic system, however profound they may be in themselves, but the singular position of the bureaucracy which not only refuses, but which can no longer make political concessions to the vanguard of the toilers. Having become itself the captive of the system it has erected, the Stalinist clique is now the main source of the political convulsions in the country.

*The Chief Danger to the U.S.S.R.—Stalinism.* How far-reaching will be the political, the Communist International, and the economic turn to the Right? To what new social consequences will it bring the U.S.S.R.? Judgment on these questions can be passed only on the basis of carefully estimating all the stages of the development during the years immediately ahead. In any case, nothing can save the Comintern. Falling step by step, its completely demoralized bureaucracy literally betrays the most vital interests of the world proletariat in return for the favors of the Stalinist clique. But the state which was created by the October revolution is virile. The years of forced industrialization and collectivization, under the lash and with all lights extinguished, have produced vast difficulties along with great successes. The present forced retreat secretes, as always, new difficulties, economic and political. It is possible, however, to state even at this moment with absolute certainty that the political crisis engendered by bureaucratic absolutism represents an immeasurably more immediate and acute danger to the Soviet Union than all the disproportions and contradictions of the transitional economy.

*The Soviet Proletariat.* The bureaucracy not only has no desire to reform itself but it cannot reform itself. Only the vanguard of the proletariat could restore the Soviet state to health by ruthlessly cleansing the bureaucratic apparatus, beginning with the top. But in order to do so, it must set itself on its feet, close its ranks, and reestablish, or more exactly, create anew the revolutionary party, the Soviets, and the trade unions. Has it sufficient forces to meet

such a task?

The working class in the U.S.S.R. has had an enormous numerical growth. Its productive rôle has grown even more immeasurably than its numbers. The social weight of the Soviet proletariat today is tremendous. Its political weakness is conditioned by the variegated nature of its social composition; the lack of revolutionary experience in the new generation; the decomposition of the party; and the interminable and heavy defeats of the world proletariat.

At the given stage, the last reason is the decisive one. The absence of international perspectives constrains the Russian workers to enclose themselves within the national shell and to tolerate the theory of "socialism in one country", with the deification of the national bureaucracy, flowing from this theory. In order to restore confidence in their own forces, the Soviet workers must once more regain faith in the forces of the world proletariat.

*The Main Key to the Situation.* The struggle between the forces within the U.S.S.R. as well as the zigzags of the Kremlin are, of course, of tremendous significance in respect to the hastening, or on the contrary to retarding the consummation. But *the main key to the internal position of the Soviet Union is today already outside the Soviet Union.* Should the western proletariat surrender the European continent to Fascism, the isolated and profoundly degenerated workers' state will not maintain itself long. Not because it must inevitably fall under the blows of military intervention: under a different set of conditions Soviet intervention can lead, on the contrary, to the overturn of Fascism. But, right now, the internal contradictions of the U.S.S.R. have been brought to the point of extreme tension by the victories of the world counter-revolution. The further spread of Fascism, by weakening still further the resisting force of the Soviet proletariat, would render impossible the supplanting of the degenerated Bonapartist system by a regenerated system of the Soviets. A political catastrophe would become inevitable, and in its wake would follow the restoration of private ownership of the means of production.

*"Socialism In One Country."* In the light of the present world situation, the theory of "socialism in one country", this gospel of

the bureaucracy, stands out before us in all its nationalistic limitation and its braggard falsity. We refer here, of course, not to the purely abstract possibility, or impossibility of building a socialist society within this or another geographic area—such a theme is for scholasticists; we have in mind the vastly more immediate and concrete, living and historical, and not metaphysical, question: Is it possible for an isolated Soviet state to maintain itself for an indeterminate period of time in an imperialist environment, within the constricting circle of Fascist counter-revolutions? The answer of Marxism is, No. The answer of the internal condition of the U.S.S.R. is, No. The imperialist pressure from without; the expenditure of forces and resources for defense; the impossibility of establishing correct economic ties—these obstacles by themselves are sufficiently profound and grave; but vastly more important than these is the fact that the defeats of the world revolution are inevitably disintegrating the living bearer of the Soviet system, the proletariat, compelling it to place its neck obediently under the yoke of the national bureaucracy, which, in turn, is being corroded by all the vices of Bonapartism. Outside of world revolution there is no salvation!

"Pessimism!"—the trained parrots of the so-called Comintern will say. And the hired charlatans, who have long since waved goodby to revolution and Marxism will howl, "Defense of Capitalism!" On our part, we really view with no "optimism" at all the Stalinist system of directing the workers' state, that is to say, of suppressing the workers' state. The collapse of this system is equally inevitable under all possible variations of the historical development. The Soviet bureaucracy, however, will fail to drag the workers' state down with itself into the abyss only in the event that the European and world proletariat takes to the road of offensive and victories. The first condition for success is the emancipation of the world vanguard from the deadly, numbing jaws of Stalinism. This task will be solved despite all the obstacles introduced by the powerful apparatus of lies and slanders. In the interests of the world proletariat, and of the Soviet Union, onward!

January 30, 1935

## The Roosevelt "Security" Program

**I**N THEIR analysis of current political events, Marxists are susceptible to a dangerous error. This error consists in supposing that their position coincides concretely and immediately with the interests of the working class. Reasoning from this supposition, they evaluate incorrectly what is actually going on, and devise wholly unsuitable tactics to meet the real situation. The truth is that the Marxian position coincides with the interests of the working class neither concretely nor immediately, but abstractly and historically. The only final proof of the actual coincidence will come if the working class makes the Marxist position its own, if it identifies its interests with the Marxian directives. Every day proves the importance of this distinction. For example, in the Sacramento criminal syndicalism trial, Leo Gallagher, reasoning abstractly that it is a contest between the capitalist state and the working class, conducts the defense as if this were the case as actually present to the consciousness of workers. He moves in a vacuum, and the effect of his presentation is on the whole to prejudice not merely the jury (thereby injuring the chances of the defendants) but the working masses of California as well. What he ought to do, on the other hand, is to conduct the defense so that the historical reality of the class opposition embodied in the trial will become concretely and immediately real in the consciousness of workers. When this is done, the class struggle is advanced a stage, though the text books remain unchanged.

This confusion vitiates nine-tenths of the comment given by alleged Marxian publications to the acts of the government. Each act that comes along is a "great blow at the working class"; the class analysis of the state shows that it is the business of the government to strike great blows at the working class; therefore this act, whatever it may be, must be such a blow; and we are inclined to leave it at that. However true this may be historically, it is far from true on the surface or in the minds of most persons. Marxists must show just why and how it is true, and must convince, not themselves—for it is to each other that they normally talk—but others. The Roosevelt social security program, now before Congress, is an admirable example. It is, of course, a blow at the working class. But it takes more than dogmatic jargon to prove this to a middle class suburbanite, who thinks it a big step toward socialism; or to a worker who believes he will get the security of unemployment insurance out of it; or, above all, to an unemployed worker on four dollar a week relief who is going to be raised to fifty a month.

Let us, in the first place, outline the program itself, to be able to keep its main features clearly in mind. The program is confused, and chaotically thrown together. The Administration apparently counts on being able to iron it out in practice, if Congress grants the Executive control that is demanded. Nevertheless, the central matters are established.

The most grandiose section deals with unemployment relief policy. Here the Administration declares that it intends to eliminate the federal dole. Of the 5,000,000 now on federal relief, 1,500,000 are to be sent back to state or local agencies as "unemployable". The 3,500,000 remaining are to be given jobs at \$50 a month on public works. Four billion dollars are to be appropriated to pay for the public works, with an additional \$880,000,000 to cover relief needs during the transfer from dole to public works. The public works are to include a great variety of projects, from slum clearance and subsistence homesteads to reforestation and improvement of rivers and harbors. The money is to be raised on credit, with no increase in taxation. The whole scheme is to be administered by the Executive, with permissive legislation from Congress giving the Executive complete control.

The next major part of the program deals with unemployment insurance. Here we discover that nothing at all is to begin until 1936, and that the plan will not get genuinely started for several years after that. The plan is supposed to work on a combined federal-state basis, though in effect in the hands of the states. A federal tax on industrial pay-rolls, 1% at the beginning and increasing to 3% "as business improves" and is better able to carry the burden, is to be returned to each state that enacts its own unemployment bill. Thus each state has a wide leeway in setting up its own plan, details for which are not prescribed by the federal program. Benefits under the program are to be paid after an interval of ten weeks from the loss of job; are to continue at an extremely low rate (a maximum of \$12 or \$15 a week) for only a couple of months; and are to be paid only to workers who can't get jobs. This last provision, of great significance, is similar to a provision in the public works program that bars from relief work all who can get jobs elsewhere.

Next comes old age insurance. This is in two parts. The first deals with "the immediate problem" of the indigent old. Here it is proposed that the states enact old age pension laws providing what they like up to a maximum of \$15 a month and that the federal government will contribute an equal amount to that paid by the states. The second is a long-time plan providing for the building up of old age pension reserves for each worker by equal contributions from the worker and the employer.

The program includes also certain paragraphs about sickness and accident insurance, and maternity and child welfare. It does not propose to do anything much about these now, but states that they are excellent ideas. For maternity and child welfare, an initial appropriation of \$1,000,000 is proposed. The Senate, with a generous gesture, has raised this to \$1,500,000.

It should be noticed that the program, as it is shaping up, excludes farm, domestic and professional workers from the provisions of the unemployment insurance and old age insurance plans.

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Why does Roosevelt put forward this particular scheme at this particular time? There are a number of alternatives that he might have chosen: to slide along on the current basis; to abandon public works in favor of outright direct dole, as the Chamber of Commerce seems to want; to push the Lundeen Bill, or something of its character. Roosevelt's scheme is neither the least "expensive" in budgetary terms, nor the most; it does not entirely satisfy any group either in Congress or the country. Let us answer the question first from the Administration point of view, before attempting to trace somewhat deeper the social meaning and effects.

The program, to begin with, carries on its surface the social democratic marks that Roosevelt finds it necessary to attach to his acts during these first years of his régime. We shall have no dole, but a real chance for the unemployed to rehabilitate themselves with actual jobs on constructive public enterprises. We shall lay the foundations for the great social reforms that will give security and peace of mind to the working masses of the country.

The social democratic surface is emphasized by the way in which maternity and child welfare are dragged in with the rest. There is nothing of them there but the name; there is not even a suggestion as to when or how they are to start operation; but the name is important. Old age insurance is shoved into a distant future, with hardly more than a gesture for the present; and unemployment insurance, too, is far enough away to be vague and safe. But they all appear, along with the public works. And if we look at them as a whole, we see that these are the slogans of generations of social democracy.

Anyone who read the issue of the *New Leader* the weekend after the program was announced will realize how true this is. In full headlines, the socialist party hailed the Roosevelt program as a great victory for socialism. Here, they said, is the acceptance "in principle" of all we have stood for. Patience now, they suggest to their readers, and the practical working out of the principles will follow, handed kindly down from the White House. The impression is confirmed by talking to middle class wiseacres, who see their beliefs in a socialist Washington substantiated, and sell their odd lot holdings on the stock market.

And this manoeuvre is still able to carry along the feelings of the majority of the people. The minds of the masses move slowly to self-consciousness. Marxists should not be deceived by their own analyses. Their audience is still decimally small, and Roosevelt's program is a large enough straw for the moment.

But the relation of Roosevelt to Congress and to the rest of the country is altered from two years ago. This program is presented at the beginning of the session not to lead Congress to action, but to prevent it from action. And only a program of this kind would do the job. There has been too much talk of Townsend Plans, Share-Our-Wealth, Social Security, Utopia, and what not. The program had to be dressed up in reformist clothing to get through. A minimum dole would not get by the many Congressmen who have learned in their constituencies how popular it is to spend lots of public money in the neighborhood. These had to be checked, and Roosevelt moved fast to check them, putting them on the defensive. And such is the political backwardness of the masses, so generally absent is a class point of view that could judge the real social meaning of the program, that Roosevelt can get away with it.

Another idea lurks in the program, contributed by the remnants of the Brain Trust. They still hope that a public works program of this kind will revive business in the old way, both directly by providing a market for certain supplies used in the work, and indirectly through "cumulative reemployment". This latter idea has been developed into a theory, according to which putting one man to work, through the materials he uses up and the additional commodities he can buy, actually brings about reemployment for anywhere from one to three others. The truth is that probably about one-tenth of a man is cumulatively reemployed; but public works does always mean sounder profits for the companies that sell the supplies and materials. And this is not forgotten.

Much more important, however, is the ability of the program to lower general wage scales. The tendency of wage scales under capitalism, unless sustained by unions, to seek the lowest level is inescapable. This is particularly important in the present case. Many construction projects under the public works plan will employ workers whose "normal" prevailing wages are among the highest. These—various branches of the building and construction industries—are, moreover, the backbone of the A. F. of L. Thus at one and the same time the government, through the \$50 monthly wage of the program, hits at the prevailing wage levels and at organized labor. Roosevelt's contention that the McCarran amendment to substitute prevailing wages for the \$50 a month would "take the heart out of the whole program", is understandable.

Lastly, the part this program plays in Farley's patronage struc-

ture should not be underemphasized. Farley has been building his party machine more skillfully and ruthlessly than perhaps anyone has done before in American history. And here will be \$4,880,000,000 to reward friends and punish enemies.

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It may be asked whether the program is workable even from the point of view of the Administration, and it may very readily be answered that it is not. In the first place, it will not go through Congress unscathed. Amendments of a dozen varieties are being proposed, and many of them energetically pushed by one faction or another. The Senate is having a great deal of trouble over the McCarran amendment to provide prevailing wages in the place of the \$50 a month provision for jobs on public works. There are complaints about the unlimited authority that the program turns over to the President. I believe, however, that in the end the program will go through with its major lines substantially unchanged. The character of the opposition to it is too inchoate to agree on a clear-cut substitute. This is brought out with particular clarity in connection with the McCarran amendment, which is chiefly supported by the die-hard Republicans—supported, of course, not because they are in favor of the higher wages, but because they want a chance to vote against the President. The result of the opposition will be merely to make more confused a bill that was sufficiently chaotic in origin.

There are also certain questions of constitutionality which will effectively interfere with smooth working. These arise especially in connection with the unemployment insurance scheme: the payroll tax, by which this is to be financed, may be found an invasion of the federal government into intra-state business. This possibility will allow employers to prevent even these meager unemployment insurance plans from getting into operation without long court battles.

More significant is the absurdity of the whole conception of handling relief. The Administration reasons: there are now 5,000,000 persons getting federal relief (representing in their families 20,000,000 persons); 1,500,000 will be returned to local relief rolls as unemployable; 3,500,000 will be put to work on the government projects. To this it may be replied, first, that local relief rolls cannot carry the 1,500,000 without federal aid. Second, 3,500,000 cannot be put to work at once when there is no coordinated plan of public works to take care of them. This second point the Administration seems to recognize by insisting on a two-year limit to the appropriation instead of the one-year limit within which it is theoretically supposed to be used. To these must be added an additional consideration. There are at least 12,000,000 unemployed, that is 7,000,000 more than are now receiving federal relief. These 7,000,000 now live from savings, loans, help from relatives, occasional local relief, temporary jobs, etc. These means are gradually being exhausted. There must be inevitably expected an increase in relief applications even if there is some upturn in employment. The Administration program makes no provision for this whatsoever. We may conclude in general that the Administration statement that jobs on public works can be substituted for the dole is necessarily false. The necessity for the dole will, in fact, remain so long as capitalism lasts.

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It is necessary to enquire further into the actual social meaning and effects of the Administration program.

To begin with, it means a hardening in the distribution of cash payments. In some cases the \$50 a month paid on the public works jobs will be less than what is now received by families in the form of rent vouchers, cash relief, electricity and gas payments, etc. The indirect effect will be more widespread. The "principles" of returning unemployables to local relief rolls and giving jobs to all others, though they cannot work to that end in practise, will provide the basis for a general slashing of relief

payments, will, in the administrative changes involved, give an opportunity to break down relief levels that have become more or less standardized in many localities.

Second, the program will aid in lowering the general level of wages, particularly in industries where the prevailing level is higher than the average. The effect of the low wages to be paid on public works in bringing this about has already been stated. The unemployment and old age insurance plans also, however, contribute to the same effect. The contributions by the employee under the old age insurance plan will be a form of wage-cut, disguised, but none the less real in diminishing the pay envelope. The pay-roll taxes called for by the unemployment insurance plan will be compensated for by the employers by drives to lower wages and raise prices proportionately, the latter as well as the former acting to reduce real wages.

Third, both the public works and the unemployment and old age insurance plans work as strike breakers. The unemployed worker will be immediately confronted with the following situation: if he doesn't take a public works job, he will be cut off from relief; but if any job in "private industry" is open—as such jobs become open, for example, in strikes—he will run the risk by not taking it of losing the public works job also; thus, with no relief to turn to, he will have the *de facto* choice between strikebreaking and starvation. Under the unemployment and old age insurance plans, the worker will of course run the risk of cutting himself off from all possible "benefits" by striking.

But the most significant general aspect of the whole program is the rapid stride forward it makes in the consolidation of bourgeois rule which, under Roosevelt, is preparing the United States for the comparatively smooth transition to Fascism. This can be brought out in a number of ways. For example: Under Fascism, the government must represent as fully as possible the class interest of the big capitalists as a whole, rather than the interests of any particular section or group of the capitalists. This contrasts with the situation often possible under *laissez-faire* economy and parliamentary democracy, when the government, while representing the capitalist class in general, may nevertheless at a given moment be in a special sense the organ of a particular section (industrialists, bankers, those needing a big tariff, those needing a smaller tariff, etc.). The decline of capitalism does not permit the degree of internecine warfare among capitalists themselves that was formerly allowable. It may be remarked in passing that this is the reason why large sections of the bourgeoisie oppose Fascism up to the last moment, and why Fascism takes occasional measures against the immediate interests of any or even all groups of the bourgeoisie. The ability of the totalitarian state to act thus, as agent of the big bourgeoisie as a whole and independent in large measure of the intra-bourgeois quarrels, is based in part upon shifts in the economic foundation of the state apparatus. It means, for one thing, that the state becomes increasingly and more directly involved in the basic economic structure of the country. Thus, we discover, that through the R.F.C. the U.S. government has tied itself to the banking system, especially the large banks (by the purchase of preferred stocks in the banks—often against the desires of the banks concerned, by loans against frozen assets, etc.), to the railroads, insurance companies, etc. Roosevelt is now engaged in entangling the government with the utility system, by the big government built dams, the T.V.A., and the rest. The government entered ship and airplane building, and ocean transport some time ago, on a large scale at the time of the war. Now, with this new relief program, the government becomes more outstandingly than ever the greatest employer of labor, the dominant "monopoly trust" of the country, and intertwines itself with the thousand and one businesses implicated in the public works projects.

The political trend of the new program is analogous. The

whole plan is to be turned over to the Executive, to be arranged, allotted, administered by what amounts to Executive decree, with no legislative check. The legislative branch of the state continues its withdrawal toward totalitarian obscurity. Parliamentarism, the political luxury of ascendant capitalism, moves further toward its decline.

Lastly, there should be noticed a feature of the program that has been strangely ignored by both the capitalist and the working class press. The program quite openly establishes the principle of forced labor. The unemployed worker will not be given a "choice" between relief and the \$50 a month job on public works. He will take the job or starve. And he will take the job that is assigned to him, whatever it may be, and however little fitted he may be for it. From this to labor camps is not so long a step.

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A question remains which I cannot take up at length in this article. What kind of workers' security program should Marxists oppose to the plan of the Administration? This is by no means an easy question to answer. We must start with the recognition that only a workers' state can solve the problem of unemployment and security in general; and with the additional recognition that capitalism in decline is increasingly powerless to grant concessions to the working class. We must also keep in mind that, for Marxists, a social security program is not a mere piece of legislation to be filed in Congress; but a class slogan to promote independent working class mass activity in its support, and to seek immediate gains only as part of the broader aim of weakening the structure of capitalism and organizing the working class forces in a revolutionary direction.

This suggests at once a major criticism of the Lundeen bill, which is offered as a working class answer to the Roosevelt program. The fight for this bill has been almost entirely reformist and parliamentary in character, and thus, even if it were passed (which it will not be), it would not represent an important victory for the working class. Even from a parliamentary standpoint, there are serious objections to the Lundeen bill. It of course avoids most of the directly anti-working class aspects of the Roosevelt program. But it is an odd and confused mixture. In some of its provisions it is openly unconstitutional (not necessarily bad, since mass pressure could enforce a lenient interpretation of the Constitution); whereas in others it leans over backwards to remain within the Constitution. It offers a plan of raising the money by taxation, to avoid inflation, which would not raise the necessary money. The kinds of taxation are correct enough in principle, but the bill should not pretend to provide money that any statistician can prove it does not. And, lastly, the bill is incomplete,

since it takes no notice of necessary parts of a workers' security program without which unemployment insurance at the present time would mean little.

The immediate requirements for a rounded workers' security program are included in the plan recently adopted by the National Unemployed League. In outline, these are as follows:

1. Adequate cash relief. No plan from now until the end of capitalism will mean anything if this is not a first and paramount provision.

2. A coordinated plan of public works. These should include above all workers' housing projects, which provide the two-fold need of giving work, and something worth while to workers when they are completed. The fight for public works should include the fight to make jobs on them pay not merely the prevailing wage, but where the prevailing wage is low, to pay more, and thus to make public works a means of lifting instead of lowering the general wage rates. A minimum of \$30 weekly and a maximum of 30 hours a week should be demanded on all public works projects. The public works program should not be left to Executive discretion, but should be made mandatory. An initial appropriation of ten billion dollars to be spent within one year should be the beginning. This should be financed through the help of taxes on the higher incomes, on inheritances, on corporate profits and surpluses. Though these taxes would not cover the entire amount, they would be sufficient to prevent inflation by providing both for the interest on bond offerings and an adequate sinking fund.

3. The universal 30-hour week. The 30-hour week is an integral part of any security program at the present time, and the fight for it should be altered from resolutions and occasional speeches to vigorous working class action. The fight for it must, of course, be accompanied by the fight to prevent a compensating speedup, and a further struggle not merely to permit no reduction in wages, but to raise the minimum wage generally, as on the public works projects, to the \$30 level.

4. Adequate unemployment insurance. The unemployment insurance should be federal, not state, and should be financed in the same general manner as the public works program, with no employee contributions whatever.

5. An immediate credit of five billion dollars to the Soviet Union, to be spent in this country for the purchase of goods manufactured here. This credit, while proving one of the most effective means for defending the Soviet Union at present in the power of the American masses, would at the same time be a far more genuine stimulus to reemployment, particularly in the basic industries, than any of the cloudy schemes of the Administration.

John WEST

## Lessons of the Paris Commune

**E**ACH TIME that we study the history of the Commune we see it from a new aspect, thanks to the experience acquired by the later revolutionary struggles and above all by the latest revolutions, not only the Russian but the German and Hungarian revolutions. The Franco-German war was a bloody explosion, harbinger of an immense world slaughter, the Commune of Paris a lightning harbinger of a world proletarian revolution.

The Commune shows us the heroism of the working masses, their capacity to unite into a single bloc, their talent to sacrifice themselves in the name of the future, but at the same time it shows us the incapacity of the masses to choose their path, their indecision in the leadership of the movement, their fatal penchant to come to a halt after the first successes, thus permitting the enemy to regain its breath, to reestablish its position.

The Commune came too late. It had all the possibilities of taking the power on September 4 and that would have permitted

the proletariat of Paris to place itself at a single stroke at the head of the workers of the country in their struggle against all the forces of the past, against Bismarck as well as against Thiers. But the power fell into the hands of the democratic praters, the deputies of Paris. The Parisian proletariat had neither a party, nor leaders to whom it would have been closely bound by previous struggles. The petty bourgeois patriots who thought themselves socialists and sought the support of the workers did not really have any confidence in themselves. They shook the proletariat's faith in itself, they were continually in quest of celebrated lawyers, of journalists, of deputies, whose baggage consisted only of a dozen vaguely revolutionary phrases, in order to entrust them with the leadership of the movement.

The reason why Jules Favre, Picard, Garnier-Pagès and Co. took power in Paris on September 4 is the same as that which permitted Paul-Boncour, A. Varenne, Renaudel and numerous

others to be for a time the masters of the party of the proletariat.

The Renaudels and the Boncours and even the Longuets and the Pressemanes are much closer, by virtue of their sympathies, their intellectual habits and their conduct, to the Jules Favres and the Jules Ferrys than to the revolutionary proletariat. Their socialist phraseology is nothing but an historic mask which permits them to impose themselves upon the masses. And it is just because Favre, Simon, Picard and the others used and abused a democratic-liberal phraseology that their sons and their grandsons are obliged to resort to a socialist phraseology. But the sons and the grandsons have remained worthy of their fathers and continue their work. And when it will be necessary to decide not the question of the composition of a ministerial clique but the much more important question of knowing what class in France must take power, Renaudel, Varenne, Longuet and their similars will be in the camp of Millerand—collaborator of Galliffet, the butcher of the Commune. . . . When the revolutionary babblers of the salons and of parliament find themselves face to face, in real life, with the revolution, they never recognize it.

The workers' party—the real one—is not a machine for parliamentary manoeuvres, it is the accumulated and organized experience of the proletariat. It is only with the aid of the party, which rests upon the whole history of its past, which foresees theoretically the paths of development, all its stages, and which extracts from it the necessary formula of action, that the proletariat frees itself from the need of always recommencing its history: its hesitations, its lack of decision, its mistakes.

The proletariat of Paris did not have such a party. The bourgeois socialists with whom the Commune swarmed, raised their eyes to heaven, waited for a miracle or else a prophetic word, hesitated, and during that time the masses groped about and lost their heads because of the indecision of some and the fantasy of others. The result was that the revolution broke out in their very midst, too late, and Paris was encircled. Six months elapsed before the proletariat had reestablished in its memory the lessons of past revolutions, of battles of yore, of the reiterated betrayals of democracy—and it seized power.

These six months proved to be an irreparable loss. If the centralized party of revolutionary action had been found at the head of the proletariat of France in September 1870, the whole history of France and with it the whole history of humanity would have taken another direction.

If the power was found in the hands of the proletariat of Paris on March 18, it was not because it had been deliberately seized, but because its enemies had quitted Paris.

These latter were losing ground continuously, the workers despised and detested them, the petty bourgeoisie no longer had confidence in them and the big bourgeoisie feared that they were no longer capable of defending it. The soldiers were hostile to the officers. The government fled Paris in order to concentrate its forces elsewhere. And it was then that the proletariat became master of the situation.

But it understood this fact only on the morrow. The revolution fell upon it unexpectedly.

This first success was a new source of passivity. The enemy had fled to Versailles. Wasn't that a victory? At that moment the governmental band could have been crushed almost without the spilling of blood. In Paris, all the ministers, with Thiers at their head, could have been taken prisoner. Nobody would have raised a hand to defend them. It was not done. There was no organization of a centralized party, having a rounded view of things and special organs for realizing its decisions.

The débris of the infantry did not want to fall back to Versailles. The thread which tied the officers and the soldiers was pretty tenuous. And had there been a directing party center at Paris, it would have incorporated into the retreating armies—since there

was the possibility of retreating—a few hundred or even a few dozen devoted workers, and given them the following instructions: enhance the discontent of the soldiers against the officers, profit by the first favorable psychological moment to free the soldiers from their officers and bring them back to Paris to unite with the people. This could easily have been realized, according to the admissions of Thiers' supporters themselves. Nobody even thought of it. Nor was there anybody to think of it. In the midst of great events, moreover, such decisions can be adopted only by a revolutionary party which looks forward to a revolution, prepares for it, does not lose its head, by a party which is accustomed to having a rounded view and is not afraid to act.

And a party of action is just what the French proletariat did not have.

The Central Committee of the National Guard is in effect a Council of Deputies of the armed workers and the petty bourgeoisie. Such a Council, elected directly by the masses who have taken the revolutionary road, represents an excellent apparatus of action. But at the same time, and just because of its immediate and elementary connection with the masses who are in the state in which the revolutionary has found them, it reflects not only all the strong sides but also the weak sides of the masses, and it reflects at first the weak sides still more than it does the strong: it manifests the spirit of indecision, of waiting, the tendency to be inactive after the first successes.

The Central Committee of the National Guard needed to be led. It was indispensable to have an organization incarnating the political experience of the proletariat and always present—not only in the Central Committee, but in the legions, in the battalions, in the deepest sectors of the French proletariat. By means of the Councils of Deputies—in the given case they were organs of the National Guard—the party could have been in continual contact with the masses, known their state of mind; its leading center could each day put forward a slogan which, through the medium of the party's militants, would have penetrated into the masses, uniting their thought and their will.

Hardly had the government fallen back to Versailles than the National Guard hastened to unload its responsibility, at the very moment when this responsibility was enormous. The Central Committee imagined "legal" elections to the Commune. It entered into negotiations with the mayors of Paris in order to cover itself, from the Right, with "legality".

Had a violent attack been prepared against Versailles at the same time, the negotiations with the mayors would have been a ruse fully justified from the military standpoint and in conformity with the goal. But in reality, these negotiations were being conducted only in order to avert the struggle by some miracle or other. The petty bourgeois radicals and the socialistic idealists, respecting "legality" and the men who embodied a portion of the "legal" state—the deputies, the mayors, etc.—hoped at the bottom of their souls that Thiers would halt respectfully before revolutionary Paris the minute the latter covered itself with the "legal" Commune.

Passivity and indecision were supported in this case by the sacred principle of federation and autonomy. Paris, you see, is only one commune among many other communes. Paris wants to impose nothing upon anyone; it does not struggle for the dictatorship, unless it be for the "dictatorship of example".

In sum, it was nothing but an attempt to replace the proletarian revolution, which was developing, by a petty bourgeois reform: communal autonomy. The real revolutionary task consisted of assuring the proletariat the power all over the country. Paris had to serve as its base, its support, its stronghold. And to attain this goal, it was necessary to vanquish Versailles without the loss of time and to send agitators, organizers, and armed forces throughout France. It was necessary to enter into contact with sympa-

thizers, to strengthen the hesitators and to shatter the opposition of the adversary. Instead of this policy of offensive and aggression which was the only thing that could save the situation, the leaders of Paris attempted to seclude themselves in their communal autonomy: they will not attack the others if the others do not attack them; each town has its sacred right of self-government. This idealistic chatter—of the same gender as mundane anarchism—covered up in reality a cowardice in face of revolutionary action which should have been conducted incessantly up to the very end, for otherwise it should not have been begun. . . .

The hostility to capitalist organization—a heritage of petty bourgeois localism and autonomism—is without a doubt the weak side of a certain section of the French proletariat. Autonomy for the districts, for the wards, for the battalions, for the towns, is the supreme guarantee of real activity and individual independence for certain revolutionists. But that is a great mistake which cost the French proletariat dearly.

Under the form of the "struggle against despotic centralism" and against "stifling" discipline, a fight takes place for the self-preservation of various groups and sub-groupings of the working class, for their petty interests, with their petty ward leaders and their local oracles. The entire working class, while preserving its cultural originality and its political nuances, can act methodically and firmly, without remaining in the tow of events, and directing each time its mortal blows against the weak sectors of its enemies, on the condition that at its head, above the wards, the districts, the groups, there is an apparatus which is centralized and bound together by an iron discipline. The tendency towards particularism, whatever the form it may assume, is a heritage of the dead past. The sooner French communist—socialist communism and syndicalist communism—emancipates itself from it, the better it will be for the proletarian revolution.

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The party does not create the revolution at will, it does not choose the moment for seizing power as it likes, but it intervenes actively in the events, penetrates at every moment the state of mind of the revolutionary masses and evaluates the power of resistance of the enemy, and thus determines the most favorable moment for decisive action. This is the most difficult side of its task. The party has no decision that is valid for every case. Needed are a correct theory, an intimate contact with the masses, the comprehension of the situation, a revolutionary perception, a great resoluteness. The more profoundly a revolutionary party penetrates into all the domains of the proletarian struggle, the more unified it is by the unity of goal and discipline, the speedier and better will it arrive at resolving its task.

The difficulty consists in having this organization of a centralized party, internally welded by an iron discipline, linked intimately with the movement of the masses, with its ebbs and flows. The conquest of power cannot be achieved save on the condition of a powerful revolutionary pressure of the toiling masses. But in this act the element of preparation is entirely inevitable. The better the party will understand the conjuncture and the moment, the better the bases of resistance will be prepared, the better the force and the rôles will be distributed, the surer will be the success and the less victims will it cost. The correlation of a carefully prepared action and a mass movement is the politico-strategical task of the taking of power.

The comparison of March 18, 1871 with November 7, 1917 is very instructive from this point of view. In Paris, there is an absolute lack of initiative for action on the part of the leading revolutionary circles. The proletariat, armed by the bourgeois government, is in reality master of the town, has all the material means of power—cannon and rifles—at its disposal, but it is not aware of it. The bourgeoisie makes an attempt to retake the weapon of the giant: it wants to steal the cannon of the proleta-

riat. The attempt fails. The government flees in panic from Paris to Versailles. The field is clear. But it is only on the morrow that the proletariat understands that it is the master of Paris. The "leaders" are in the wake of events, they record them when the latter are already accomplished, and they do everything in their power to blunt the revolutionary edge.

In Petrograd, the events developed differently. The party moved firmly, resolutely, to the seizure of power, having its men everywhere, consolidating each position, extending every fissure between the workers and the garrison on the one side and the government on the other.

The armed demonstration of the July days is a vast reconnoitering conducted by the party to sound the degree of close contact between the masses and the power of resistance of the enemy. The reconnoitering is transformed into a struggle of outposts. We are thrown back, but at the same time the action establishes a connection between the party and the depths of the masses. The months of August, September and October see a powerful revolutionary flux. The party profits by it and augments considerably its points of support in the working class and the garrison. Later, the harmony between the conspirative preparations and the mass action takes place almost automatically. The Second Congress of the Soviets is fixed for November 7. All our preceding agitation was to lead to the seizure of power by the Congress. Thus, the overturn was adapted in advance to November 7. This fact was well known and understood by the enemy. Kerensky and his councilors could not fail to make efforts to consolidate themselves, to however small an extent, in Petrograd for the decisive moment. Also, they stood in need of shipping out of the capital the most revolutionary sections of the garrison. We on our part profited by this attempt by Kerensky in order to make it the source of a new conflict which had a decisive importance. We openly accused the Kerensky government—our accusation subsequently found a written confirmation in an official document—of having planned the removal of a third of the Petrograd garrison not out of military considerations but for the purpose of counter-revolutionary combinations. This conflict bound us still more closely to the garrison and put before the latter a well-defined task, to support the Soviet Congress fixed for November 7. And since the government insisted—even if in a feeble enough manner—that the garrison be sent off, we created in the Petrograd Soviet, already in our hands, a Revolutionary War Committee, on the pretext of verifying the military reasons for the governmental plan.

Thus we had a purely military organ, standing at the head of the Petrograd garrison, which was in reality a legal organ of armed insurrection. At the same time we designated (communist) commissars in all the military units, in the military stores, etc. The clandestine military organization accomplished specific technical tasks and furnished the Revolutionary War Committee with fully trustworthy militants for important military tasks. The essential work concerning the preparation, the realization and the armed insurrection took place openly, and so methodically and naturally that the bourgeoisie, led by Kerensky, did not clearly understand what was taking place under their very eyes. (In Paris, the proletariat understood only on the following day that it had been really victorious—a victory which it had not, moreover, deliberately sought—that it was master of the situation. In Petrograd, it was the contrary. Our party, basing itself on the workers and the garrison, had already seized the power, the bourgeoisie passed a fairly tranquil night and learned only on the following morning that the helm of the country was in the hands of its gravedigger.)

As to strategy, there were many differences of opinion in our party.

A part of the Central Committee declared itself, as is known, against the taking of power, believing that the moment had not

yet arrived, that Petrograd was detached from the rest of the country, the proletariat from the peasantry, etc.

Other comrades believed that we were not attributing sufficient importance to the elements of military complot. One of the members of the Central Committee demanded in October the surrounding of the Alexandrine Theater where the Democratic Conference was in session, and the proclamation of the dictatorship of the Central Committee of the party. He said: in concentrating our agitation as well as our preparatory military work for the moment of the Second Congress, we are showing our plan to the adversary, we are giving him the possibility of preparing himself and even of dealing us a preventive blow. But there is no doubt that the attempt at a military complot and the surrounding of the Alexandrine Theater would have been a fact too alien to the development of the events, that it would have been an event disconcerting to the masses. Even in the Petrograd Soviet, where our faction dominated, such an enterprise, anticipating the logical development of the struggle, would have provoked great disorder at that moment, above all among the garrison where there were hesitant and not very trustful regiments, primarily the cavalry regiments. It would have been much easier for Kerensky to crush a complot unexpected by the masses than to attack the garrison consolidating itself more and more on its positions: the defense of its inviolability in the name of the future Congress of the Soviets. Therefore the majority of the Central Committee rejected the plan to surround the Democratic Conference and it was right. The conjuncture was very well judged: the armed insurrection, almost without bloodshed, triumphed exactly on the date, fixed in advance and openly, for the convening of the Second Soviet Congress.

This strategy cannot, however, become a general rule, it requires specific conditions. Nobody believed any longer in the war with the Germans, and the less revolutionary soldiers did not want to quit Petrograd for the front. And even if the garrison as a whole was on the side of the workers for this single reason, it became stronger in its point of view to the extent that Kerensky's machinations were revealed. But this mood of the Petrograd garrison had a still deeper cause in the situation of the peasant class and in the development of the imperialist war. Had there been a split in the garrison and had Kerensky obtained the possibility of support from a few regiments, our plan would have failed. The elements of purely military complot (conspiracy and great speed of action) would have prevailed. It would have been necessary, of course, to choose another moment for the insurrection.

The Commune also had the complete possibility of winning even the peasant regiments, for the latter had lost all confidence and all respect for the power and the command. Yet it undertook nothing towards this end. The fault here is not in the relationships of the peasant and the working classes, but in the revolutionary strategy.

What will be the situation in this regard in the European countries in the present epoch? It is not easy to foretell anything on this score. Yet, with the events developing slowly and the bourgeois governments exerting all their efforts to utilize past experiences, it may be foreseen that the proletariat, in order to attract the sympathies of the soldiers, will have to overcome a great and well organized resistance at a given moment. A skillful and well-timed attack on the part of the revolution will then be necessary. The duty of the party is to prepare itself for it. That is just why it must maintain and develop its character of a centralized organization, which openly guides the revolutionary movement of the masses and is at the same time a clandestine apparatus of the armed insurrection.

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The question of the electibility of the command was one of the reasons of the conflict between the National Guard and Thiers. Paris refused to accept the command designated by Thiers. Varlin

subsequently formulated the demand that the command of the National Guard, from top to bottom, ought to be elected by the National Guardsmen themselves. That is where the Central Committee of the National Guard found its support.

This question must be envisaged from two sides: from the political and the military sides, which are interlinked but which should be distinguished. The political task consisted in purging the National Guard of the counter-revolutionary command. Complete electibility was the only means for it, the majority of the National Guard being composed of workers and revolutionary petty bourgeois. And in addition, the motto "electibility of the command", being extended also to the infantry, Thiers would have been deprived at a single stroke of his essential weapon, the counter-revolutionary officers. In order to realize this plan, a party organization, having its men in all the military units, was required. In a word, electibility in this case had as its immediate task not to give good commanders to the batallions, but to liberate them from commanders devoted to the bourgeoisie. Electibility served as a wedge for splitting the army into two parts, along class lines. Thus did matters occur with us in the period of Kerensky, above all on the eve of October.

But the liberation of the army from the old commanding apparatus inevitably involves the weakening of organizational cohesion and the diminution of combative power. As a rule, the elected command is pretty weak from the technico-military standpoint and with regard to the maintenance of order and of discipline. Thus, at the moment when the army frees itself from the old counter-revolutionary command which oppressed it, the question arises of giving it a revolutionary command capable of fulfilling its mission. And this question can by no means be resolved by simple elections. Before wide masses of soldiers acquire the experience of well choosing and selecting commanders, the revolution will be beaten by the enemy which is guided in the choice of its command by the experience of centuries. The methods of shapeless democracy (simple electibility) must be supplemented and to a certain extent replaced by measures of selection from above. The revolution must create an organ composed of experienced, reliable organizers, in which one can have absolute confidence, give it full powers to choose, designate and educate the command. If particularism and democratic autonomism are extremely dangerous to the proletarian revolution in general, they are ten times more dangerous to the army. We saw that in the tragic example of the Commune.

The Central Committee of the National Guard drew its authority from democratic electibility. At the moment when the Central Committee needed to develop to the maximum its initiative in the offensive, deprived of the leadership of a proletarian party, it lost its head, hastened to transmit its powers to the representatives of the Commune which required a broader democratic basis. And it was a great mistake in that period to play with elections. But once the elections had been held and the Commune brought together, it was necessary to concentrate everything in the Commune at a single blow and to have it create an organ possessing real power to reorganize the National Guard. This was not the case. By the side of the elected Commune there remained the Central Committee; the elected character of the latter gave it a political authority thanks to which it was able to compete with the Commune. But at the same time that deprived it of the energy and the firmness necessary in the purely military questions which, after the organization of the Commune, justified its existence. Electibility, democratic methods, are but one of the instruments in the hands of the proletariat and its party. Electibility can in no wise be a fetish, a remedy for all evils. The methods of electibility must be combined with those of appointments. The power of the Commune came from the elected National Guard. But once created, the Commune should have reorganized with a strong hand the National Guard, from top to bottom, given it reliable leaders and

established a régime of very strict discipline. The Commune did not do this, being itself deprived of a powerful revolutionary directing center. It too was crushed.

We can thus thumb the whole history of the Commune, page by page, and we will find in it one single lesson: a strong party leadership is needed. More than any other proletariat has the French made sacrifices for the revolution. But also more than any other has it been duped. Many times has the bourgeoisie dazzled it with all the colors of republicanism, of radicalism, of socialism, so as always to fasten upon it the fetters of capitalism. By means of its agents, its lawyers and its journalists, the bourgeoisie has put forward a whole mass of democratic, parliamentary, autonomist formulæ which are nothing but impediments on the feet of the proletariat, hampering its forward movement.

The temperament of the French proletariat is a revolutionary lava. But this lava is now covered with the ashes of skepticism—result of numerous deceptions and disenchantments. Also, the

revolutionary proletarians of France must be severer towards their party and unmask more pitilessly any non-conformity between word and action. The French workers have need of an organization, strong as steel, with leaders controlled by the masses at every new stage of the revolutionary movement.

How much time will history afford us to prepare ourselves? We do not know. For fifty years the French bourgeoisie has retained the power in its hands after having elected the Third Republic on the bones of the Communards. Those fighters of '71 were not lacking in heroism. What they lacked was clarity in method and a centralized leading organization. That is why they were vanquished. Half a century elapsed before the proletariat of France could pose the question of avenging the death of the Communards. But this time, the action will be firmer, more concentrated. The heirs of Thiers will have to pay the historic debt in full.

Leon TROTSKY

ZLATOOST, February 4, 1921.

# The Housing Question in America

## 1. What the Problem Looks Like

**T**HERE ARE today in the United States approximately 30 million homes housing primarily one family per home, but for the poorer families running into the 2, 3 and even more families per single dwelling unit. Of the total, 13 million do not come up to the standard of minimum decency\* and should be rebuilt or replaced. In addition, there exists an actual shortage of 5 million dwellings that are needed to accommodate those families with 8 or 10 persons squeezed into 3 room apartments or those staying with the mother-in-law. The problem of the housing shortage and decent housing is no local problem; the large city as well as the small has its problem; the farm as well as the village. From the Mexican shacks in lower California to the East Side ghetto of New York City the crying need of a "decent" house makes itself felt wherever the poorly-paid city worker or mortgage-burdened hillside farmer continues to exist.

The city slum of course is the most obvious of the non-decent type of home, and should be considered first in any discussion of the problem as it exists today. All other phases, although important in their own right, must naturally give way before the burning need for slum clearance.

What is a slum house? It is something for which a proper description or definition would require the use of all five senses. An investigator may find any type of human misery he desires. "A 3 room apartment will house 11 people, the baby sleeping in a cheap baby carriage; the husband, the wife, and the next youngest child in a three-quarter bed in a bedroom; 5 older children in another three-quarter bed in a dining-room; and a boarder on a folding cot in a kitchen." The bedroom may or may not have windows. The likelihood is that all rooms are dark, and what windows they do have face on narrow alleys. Air will be anything from foul to merely stale. All types and breeds of vermin from the tiny ant to the large cat-sized rat will roam through the building at will; cockroaches and bedbugs will infest not merely the furniture, but the very structure of the building itself. Baths will not exist. Toilets will be shared by from 2 tenants on the floor to an entire house—in which case they will be situated in the yard. Winter most likely brings with it a freezing of the water pipes, leaving entire houses without water for drinking or drainage purposes for

\*Dr. E. E. Evans gives the following modest enough definition of the indefinite term "decent housing": a home with a private toilet, running water, electricity,

one room per person, fresh air, sunlight, dry walls. Bath, central heating, modern kitchen are not included in his minima.

days at a time. Of all the modern conveniences such as steam heat, hot water, bath, etc., the only one usually present in the city slum is electricity. In short, a slum house is one that lacks everything that goes to make up "decent living".

*New York City: A Record of Slum Growth Not Slum Clearance.* One hundred years ago the elders of New York City, overawed at the condition of the then existing slums, ordered "something done about them". The investigation of the year 1837 was the result. It was a most gratifying investigation indeed; far superior to many that have followed, and then again hardly up to the level of other investigations that were fathered by different horror-stricken gentlemen in other years. For 1837 marked but a beginning, and perhaps not even that, were one interested enough in the historical aspects of the problem to delve further back in the records. Investigation followed investigation with ever-increasing tempo until the year 1930 brought with it a veritable deluge of investigations and committees.

However, houses built in 1837 in New York are still standing today, and considered "home" by many an underpaid worker. More than half the tenements "condemned" by one of the official investigation committees in the year 1885 are still housing human beings. Between 200,000 and 250,000 of the windowless rooms attacked in 1901 (the year of the enactment of the New Tenement House Code) have continued to remain without the benefit of air or sunshine to this very day. At least 23,000 people were living in basements in 1932—God only knows how this figure has increased statistically during the past two years. All told, there are "living" today in the slums of New York City about one and a half million individuals.

An example of how municipal regulation proceeds in the correction of abuses may be deduced from the report of a single year. Of the 57,233 buildings reported in 1930 for violation of the "new law", 40,170 were dismissed, 27,063 were "filed", and 19,441 were pending at the end of the year. Of the 2,925 brought to court, 306 were dismissed by the magistrate, 1,976 ended in suspended sentences, and in 295 cases only were fines levied. These violations were of all types, from poor plumbing to lack of proper fire preventives. The result of such a record is obvious: continued unsanitary conditions and fire-trap dwellings. Last year alone 52 persons lost their lives in old law tenement fires.

The inauguration of the "liberal, labor-loving" LaGuardia as mayor of New York City changed conditions not a whit. He has actually cut the appropriations of the tenement house inspection force, leaving the staff very much under-manned. The LaGuardia policy can be summed up in the following quotation from a recent

letter of his tenement house commissioner, Langdon W. Post: "At the present time, therefore, a wholesale enforcement of the letter of the law would put something like one million [other sources estimate one and a half to two million. H.S.] people on the streets with no possible place to live." Mr. Post continues in this open letter by describing the actual fire hazard involved in these old law tenements, but admits that the present city administration can do nothing to change this appalling condition.

New York City, although it may lead the country in the size and volume of its slum districts, is by no means the only city in the United States having a slum region. A recent report comparing slum conditions in this country and in Europe leads one to believe that perhaps even in shoddy housing as well as in most other things our fair nation takes the lead. No American city lacks its "gas-house district". In Cincinnati, for example, a survey of 5,993 flats in the town's malodorous "basin" district showed that 70% had outside toilets used by as many as 9 families. There were 80 bathtubs in the whole area. Half the flats had two rooms only and were occupied by 1 to 17 people. Rooms were dark and windowless and a third of the buildings (3, 4 and 5 stories in height) had only one egress.

Chicago's Hull House district needs no introduction. In 1925, 1,500 homes had 140 tubs among them; a third had yard toilets; and 85% of them had no heat but stove-heat. Philadelphia's streets go by such names as Noble, Christian, and Beth Eden. In 1929 yard toilets in these districts ran to 90% or over, and stove-heated homes to 95%. Every tenth home in the Beth Eden district had no water whatsoever. Pittsburgh has its "Hill" District and Northside; Columbus its Sausage-Row; and in all of them conditions are merely a duplication of the conditions in any one of them. For the sum total of the American cities there were in 1929 only 3 bathtubs for every 4 apartments, and one need not be a genius to guess what income group secured the greater proportion of these tubs. In 1928, Philadelphia had 10,000 privy houses and St. Louis a like amount. Dr. E. E. Wood, accepted as a reliable and widely recognized authority on housing, writing in 1931 and describing the extreme conditions, had the following to say: "Most American communities have sections, large or small, inhabited predominantly by Negroes or the foreign-born, where neither city water nor city sewers penetrate. Filthy back-yard privies with overflowing vaults serve from 2 to a dozen families. Water is carried by hand into the house from well or hydrant."

This is the picture of the large city slum.

But all the above relates to the great American cities, and these have always had their slums. How about Middletown, home of Mr. Babbitt and his native stock American worker? Zanesville, Ohio (population 40,000) shows of the families surveyed that 40% lack bathtubs and only 61% have plumbing systems. Des Moines, Iowa ("city of homes") found in a recent survey that out of a total of 18,694 dwellings in the city, 5,000 were entirely without sewers or city water; 1,500 had no running water whatsoever. Stuart Chase in an estimate made in 1929 (which more than holds true for 1935) concluded that for Middletown, U.S.A., most of the workers lived in the base-burner and unheated bedroom era; one in four of all the city dwellings lacked running water. An even higher percentage still used the old fashioned back-yard privy; and only two-thirds of the houses had sewer connections. Apparently, capitalism has as little regard for its native-born American worker as for the foreign-born.

As for the company town—crown of American efficiency—a study made by the Department of Labor (in 1920, unfortunately, but would 1935 show much improvement?—they still are company towns) paints a dark picture indeed of the generosity of the American paternal capitalist, the welfare type. On the basis of an examination of 423 company towns, housing 160,000 employees, and constituting 47,580 dwellings, it was found that 17% of the

homes had bath, toilet, running water, gas and electricity; 39% had gas or electric light only, and 5.4% had running water only. The room density in these "country towns" would begin at two and have the sky as a limit—or the undertaker.

*The Farm.* Figures for the necessary conveniences in the farm house swing wildly from one end of the country to the other. All that the American farm home seems to have over the city slum is the "country air"; and often this may be slightly tainted by the proximity of the back-yard telephone booth or cattle-barn. The 1930 census reported the following for percentage of farms equipped with running water or bath:

	Running water	Bath rooms
Connecticut	63%	34%
Kentucky	3%	2%
No. Dakota	7%	3%
So. Carolina	3%	2%

In 1926, the Department of Agriculture, in a report of white farm families in 11 typical states, said in part: "Almost three-fourths of the homes reporting have none of the modern improvements (indoor toilet, kitchen sink, running water, central heating, etc.)." No agency, however, has yet succeeded in reducing the Mexican shacks of the Southwest or the huts of the Southern Negro share-croppers to any statistics whatsoever. For most such, it is far easier to indicate a minus and say that the house simply does not exist, except that there are human beings living in it.

These various settings make the grand picture that is called the "American home", the home of the poor farmer and city worker. This is the dwelling of the two classes who through their toil brought about the ten years of the dizziest expansion these United States have yet seen.

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How is it possible, one must necessarily ask, that America should be so deficient in decent housing? We recall the huge totals of construction for the years 1927 and 1928 and have been reading for the past three years of the millions and even billions constantly "being appropriated" for housing and public works. It must come as a surprise to learn that there is today a shortage of 5 million homes and a total shortage of decent homes of about 18 million. An analysis of the construction figures since the war as well as a second glance at the huge totals being appropriated today for low-cost housing gives one an inkling as to what has actually been taking place.

Housing, like all enterprises under capitalism, has as its basis—profit. Slum eradication will take place only when it "pays"; thus far, it has attracted no private capital precisely because it does not "pay". Slum removal and replacement by new modern apartments implies that the slum dweller is able to pay the higher rental of the new apartment. This assumption is false. The slum dweller is not able to pay the higher rent required of him to change over to a decent home, and it is for this reason that slum eradication has not gone forward. New construction of city homes for the past twenty years has barely kept pace with population increase. What spurts did take place during 1923-1927 reached their peak in 1925 and were forced by the laws of capitalist economics to begin to fall off long before the present depression began. Continued reliance on private initiative will merely see a repetition of the results of the era before and during the depression. The solution lies in governmental subsidy. A brief study of the figures points to this as the only way under capitalism.

For the past twenty years, despite the continued discarding of old machinery by industry as a whole and a general replacement of the obsolete methods of production by newer technique, as regards the human home no such general replacement has taken place. New construction, to repeat, has barely exceeded population increase. During the war-years and immediately following, construction of city homes actually fell behind the normal increase

of non-farm population. Beginning with 1923, home construction began to spurt forward so that by the end of 1927 (the peak of construction was 1925) there was an excess of about 1,250,000 new city homes to tempt the slum dweller. Unable to pay the rentals required for the newer apartments, the poorly paid worker represented no market whatsoever for the new buildings. Construction declined during 1928 and for 1929 was but 50% of the 1925 level. The year 1930 brought with it the crisis, and the bottom dropped from beneath home construction, completely wiping out the excess of home unit construction over population increase that existed in 1929. The record for the years in question (Bureau of Labor) shows what has taken place. The figures indicate new dwellings in 257 identical cities:

1925	491,222	1930	125,322
1926	462,214	1931	98,178
1927	406,095	1932	27,381
1928	388,678	1933	25,879
1929	244,394	1934 (estimate)	24,000

Construction of new dwellings during the past three years (years of the Roosevelt ballyhoo) has been averaging about 5% of the 1925 peak, and during all these years, Sir Stork has been adding to our city population almost 1 million per year. The year 1933, and 1934 during which the papers were full of P.W.A., F.H.A., H.O.L.C.\*, and the thousand and one schemes of federal, state and city slum removal "projects" witnessed an actual decline from 1932. In New York City alone, there were 34,000 units built in 1928 as compared with 4,000 in 1933.

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It is with the above as a background that one can begin to understand why the federal survey conducted in the spring and summer of 1934 concluded that there existed an actual shortage of 5 million dwelling units. Dr. E. E. Evans in his *Recent Trends in American Housing*, published in 1931, asserted that "less than half the homes in America measure up to minimum standards of health and decency". The real property inventory of 1934 conducted by the Bureau of Census divulged conditions concerning urban housing in the United States. The report, based on a total of 2,633,135 dwelling units in 64 representative cities, showed that nearly 50% of the family dwelling units were over 20 years old; that about 7.8% were vacant (no statistics to show in what class of dwelling these vacancies occur), and that 17.1% of the occupied units were crowded. About 44% of the structures were in need of minor repairs, 16% in need of major repairs, and 2% were listed as unfit for use. (It must be remembered that the Bureau report did not concern itself with decent housing which is after all the real problem.) What this country needs today is a housing program that will create half as many new decent homes as are standing today.

**Government Construction.** What has the government actually done during the recent campaign of slum removal, besides making newspaper copy? The year 1934 shows actual home construction less than that of 1933 and only 5% of the 1927 figure. The Roosevelt talk of millions and billions for "better homes for the people of the nation" has brought forth not even a mouse.

The federal government, in tackling the problem of home construction, has proceeded on at least 14 different fronts: H.O.L.C., P.W.A., F.H.A., F.E.R.A. and a few more of the alphabet agencies were created. Some of these agencies had as a specific task aid to the mortgage-holding property owner; others had as their task aid for the banks holding unredeemable mortgages. The P.W.A. and the F.H.A. had as their specific aim the stimulation of construction. The task of James A. Moffett, head of the F.H.A., was to induce private capital to invest its funds in new construction and rehabilitation. Where such efforts proved successful the govern-

ment would take over the responsibility of guaranteeing the mortgages involved. The P.W.A., at whose head stands Harold I. Ickes, although at first its functions overlapped those of the F.H.A., has today gone in for complete federal financing and the construction of new homes. None of the schemes, however, has succeeded so much in making a ripple on the American scene, as could be deduced from nothing more than the acknowledgement of the fact that 1934 saw fewer homes built than 1933 and 1933 less than 1932.

But in the creation of these various agencies hangs a tale: the tale of the recent slug-fest between Ickes on the one hand (for the poor man!) and Moffett on the other (for the banker)—Roosevelt, referee.

In June 1934, Franklin Delano Roosevelt in a radio broadcast, said: "We seek the security of the men, women and children of the nation. That security involves added means of providing better homes for the people of the nation. That is the first principle of our future program." The entire nation applauded. Better homes?—why, certainly!

The problem arose, however, as to who should build these homes—private industry or the government.

Donald R. Richberg said last November: "The building of these homes ought to be done by private enterprise." Ickes, in a report issued in the latter part of November, although not specifically replying to the above quotation, took exception to it. In condemning the practise of relying upon private capital he said, in part: "Our much-vaunted private initiative as so often happens when the goal is a social good instead of a private profit, was unable or unwilling to undertake much that was worth while. With the failure of private enterprise to provide low-cost housing even with government aid [85% of the funds were to be advanced by the P.W.A. in the form of a loan. H.S.] the Housing Division decided it would have to do its own constructing and operating."

About this time, Mr. James A. Moffett, who left a \$100,000 Standard Oil job to join the Roosevelt plan of becoming the head of the F.H.A., told reporters in a press interview that he was pleased with his agency's progress. He suggested that Mr. Ickes' funds might not be needed for housing because private capital was beginning to flow into the real estate mortgage field under the spur of his agency's guarantee.

The following day Ickes held a press conference. "I've seen no evidence that the holders of private capital are ready to use it," he said, "and we can't sit around all day waiting for private capital to get going." (This is speedy Ickes speaking.) "I subscribe to the theory that a very large amount of public money should be put out so that industry may be pepped up in a hurry."

Mr. Moffett was thereupon put into a fighting mood. He told reporters that such a low-cost housing program as proposed by Mr. Ickes "would wreck the housing situation and drive private capital into hiding". "The minute the government sells houses directly to the people generally," he continued, "you compete with private enterprise and it couldn't be done."

The following day a three-way telephone conversation was held between the two lieutenants and their chief, Roosevelt, who at the time was basking in the Georgia sunshine. The tiff was apparently patched up and an official White House communique declared that everybody was in "substantial accord".

The controversy as to who should supply the funds for construction apparently has led to this result: neither private capital nor public funds have been forthcoming. The whole squabble seems to have taken place in a vacuum.

The Federal Housing Administration has thus far advanced for loans for repairs the grand total of 30 million dollars. The sum is so insignificant that James A. Moffett, in drawing his balance sheet at the end of the year, passes over this sum very hastily, but then points with pride to the million and some odd pieces of liter-

\*P.W.A. is Public Works Administration, F.H.A. is Federal Housing Administration, H.O.L.C. is Home Owners Loan Corporation.

ature thus far distributed. "Wait until the end of 1935," he concluded, "even a billion won't be too small."

In the P.W.A., however, under the supervision of H. L. Ickes, the money flows—drop by drop, it is true,—but it sounds big to the uninitiated. The P.W.A. housing phase is divided into two major categories, the limited dividend-private capital-government loan type, and the second to be completely financed by government funds.

The Federal Housing Division of the P.W.A. was set up July 20, 1934. After 18 months Chief Ickes took inventory of the progress and hailed his work "as concrete evidence of the social changes being wrought by the Roosevelt administration". He declared that "low-cost housing projects are now going forward in a large number of cities". The cities may be large but the number or the size of the projects could hardly be considered so—nor are they low-cost.

As of January 4, seven limited dividend corporations had been organized, \$12,433,000 allocated for their financing and \$4,240,000 actually spent. Of these government-aided private enterprises, 2 were complete. One, an apartment house in Philadelphia, provides 284 living units renting for an average of \$10.51 per room per month. (Slum rentals average about \$5 or \$6 per room.) The Cleveland project plans \$10 per room and 6 room apartments, or \$60 per month rent. The two New York City projects will average \$11 per room. None of the projects is in what might be termed a strictly slum area; as a matter of fact, they are far removed from the slum section. The two New York City projects are to be located in the upper Bronx, near Westchester (Hillside Housing Corporation) and in the great open spaces of Queens (Boulevard Gardens Corporation). This can hardly be called slum removal.

The Housing Division's own construction was proceeding or planned through 49 federal projects involving 38,125 living units and \$149,756,000 in allocations, actual or tentative. Thus far, 13 have been approved and are in various stages of actual progress. Commanding \$79,807,000 in allocations, and providing 18,705 living units, they will rise in New York (5,000 living units); Chicago (6,900); Atlanta (1,283); Cleveland (660); Indianapolis (1,022); Cincinnati (1,960); Detroit (1,236); Montgomery, Ala. (162); and Louisville (460). Actual expenditures on them as of January 4 totaled \$2,064,984. Of the remaining 36 projects, some they hope to build, others they are merely thinking about building and the remaining few they have not even begun to think about—but eventually they will all be complete.

The subsistence homestead, which one commentator properly termed "an industrial peasant" scheme, although it has contained within itself the very vicious idea of using the worker only when industry needs him and then making the unemployed worker dig for his food, can hardly become a problem today. We are too far advanced in the 20th century, and unfortunately capitalism still exists. By December 22, 1934, the F.S.H.C. had allocated \$18,920,000 to 62 projects. These will provide 6,612 dwellings. Seventeen of the 62 projects were under actual construction as of that date (1,064 dwellings).

Except for a few scatterings here and there under some of the more obscure letters of the alphabet, this is the sum total of federal home construction over 18 months. About 48,000 dwelling units have been planned, 20,000 of which are in actual construction and 500 of which have been completed. In 1925, total residential construction was three and a half billion dollars, providing approximately 772,000 dwelling units.

One would hardly call this slum clearance. One official of a federal slum clearance agency, approached and questioned by the editors of *New Outlook*, replied: "No slums will be cleared. Not a slum. We cannot afford to clear slums. Even the government cannot do that. We will clean up some near-slums. It'll be a hell of a mess, but we cannot avoid it. We made our brags and now

we must stick to them." The gentlemen, indeed, spoke forcibly, frankly, and tragically for the underpaid city worker.

The need has not changed a whit. There is still a shortage of 5 million dwelling units, 13 million homes still have to be rebuilt or replaced.

Why cannot the present approach of the federal government bring any results? First, because it is geared at an entirely too slow tempo. Where millions are needed, they speak of hundreds and even dozens. Secondly, it is the approach of a pawnbroker to his client, except that here the client has nothing more to offer. He has been stripped bare.

The government approach is one that must result in rentals that the slum dweller can never think of paying. The limited dividend rentals of ten and eleven dollars per room per month are twice what the slum dweller is accustomed to paying. In the early stages of the completely federal-financed projects the talk was of five and six dollars per room. Today this has risen to seven and eight dollars, and before completion will probably be still higher. Thus far, the new construction has taken place not in the slum regions, but mostly on very low value land. Should attempts be made to tackle the slums in the heart of the city, the land values will represent an obstacle over which no five and six dollar rental will be able to hurdle, provided the present method of financing is continued.

The Ickes method of financing is one of self-liquidating projects. This means when translated into simple language, that the worker will have to pay not merely for the upkeep, but for the actual construction and land purchase as well. (Including interest on the original sum advanced). Harold L. Ickes, in defending his position last November, defined his policy as follows: "Housing under the administration's program is designed to be self-liquidating. The money used in financing this lowcost housing will be returned to the treasury through the collection of rents. The United States Congress has not authorized an era of Vienna housing, capital costs of which would be paid by the taxpayer, leaving rents to be based on operation and maintenance alone."

It is precisely the latter type of financing that will bring about real slum clearance and it is this latter type that the working class must demand. The federal government has subsidized everything from railroads to airplanes. Today should begin the era of government subsidy for home building: initial cost of construction to be taken care of by the Federal government; rents to be based on operation and maintenance. This is the only sensible and logical conclusion and only thus will we truly begin to approach slum removal on a large scale.

One should not preclude the possibility of such a program taking form and shape under capitalism. It is true that it will be no easy task to force such a plan upon the capitalist class. The workers will have arrayed against them a solid front of real estate owner, banker and government. But no obstacle is too great for a determined working class.

Can such a program be undertaken by American industry? The answer is that not only can this be done, but that a properly executed program would take care of many of the nation's unemployed. Construction has constituted a drag on every upturn that has begun to show its head during the past few years. Consider that construction used to average about 7 billion dollars yearly and has lately been running well below 1½ billion; that in 1925 a total of three and a third billion dollars was spent for residential construction alone; that in 1925 about 772,000 homes were built; that normally the building trades industry employs 2,500,000 workers.

A quick program will return to their jobs building trades workers now unemployed as well as many millions more who would find their jobs again in the allied and the stimulated industries.

Henry STONE

## 2. How the Problem Is "Solved"

AMERICA has discovered "the housing problem". For decades its slums, for filth and overcrowding, have been exceeded only by those of the Orient. But now, it seems, the gentlemen in power in Washington are really concerned about those of their fellow citizens who are condemned to live in dirt, depravity and sudden death by fire in our "sub-standard housing areas", to use the euphemism so much in vogue with housing experts. And the gentlemen in power, curiously enough, outdo each other in picturing the horror and tragedy of slum life. Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, as head of the P.W.A. in whose hands some of the housing funds hitherto have been tightly clutched, sheds administration tears at the thought of slum degradation. Langdon W. Post, chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, to whom housing was in a class with Sanskrit before he recently took office as New York's tenement house commissioner, stands aghast at New York's multiple-dwelling firetraps. Mrs. Roosevelt organizes a slumming party of Washington society leaders to focus public attention on the cause of government housing. But "housing" is one thing and houses at low rentals for workers is another. What are the housing facts? Let us see!

Take New York City as a fairly typical example. New York—with its Park and Fifth Avenues, its Sutton Place. In this proud metropolis, in this center of architectural wonder, there are nearly twenty square miles of slum area in which 513,000 families, involving about 1,800,000 persons, live under conditions of squalor which are unequalled even by the notorious London slums. In New York City 49% of all tenement and apartment houses were built in the last century; in Manhattan 75% were built before 1890.

In this housing cesspool hundreds of thousands of workers live without the most elementary sanitary conveniences. Antiquated toilets in the hallways in common use for men, women and children. Breeding places of disease. Incubators of sexual crime. Nearly 2,500 tenement houses with toilet accommodations in the yard. Windowless rooms. Dark, fetid hallways. Unbelievable congestion—in Harlem, the city's most exploited slum, the beds never grow cold, they are used in three eight-hour shifts. Nearly 2,000,000 inhabitants—representing what the social workers call "our lowest income groups", that is to say, the most exploited sections of the workingclass—are compelled to live under these inhuman conditions.

These are the bald facts about New York's slums, these are unadorned statistics, and are fairly representative of conditions in most large cities. These selfsame slums have existed for years. They have filled the hospitals, prisons and lunatic asylums of the state ever since they came into existence. In the past, philanthropists anointed their consciences by building neighborhood houses and health centers in the slums. Social workers and housing "experts" wrote reports, made surveys and speeches—and still the problem of the slums remained unsolved.

During the boom years the slums paid handsomely, paid as high as 30% profit per annum to the Astors, the Wendels, the Stuyvesants and the banks and mortgage companies who today own more than 65% of all slum property. Filth, degeneracy and tuberculosis stalked through the dilapidated tenements then as now—but as long as the properties paid well, the press was sterile of anti-slum propaganda.

During the past decade, however, some 413,000 inhabitants have migrated from the lower East Side slums. Comparatively high wages earned during the years 1924-1929 enabled thousands of workers to escape the slums, enabled them to move to less congested and less squalid sections. After the débâcle of 1929, working class families, under the heavy blows of the crisis, broke up, doubled up, took makeshift quarters in rooming houses or migrated.

As a result there are 131,757 vacant slum dwellings in greater New York today. Fictitious real estate values based upon the abnormal boom-year rentals succumbed to grim economic reality and deflated precipitously. Hundreds of thousands of workers were forced on to relief. City rent vouchers were so low that they could not even meet the deflated rentals demanded in the slum areas. Second and third mortgages disappeared over night. The slums were no longer so profitable.

In a crisis of this magnitude only the large landed families, the banks and the mortgage companies were able to retain their equities, but as crisis followed crisis the properties soon dropped below the value of the first mortgages. Slum real estate in New York City today is actually worth *less* than its assessed valuation. For the past two years sales of slum property have been so rare as to be almost phenomenal.

When the banks and the landed families saw their equities hopelessly wiped out, one last course remained for them—government subsidy. Hence the surprising and sudden demands in government circles for slum clearance. As a matter of fact, so eager was the Roosevelt administration to come to the aid of the holders of slum property that when the \$4,880,000,000 emergency budget bill was drafted it failed to make mention of government low-rental building and merely called for *slum clearance*. But the manufacturers of building materials soon set this slight error to rights.

In a rational planned workers' economy, homes will be built for the very apparent reason that they are needed. But the present housing campaign does not rest on so simple a premise. No, indeed! For nearly six years the profit economy in America has been paralyzed. All efforts to restore the patient have been fruitless. N.R.A., C.W.A., F.E.R.A., P.W.A.—all to no avail. The more violent the hypodermic, the more spasmodic and grotesque are the response of the victim. With the national elections less than two years off and with more than 20,000,000 Americans on relief, the situation for the Roosevelt administration is truly alarming. Moreover, the capital goods industries are clamoring for help. The New Deal took care of everyone—the banks, the railroads, public utilities, the mine operators and the manufacturers. Only the building trades have languished under the blight. This is soon remedied. The answer, of course, is government housing, part of a vast, last-stand public works program.

But, the President hastens to explain, there will be no fancy wages. Wages, said Mr. Roosevelt, will be a shade above the dole and considerably below prevailing union rates. The workers must not, under any circumstances come to think that public funds are public funds. Carpenters, bricklayers, electricians and all the skilled building crafts will, with the assistance of William Green, receive a "subsistence wage" not to exceed \$50 a month.

For the past two years the country has been blanketed by glowing articles, written by housing social workers and enthusiastic but unemployed architects, on the advantages of government low-cost housing. For two years the country has been deluged with statistical surveys and reports all designed to prove that housing is necessary, desirable and logical. Net result: not a house. But the distressed cries of the landlords, the outraged protests of the manufacturers of building materials and the ominous rumblings of the millions of unemployed, impelled the government toward action. Not because workers were living in filthy rookeries. Not because the infantile death rate in the slums was steadily rising. But because more billions must be shovelled in frantic desperation into the wide pit of the crisis.

The National Housing Conference held in Washington in January of this year estimated that at least \$20,000,000,000 will be required to wipe out the nation's slums. Of this amount, \$1,500,000,000 would be required for New York City alone. What does the Roosevelt administration offer in the face of this tremendous need? (What, indeed, can it offer?) Of the proposed \$4,880,000,000 special appropriation, certainly not more than \$1,250,000,000

will be spent throughout the country for housing, of which New York's share will be, according to the most optimistic forecasts, not more than \$150,000,000. Will this abolish the slums? Will this pitiful amount, raised in desperation as a stop-gap against the floodtide of importunate manufacturers and the ebbside of desperate workers, really provide adequate housing facilities to those in the greatest need? **Hardly.**

Let us assume that the federal government will advance New York City this \$150,000,000 for housing. At the most not more than 120,000 rooms could be constructed at this cost. In short, all that the President's labors will bring forth are apartments for approximately 30,000 of New York's 513,000 slum dwelling families.

Slum property in New York City, although it has little or no market at present, will cost as high as \$12 per square foot when the landowning families are to be bailed out and slum clearance undertaken. It is quite possible that in some districts property could be assembled for about \$3 per square foot. Under these circumstances more than 30% of the total housing appropriation will be spent on land acquisition. With the real estate interests receiving 30% and 50% going toward material, labor will receive a bare 20% thinly spread as subsistence wages.

It is quite possible that while the government's slum clearance program will in effect be a subsidy to the landed gentry, the local governments will be compelled to guarantee that the funds will be used for self-liquidating projects. Moreover, it is quite possible that the period of amortization will be fifty years and that the rate of interest will be somewhat near the present federal rate, about 2½%. Allowing for a construction cost of \$1,000 per room, 2% amortization, partial tax exemption and an annual service charge of \$35 per room, it will be impossible to rent apartments for less than \$9 per room per month. At this figure more than 90% of the present slum dwellers will be unaffected by the Roosevelt housing program.

True, the government's model housing developments will be modern, clean and healthful, but workers on relief or receiving N.R.A.'s minimum wages (which in many cases have become maximum wages) cannot afford to pay one additional dollar for rent. In Glasgow it was discovered that workers who moved from the slums into model government houses where slightly higher rents prevailed, developed a greater susceptibility to tuberculosis. This puzzled social workers for some time until an astute physician (a Marxist in all likelihood) discovered that the increased rental compelled economies on an already restricted diet.

There can be no doubt that Roosevelt will initiate some measure of government housing, but the actual needs of the most desperate sections of the working class will be ignored. Working class families in the large cities which require four and five rooms at a maximum rental of \$18-\$20 a month have nothing to expect from this political housing program, which will be a heaven-sent release from the hell of low values for the landed families and the banks. For vast sections of the working class, employed and unemployed, the Roosevelt program means continued life in the old slums and work at forced labor rates.

Who, then, will live in New York's 30,000 new apartments? Ward-healers, certain sections of the lower middle class and the smaller categories of the Fusion and Roosevelt bureaucracies. And when this comes to pass, for all popular purposes, the housing problem will have been "solved".

Despite the vast amount of energy expended in writing about housing in America in the last two years there has been no genuine housing movement. An effective housing movement must, of necessity, be a consumers' movement and the only "consumer" of low-rental housing is the working class. Today housing is manna which fall, by some strange suspension of the laws of capitalist economy, from the Rooseveltian heavens in Washington. Housing "experts" have always believed that housing would come from above and the news of the \$4,880,000,000 appropriation for housing and public works have sent them into positively indecent transports of joy.

The housing problem cannot be solved by capitalism. Neither Mr. Roosevelt, nor Mr. Ickes, nor Mr. Moffett are in the least degree interested in destroying real property values—and, in the last analysis, complete low-rental housing for the working class must lower speculative real estate values.

Housing is not a technical problem; it is an economic problem. Although in the past labor organizations have been remarkably inactive on the question of housing, there are indications that this will not be the case in the future. Workers' representatives should demand representation on every housing authority in the country, on job committees, on management boards. A labor housing conference should be organized in every large city to give the housing movement the class character which alone will militate against injustice and favoritism. American workers have the right to demand decent housing, not as charity from their bosses or from Washington, but as their inalienable right as the creators of all wealth.

Paul V. McBRIDE

## The Political Situation In Spain

**T**HE MOST surprising phenomenon of the recent Spanish proletarian insurrection is the fact that although the revolutionary camp was defeated, the Vaticanist reaction found itself, as regards power, in exactly the same position as before. The reactionary cliques tried in vain during the wild days of the insurrection, to sweep everything before them and to gain complete control of the state. After having employed all of the coercive means at their command, they were forced to give up in the face of resistance encountered. The repression, with the violent forms it assumed in Asturias, did not adapt itself to their plans; nor has it been able to surmount the temporary arrangement represented in the ruling parliamentary coalition.

We attribute this phenomenon to the opportuneness of the moment chosen for the insurrection. From a revolutionary point of view it would not be good judgment to use one's last recourse when there are still other less desperate means that can be employed. But far from justifying it, this fact is the complete condemnation of the expectant attitude of the socialist party in

the months leading up to the insurrection. One may use one's final recourse while others still exist, but, of course, only on condition that these other weapons are being utilized at the same time.

On the other hand, if the labor and popular uprising had been defeated at a later date, it would have been difficult to keep the Vaticanist reaction within the bonds that now temporarily hold it back. Once the popular mass forces were defeated, the arbitrator of the situation in the midst of the antagonisms that might have arisen would have been the army. Against the will of the army, or without its support, nothing serious could have been attempted. And here we find the explanation, why it is that in the conflict between the President of the republic and the government, which incidentally is the key to the present situation, the point of view of the former has prevailed. It may be assumed that had the events taken place a few months later, the story would have been different, because the most important military posts, held at the time of the formation of the Lerroux-Gil Robles government by elements in sympathy with the republican régime, would have

been replaced by elements loyal to the Vaticanist reaction.

In the very first days of the insurrection, when the general strike in the country had not yet been broken, and while the government forces were still unable to penetrate Asturias, a sharp antagonism developed between the President and the government on the matter of the death sentences decreed in Catalonia against the military chiefs who had served under the autonomous government. We all know that after the operative act, beyond which the uprising did not go, the Catalonian autonomists were the first force to succumb. It was rather because those condemned had but recently been his own associates and collaborators, than because of any qualms about capital punishment, in general, against those defeated, that the President of the republic opposed sanctioning the death penalties in Catalonia. In the beginning there were differences of opinion within the government itself on this point, but it did not take long for the Vaticanists, to whose will all the other elements of the coalition are completely subjected, to prevail. Thus the government was able to face the President of the republic with a practically unified opinion. There can be no doubt that had it involved ordinary worker elements, the President would not have offered such obstinate opposition to the executions as he did. But as for the execution of the Catalonian army officers, the President's intransigence was absolute. The Vaticanist reaction was doubly hindered: first, the commutation of the Catalonian officers set a precedent that would have to be followed when the Asturian workers, still in open rebellion, were brought to trial; and secondly, it frustrated the hopes of the reactionaries to take advantage of the circumstances by a great leap forward in their political career, being obliged instead to resign themselves to continued struggle based on the parliamentary coalition.

After a long drawn out dispute, the Cabinet gave in to the President, retreating under cover of various dilatory formulæ, the main purpose of which was to prevent the news of these commutations of sentence for the Catalonian army officers from being made public until after the defeat of the Asturias movement could be assured. When the government actually had for decision the sentences imposed in Asturias, commutations were granted for all of the 23 that had been condemned to death, with the exception of two poor wretches chosen to enact a ghastly comedy considered necessary in order to demonstrate that on some points the severity of the law is inflexible. The government commuted the death sentences, reserving all explanations as to the reasons for so doing until such time as might be deemed opportune.

The governmental clemency during the repression was only apparent. What it did in reality, due to its own conflict with the President, was to moderate the action of the courts, while at the same time intensifying the fury of the soldiery. While the matter of commutations of sentences was being discussed in the higher circles of the state, the armed forces of this same state were devoting themselves to the most frightful butchery. Supported by martial law and an extremely severe press censorship over all information coming out of the Asturias region, the soldiery for days on end committed the most monstrous crimes with all impunity. By a discreet and impenetrable silence, the government opened this channel for the crimes that it was unable for political reasons to carry out officially and publicly.

If reaction had been able to count on the support of the army, no attention would have been paid to the opinions of the President, and in all likelihood the results of this antagonism, and therefore the immediate consequence of the proletarian defeat would have been either a military dictatorship or a government organized to the taste of the army officers. But the position of the army at the time of the insurrection, just as today, was such that it did not seem disposed to take part in any intrigue or plot of the various political groups, going only so far as to support official power. Any attempt of the Vaticanists to take power by

force would have met with the opposition of most, if not all, of the army. If the political crisis of October which became the signal for the uprising had been solved in a manner unfavorable to the counter-revolutionists, then the situation would have been very dangerous for them, for if they had attempted a violent assault on power failure would have been inevitable. The fact that the President of the republic was the main hope of both of the two antagonistic camps in the weeks preceding the revolution, in that he could throw the whole apparatus of the state either one way or another, was the reason for his importance in the weeks preceding the revolution. Reaction realized its own weakness, and labor and the democratic (democratic and social democratic) camp harbored such fear of an audacious revolutionary overthrow of the régime, as to keep it in a state of passivity and watchful waiting until the last moment. Being unable to use violence, what other means did reaction have of achieving power during the recent events? None at all. A protest in the Cortes could only have provoked a Cabinet crisis, while the whole country was engaged in an armed struggle, and this would have meant risking the loss of the positions which had been won in the government at such great cost and with such tremendous difficulty.

We therefore have as the fruit of the desperate struggle that has been waged in Spain between the revolution and the counter-revolution, a hybrid political situation. Everything is almost lost—the parliamentary system, Catalonian autonomy, freedom of the press and of propaganda, labor organizations—but nothing has yet been completely lost.

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In order to arrive at an understanding not only of the exact road taken by the counter-revolutionary course in Spain, but also in order that we may understand the changes and antagonisms that may very soon appear, we believe it advisable to describe briefly the forces that now share governmental power in the country.

Niceto Alcalá Zamora, head of the first government and today President of the republic, by consequence of a whole series of factors, is the man who has exercised greatest influence over the march of republican politics from the last months of the monarchy until the present, in spite of having no party base of his own. The extraordinary rôle that he has played is due solely to his personal significance. His monarchist and Catholic affiliations, his quality as ex-minister of the fallen régime, made of him a banner to be followed during the last pre-republican period. The fact that such a prudent man should place himself at the head of a republican movement should be the best proof of the decomposition of the monarchy, as well as the most valid guarantee to the "best families" that the new régime would not aspire to alter the principles and customs of the established social order. With no parliamentary representation save himself and a few friends, he commenced during the constituent period of the republic to bring forward his militant Catholic opinions within a government where all of the other parties were fiercely secular without being much of anything else, for it is well known that parliamentarism and secularism are the only two goddesses of liberalism, and especially of Spanish liberalism.

The Leftists explained the continual subordination of the government to the will of Señor Alcalá Zamora by pointing to the necessity of maintaining the unity of the government. At the same time, however, this necessity interested them as a means of justifying the abominable transactions and horse trades of their policies, which they preferred, like good parliamentarians, to the radical application of the ideas they claimed to profess.

After having worn down and chiseled away the most essential parts of all the secular legislation projects, as well as all of the other most important proposals of the Constituent Cortes, Alcalá Zamora finally left the government together with the other Catholic, Maura, declaring his dissatisfaction with what little of the

secular legislation had finally remained.

These projects were: that calling for the formal dissolution of the Company of Jesus, accompanied by the still more formal expropriation of the latter's estates—prudently placed in safekeeping beforehand; and the law prohibiting the religious orders from teaching in schools. As he abandoned the government, Alcalá Zamora announced his intention of taking the initiative and of placing himself at the head of a public campaign for the purpose of revising the constitution, at least in the matters of secular legislation.

In order to prevent the "bad effect" of discord with the ex-head of the government and to pay the homage due his person, the new Leftist government could think of nothing more fitting than to retire him from active politics by naming him President of the republic, by which he was charged with the supreme vigilance over the Constitution that he himself—and rightly so—had declared incompatible with his whole ideology. What happened afterwards may not have been entirely predictable, but quite obviously it was to have been feared. To no one who understands a little about Spanish politics is it a secret that the cause of the fall of the republican-socialist coalition and the dissolution of the Constituent Cortes in the summer of 1933, was to prevent the going into effect during the coming autumn of the secular legislation that had been passed by the Constituent. Precisely at that time, the President dissolved the Constituent Cortes, resolved to face all of the dangers that a Rightward course might bring rather than to permit the secular laws to prosper.

But in spite of his social ideology, which was identical with that of the Monarchist and Vaticanist reaction, of whose privileges he has been the most ardent champion, the sectarian hatred of the monarchists and Catholics against Señor Alcalá Zamora has at all times been extraordinarily sharp. The churchgoing public sees but the hateful spectre of heresy and hypocrisy in those Catholics who assumed the leadership of the republican movement. On the other hand, the marked disdain with which reaction views the republic as such, and certain of its basic institutions—parliament, Catalanian autonomy—is sufficient reason why the President should, on his own score, feel the greatest of misgivings toward the reactionaries.

The Vaticanists found the docile instrument to fit their plans in the Radical party, the representative of so-called "historical republicanism". It would be difficult to find a party comparable to this one at the head of a government in any other country. In every parliamentary régime, the lowest political level is occupied by the parties or individuals of exalted liberal extraction, experts in parliamentary intrigues, who make a profession of being in permanent opposition. All of the vermin of politics and journalism, the most illiterate and the most mercenary, occupy this zone. The Spanish Radical party is one of the purest and most unbelievably picturesque representatives of this species.

The Radical party never dreamed that it might some day reach the seats of power. After long years of existence as a party, the coming of the republic was, for it, an unforeseen accident which raised it from the lowest and dirtiest steps of the political ladder to the very highest plane.

In the early years of the century, a great political effervescence dominated the country's life, and at that time, when the existence of the monarchy was not considered to be even remotely menaced, the Radical party came into being and immediately seized upon the banner of the most exalted republicanism. The big bourgeoisie which was then coming into existence along with the process of industrialization, in spite of clashing at many points with the old bureaucratic state, did not go beyond the stage of a clever and purely formal liberalism, while the proletariat was still in diapers ideologically and organizationally. Republican ideas were at that time most appropriate for the Radical leeches of the permanent opposition. The most important work of the Radical party con-

sisted in serving as the agent of the monarchist governments for combatting the autonomist demands of the Catalanian bourgeoisie, utilizing the general incomprehension of the nationalist problems by the masses as well as their hatred of the exploiting bourgeois class. This campaign was often conducted under direct orders of the Madrid governments, and always serving as an excellent means for blackmail, it carried forward by means of lofty invocations to the "social republic" obscene anti-clerical harangues, and even anathemas against the automobile, that "detestable bourgeois vehicle".

The tales of prowess of the Radical party cannot be told without risk of being charged with exaggeration, or the simple desire to tell stories. The invitation to the masses to "violate the novitiates of the convents, making mothers of them"; the ostentatious and succulent meat dinners called "Feasts of Promise" given on fast-days, so as to counterpose the Radical rite to the religious rite; these and other extravaganzas will give some ideas of the political stature of these people. The Youth Militias of the Radical party operated under the *nom de guerre* of "Barbarous Youth", through the absurd ranks of which not a few of today's revolutionists have passed. The activities of the Radicals left indelible marks on Catalanian politics and especially on the municipal administration of Barcelona. Their press frequently initiated furious campaigns against the Moroccan war, against some form or other of governmental authority, against some particular banker or capitalist, in any of which cases those under attack knew how to silence these campaigns by asking one or the other of the responsible Radical leaders to drop around to the servant entrance, where an envelope would be absentmindedly slipped into his hand.

The annals of Spanish parliamentarism since the beginning of the present century are filled with accusations against Radical party elements for cheating, trickery or bribery, in spite of the small desire that bourgeois parliamentarians have for bringing such matters officially into the open. Even in the recent Constituent Cortes, one of the most outstanding leaders of the Radical party, famous for the record-breaking number of scandals in which he has been involved, had to be expelled from the Cortes for "moral incompatibility", it having been proven that he attempted to bribe the parliamentary commission in charge of investigating the secret activities carried on by the multi-millionaire, Juan March, sinister figure of the Spanish plutocracy during recent years. The evidence was such that his own party was obliged to accept the sacrifice and public dishonor of the "old militant" without any protest or objection being raised. However, when the first Radical ministry was formed, the multi-millionaire Juan March escaped from the prison of Alcalá, to which the republican-socialist government had transferred him in fear that he might be able to escape from the Madrid prison; and the already mentioned "old militant" who had been excluded from the Cortes with the silent permission of his own party came to occupy in the new Cortes the leadership of his party's parliamentary minority, which post he still holds. The internal life of the Radical party is like a mad-house. The dominant theme of party life in general and that of its various leaders individually is made up, on every hand, of accusations of graft and job-seeking. However, they pretend to live in rapturous adoration of their "chief" Alejandro Lerroux—founder and main force in the party, old cynic and adventurer, and in fact, quite a political clown, who with great frequency brings the party's bright lights together in love-feasts so that he may talk to them, "appealing"—to use his own words—"sometimes to their heads and other times to their hearts".

When the country felt the pressing need for a change of régime, the attempt was made to organize a new republican movement barring the Radical party—which had become known also as "His Majesty's republican opposition"—because of its extremely filthy history. The most intransigent in their opposition to the participation of the Radicals in the new movement were precisely those

elements who, being of monarchist origin (especially Alcala Zamora), knew best for what class of services the old régime had used the Radicals, and who, because they were serious in founding a movement to establish a republic, considered it advisable to exclude such a party of demagogues and professional blackmailers. However, it proved impossible to get along without the Radical party which may be said to have been the only representative of republicanism of some years' standing and which enjoyed a certain legendary popularity, with electoral strength in various localities throughout the country giving it a certain safe parliamentary base. The elections to the Constituent demonstrated this, giving the greatest representation to the Radical and Socialist parties, which were of longest standing, while the other republican parties were but last-minute makeshifts. But no sooner was the Radical victory known, than the socialist Minister Prieto declared unexpectedly, at a time when the final line-up of forces was not yet clear, and the greatest of harmony seemed to reign among the parties of the republic, that the socialists would by every means oppose giving the reins of power to the Radicals. How is this violent reaction of the socialists to be explained? In the same way as Alcala Zamora's previous refusal to allow them to participate in the republican bloc. Even today these considerations cause him to prate in his affectedly pompous tone, which, while it forms an integral part of his oratory, is at present greatly exaggerated, because of the vagueness of the language he is obliged to use by the nature of his office. The President of the republic now raves and rants on the "morality of rulers" and whether or not there can be "authority without morality", etc., etc.

It must be historically established that the discord between socialists and Radicals did not originate on questions of program, and that only during the course of the Constituent did it acquire a content of ideas and interests. At the outset, the opposition to the Radicals was based on considerations of political decorum, on the simple need for a minimum of morality—in appearances at least; it was an echo of the horrible reputation of the Radicals. On the other hand, the possibility of the Radicals governing the country was viewed with horror by their adversaries, and even their allies were unable to conceal a certain alarm which they were obliged to overcome in the name of the supreme interests of their cause. The socialists could have no principled political opposition to the Radical party at a time when they themselves entered the government as the principal prop of the bourgeois régime, in a movement where all the groups participated and where the most reactionary elements held the highest posts.

The Radical party was for the time being converted into the party of the bourgeoisie, which, not having traditional bonds with any particular group, has been ever adverse to changes in the government. The Radical party now acquired enormous strength and we are of the opinion that no party specifically representative of the Spanish bourgeoisie has ever been so powerful. Furthermore, the recently defeated monarchic classes supported it, as constituting for them a lesser evil. But the months have passed, showing that the Radical party is incapable of leading its great following. Incapable by nature of orienting itself by objective standards, the party is lost in the scramble for lucrative posts and positions of power; all of the party activity is wasted in squabbles or goes up in the incense of hero worship. Politically it continues to live off the moment and the opportunities that present themselves. A curious example of its attitude is to be seen in the eternal religious question, one of the central problems of Spanish politics.

Without at all foreseeing the alliance it was to form shortly, the Radical party prepared to keep faith with its original ideas on such matters, so often repeated in the "Feasts of Promise" held under its auspices. At the time of voting for the secular laws, the Radicals pointed out that they considered this legislation com-

pletely inadequate and recommended that more rigorous measures be employed against the clergy. But when attempts were made to apply this legislation in such minor respects as the removal of crucifixes and religious images from the walls of official educational institutions, the "chief"—in response to inquiries on the subject—remarked that no one had ever been more "secular" than he, nor for a longer period of time, but this matter of removing the crucifixes and images seemed to him a detestable annoyance. And finally, when the attempt was made to suspend and invalidate the secular legislation already voted, Lerroux was placed in power.

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If the hegemony of the reactionary movement passed so easily into the hands of the feudal Vaticanist party, this was due to the organic weaknesses of the bourgeois party. The strong point of the former was that it held the political control of the villages, where the backwardness and lack of independence of the population makes it possible for a privileged minority, consisting usually of two or three families—which may be either big landholders or middle class elements, according to the characteristics of the locality—to decide the elections. This is what is commonly known as the *cacique* [boss] system. The republic wanted to make an end of this system—by means of the ballot! In the cases of certain municipal councils where it was claimed that their election was not a result of the "popular will", these councils were removed, but with the same voters taking part in the new elections under the same conditions as existed previously, the results were naturally the same. These impregnable electoral positions and the tremendous economic resources at their disposal for propaganda purposes permitted the clerical-landlord party to win whatever the bourgeois party should lose. With keen political sense it was able to place class interests in the foreground of its demands, ignoring for the time all controversial matters of the political régime. The wealthy non-aristocratic classes of city and county, who looked askance at sectarian monarchism in which they saw nothing but a political demand as disturbing as it was non-essential, gravitated towards the feudal elements with their program of social reaction covered by a futile demagoguery borrowed from the rising European fascism. This program of reaction however made no impression on the Spanish working class, which on the contrary but tightened up its own ranks. No one, however, can deny the success of this program—which has a clear purpose though ambiguous form—among the well-to-do classes.

Upon the initiative of the Vaticanists, the monarchistic parties did not go forth to the electoral struggle with the crown and cross for emblems, but united as an "anti-marxist front". However, the marked monarchistic character of this bloc prevented the "historically republican" bourgeois Radical party from entering it. But faithful to the only thing really authentic in its whole past, the Radical party made haste to lend its services in the form of a series of local partial coalitions wherever such arrangements were convenient. The victory of this powerful reactionary bloc in the November 1933 elections was such as to surpass all expectations.

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The sharp relief in which the problem was posed indicated clearly what the attitude of a conscious, genuine workers' party, such as the socialist party decidedly was not, either by its theoretical foundation or practical action, should have been. Thanks to the the tricky electoral mechanism existing in the country, the Cortes was the stronghold of reaction and the weak spot for the proletariat. On the other hand, the strong points of the latter were the broad well-disciplined laboring masses possessed of a great spirit of combativity, which clerical Fascism was entirely lacking. The "concentrations" twice attempted by the latter (April 22, 1934 in El Escorial, September 8 and 9 in Madrid and Asturias) were answered by determined strikes of the proletariat which successfully reduced to the ridiculous the great show of forces by a reac-

tionary movement without real masses. The reactionary cadres were made up in these "concentrations" of the domestic help of the rich, and poor persons obligated to them.

Where should the main proletarian attacks have been directed? At the Cortes. It was necessary to decide on this course from the outset, or else allow reaction to come to power gradually, exposing ourselves to that which has happened: to the necessity of fighting a decisive struggle under the least favorable circumstances.

But this was too much to have expected of the main working class party, the socialist party, for like all of the democratic parties, if the socialists decide to break with the formal rules of democracy, they do so only when the water has risen a little above their necks, when there is absolutely no further hope of saving themselves.

The position of the socialist party was, in brief, as follows: "If Vaticanist reaction should take power, we shall then make the insurrection against the government and against the Cortes." The interests of the labor movement on the other hand, counselled proceeding with the decision against parliament for the purpose of preventing the armed clash at this time, if possible, and placing the proletariat in an aggressive rather than in a defensive position. In vain did certain labor minorities—the Communist Left, the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc (Maurin), and to a certain extent the Syndicalist Opposition—attempt to turn the struggle in this direction. The events of April 22 and September 8 and 9 were the only events of importance that have to an extent separated the socialist movement from its traditional policy of prudent timidity. The demoralizing effect of these events on the reactionaries was clearly visible. The socialist Left wing, best represented—at least in the field of propaganda—by the young socialists, did not possess the maturity, seriousness or sufficient sense of responsibility to adopt this point of view. They preferred to make a big noise about their newly-discovered revolutionarism which in practise became the complement of their traditional organizational timidity. To the demand that all energies be devoted to bringing about the overthrow of the Cortes, they replied that it was not necessary to concentrate the struggle on positions beyond which the proletariat had advanced, and that what was now necessary was the preparation of the insurrection for the overthrow of the capitalist régime. This over-simplified formulation of the objectives of the proletariat has exerted during recent months the same disorienting influence over the masses as did the anarchist propaganda of a-politicism in previous periods.

In the few months of its existence, from the time of its election until the insurrection, the second Cortes of the republic was noted for its instability. The governments during this period lacked a real parliamentary base and were made up of the least objectionable individuals, carefully selected for the rôle they were expected to play—that of governing by the consent and instructions of the Vaticanists, who themselves had no direct participation in the government. The instability of the régime was constantly evident, and government crises were frequent. But in spite of having such a weak foothold that could have been washed away by the first unfavorable tide, the Vaticanists were nevertheless able to continue advancing because their only opposition consisted of some noisy socialists in parliament, as loud-mouthed as they were weak-kneed. Instead of organizing a strong outside campaign which could give a more concise and urgent character to the struggle against the Cortes, this parliamentary opposition limited itself to useless imprecations and loud talk. The position of the socialist Left on this point was pitifully ingenious. They favored walking out of parliament as an expression of injured dignity, but without thinking of doing anything outside of the Cortes, other than "preparing for the insurrection", that is to say, preparing for the blow if it is inevitable, but doing nothing to prevent it, which latter problem, in our opinion, was also worth worrying about. With

the summer harvest, the agricultural workers' strike broke out as a consequence of the annulment of the labor agreements. At the same time the Cultivation Laws, voted by the Catalonian parliament in the interests of the peasants, led to a break between the autonomous government of Catalonia and the Madrid governments, one of the most notable manifestations of which was the withdrawal of the deputies representing the Catalonian Left *Esquerra* from the national parliament.

If the socialist deputies had backed up the Catalonians and if the industrial workers had supported the rural workers on strike, demanding the dissolution of the Cortes which was attempting to nullify the conquests already achieved by the masses, it would have been next to impossible for the Cortes to weather the storm. At any rate, the labor movement could not have fared the worse if such a course had been followed. But at this decisive moment, as in others before it, the passivity of the socialists was complete. The agricultural workers lost their strike, their organizations were suppressed and their class consciousness, always less clear and less firm than that of the industrial proletariat, was severely shaken. Thus was the autumn ushered in. The reactionaries, screwing up their courage, again attempted their grotesque "concentration" as a prelude to their activities for the conquest of power.

The proletariat responded to these provocations just as it should have. Then came the crisis in the government, with a solution favorable to reaction. The working class then had no other way out but to rebel. To have hesitated would have been criminal. The agricultural regions, demoralized by the outcome of the summer strike, did not take part in the insurrection, but even had they intervened this could not have had a decisive influence on the outcome of the uprising. That which, from the very first days, could have decided the success or failure of the movement was the course of the struggle in Madrid.

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The major antagonism today, with the régime on its last legs, is that which exists between the reactionary liberalism of the President of the republic, a God-fearing man who fears also the fall of the régime, and pseudo-Fascist Vaticanism. We must first point out that no prediction as to the results of this conflict can be made. The rôle played in this situation by the Radical party can be deduced from the explanations we have already made: its presence in the government is the result of the rivalry between the President and the Vaticanists, and serves as a screen for the real impotence of the former. We should like to call the attention of the reader to our intention to state the facts with rigorous exactness in this analysis of the rôle of the Radicals; no irony is intended and there is no metaphoric generalization such as is frequently used for the purpose of bringing out the salient points of a situation. The Vaticanists are free to break the coalition with the Radicals at any time. The lack of any clear political orientation by the Radical party, eliminates any importance that antagonisms which may arise between it and the Vaticanists could possibly have. Whatever position the Radicals may hold cannot influence the course of political events to the slightest degree.

The disagreements between the Radicals and their allies, when they are manifested at all, are shown to be of weak, unclear, and therefore scattered and ineffective character. The Vaticanists operate within the coalition in a cold calculating Jesuitical fashion, utilizing the Radical party to the extent that they consider necessary and being in a position to eliminate individuals who have become *persona non grata* at any time they may wish. With time the gradual dissolution of the Radical party may result. The partial cabinet crisis after the insurrection, by which the Minister of War and Senor Samper, chief of the previous cabinet, were eliminated from the government is illustrative of this condition. The Vaticanists had not raised any objections to these two minis-

ters at the time they were included in the October government. When the former first gained entry to power, it was realized that the raising of petty difficulties at that time would endanger their own attempts to advance. But once the coalition was firmly in power, they were able by a well-directed blow to force the resignation of the two undesirables. Had the other Radicals come to their support, there would have been a general crisis of the government. This was something greatly feared by the Radical party and thus it was that they tolerated the mutilation imposed on them, contenting themselves with filling the vacancies. This eloquent example, to which could be added others of similar nature, suffices to give an idea of the character of the ruling bloc, wherein the greater intelligence and audacity of the Vaticanist wing as contrasted with the personal corruption and political weaknesses of its allies, permits the latter to utilize the Radicals as pawns without fearing them in the least.

The President of the republic is the only consequential barrier within the régime that blocks the advance of the Vaticanists. This problem will ultimately be decided by the situation within the army. After the militant uprising of August 10, 1932, the army was well purged of the most rebellious monarchist elements that had been involved in the conspiracy. The primary task of reaction in past months was to liberate these elements and try to squeeze them back into their former military posts. The second of these objectives is today the most important activity of the clerical-agrarian forces.

As to the possibilities of the proletariat or of the democratic tendencies intervening in the situation at the present junction one

should be guided by an analysis of events as they occur and not by pseudo-revolutionary flights of fancy. The proletariat has just been defeated in an armed struggle and, although it has emerged from the experience with a high revolutionary morale, its cadres nevertheless have suffered the consequences of a serious repression, its organizations and propaganda are for the moment suspended and threatened with definite illegality. A certain reactionary newspaper, in reply to those who base excessive hopes on the conflicts existing between the reactionary factions and which we have just reviewed, asked if the Lefts could expect to win by a mere cabinet crisis that displacement of reaction which they were unable to achieve by force of arms. This question is very timely, in order that those under illusions may be brought to understand the realities of the movement. It is especially forceful when applied to those in the proletarian camp who are under such illusions, and who after a great defeat still dream that the proletariat may be able in a short time to strike out again for power. Nonetheless, the frictions and breaches existing in the ranks of those who now share governmental power open the way for the working class once more to win its elementary rights and liberties. The weight of the proletariat will be decisive and will permit it to thwart the aims of its enemies, converting the situation into one favorable to itself. Furthermore, the immediate future of the Spanish proletariat does not depend on itself alone, but in still greater measure on the course and tempo of the international labor movement.

TRANSLATED BY RUSSELL L. BLACKWELL

L. FERSEN

MADRID, December 1934

## Strikes on the 1935 Horizon

**A**T THE MOMENT of writing no large scale strike is under way. There is a possibility that such a struggle may break out in the rubber industry in Akron. Just now, there are skirmishes only, desultory firing, as in the drivers' strike in Fargo, N.D., the hosiery strike in Georgia, etc. Are these rear-guard actions following the strike wave of 1934 or do they presage fresh major battles?

The answer to this question must begin with an analysis of last year's strikes. These demonstrated certain things about the employing class and its attitude, about the Roosevelt administration, about the mood of the workers, and about the condition of the unions and the rôle of the trade union leadership.

The employers, particularly in the basic industries, demonstrated that they are as adamant as ever against unionization of their employees and collective bargaining. The most determined resistance was offered against all attempts to organize. The building of company unions to confuse the workers was persistently pushed. Bitter and brutal methods were employed in the effort to smash strikes when they occurred. Moreover, the aggressiveness of the employer attitude toward the government and its gestures in "support" of labor's right to organize, was intensified as the months progressed. Sabotaging of the various labor boards by resort to technicalities and endless delays, open flaunting of the authority of the boards in many instances, appeals to the courts on the issue of the constitutionality of the N.R.A., occurred. At the close of the year the employers' associations openly demanded abrogation of all New Deal measures except those which strengthened monopolistic tendencies, such as suspension of the anti-trust laws. Proposals to outlaw sympathetic and general strikes are now being waged. It is a far cry from the spring of 1933 when the Chamber of Commerce of the U. S. was begging Roosevelt to take control of industry for a couple of years on almost any terms.

When one reads the reports of vastly increased corporation

profits as a result of the boosting of prices on the one hand, and the pegging of wages at a low point on the other hand, the basis for the employers' attitude is revealed. Since, furthermore, it is only by the process of restriction of production, fixing of prices and severer exploitation of labor that profits can be made in this period of capitalist decline, their attitude toward unionism and collective bargaining will not and cannot change. Under the circumstances unions relying on coöperation with the employers can by no stretch of the imagination gain anything for workers in the basic industries. Any conceivable temporary gains and even the defense of existing standards can be won only by fighting organizations through the most intense struggle. Stable unions living for long periods in peaceful contractual relations with employers will not be a dominant feature of the landscape.

The Roosevelt administration, on its part, completely capitulated to the big industrialists in the strikes of 1934. Any pretense of "cracking down" on them and forcing them to bargain collectively was thrown to the winds. The notion is as dead today as is the great Poo-Bah Hugh Johnson himself. Administration representatives continued to issue conflicting interpretations of section 7A of N.R.A., which admirably served the purpose of keeping the workers hoping that Roosevelt would do something, enabling William Green and his henchmen to contend that the workers must stick to them in order to please Roosevelt and get the benefits of N.R.A., while the employers were at liberty to smash strikes, build company unions, etc. The gullibility of human nature is illustrated once more by the fact that for some time the fiction was maintained that it was Roosevelt's underlings, and not the Great White Father himself, who were betraying the workers, though it was Roosevelt who personally wrote into the automobile code last March the "proportional representation" clause giving company unions the same status as independent unions. Even the most liberal of the various labor relations boards made no attempt to force employers to deal with unions or despairingly admitted that

they had no power. Arbitrators and conciliators, even the best of them, considered it their main duty to prevent strikes or settle them expeditiously, not to help unions to win them so that section 7A would cease to be a dead letter.

Police and militia were regularly called out against the strikers. During the textile strike the militia was out in seven states at one time—not to whip the employers into line, but to keep strikers in line. No word of rebuke issued from the White House. To the contrary, when "Red hysteria" needed to be whipped up in order to smash the Pacific Coast strike, not only reactionary Hugh Johnson but supposedly liberal Frances Perkins of the Roosevelt staff helped to do the job.

As the new year gets under way, Roosevelt renews the automobile code, openly slapping William Green, who describes himself as the President of the "great American Federation of Labor", in the face of refusing to remedy any of the conditions which have enabled the automobile barons to maintain the company unions. From Green, from John L. Lewis, and other trade union bureaucrats who hailed the N.R.A. as the Charter of American labor and tricked the masses into a vast scheme of collaboration with the government in order to save capitalism, now issue howls of disappointment and rage. Of that more will be said later. Here it is important to set down the observation that so far as the issue of unionism is concerned the workers as a whole have been cured of faith in Roosevelt. I have just passed through the mine fields of southern Illinois where men were threatened with mob violence in the fall of 1933 if they showed any reluctance in joining in Blue Eagle parades. You are more likely to be laughed at today for defending the New Deal than regarded as a "Red" for attacking it! The workers may not yet fully realize that they will have to fight the government as well as the employers in order to organize unions and win strikes, but they do know that no support is coming from Washington.

What of the workers' attitude as revealed in the year which witnessed the aluminum strike, Toledo, a near-general strike in steel, Milwaukee, Kohler, Minneapolis, San Francisco, the textile general strike? They evinced, and all the signs indicate that they still possess, a determination to organize. They are willing to fight for unionism, even under the most inadequate leadership. The general strike in textiles was finally called by the leaders of the United Textile Workers only after the most terrific pressure from the ranks. It was "settled" by the former on terms which, to put it charitably, gave the workers much less than they might have obtained. Tens of thousands of them went jobless for months because no defense against discrimination was provided in the settlement. Yet if these same U.T.W. leaders call a general strike tomorrow, the indications are that more workers will respond than last fall. Thus have the lessons of the depression sunk in. Thus has the desire for unionism been sharpened.

Of fundamental importance is the evidence furnished in the struggles of 1934 that the craft idea is disappearing and the sense of class solidarity growing by leaps and bounds. In Toledo only five hundred union members were on strike in the Auto-Lite plant, but ten thousand Toledo workers were on hand on the afternoon and evening when the plant was stormed. A similar story can be told of every one of the big strikes of the year. Moreover, in practically every case, the unemployed trained by the unemployed organizations, especially the National Unemployed League and its units, fought side by side with their striking fellow workers on the picket lines, in fact in a number of instances took the initiative.

It was conclusively demonstrated that where, as in Minneapolis and Toledo, a realistic revolutionary political leadership was available, the workers were willing to follow it; and this leadership in large degree supplanted the conservative trade union bureaucrats, or at least forced them to take progressive steps, as the struggle gained breadth and intensity.

Despite all this, numerous strikes did not come off at all, including the very crucial ones in steel and automobiles. Save in exceptional cases, the strikes failed to achieve what under the objective conditions might have been gained. The responsibility for this must be placed in the first instance at the door of the A. F. of L. leadership. As has already been noted, they depended upon the favor of Roosevelt, not upon struggle with the employers, to produce results for labor. They have been betrayed by their "friend"; the employers have once again demonstrated that they will not be "patriotic" and sensible, and sign union contracts. The union bureaucrats are now beating their breasts, wagging their heads, cursing such old friends as Donald Richberg, ex-attorney of the railroad unions, who learned collaboration with capitalists from no one but themselves.

Does all this mean anything for 1935? It would be a grievous error to imagine that Green *et al.* are now going to adopt a genuinely militant policy. They have long since forgotten how to fight. They are saturated with a conservative, capitalistic outlook. Even with regard to respectable social issues such as old age pensions they have displayed no leadership but have followed in the wake of social workers and politicians. They will make further compromises in the pinch rather than run the risk of alienating Roosevelt and giving him a pretext for calling them unpatriotic, obstructionists of the national recovery, etc. The battle for militant unions in the big industries which can only be born out of strikes must therefore necessarily be a battle against the present collaborationist leadership of the unions.

Nevertheless the experiences and revelations of the past year have weakened the position and diminished the prestige of the union bureaucrats. It will be easier for opposition forces to organize, harder for the bureaucrats to discredit those who from the beginning predicted what reliance upon the N.R.A. would bring. Everywhere today one observes an increasing aggressiveness on the part of the progressives and militants, a defensive attitude on the part of the officialdom whose anti-Red campaign, e.g., has come to naught, and a growing disposition on the part of the masses to follow the progressives.

Furthermore, the A. F. of L. leadership will be forced to make an effort to regain its prestige. It will have to go through the motions of trying to organize in some of the basic industries. It will have to talk in "militant" language again. Witness William Green's speaking tour through the big industrial centers. Thus the cloak of A. F. of L. respectability may be thrown over certain organizing campaigns and even strikes (*cf.* the steel strike of 1919) and the support of the labor movement as a whole gained, and this may prove of real, even decisive, help—provided that the progressive trade union forces, with revolutionary political leadership and inspiration, maintain control of developments and use the opportunity to the utmost. An adventurist and unrealistic policy on the part of the latter will only play into the hands of the bureaucrats and offer them an alibi for inaction and sabotage. On the other hand, a Lovestoneite-S.P. line of timidity, of avowed or tacit alliance with the bureaucrats, can only result in the failure of organizing campaigns and the betrayal of strikes. There is, e.g., on the one hand grave doubt whether a large-scale organizing campaign and a strike in steel can be achieved today without A. F. of L. "support" of a sort. It is certain, on the other hand, that no organizing campaign will show substantial results and no effective strike will be permitted to occur at all, unless the work is done and the actual as distinct from the nominal leadership given by the progressives and militants. To split up the masses is a crime; to split the masses from the collaborationist bureaucrats is another matter.

Under these circumstances unions independent of the A. F. of L. cannot be ruled out of the picture in cavalier fashion. The workers will in certain instances turn to them, for all of Love-

stone's warnings! They may serve as a base for militants and revolutionists to contact workers. Their very existence is a challenge to A. F. of L. unions and a spur to action. The most scrupulous integrity and most intelligent judgment must, however, be exercised in the situations where there is more than one union in the field. It is so easy, as in the case of the Progressive Miners and the United Mine Workers in Illinois today for the employers to play one against the other while the workers are saddled with two sets of bureaucrats instead of one! The revolutionists must stand for and vigorously push the issue of amalgamation into one democratically controlled industrial union in all such cases, and of course advance the slogan of identical demands and joint action in case of strikes. They must take every means to bring the rank and file of the organizations into contact with each other. The onus for division and splitting must rest in every instance upon the bureaucrats.

To the present writer it seems extremely doubtful whether in the long run the A. F. of L. will be transformed into an instrument of struggle for the masses of the workers in this era of capitalist decline. No intelligent observer will be so bold as to claim that he knows for a certainty that it will. Even today there is no guarantee that the strikes which will certainly be necessary in basic industries if any semblance of organized power is to be developed by the workers, can be achieved within the framework of the A. F. of L. The choice between an open break with the A. F. of L. or an ignominious and fatal abandonment of struggle may be presented to the workers. That must not be lost sight of for a single moment. Nor must the workers be left in any doubt as to what course the revolutionists will advise in such a case.

The analysis of the past year and the present position is not completed, however, with the estimate of the rôle of the A. F. of L. leadership. Where were the progressives and militants in the strikes of 1934? Where were the political parties whose responsibility it was to give political direction to these struggles?

The extent to which the Left-progressive forces failed to play an adequate and decisive rôle in this year of insurgency in the working class may be gauged by the fact that when under pressure of the situation the A. F. of L. convention last fall had to add "new blood" to the Executive Council, four out of the five chosen were Lewis of the Miners, Hutchinson of the Carpenters, Berry of the Pressmen, and Tobin of the Teamsters, four of the most notorious labor czars in the entire movement! The failure of the Left-progressive forces to make a better showing was due to the sheer inexperience of the more militant younger elements in the new unions; to personal rivalries among them; to their lack of political and economic background which offset their native militancy. It was due, above all, to the fact that they were unorganized. As a consequence they were more easily defeated by the old politicians of the movement, and the lessons of one struggle could not be adequately utilized in the next.

The lack of organization among the militants was in turn due to the failure of the S. P. to provide any independent leadership whatever in the union field and on the other hand to the disruptionist policy of the C. P. in the last period which had demoralized the Lefts and isolated them from the masses, and made it easy for the bureaucracy to kill the influence of any opposition by tagging the "communist" label on it. Thus the key to the developments of 1935 is in the hands of the new revolutionary party and of the organized Left-progressives in the unions.

Economic conditions are such that the workers, both in private employ and on public projects, will be driven to struggle. There is no doubt that the will to organize is still strong among them, even though in such an industry as automobiles e.g., after the experiences of last year, they hesitate to give their full confidence to any union in the field. Trust in the employers, the N.R.A. and the union officials has been shaken. There is an unquestioned

tendency practically everywhere to look with hope to the militants.

These militants and Lefts must speedily learn to work together; they must organize both locally, in each industry, and nationally for the trade union movement as a whole. This is essential for defense against the reactionaries who one day will smash isolated centers of militancy. It is likewise essential because no headway can be made with such stupendous problems as steel or automobiles, e.g., by weak and scattered forces who operate in a haphazard fashion.

In this connection the "new line" of the C. P. must be dealt with. Disaster having overtaken it as a result of its former policies, the criminal incorrectness of which we had pointed out for years, the party is now executing the biggest zig-zag yet. In its latest program the "revolutionary" unions are liquidated, the united-front-from-below is in the discard, there are no more social Fascists it would appear, it is not wise to "raise the question of an independent federation of labor", A. F. of L. unions are no longer company unions. To the naïve it might appear that the leopard has changed his spots, and that a thoroughly correct and realistic trade union policy has been worked out. The work in the A. F. of L. unions will now be carried on with all the circumspection that C. P. leaders and followers, long trained in a false line, can muster. Mighty efforts will be made to ingratiate themselves with progressive unionists who yesterday were fakery and capitalist agents, preventing the workers from rushing into the "revolutionary" unions. There is no doubt that with its apparatus, press, etc., the C. P. can momentarily make some headway with this policy. It has already gained a slight foothold in one or two fields where previously it was barred. Yet, for all its painful, stilted efforts to act tactfully, to put on an "American approach", it is already demonstrating in the steel situation that it cannot get rid of its mechanical way of handling things, that it can only play in an adventurist fashion for capture of a movement, for a big story to write about in the *Daily Worker*, but cannot responsibly, patiently and honestly build a mass movement.

The plausibility of the C. P.'s present line must not prevent any revolutionist or intelligent trade unionist from understanding its real nature and pressing the attack until this party which has everywhere in recent years led the workers to defeat has been completely isolated and eliminated as an evil influence in the labor movement. Its recent turn does not result from a reasoned view of the situation and it is not based on principle. It is based upon the exigencies of Soviet Russia's policy, under Stalinist leadership, of conciliation with the capitalist world and lack of confidence in the revolutionary movement in capitalist countries. If it were based on principle, the new line would have been taken long ago and the havoc that has been wrought in the unions by the scattering of the Left-progressive forces and in other ways prevented. If the new turn were a principled one, it would be marked by some Bolshevik self-criticism of this havoc wrought in the past. But we look in vain for any such analysis of past mistakes and crimes in C. P. literature.

We are assured that a new united front policy is now to be carried out but our comrades in Toledo found recently that there is the same old trickery and chicanery as before. The honest militants everywhere will find that to be the case. The C. P. makes a great show of wanting to establish an honest united front with the S. P. and the A. F. of L. unions, but at the same time makes vehement attacks upon the Workers party and upon its members, adherents and sympathizers in the unions, in the Unemployed Leagues, in Toledo, Minneapolis, the Illinois mine fields and other centers where these workers have constituted the backbone of the progressive fighting forces for years! What kind of a united front is it which can take in social democrats, conservatives and reactionaries but must exclude and even attack Allard, Battuello, Selander, Pollock, the Dunne brothers, Bill Truax,

Arnold Johnson, Ramuglia, Bill Brown? And exclude and attack the Workers party—the one party which the C. P. cannot logically accuse of not being revolutionary and hence now describes as “ultra-revolutionary”? By this course the C. P. undoubtedly displays partisan tactical sense, recognizing the one force that can effectively challenge its pretensions, has indeed put it completely on the defensive everywhere. But it likewise gives conclusive evidence that it does not possess the competence and integrity to give leadership to the labor movement.

Some obstruction to progress the C. P. may yet be able to offer, yet even this can be reduced to a minimum and certainly will be if the Workers party rallies all its forces and gives the workers that leadership which they crave. For the workers are not in large numbers going to “fall” for the latest C. P. argument: “We have, after wreaking untold havoc in every corner of the labor movement, had to throw overboard in indecent haste every major policy of recent years; ergo, we have proved that we are the only party that can do anything for the workers!”

Within the C. P. itself the sudden new turn is causing profound disturbance. Many honest members and sympathizers now listen willingly to the propaganda of the Workers party and study its literature. With an increasing number of former C. P. sympathizers we shall now be able to work. Not a few members will

join our ranks. Hot flirtations with social democrats and conservatives may temporarily gain the C. P. some sympathizers among the latter. It will be at the cost of alienating true revolutionists in its own ranks who have no means of telling when some new exigency of Stalinist policy may bring orders—for still another zig-zag!

Thus the Workers party must assume its responsibility in the strike struggles of 1935, in the building of the new Left wing in the unions. The fact that the American Workers party existed and that the Communist League of America turned to mass work profoundly affected the character of the mass movement and the strike struggles last year. Without Toledo and Minneapolis things would have been very different. The merger of these two organizations brings the revolutionary forces to 1935 with strength, clarity and purpose much more than doubled. There is no time to be lost in rallying all the sound revolutionary elements into the new party, in bringing all militant forces in and out of the party together for united action, lest the upsurge of the masses in 1935 again fail to achieve results commensurate with their militancy. If on the other hand we do measure up to our responsibility the political level of the struggle will be greatly raised this year and American capitalism challenged as never before by the organized might of the masses.

A. J. MUSTE

## Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg

ONE OF THE marked features of the decay of official communism has been the rending of the theoretical web woven by its intellectual founders. The violence with which the central ideas of modern revolutionary Marxism have been torn to shreds and thrown into discard is matched only by the coercion exercised by the bureaucracy to compel adulation of its enthroned ignorance. Insisting upon acknowledgment of the infallibility of its own theory, the central leadership then wards off all criticism of the ensuing errors by the theory of its own infallibility. To sustain both, in face of the paucity of its intellectual contributions to Marxism and the accusing record of its achievements, it is constantly compelled to pervert or defame the work of those gifted leaders whose places it usurped. The bureaucracy must reduce the proportion of its own dwarfishness by dragging its great forerunners, to whose level it cannot rise, down to an inferior position. It thereby acquires the semblance of greater stature. This helps not only to console a dubious following, but reassures the bureaucracy itself against its own uncertainty.

With no one is this process more clearly revealed than with the personal incarnation of the régime, Stalin. The two greatest victims in the domain of ideas are Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, each in his own way. What has happened to Lenin is even worse than the fate which he once pointed out as having been accorded to Karl Marx and other great revolutionary leaders: “After their death, however, attempts are usually made to turn them into harmless saints, canonizing them, as it were, and investing their name with a certain halo by way of ‘consolation’ to the oppressed classes, and with the object of duping them; while at the same time emasculating and vulgarizing the real essence of their revolutionary theories and blunting their revolutionary edge.” The Stalinists have not felt themselves under even such restraint with regard to Rosa Luxemburg. Against her tradition and heritage, which was so warmly if critically cherished in Lenin’s day, a veritable blackguard’s offensive has been systematically nurtured since Lenin died. Whereas the ideas she defended bring her, so to speak, up to Lenin’s shoulders, she nevertheless towers grandly above the Stalinist pygmies. To strengthen the illusion of their height, Rosa Luxemburg had therefore to be dragged down into

the dirt. The kindest thing that can be said about the bureaucracy’s defamations of Rosa is that they have never served the interests of critical enlightenment but have always been subverted to meet factional exigencies.

The very first “Bolshevization” wave which inundated the Communist International was directed not only at the Marxian principles defended by Trotsky, but had as one of its purposes the discreditment of Luxemburg. In the first “Bolshevization Commission” of 1925, such luminaries as Bela Kun, John Pepper, Heinz Neumann and Stalin solemnly elaborated the outlines of an assault upon the “Luxemburgian deviation”. In the German Communist party which Rosa had founded, it was possible for one of the newly appointed leaders of that time to declare publicly that “Luxemburg is the syphilis of the labor movement” without being driven out of the party with whips. The complete edition of Rosa’s works, which the party had begun to issue under the scholarly care of Paul Frölich, was brought to an abrupt end and no new volume has since been published. In 1931, the campaign reached its climax in Stalin’s libellous letter to the editors of *Proletarskaja Revolutsia* on “Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism”. The official line of the present bureaucracy with regard to Rosa’s rôle in the labor movement derives directly from this letter, which is now obligatory doctrine. The formal occasion for the letter was an article written by one Slutsky in which he pointed out that Lenin had “underestimated the danger of Centrism in the German social democracy” before the war. For more than a year the article went unchallenged and uncriticized. Stalin brought it out of obscurity, used it for a violent attack upon Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky, and designated the pre-war Left wing in the European social democracy whose most eminent leader Rosa was, as semi-Mensheviks or allies of Menshevism.

The letter was the signal for a world-wide campaign of denigration against Rosa. It reached its lowest depth in the book of the one Stalinist disciple, Kurt Sauerland, in which he asserted nothing more or less than that “the legend of the ‘betrayal’ of the once ‘true’ Marxist [Kautsky] does not stand up under a careful analysis”—a declaration that must have been consoling to Kautsky; that Rosa and the pre-war Left wing were distinguished “only

formally from the social-Fascist theoreticians"; and that today Rosa's "theories have especially become the weapons of Trotskyism and other counter-revolutionary groupings" (*Der Dialektische Materialismus*, p. 133).\*

It is not in order to show where Lenin had a keener, profounder and more comprehensive view of the problems of the proletarian revolution than Rosa that this rubbish is crammed into hollow skulls, but in order to establish the genius of Stalin by perverting what Lenin and Luxemburg really stood for and officially establishing an unbridgable gulf between the two.

The object of these lines, therefore, will be an attempt to restore to their proper proportions the divergences between the two great revolutionary spirits whose anniversaries have just been observed. If it is easier to do it now than it was a decade or more ago, it is certainly not because of any light shed on the relationships by the Stalinists, but because, as Heine said somewhere about Goethe, only now that the great oak has fallen can we measure its full stature.

\* \* \* \*

The sharpest dispute between Lenin and Luxemburg in the period of the Second International occurred over the national question—the right of self-determination of nations and national minorities—and specifically over the question of the socialist attitude towards the question of Poland. Current communist indoctrination dismisses Luxemburg's position with the assertion that she "denied" the right of self-determination, but the dispute was far from being quite so simple.

The common goal of the Russian social democracy at the beginning of the century was the democratic revolution against czarist absolutism. The politically organized proletariat of Russia pledged itself to carry out consistently that liberation of oppressed nationalities which a revolutionary bourgeoisie had once accomplished in whole or in part. The national problem was particularly acute for a country like the Russian empire in which not even a majority of the population was composed of Russians properly so called. For the Russian Marxists, it was taken for granted that the proletariat would accord the imprisoned nationalities of the empire the right to self-determination even to the point of complete independence and separation, should that prove to be the democratically expressed will of the people involved. This view was shared by both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and, especially when applied to Poland, merely continued the tradition of Marx and Engels.

Opposed to the formulation of this slogan in the Russian party program (§7) was the party led by Luxemburg, the Social Democracy of Poland and Lithuania. Its position was set out right before and during the London congress of the Russian party in 1903, to which, on the insistence of Lenin, Martov, Plekhanov and Trotsky, it had been invited despite the opposition of the Jewish Bund, and the fact that the S.D.P.L. had set as a condition for joining the Russian party the reformulation of §7.

The congress had been preceded by a warm discussion in the radical press on precisely this question. The chauvinists of the P.P.S. (Polish Socialist party) had attacked an article in *Iskra* which recognized the right of self-determination and had opposed to it their own nationalistic point of view. In his defense of Martov's article, Lenin reaffirmed the party's position but pointed out that this was not identical with the obligation to support every demand for self-determination at every moment, any more than the demand for the right to organize is synonymous with the obli-

\*The measure of the Stalin school of theoreticians and its graduates can be taken by what this same abusive ignoramus says about Franz Mehring: "Mehring was not the 'full-blooded dialectician', Mehring was, as we have proved [!], with all his lip-service to Marx-

ism, a thorough eclectic, mechanist and vulgar materialist, not without very strong idealistic features." (*Ibid*, p. 173.) This about Mehring, in order to contend that, except for Lenin, the only "full-blooded dialectician" of our whole epoch is . . . Stalin.

gation to defend the organizing work of Jesuits. In this conditioning of the right, that is, in essence, the subordination of the national struggle to the interests of the class struggle, Lenin established the difference between bourgeois democracy, even at its best, and the revolutionary social democracy. While it was not likely, he pursued, that the Polish bourgeoisie would raise the slogan of independence under conditions in which the national question had been pushed to the background by the open class struggle, it was at the same time possible that it *would*, and the social democracy would err greatly in binding itself in advance against such a possibility.

Luxemburg's criticism, which was directed mainly and primarily against the Polish nationalists and not against Lenin, was not based upon opposition to recognizing the right at issue. Proceeding from the contention that the truth was always concrete, she asserted that Lenin had failed to give a concrete analysis of the political possibilities for Polish independence at the given time. The latter could be the result only of a general European war and a Russian revolution evoked by it, or vice versa. The Polish revolutionists, however, refused to make a European war the point of departure for the policy of the Polish working class. Should the Poles fight together with the Russian proletariat against absolutism—she asked Lenin at the Congress—or separately from the Russians and therefore with the bourgeoisie for independence from the empire? And in the first case, in what concrete form was it possible to realize the right of the Polish nation to self-determination without subordinating the class interests of the growing proletariat to those of the Polish bourgeoisie?

Her views were elaborated in greater detail in the articles she wrote for the Polish theoretical review in 1908 and in her introduction to the collection of articles on the national question printed in 1905. Again, it should be emphasized that she did not deny the right of all nations and national minorities to dispose of themselves as they saw fit, for this was to her an "obvious and uncontested" right, "conforming to the elementary principles of socialism". It was not, however, to be realized under capitalism. "Socialism," she wrote during the war in the famous Junius pamphlet, "grants every people the right to independence and freedom, to independent disposal over its own destiny. . . . International socialism recognizes the right of free, independent nations having equal rights, but only it can create such nations, only it can realize the right of self-determination of the peoples." But to advocate the independence of Poland would produce, she argued, precisely what Lenin, in polemizing against the Polish nationalists in 1903, warned against: the corruption of the class consciousness and independence of the proletariat, the confusion of the class struggle, the impregnation of the workers with petty bourgeois democratic phraseology, the disruption of the unity of the proletariat throughout the empire in its common struggle against czarism.

To proclaim this right, Rosa contended, would not result in a positive solution of the national question. In defending it, the proletariat would inevitably come under the domination of the nationalist bourgeoisie, eventually become the football of the big imperialist powers, and lose both its independent identity and the possibility of fulfilling its historical mission. From the international standpoint, also, socialist policy could not include the establishment of an independent Poland (under conditions of capitalism, be it always understood), for that would bind the social democracy to demand the separation of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine from Germany and their return to France, the promotion of the separatist aspirations of the Czechs, the acquisition of Trieste by Italy, etc.—support to all of which would simply mean that the social democracy obligates itself willy-nilly to serve one national imperialism or another in a capitalist war, that being the only means by which any of these aspirations could be realized outside of the socialist revolution. Examination into the *concrete* possibilities of realizing the right of self-determination, she therefore

concluded, especially when it is considered that the right is worldwide and consequently includes the colonial empires of imperialism, excludes the struggle for it under capitalism as utopian, and makes it realizable only in the socialist society.

Although she modified many of her other criticisms of Lenin and Bolshevism towards the end of her life, there is no doubt that she retained her point of view on the national question to the last. Under her leadership, the Poles did not, to my knowledge, ever make the demand again for the elimination of § 7 from the Russian party program after the fight at the London congress. At the famous Stockholm unity congress in 1910, their formulation—an autonomous Russian-Poland within the borders of a democratic Russian republic—was accepted by both the Bolshevik and Menshevik groups, which thus met what the Poles considered their demand for a concrete formulation at once of the method of realizing the right of self-determination and of the most expedient form of the slogan. (Thereby, be it noted in passing, the Poles yielded their fundamental position, as will become clearer further on.) However that may be, the public polemic between Luxemburg and Lenin was resumed by the latter, after a silence of ten years, in 1913, carried through during the black war years, and summed up, so far as Rosa's position is concerned, in the critical commentaries on the Russian revolution written just before her assassination in her *Spartakus* letters and in the posthumously published manuscript issued by Paul Levi and written for his benefit.

Against Rosa's position, as well as against those similarly inclined, Lenin mustered a series of arguments which contain the essence of the Marxian teaching on the national question and retain their fundamental validity to the present day.

Socialism requires democracy and democratic forms; in realizing them to the fullest degree, it abolishes them; the communist society is at hand. From the standpoint of international democracy, it is impossible to gainsay the right of any people to self-determination. As against the forcible retention of a national minority within the frontiers of an oppressor power, the aspiration to independence of this minority is a progressive democratic factor. The proletariat of the oppressing nation cannot refuse to grant the oppressed nation the right to national independence, if and when it is demanded by the latter, without becoming an accomplice in its oppression. From this it does not follow that the *socialists* of the oppressed nation are obliged to support the national aspirations of this or that people (or the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie of this or that nation), at any and every moment that such aspirations are manifested. Nor does it follow that even the socialists of the oppressor nation, while they support the demand for national independence to the point of separation, are obliged to *advocate* such a separation. The two are not identical, any more than the advocacy of the *right* to divorce is identical with advocating that one particular woman should divorce her husband.

"We have never reproached the Polish social democrats (I wrote on that score in *Prozveshchenye*) because *they* are against the independence of Poland," Lenin wrote during the war to the Georgian Bolshevik, N. D. Kiknadze. "Instead of a simple, clear, theoretically indisputable argument: one cannot be for *such* a democratic demand at present (an independent Poland), which subjects us *in practise completely* to one of the imperialist powers of coalitions (this is indisputable, this is enough; this is necessary and adequate)—instead of this they attained to the absurd 'unrealizable.'" (*Werke*, Vol. XIX, pp. 290f.)

Theoretically, moreover, it is not unrealizable even under capitalism. Lenin offered the example of the separation of Norway from Sweden in 1905, which was accomplished under bourgeois democracy and in accordance with the exercise by the Norwegians of the right of self-determination. What is more, the fact that the Poles recognized their Stockholm formula (referred to above) as the concrete form in which the slogan could be realized for Poland, signified an acknowledgment in principle of the realiza-

bility of the demand even within the confines of capitalism, namely, of a Russian democratic republic. If there is a difference in the two positions, and there is, it lies in the fact, continued Lenin, that the demand for the autonomy of Poland within a democratic Russia is a reformist measure, whereas the struggle for Polish independence is a revolutionary fight.

An argument advanced by Lenin which none of his adversaries was able to answer with even slight effectiveness, dealt with the socialist position on annexations. Socialists oppose the forcible annexation of one country, one piece of territory, by another. How then is it possible to oppose the right of self-determination of nations already annexed? To hold such a view means to oppose only such annexations as are being planned, but to ignore those that have already been effected. Those who are theoretically against annexations and at the same time theoretically against the right of self-determination (between which there is "neither an economic nor a political, nor any kind of logical distinction") were plastered by Lenin with the not very comforting label of "inconsistent annexationists".

"We do not want to dispute over words," he wrote in reply to the theses on the subject issued during the war by the extremist editorial board of *Gazeta Robotnicza*, organ of the Polish social democracy, who went further than Rosa in that they characterized the slogan as not only unrealizable under capitalism, but inapplicable under socialism. "If there is a party which declares in its program (or in a resolution binding upon all—the form is not the point) that it is against annexations, against the forcible retention of the oppressed nations within the boundaries of *its* (this party's) state, then we declare that we are in complete agreement in principle with such a party. It would be absurd to want to cling to the words 'right of self-determination'." (*Werke*, Vol. XIX, p. 305.)

That Lenin nevertheless concurred with Rosa in her apprehensions about the chauvinistic dangers entailed by advocating the independence of Poland at any and all times, and that he had a high regard for her revolutionary, internationalist struggle against the Polish patriots of the Pilsudski-Daszynski-Niedzialkowski stripe, is beyond dispute. "To be for a European war solely for the sake of the restoration of Poland—that would mean to be a nationalist of the worst sort," he wrote in 1916, "to put the interests of a small number of Poles higher than the interests of hundreds of millions of people who suffer by the war. Such are however, e.g., the 'Fraki' (Right wing of the P.P.S.) who are socialists only in words and against whom the Polish social democrats are right a thousand times over. To raise the slogan of Poland's independent *now*, in face of the *present* relationships between the neighboring imperialist states, means in fact to chase after a utopia, to fall into narrow nationalism, to forget the promise of a European or at least of the Russian and the German revolutions. . . . It is no paradox, but a fact, that the Polish proletariat as such can today serve the cause of socialism and freedom, *also Polish*, only if it fights *together* with the proletariat of the neighboring states against the *narrow-Polish* nationalists. It is impossible to dispute the great historical service of the Polish social democrats [i.e., of Rosa Luxemburg] in the struggle against these latter." (*Werke*, Vol. XIX, p. 329f.) Yet while this probably came closer to Rosa's position than any other writings by Lenin on the subject, and most directly met her demand for a *concrete* answer as to whether the slogan of independence for Poland could be raised under given conditions—Lenin's answer at that time being, No—he nevertheless insisted at the same time that both the Russian and German social democracies must continue to stand unconditionally in favor of Poland's *right* to state separation.

Recognition of the right of self-determination was no abstraction to Lenin. Like all democratic slogans, he emphasized time and again, it was subordinated at all times to the socialist-revolutionary class interests of the proletariat. But just because the

latter was primary and dominant, the slogan had to be put forward as part of the general support which the working class, in its struggle for emancipation, gives to every movement genuinely directed against the common enemy: imperialism. Despite the sharp criticism levelled by Rosa at the Bolsheviks for their national policy after the revolution, the latter was nevertheless confirmed by the results. The national aspirations aroused by the first 1917 revolution even among the most backward and remote peoples of old Russia encountered a revolutionary support only from the Bolsheviks. One of the main reasons why the Kerensky-Menshevik-S.R. régime had the ground taken from under its feet, lay in the fact that it ignored or flaunted these aspirations. The Bolshevik revolution triumphed not only because it was "reinforced"—as Marx indicated it would have to be—by the peasants' war but also because the proletarian hammer-blows at the bourgeois state were supplemented by the coincidental blows delivered from the periphery by the various national-revolutionary movements.

The territorial disintegration of the Russian revolution, and its consequent collapse, proved to be an unjustified fear expressed by Rosa in her 1918 criticisms, in which she so acidly ridiculed the idea of a "Ukrainian nation". That centralization, "big-stateism", which is the socialist ideal, was realized in Russia not along a rigid and straight line, but dialectically, as a process, which began with recognizing the right of each nation to separate, actually granting the separation, strengthening the proletarian movement and sharpening the class struggle in the separated nation, the victory of the proletariat in the struggle, and finally the federal re-affiliation into a centralized union of Soviet states. If Poland, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Esthonia and other parts of the former czarist empire today still remain without the comity of the Soviet family, and are in the hands of stark reaction, the reason is not to be traced to Lenin's national policy, but rather to objective conditions beyond the control of the Bolsheviks and their theories, conditions which Rosa's writings acknowledged, at least in part: the failure of the western European proletariat to come to the direct aid of the Russian revolution when it was backed against the wall by German and Allied imperialism; the weakness of the revolutionary movement in the countries named.

What was the source of Rosa's position on the national question, which caused Lenin, with all his esteem for her and her work, to polemicize against her so vehemently? He himself traced the position of both the Polish and Dutch opponents of the slogan to their situation within small nations with century-old traditions and "Great-Power" pretensions which had an imperceptible effect even on the radical wing of the labor movement. The assertion requires elaboration and supplementing.

When Rosa began to unfold her activity in the Polish labor movement, the scene was already swarming with the activity of the Bund, which defended a national-separatist position among the Jewish workers of Poland and Lithuania, and the notorious P.P.S., which defended an even more nationalistic position among the Polish masses. Deeply impregnated with the spirit of Marxian internationalism from the first day on which she drew breath in the labor movement, Rosa flung herself into the battle against P.P.S. nationalism from the very beginning, with the impetuous energy that never left her. So violent was her struggle against the Polish chauvinists, and so cordially did they detest her, that a scandal occurred at the Zurich congress of the Second International in 1893, when her credentials were successfully contested by Ignacy Daszynski, whose malicious machinations won the unwitting support, alas! even of Friedrich Engels. There is no doubt that in the ardor of her unremitting struggle against the poisoning of the Polish proletariat by the P.P.S., she was led, as so often happens in political battle, to bend the rod too much the other way.

The events in the socialist movement just before and during the war were not calculated to correct her position; if anything, they served only to confirm her in her opinions. How important it is

to recall, in appraising her position, how others, besides Lenin (and in contradistinction to him), manipulated the slogan of the right of self-determination! Plekhanov justified his support of the Russian fatherland against Junker invasion by basing himself on the right of the Russian people to determine their own fate! Vandervelde and Scheidemann sent their working class followers to slaughter each other in the name of socialism and the right of every nation to self-determination! Wilson, Clémenceau, Lloyd George dismembered one vanquished power after another, and created new powers which were only prisons for a dozen national minorities, in the name of the right of self-determination! In its name, Kühlmann, Hoffmann, Czernip, Popov and Talaat Pasha tore away the Ukraine, Poland, Finland, Esthonia, Courland, Livonia, Lithuania, Ardahan, Kars and Batum from the territory of revolutionary Russia by virtue of the Brest-Litovsk treaty!

Her reconfirmed opposition to the slogan lay not so much in the fact that *she* directed it against the Bolsheviks, but because, as she saw it, *it* was being directed against the Bolsheviks. And her vitriolic comments upon the imperialist perversion of the slogan preserve their freshness and fitness to this day. "The bloody orgies of Mannerheim, the Finnish Gallifet, show how much the hate germinated in the white heat of the last year in the bosom of all these 'small nations', all the Poles, Lithuanians, Rumanians, Ukrainians, Czechs, Croats, etc., only awaits the possibility of finally disemboweling its own revolutionary proletariat by 'national' means. From all these 'young' nations, who gambol on the meadows of world history like lambs, white and innocent, there already gleams the carbuncular eye of the savage tiger, who waits for a 'reckoning' with the first stirrings of 'Bolshevism'. Behind all the idyllic banquets and uproarious feasts of fraternization in Vienna, in Prague, in Agram, in Warsaw, there already yawn Mannerheim's open graves which the Red Guardsmen must scoop out for themselves, there loom like blurred shadows the gallows of Khar'kov, for whose erection the Lubinskys and Holubovitches invited the German 'liberators' to the Ukraine. And the same fundamental thought dominates the whole democratic peace program of Wilson. The 'League of Nations', in the atmosphere of triumphal intoxication of Anglo-American imperialism, and the terrible phantom of Bolshevism haunting the stage of the world, can bring forth but one thing: a bourgeois world alliance for the suppression of the proletariat. The first smoking sacrifice that the high priest Wilson will bring before the Ark of the Covenant of the 'League of Nations' on the spikes of his augurs, will be Bolshevik Russia, at which the 'self-determined nations', victor and vanquished together, will fling themselves." (*Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, Vol. XIII, p. 296f.) If Rosa underestimated the resistance power of the Russian revolution, she did not understate the aim of Wilson's League and its slogan.

It is a vain occupation to speculate on whether or not Rosa would have come to Lenin's position on the national question had the assassin's blows been spared her. But all that she embodied and stood for, her whole life's work and the priceless heritage she left not only to the Polish workers but to all of us, entitles us to believe that she would never have accepted the wretched caricature of Lenin's views which his successors have palmed off in his name.

The current teaching of an immaculate Bolshevism and equally immaculate Bolsheviks set off against a badly suspect "Luxemburgism", both of which every quickly-baked "theoretician" now solemnly assures us existed, is pure legend. That there was Lenin, is true; but only *one*. His sharpest shafts on the national question were directed, during the war, against leading spirits of his own party: N. Bukharin, N. Krylenko, G. Piatakov, Eugenie Bosch and Poles like Rozmirovitch (Radek) and Ganetzky, all of whom, unlike Rosa, denied the applicability of the right of self-determination even under socialism. Stalin's views on the national question, expressed in *Pravda* before Lenin's arrival in Petrograd, would

have made Rosa's lips curl in contempt. The violent remarks uttered by Lenin on the theories and practises of Stalin, Dzerzhinsky and Kamenev on the national question towards the end of 1922 (when Stalin accused Lenin of "national liberalism"!), are a matter of record. But all this pales by comparison with the theories and practises of the whole Stalin leadership in the national and colonial questions after Lenin's death. Can one imagine Rosa in the company of those who strangled the Chinese revolution by attributing to Chiang Kai-Shek and the Chinese bourgeoisie the leading revolutionary rôle in "liberating the nation from the yoke of foreign imperialism"? Can one imagine Rosa in the company of those who hailed the 1926 *coup d'état* of Marshall Pilsudski as

the "great national democrat" who was establishing the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" in Poland? Can one imagine Rosa in the company of those who for years glorified and canonized every nationalist demagogue who was gracious enough to send a visiting card to the Kremlin—Radič, Maniu, Hu Han Min, Macia, Amanullah, *et tutti quanti*? How contemptible are those who dismiss a Rosa Luxemburg with smug disdain as a "Menshevik", when they have themselves proved unable to rise to the height of her boots!

Even now that the oak has fallen, her professional detractors are weeds around her. Rosa is still the great oak.

Max SHACHTMAN

## American Trade Union Problems -- II

ONE OF THE most outstanding characteristics of the trade union problem in the present period of advancing contradictions inherent in the process of capitalist decline is its ever more marked political aspects. Failure to give full recognition to these peculiar aspects will render any attempt at a solution worse than futile. I am referring in this respect not only to the generally abstract question of the extent to which the trade unions can be made instruments of the workers' struggle for power, but much more directly to the every-day questions of organization, of obtaining union recognition and of the struggle for economic demands. Essentially these are today political problems reaching beyond the limits of mere trade union experience. An approach to a solution must therefore have as its starting point the generalization of all working class experience. In other words, it is necessary to place considerable emphasis on the fact that only the weapons from the arsenal of Marxism will prove equal to the requirements of correct trade union policy. It is in this sense that we visualize the rôle of the workers' revolutionary party.

Naturally we start from the proposition that the revolutionary party must raise itself to the rôle of leader of the working class in all its struggles without exception and consequently in the trade union field. It must seek to influence the course of the economic organizations of the workers and win their confidence. Its program of action must be realistically conceived, proceed from the concrete issues of the movement as they arise, and it must be based at all times upon considerations of advantage in the class struggle. But to attain success in this practical work it is necessary also that the methods of the party correspond to the nature and problems of the unions.

Let us observe for a moment the trade union movement in this practical aspect. We will notice immediately the outstanding political character taken on by all of the struggles it engages in. Most of the important issues that arise become distinctly class issues. The trade union movement itself today cuts across the old barriers of craft and skill. It is in the process of becoming transformed from a craft movement to a class movement. Every step in organization, every demand made and every strike comes into direct connection with the rôle and the function of the political state. The forms of this connection may vary but the substance remains the same. Most of these issues present themselves within the general framework of the N.R.A. and its auxiliary provisions. Representatives of the government enter into practically all negotiations be they for the more fundamental objective of union recognition or questions of wages and working conditions. Generally speaking, the entry takes place through the governmental machinery of conciliation and arbitration—a relationship that exists today on a voluntary basis but tomorrow may become compulsory. The Roosevelt automobile agreement of last year, the acceptance by the steel workers' union, also last year, of the National Steel Labor

Relations Board instead of a strike, and the settlement of the national textile strike on the basis of the Winant report are good examples in this respect. And by way of parenthetic remark it should be noted that each one of them had serious retrogressive consequences to the trade union movement. In numerous instances the issues of labor conflicts enter the capitalist courts or become sharpened by anti-union injunctions not to mention the various forms of anti-labor legislation. The strikes of today practically in every instance meet the intervention of police or military forces, often taking on the character of civil war on a small scale.

Similarly within the trade union movement these class issues are ever more sharply reflected in the division between the rank and file working class forces and the capitalist agents that make up the leadership. There is the example of the steel workers' union. The organization of this basic industry is a key question to the whole of the labor movement. Without steel being organized it is inconceivable that the trade unions can penetrate seriously or become rooted in the other basic industries, and without that there will be no serious trade union movement today. But a campaign of organization of the steel workers is a first class political question in the sense that it meets not only the ruthless resistance of the steel trust but also runs into conflict with the political state. The capitalist agents in the union leadership have had no intention of risking such a struggle and they have thereby come into violent conflict with the rank and file membership, the first stage of which has already led to wholesale expulsions of numerous union locals in the most important steel mills. This, of course, is only one of the examples of what is to come in similar situations that will inevitably arise. Elsewhere in the trade union field there are already large-scale insurgent movements in the making. Throughout there is a general sharpening distinction between the reactionaries in control of the union leaderships and the militant section of the membership. The political issues of the class struggle begin to find their expression within the unions in the class division between the rank and file workers and the capitalist agents in the official leadership. It can be assumed with fairly reasonable certainty that as the insurgent movements reach larger proportions, become more definite and distinct and enter into strikes that may be outlawed by the official leadership or find themselves outside the official fold by expulsion, the forces of coercion of the political state will be on the side of the capitalist agents against the insurgents.

Basically the present trends toward insurgent movements represent an unconscious groping on the part of the working masses that have flowed into the conservative unions for a means of transforming them into weapons of battle against capitalist exploitation. In almost every recent strike there have been some elements of this insurgency taking on varying forms and reaching varying degrees of development. It is a well known fact that in

the San Francisco general strike and in the national textile strike only the persistent demands from the rank and file and its enormous pressure compelled action by the union leaders. In the most recent New York strike against an injunction issued to restrain the teamsters' union and the longshoremen's union from interfering with non-union trucking on the waterfront, the rank and file truck drivers went entirely over the heads of their official leaders and struck to the last man. The situation in the steel workers' union is a part of this chain of development but representing a more advanced stage, not yet toward the definite crystallization of a progressive movement, but in the sense of preventive measures already taken by the reactionary officials to crush it in its infancy. Unquestionably, this particular instance shows so far the most completed negative aspect in the struggle of the conflicting currents, whereas the Minneapolis and Toledo strikes still hold the record of positive gains. In the former a conscious Left wing leadership took hold of a local A. F. of L. union, built it into a powerful force, and prepared it for the impending struggle to compel recognition from the employers. Since the strike this leadership has consolidated its gains and successfully built up a progressive movement that is now in the process of expanding over several cities in the northwestern states. In Toledo the excellent coöperation of the local Unemployed Leagues on the picket lines set an example of magnificent struggle and laid the basis for a conscious progressive movement in the city. On a whole there are enormous potentialities hidden below the surface in the more or less definite trends toward the crystallization of a distinctly progressive movement out of these marked elements of insurgency. But the consciousness and firm political direction necessary to give them organized form, class content and a truly nationally coördinated and disciplined character is still lacking. To invest the present rather formless and spontaneous movement with these qualities is the particular task of the revolutionary party.

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When taking up in earnest the problems that arise in the creation of a national progressive movement in the trade unions, lessons of the past will have inestimable value. It is not a new task that we are facing; there have been such movements before, representing on the whole a rather checkered career; but the conditions under which we face it have altered in several fundamental respects. Nevertheless much can be learned from the positive as well as from the negative sides of these past movements. Most outstanding in this respect is the history of the Trade Union Educational League, which later became the Trade Union Unity League. In the change of name from the T.U.E.L. to T.U.U.L., with the latter slated to pass into the limbo of forgotten language, is embodied the completion of an historical cycle traversed by a movement from its magnificent inception, through a tragic débâcle, and back to its original form but sapped of all its revolutionary and progressive qualities and appearing in this form on a much lower plane.

The T.U.E.L. arose out of the great labor struggles of the early post-war period and at a time when the rank and file trade union membership chafed under the many bitter disappointments from the class collaboration policies of the fossilized leadership of Gompers. When it appeared on the scene it immediately electrified the scattered groupings of militants, fired them with the zeal of crusaders and became a veritable nightmare to the dynasty of Samuel Gompers. Together with the crown prince, Matthew Woll, old Sammy went out of his way to denounce and castigate the T.U.E.L. and all its supporters. But the warm response it received from the broad layers of the trade union movement was so overwhelming that it developed rapidly on a national scale into a powerful instrument for the advancement of progressive policies and measures. Its purpose was set forth from the beginning in unmistakable terms: namely, to put an end to all the preceding

disastrous secession from the trade unions of the revolutionary and progressive forces, and to turn their attention to the task of penetrating the broad labor movement with their ideas and slogans for action. Editorially the T.U.E.L. official organ, *Labor Herald*, in arguing against the whole course of the I.W.W., said in its April 1922 issue: "Only those will be surprised who still think that it is a 'revolutionary' act to draw a handful of militant workers outside of the masses, unite them on a dogma, and call it a revolutionary union. It is the logical conclusion of the counter-revolutionary tactics of the past. For the future the hope of the revolutionary workers lies in the mass organizations, the old trade unions, the organized labor movement of America."

There could be no mistake about this statement of purpose of the T.U.E.L., and only the greatest tribute could adequately describe its effective campaign for the slogan of amalgamation of the trade unions: It won the Chicago Federation of Labor, at that time the most powerful central labor body in the country, for this slogan, and the federation became a spearhead in the drive for industrial unionism. At the second conference of the T.U.E.L., held in September 1923, it was possible to report that eight international unions, fourteen state federations of labor and numerous central labor bodies had declared for amalgamation. In addition to this achievement of building up sentiment for progressive measures, the T.U.E.L. was no small factor in strengthening several strikes conducted in resistance to the employers' open shop campaign. But it suffered its first setback in its ill-advised labor party slogan and in the less fortunate results growing out of the formation of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party. From then on the decline set in. As the T.U.E.L. became more revolutionary in phraseology, it became less revolutionary in content in the sense of losing its valuable contacts with the trade union movement. By July 1924, it accepted the proletarian dictatorship in its program. The broad Left wing became converted into a narrow Left wing. It appeared henceforth only one step removed from the policy of so-called revolutionary unions which followed a few years later as a complete negation of everything the T.U.E.L. had previously stood for, and resulted in the demoralization and destruction of the Left wing. The militants who had followed it deserted the mass unions to "unite on a dogma, and call it a revolutionary union".

Earl Browder, the theoretical exponent of this "brilliant" new strategy, now discovered that it had been all wrong to work with the trade union progressives. In greeting the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, which arose after the T.U.E.L. had deserted the field, he declared: "We understand more fully today than four years ago, the treacherous rôle of the 'progressives' as the bearers of social reformism even into the ranks of the Left wing workers themselves. We will no longer waste our energies and time in disastrous attempts to work with these fake progressives. . . . Today the workers must be prepared for the actual organization of revolutionary trade unions separate from and fighting against the class-collaborationist, social reformist A. F. of L., organizationally and politically." (*Labor Unity*, March 1929.) From the side of the Stalinist party, where Browder had equally become the celebrated theoretician, this policy was made no less clear, but remained no less false. Its seventh convention thesis, in 1930, conveys the illuminating information that: "It has been a mistake on our part that we did not sooner clearly analyze and characterize the open Fascism of the American Federation of Labor. . . . The party can win the masses for its political leadership only by leading them in their economic struggles; and only on the basis of the Trade Union Unity League will the party be able to assume the leadership of these struggles."

But alas, the working masses did not respond to this "perfect" union structure. As could be expected, they were not interested in uniting on a dogma, and call it a revolutionary union. The

Stalinist quack doctors had completed the conversion of a once glorious Left wing movement into sectarian auxiliaries of the party for momentary aims which prevented them from becoming genuine mass organizations. These unfortunate unions were kept in leading strings, dictated to by the party from above, and consequently by all semblance of trade union democracy and free development was stifled and crushed. They remained isolated and unable to lead any serious struggles. Soon, however, this perfidious policy, devoid of Marxism, found its refutation in the process of life. The A. F. of L. unions experienced their recent stormy growth and development, and history made a mockery of the revolutionary union theory. The zig-zag cycle is now being completed. The Stalinists are attempting to revert to the original form of the Left wing movement; but not at all to its original content. The revolutionary policy is lacking. The substitution in its place of an exclusive A. F. of L. orientation and the proscription of all that Wm. Green and Co. labels as dual unionism, together with the brand new turn for a labor party, will by the very logic of politics become a cover for an abject bowing down before this trade union bureaucracy. From this distinctly Rightward turn greater débâcles and greater demoralization will ensue. Thus, what stands out preëminently in the lessons of the T.U.E.L., verified by history, is the degeneration and falsity of party policy.

In this respect the history of the Conference for Progressive Labor Action presents a distinct contrast. Programmatically this progressive movement had much in common with the T.U.E.L. during its best days, although it lacked some of the spirited qualities and clear-cut objectives of the predecessor. Above all, however, its main weakness must be sought in the fact that it lacked the necessary support and direction of a workers' political party. It arose out of the need for a rallying center for the militant trade unionists after the T.U.E.L. had deserted the basic labor movement. While the C.P.L.A. attempted to confine itself exclusively to the trade union field, there was no doubt of its general purpose. Its program included struggle for a number of elementary demands but laid emphasis on labor's goal of a social order controlled by the workers. It asserted the principle that labor must be international in its spirit and activities. Although declaring for a labor party, the C.P.L.A. sought to cooperate politically with the two major workers' parties in existence, the C.P. and the S.P. Leaning at the outset considerably in the direction of the latter it soon began to move Leftward to a critical position of the S.P., but found cooperation with the C.P. and its policy of "Red" unions equally impossible. The C.P.L.A. was therefore driven to the logical conclusion of its position, to endeavor to build a workers' political party. Out of it grew the American Workers party. But this also marked the end of the brief history of the C.P.L.A., and after that the validity of the all important lesson, that the conscious political direction of a workers' revolutionary party is the first prerequisite for building a progressive movement in the trade unions, remains doubly reinforced.

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Since the reorganization of American national economy, exemplified by the N.R.A., the trade union movement has passed through two strike waves. The second showed characteristics distinctly different from the first. A new strike wave, more explosive in character, is inevitable, and due to bring out yet greater differences. Far more than before, all the pressing questions of policy, methods, tactics and structure will come to a head. In general the transformation of the unions to meet the requirements of the new conditions has followed much more slowly than the changes in national economy. This process of transformation is only about to pass its first stage characterized by stormy growth of the movement, changing its composition from a craft basis toward a mass basis and inaugurating the first changes in its position in relation to the dominant capitalist forces and the capitalist state. In the

next stage this process will necessarily be vastly accelerated, bringing in its wake also the inevitable convulsions, resulting very likely in splits by expulsions or by secessions characteristic of the decomposition attendant upon the birth pangs of a new union structure, resting on a new theoretical and tactical foundation in accordance with the new requirements. The expulsions in the steel workers' union are so far only an indication. We are not at this moment taking into account the question whether this process will remain within the framework of the A. F. of L. or whether it will reach outside in the formation of independent unions. That cannot yet be precisely estimated. Important however, is the fact that the A. F. of L. today embraces the American trade union movement and it is still the center of gravity. While the elements of decomposition may very well in the future lead to the road of independent unionism, it should be remembered that the A. F. of L. bureaucracy has not at all the powerful political apparatus for maintaining itself in perpetual control comparable, for instance, to what has been the case in European countries. Trade union unity is today accomplished primarily within the A. F. of L.; but for us the question of unity or splits is subordinated to political policy and not determined by what Wm. Green deigns to recognize or to label dual unionism. This is the only way for revolutionists to pose this question. A correct solution to the problems that are involved presupposes the existence of the indispensable instrument, directly connected with and an intimate part of the trade unions—a progressive movement, organized nationally, interlocking from industry to industry and from union to union. That is the basis for the fight for a class struggle policy and leadership in the trade union movement. But it is necessary to reiterate that the revolutionary party must play a conscious rôle in its development. This the Workers party has accepted as one of its foremost tasks.

Our beginning we shall make from the simple and concrete issues as they exist today. It is possible at this point to mention specifically: industrial unionism; an aggressive policy of organization of the unorganized; dependence upon the organized power of the workers rather than upon the governmental labor boards; promotion of labor solidarity and struggle against the various forms of vigilante movements; trade union democracy and class struggle policies. The fact that the broad masses are in motion makes a broad progressive movement both necessary and feasible. The beginning made from Minneapolis in the organization of the progressive unity conference of the northwestern states may serve as a good example on a small scale and as an initial beginning. In the further organization and development, we shall enter into agreements with progressive elements for the specific objectives set, and with the pledge to carry them out in common action.

In the trade unions the party acts through its fraction. Under the existing conditions it is clear that the fraction is obliged not to unfurl the revolutionary banner prematurely. While it must translate the party's program into the language of the trade unionists in order to lead them forward more surely, it is compelled to adapt its methods and its tactics to the actual situation at hand. But the party organization as a whole decides what forms of adaptation are permissible and necessary. The more difficult the conditions for the carrying out of the revolutionary work in the trade unions, the more strictly systematic should be the party control of its fraction. Preserving at all times its own political independence, the party as such will act with its banner unfurled, say everything that is required by the revolutionary objectives, in its press and in its meetings, and name things by their right name. The problems of the trade union movement can never be separated or isolated from the general political situation, and they must be placed by the party in indissoluble connection with the political struggle of the working class.

# Why the Saar Was Lost

**T**HE RESULT of the vote in the Saar district came as a surprise. Not even the Fascist hangman really counted upon so overwhelming a majority for reincorporation into the Third Reich; still greater, however, was the astonishment in the anti-Fascist camp, where nobody was prepared for so small a percentage in favor of the *status quo*. No quibbling and twisting gets us past the fact: the anti-Fascist forces have suffered a grave defeat, whereas Hitler has gained a great victory. Up to the very last the chances for the *status quo* were calculated at a far higher figure than the bare 10% that was finally assembled for it. The forces of German Fascism proved to be stronger than the anti-Fascist. What is now necessary, in the first place, is to examine into and to lay bare the causes that led to the Fascist victory and the anti-Fascist defeat. It would only mean a further weakening of the anti-Fascist forces were one to pass over the Saar defeat with confusing and tortuous explanations, or worse yet, with sentimental extenuations.

*The Fault of the Terror.* In all the explanations and commentaries on the anti-Fascist defeat, the Fascist terror occupies the foreground. It is set down as the main reason for the Fascist victory. It may be a good consolation to many to feel that they became the victims of a frightful Fascist pressure, but this is but a feeble consolation and in the best case perhaps a quarter-truth. Naturally, there was a strong Fascist terror, there was a constant pressure. Yet this assertion does not yet signify much. It is much more important, however, to emphasize that there was no anti-Fascist counter-pressure, or practically none! And the blame for Hitler's significant victory in the Saar district is shared both by Fascist terror and anti-Fascist impotence and passivity.

That terror and Fascism are inseparably connected, is certainly not new. The additional evidence of the Saar vote was not required to prove it. Something different had to be shown in the Saar, namely, that the Fascist terror represents no invincible force and that the power of the proletarian, anti-Fascist united front is strong enough to break the Fascist terror, at the very least, to dam it and to attenuate its effects. Otherwise, why the struggle against rejoining Hitler-Germany? It was necessary to harness and exert every bit of strength, genuinely and actively. And it is from this standpoint that a position must be taken on the Saar vote. Innocents may content themselves with the argument that the terror was to blame. The question to be answered is: How could the Fascist terror acquire such extraordinary significance despite the anti-Fascist united front?

*The United Front.* At the beginning of July 1934, the united front was effected in the Saar district between the C.P. and the S.P., a year and a half after Hitler's seizure of power, half a year before the Saar referendum. It took a long time before the social democratic and the Stalinist bureaucrats recognized the most elementary need of the anti-Fascist struggle: the close organization of all forces for the struggle against Fascism. The Fascist "united front" had long become a fact—all the bourgeois and reactionary organizations had been brought together in the *Deutsche Front* under Fascist leadership—before the bureaucrats of the labor organizations, not least of all under the pressure of the membership masses, condescended to form the anti-Fascist united front.

It is no accident that the anti-Fascist united front in the Saar district came into existence so tardily. What was primarily decisive, generally speaking, was the fact that the movement of the social democratic and the Stalinist bureaucracy in the direction of the united front first started everywhere towards the summer of 1934. But this "reason" could surely have been overcome with ease in the Saar district on the basis of the special situation ob-

taining there—the dated referendum—had there existed between the C.P. and the S.P. the *political premises* for a united front. But precisely this was absolutely not the case.

*"Separatists."* For a long time, an exceptionally great confusion prevailed among the bureaucrats of the labor organizations and by that also among the masses of the membership. Nobody knew what was actually going to happen in the Saar now that the Fascist dictatorship had been established in Germany. For years, the working class organizations had worked for the reincorporation of the Saar into Germany—was an end to be put with a single stroke to the good old slogan? After all, one had grown so used to it and nobody ventured to propose a reversal, the political turn that had become necessary. Blandest of all—naturally!—were the Stalinists. To them, the singular "program of national liberation" of the German Communist party of Germany still held good, and besides—had something really happened in Germany? The C.P.G. hadn't suffered a defeat, Hitler wouldn't last in power for more than a few days, everything was in the best of order. Whoever didn't believe it, could read it for himself, black on white, in Fritz Heckert. And as the matter was so clear, the C.P. retained its old slogan in the Saar: Back to Germany. But since something like a Fascist terror nevertheless ruled in the Reich, the C.P. felt itself constrained to alter its old slogan; thenceforth it read: *Back to Germany under all circumstances!*

For months on end propaganda was made in favor of this slogan. Its success, it goes without saying, consisted in an enormous strengthening of Fascism. Great masses must have said to themselves: "If indeed we are to go back to Hitler, then let it be with the Fascists and not with the Communists." So did the C.P. render Fascism the service of whipping up support for it.

Those, however, who came out for the *status quo* in the Saar district immediately after the establishment of the Fascist dictatorship in Germany, were called "separatists" by the C. P. and even abused as "creatures bought by France". The slogan of *status quo* was thus combatted by all sides at first, both by the Fascists and the C. P. Only the strength of the anti-Fascist resistance was weakened thereby; weakened also, however, was the C. P. itself. Renegacy from the C.P. to Fascism became very widespread.

Finally, when the C.P., especially under the influence of strong oppositional sentiments in its own ranks, was compelled to give up its slogan of reincorporation, then picked up the confusing and meaningless slogan of "A Red Saar inside a red Germany", but nevertheless had to come out in favor of the *status quo* in the end, a long and precious period had been lost for the struggle in favor of the *status quo*. Among undoubtedly large sections, the C. P. itself had discredited the *status quo* as separatist and French, and had decided the masses in favor of Germany, i.e., of Hitler. And in the period that followed, Fascism made not inconsiderable use of those insults and calumnies which originated in the arsenal of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

More cautious was the S.P. It too hesitated a long time before issuing a clear slogan for the referendum. First it made a prolonged attempt to get a postponement of the voting, a solution which was no solution and which necessarily ended in failure. Nevertheless, the S.P. arrived at the slogan of the *status quo* much sooner than the C.P., but unlike the latter, without having previously made good propaganda for Hitler-Germany.

This development, which occurred before the formation of the united front in the Saar district, must not be overlooked when examining into the Saar struggle. On the contrary, it is of importance, for the original weaknesses of the *status quo*, the shame-

ful and treacherous policy of the C.P. and the hesitancy of the S.P., could not but have their effect. The masses were thus driven into the arms of the Fascists and kept there; a subsequent departure from the Fascists was tied up with great difficulties and dangers. The loss of time had its bitter revenge; time is a priceless factor in politics, especially when so embittered a struggle is involved as the one that was carried out in the Saar.

*Optimism of Parades.* It is clear that the united front—after about a year and a half had been lost and only half a year still remained till the decision—immediately had to unfold the most active anti-Fascist resistance. The *Deutsche Front* had thoroughly exploited the confusion in the anti-Fascist camp, had plunged forward everywhere, and established its positions. Fascism could be driven back again only in the course of unintermittent, tenacious daily work. The masses, having felt up to then only the Fascist pressure, should now likewise have been made to feel the pressure and the might of the united front. Although the united front had come into existence late enough, it was nevertheless not too late. Much could still be saved, very much. But one condition had to be fulfilled before the work could be successful: the united front would have to be a genuine *fighting* front, it would have to develop the greatest possible activity.

This is just what did *not* happen. There was no trace of a serious *work* of the united front among the masses; all its activity was exhausted by joint meetings, fine speeches and strong phrases. But behind them stood nothing. The leaders of the united front complained incessantly about the Fascist terror, *did* nothing and only complained. Thus the Saar district, so far as it was anti-Fascist, was turned into a wailing wall. But neither the voice of Max Braun, nor Pfordt's, nor yet Father Dörr's, was capable of filling the Fascists with fear and of breaking down the Fascist terror. Other means were needed for the purpose.

*Activity.* To drive through the country in automobile and to deliver big speeches, is certainly a good thing, but entirely inadequate. Not much could be achieved that way, even less in the Saar district than anywhere else. Only an unremitting daily work of activizing the masses against the Fascist pressure could be of any help. The Fascist terror should have been checked and counter-measures taken immediately and in every single case. The individuals and the vacillators should have been worked on systematically, the Fascist test votes should have been prevented, the Fascist questionnaires seized, etc.; the oft-mentioned Fascist "Block Guards" should have been opposed by agents of the united front. The masses should have been in a position to feel that the united front is backing them up. But nothing of the kind occurred. The united front was completely preoccupied with parades: the Sulzbach demonstration sufficed for a prolonged wave of enthusiasm, the demonstration in Saarbrücken, the so-called "greater Sulzbach", created even more enthusiasm—until, one week later, the result of the referendum, as the "greatest Sulzbach", brought with it a brusque awakening.

While the united front talked itself to death, the Fascists systematically and planfully prepared the referendum. Besides talking, they did not forget the *organizing*, the organized pressure. The united front only organized meetings, and beyond that its organizing activity was nil. And if the former "leaders of the Saar proletariat" today tell us and the whole world about the terror of the Fascist Block Guards, then only one question is of interest: how were these creatures able to play such a disastrous rôle *in spite of* the united front? In answering this question it should not be overlooked that the failure of the united front became the strength of the Fascist Block Guards.

*The Pope.* Instead of living on active struggle, the united front lived on hopes. It placed its hopes in *everything* and therefore did *nothing*. It made its victory depend upon the League of Nations and the Pope: upon the League of Nations, if it would express

itself for the possibility of a new referendum later on; upon the Pope, if he would declare himself for the *status quo*. Where it was necessary to fight in the Saar with one's own forces, and if help was needed, to appeal for it to the international proletariat, only longing glances were cast towards Geneva and Rome. But the Pope remained silent. Only the bishops made speeches—for Hitler.

Hopes were put in the Catholics. To be sure, these hopes were not baseless in advance. But if the Catholic sections were to be won for the *status quo* camp, they had to be convinced of its power and strength. Yet it was just the other way that it happened: instead of bringing the Catholics under the influence of the united front, the united front passed itself off as Catholic, almost as more Catholic than the Pope. The Stalinist *Arbeiterzeitung* wrote about the sanctity and the protection of monstrances and processions, and also that these things were all protected by the Communists, etc., etc. A Comintern-Catholicism grew up and produced astounding blossoms. The referendum showed unequivocally and clearly that the abandonment of vigorous activity by the proletarian united front for the sake of a stupid toadying to Catholicism, did not achieve the slightest results and was not even taken seriously by the Catholic circles. At most, the C. P. recruited a few of its members for the Catholic church, just as it did a short time previously for reincorporation into Fascist Germany.

*"Hold Fast to What You Have."* This is the slogan under which recruiting went on for the *status quo*. The very choice of the slogan expresses the whole helplessness of the united front. With it was stifled any fight in the Saar for new rights, for higher wages, etc. The position of the Saar miners, one of the most important sections, is extremely bad and miserable. The united front wanted to "hold fast", but the working masses wanted to have living conditions. Fascism promised them all kinds of improvement and made full use of corruption throughout the ranks of the workers. Hitler's work among these workers was facilitated by the fact that the exploiter who paid such miserable wages was the *French* mine administration.

In this respect also the united front did nothing. There wasn't even the thought of a struggle for higher wages, for better working conditions. Yet, by means of such a struggle large masses of workers could have been showed that for them too the *status quo* would bring about an improvement. In this way, however, the slogan of the *status quo* remained a hollow one to broad masses and Fascism profited by promising them economic improvements, etc., after the reincorporation. The proletarian united front forgot the daily struggle of the working class, forgot the struggle for raising the proletarian living standards and was thus defeated by Hitlerian demagogy.

*An After-Effect.* The struggle for the *status quo* was badly conducted, very badly. But that alone does not explain the depth of the anti-Fascist defeat in the Saar. A bare 10% of the votes for the *status quo* is such a catastrophic result that other factors besides the miserable policy of the bureaucracies must have been at work.

The outcome of the Saar struggle plainly illustrates the effects which the victory of Hitler has had upon broad masses of the people. The defeat of the German working class did not pass by without a trace. Widest sections of the people have lost all confidence in the power of the proletariat and are attracted and held fast by Fascism. So heavy a defeat as that of the German proletariat is not so quickly forgotten and straightened out; two years of Hitler dictatorship only led to 90% of the Saar population expressing itself for Hitler. Such a result should not be underestimated; it allows of important conclusions about the situation in the Reich itself. To be sure Hitler's position within the Reich is not as strong as in the Saar, but the rumors about the convulsions of the Fascist dictatorship will be greatly diminished for a period

of time. Fascism is no mere "king for a day". The evaluations which the Stalinist bureaucrats gave about German Fascism, proved once again to be stupid and false. Wasn't it the Saar which, according to the Stalinist theories, was to become a great anti-Fascist victory? Yet, out of about 127,000 votes cast for the labor parties in the Federal Council election of 1932 in the Saar district, only about 46,000 remained for the *status quo*. Even if one assumes the most favorable case, and estimates that only half of the voters of 1932 had the right to vote on January 13, 1935, there still remains a great proletarian loss to record. To find a solution for this, will hardly be attempted by the Stalinist theoreticians.

Perhaps they will adopt the clever explanation which all the baffled and helpless politicians are now employing: "Large sections of the Saar population voted for Germany but not for Hitler." Here indeed is an explanation that might have been produced by a low comedian. In the Saar itself it looked quite different. The whole referendum battle took place under the sign of the swastika, Germany's propagandists employed the Fascist phraseology, the *Deutsche Front* was a purely Fascist organization. Everybody

knew: *For Germany means—for Hitler!* And the Fascist "liberation uproar" throughout the land after the referendum, confirmed this ever again. Not Germany—but Fascism, Hitler, drew the population of the Saar into its orbit; it voted for the *Third Reich*. No confusing or clever tricks can get around this; they have nothing in common with politics and are merely a gross nuisance. In order to combat the enemy, he must be acknowledged; you don't arm yourself for new struggles with cock-and-bull stories.

One thing was confirmed by the Saar referendum: the effects of the defeat of the German working class are extremely long-lasting and deep-going. The proletariat cannot emerge from this defeat by means of the old bankrupt policy of the bureaucracies.

Also confirmed, however, was the law: proletarian passivity signifies automatically the strengthening of the class enemy, the weakness of the proletarian defensive struggle is the strength of the Fascist terror. The working class of all countries must thoroughly assimilate and attend to these lessons which were emphasized anew in the Saar struggle, if it would guard itself from new defeats.

PARIS, January 20, 1935

Oskar FISCHER

## In a Billion Dollar Industry

**A**MERICA'S billion dollar rubber industry is an outstanding example of the development of monopoly—controlled by finance capital—over the country's basic productive forces, which has been forced by its inherent nature to find its highest expression in ruthless imperialism.

The industry has expanded in two decades from a few small factories located in Akron, Ohio, to giant corporations having plants throughout the world from Japan to India to Spain and South America. It has subjugated Liberia into slavery, fought against British and Dutch imperialism over the East Indies in its pursuit for crude rubber and raw materials.

When the world war broke out, the rubber industry received the same impetus as steel for its growth, with the insatiable demands for its products, in particular gas masks and other actual war equipment. Government subsidies, chiefly in the form of unbelievably high prices for products, left the tire industry in an excellent financial position and saw Akron grow from a mere town of 50,000 to an industrial center with over 200,000 population. During this period Akron men, entrepreneur capitalists, controlled the industry.

The post-war depression gave New York capital its opportunity to seize control from the Akron men—an example is F. A. Seiberling, founder and builder of Goodyear, whose \$150,000,000 company was taken by Dillon, Reed, of Wall Street, because of unpaid loans.

British control of crude rubber plantations which sent prices shooting to as high as \$1.14 a pound with the Stuyvesant act of 1924 forced the industry to seek its own raw material sources. This epoch was culminated with the building of a million acre plantation in Liberia for the Firestone Co. in 1927. Financial control over the country was given to Firestone by the League of Nations upon the insistence of the American government. The slavery of the people—against which even an Episcopal bishop protested—followed.

The tremendous boom in the automobile industry in the 'Twenties was followed by a similar expansion of the tire industry which depends in a large part on the auto industry (their seasonal booms and depressions, their cyclical curves of business activity, run parallel). It was in this period that tire production trebled to reach 90,000,000 million yearly and that plants began to sprout throughout the country.

Small companies flourished until over 200 of them were in business. Meanwhile Goodyear was using surplus profits to build plants in Los Angeles, Canada, Gadsen, Georgia, Buenos Aires, Wolverhampton, Eng. and elsewhere. Goodrich and Firestone followed this same path. An idea of the immense amount of surplus value stolen from labor can be had when it is realized that monetary wages—about \$1,500 average per worker yearly—remained the same throughout this period, while tire prices followed other commodity prices in the upward leap during the inflationary period. Better yet, at Goodyear alone, 30,000 workers in 1920 built 30,000 tires, while in 1930 16,500 workers built 50,000 tires! And the wages remained the same.

The other company of the "Big Four", the United States Rubber Company, used a more advanced capitalist technique to rise to first place in the rubber world. Through holding companies, etc., it seized control of over 34 companies and had assets of over \$350,000,000. With the beginnings of business recessions in 1927, the Big Four used ruthless price-cutting to ruin the small companies of which only nineteen of any consequence exist today. This process was accentuated with the depression.

Until the Roosevelt régime, the rubber industry, enmeshed in financial difficulties, was unable to continue its profit-making to any extent despite successive 10% pay cuts, with the exception of Firestone who proudly announced in 1931 that his company made \$4,000,000 by cutting wages! Under the benevolence of Roosevelt the companies—i.e. the Big Four—have announced profits of an average of \$4,000,000 apiece yearly. Two 10% wage increases were given, but these were followed by two 20% increases in tire prices; and living costs, of course, have advanced about 25% in Akron so that labor today receives much less than it did before the New Deal—as in every other industry.

During the rise of the rubber industry labor made numerous attempts to gain more of its share of the product it was creating. In 1913, under I.W.W. leadership, a general strike in Akron brought pay increases. Bill Haywood was one of the leaders in this fight of labor, which was met with vigilante committees, wholesale terrorism through beatings, and utilization of strike-breaking agencies. Goodyear even set up a Goodyear Industrial assembly in 1914 as a sop. This company union still exists and is a factor here which splits labor forces. Walkouts of departments marked the period from 1920 to 1932. In fact, in 1927 the

Proletarian party captured control of the Goodyear union and lead a walkout which was broken, since only 200 workers joined. In general, however, the firing of any militant, the recruiting of raw labor from the backward sections of the South, and the failure of any organized labor group to try to unionize the workers, made the boast of the Chamber of Commerce that "Akron is the most open shop city in America" true.

The communist party has had an organizer and a small following since 1921, but disastrous policies, poor leadership and the objective conditions have kept it a negligible factor. A more thorough analysis of the C. P. position today will be made later.

The advent of the N.R.A. found the 80,000 rubber workers in the industry in a dangerous mood. Years of seasonal lay-offs, brutal speeding up—as was shown statistically—the oppressive atmosphere of the working surroundings which smell of sulphur and are filled with sulphur dust, the wage cuts, the day and night work (shifts are employed continuously for 24 hours daily) and the depressed condition of their living as the depression squeezed down their existence level—these conditions, prevalent in America and accentuated here, aroused labor.

Under rank and file leadership, unions rose here from nothing until it could be safely claimed that nearly 40,000 workers were unionized. Not until the rubber workers were almost at the height of their strength did the A. F. of L. take action. Then Coleman C. Claherty, special organizer appointed by Green, came to Akron, and charters were granted to the locals. Claherty was a craft unionist, a sheet metal organizer, and he followed the A. F. of L. policy of building crafts. Charters were thus given to 25 craft unions.

In the spring of 1934 the A. F. of L. had two fights on its hands. First, the rubber workers demanded strike action and repeatedly tried to pass motions to that effect in the locals. They wanted results but Claherty, the only experienced and clever politician, backed by Green, was able to forestall action. Second, the rank and file leaders who organized the unions, wanted industrial unions and an international.

Sentiment for industrial unions and an international was so strong that a year ago January the unions from plants throughout the country sent 200 delegates to a "rump" convention, unsanctioned by the A. F. of L., to form a rubber workers' international. This was smashed by Claherty and Green who expelled the leaders from the unions. The two real leaders, Frederick L. Phillips, former financial secretary of the Goodrich local, and Clark C. Culver, financial secretary of the Goodyear local, have since been unable to find work at any plant and have had their characters assassinated by Claherty. Promise of a sanctioned convention later and of immediate action in negotiations with the rubber barons helped Claherty swing enough support to continue his dictatorship.

Threat of a strike at the India Rubber Co., near Akron, brought union recognition and small wage increases last February. Refusal of the big companies even to discuss possible negotiations with the union delegations brought bitter resentment last May, but huge inventories and the arrival of the slack season helped Claherty curb the militants. However, 1,100 rubber workers at the General Tire Company, impatient with the A. F. of L. and realizing they must strike immediately to win anything, walked out spontaneously early in June and held a strong picket line for six weeks, forcing the A. F. of L. to back them. They gained a partial victory. The excellent financial and picket line support other unions gave the strikers was significant. It showed that labor understood the need for solidarity. Labor, previously inexperienced, was learning.

When the A. F. of L. called a national rubber workers' convention last June, delegates were selected by crafts so that the actual rubber workers' unions having 90% of the workers in them, were in a hopeless minority. Claherty was able to set up an executive

council of seven members only one of whom was an actual rubber worker. The other six were craftsmen. Claherty had himself elected president. Akron locals were given two offices, having *ex-officio* membership in the council, as a sop.

However, the Akron locals were able to force two concessions from the A. F. of L. since the convention set up the United Rubber Workers' Council as governing body. One was the adoption of a law that craft unionists should also join the rubber workers' local, and the other was the creation of a subordinate council, composed of delegates from the Akron rubber workers' locals, which has power over them.

The fall of 1934 found the rubber workers' unions in a precarious position. The Firestone local, which had 75% of the 9,000 employees as members, dropped to not over 2,000 membership. The Goodrich local, having 8,000 out of 9,500 workers organized at its peak (it was and is the strongest union), saw its membership fall to less than half. The Goodyear local, at best with 75% of the 12,000 employees unionized, was down to not more than 2,000 members. The ordering of employee elections at Goodrich and Firestone last December brought many workers back to the folds. Goodyear local leaders were afraid to pit their strength against the 21-year old company union. Of course the companies tied the elections up in federal court where they are still pending. Two weeks later Firestone laid off 325 workers who were the backbone of the union. A strike vote was taken but defeated through Claherty's machinations, for he is deadly afraid of the companies, if not in their pay. Instead the A. F. of L. promised action through the labor boards. It has begun an absurd campaign to take away the blue eagles of the company. That is their strategy despite Roosevelt's open rejection of them as class allies.

This action has nearly killed hope of an industry-wide strike for this spring. Progressive forces which sought to compel a strike were defeated by Claherty at a recent meeting of the subordinate council. Membership in the unions continues to fall after the adoption of the class collaboration policy.

Having thus elected to complete its betrayal of the rubber workers, the A. F. of L. reactionary leadership stands exposed to the progressive elements and the workers at large and stands at the threshold of its doom. Personal criticism of Claherty is so outspoken and great at local meetings that his removal seems a foregone conclusion. A strong rank and file "union within the union" under progressive leadership at Firestone threatens to take the entire membership with it away from the A. F. of L. As though Green and company weren't having enough trouble with progressives in steel and the textiles and the auto industries, this additional headache keeps the bureaucrats awake at night. It is entirely possible here that a spontaneous walkout like the one at the General Tire company will happen any day. Again the A. F. of L. bureaucrats will be put on the spot.

It is evident that the chief difficulty of the workers has arisen from their inexperience in fighting bureaucrats like Claherty, and in their not having a correct perspective for their future. There is no unification of progressive elements in the various plants. This must be the major task of the Workers party in Akron. Numerous contacts, a good rôle in workers' education circles here, and a thorough grasp of the situation are the assets. Likewise we must pose the question of strike leadership if such action is taken by any of the locals. A weakness in numerical strength must be overcome by the branch so that it can play a decisive rôle in the labor movement in the rubber industry. The Stalinists have been and are almost completely isolated from the rubber workers' unions. One of the greatest fields for the growth of the Workers party in America toward the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism is open to us. We must go forward, armed with the keenest weapons of Marxism, to victory. The future of the working class and its allies is at stake.

Jack WILSON

# Marxism: Science or Method?

## The Historical Limits of the Materialist Conception of History

FROM DENYING that Marxism is a science, it is not difficult to jump to another startling conclusion that historical materialism is confined in its application only to class societies. Hook performs this additional feat with the agility of a trained acrobat. His argument takes this form. Historical materialism is the abstract methodological approach which the proletariat concretizes in terms of the class struggle of today. In this concrete form, it is actually the method by which the proletariat frees itself and all oppressed classes from the dehumanizing chains of capitalism. Its applicability, therefore, is necessarily restricted to the society in which there are contending classes, the class struggle. It can never apply to a society in which all classes have been annihilated at one blow, or liquidated as the result of a long, voluntary process. Beyond capitalism, in the classless society, man is no longer subjugated by economic circumstances, chained like a prisoner to economic process and laws; he is, as Henley poetically apostrophized, the master of his fate; nothing except "natural necessities" hamper the free activity of his highly cerebrated, spiritualized existence. The world, in short, is his oyster. How can anyone, with a proper conception of that world, think of explaining its "general character . . . in terms of the economic relations in which human beings find themselves and by which they are controlled?" (p. 97). How can anyone insist that there is a tie-up between the cultural life of classless man and the economic relations in which he finds himself? This principle, therefore, Hook says, "of necessity, must be suspended in a collectivist society in which man makes his own history, in which the total product of labor-power, although not returned to the individual worker, is disbursed and reinvested for the good of the community. . . ." (p. 97).

The picture drawn is very pretty. Who would want to deny it? Man, no longer subject to unknown economic forces beyond his control, no longer tossed upon the Procrustean bed of the class struggle, lives in the pure, mountain air, clear of the steel filings and cotton waste of production. But Hook makes his picture even prettier by scraping his intellectual bow, in one of his chapters, musically across the strings of the bull fiddle of tragedy. "Under communism," he says, "man ceases to suffer as an animal and suffers as a human. He therefore moves from the plane of the pitiful to the plane of the tragic." (P. 101.)

Hook, therefore, is giving as his reason for saying historical materialism can not apply beyond class societies, the ability of man to control economic forces. But by his definition of historical materialism he seems to imply another. If we had to deal solely with this particular definition, the task of disposing of Hook's position would be simple. Unfortunately he says other things to complicate our task. According to him, historical materialism is the "theory which explains the social life in terms of the economic relations in which men find themselves or are controlled". In the form it is expressed, it is far removed from Marx's and Engels' conception, for it fails to include the forces of production and the propagation of life. But even in this form, it does not exclude, as Hook presupposes, applicability to a classless society.

Economic relations can mean, without contradiction, two things: (1) those relations growing out of the private ownership of the means of production, or (2) those relations dependent upon the sharing of the products of labor without any private ownership of the means of production. The first means the existence of classes, of oppressors and oppressed; the second, a classless or communist society. Neither is excluded by Hook's definition; and so, even in its terms, historical materialism can apply to a classless society.

Still, to take this definition as Hook's complete understanding of

historical materialism would not be to do him justice. In another place, (chap. XI, sec. 3) Hook has a more adequate discussion, in which he approximates much more closely to the meaning of Marx and Engels. Here he distinguishes two aspects of the theory: the dynamic and the static. The dynamic phase is found in the productive forces of any society. These forces are responsible for deep and far-reaching changes, the appearance of new methods of production, new ideas, new developments in the fields of art and science. The static phase is found in the productive relations, in the private ownership of the means of production, in the distribution of the wealth of society. It is when the static and dynamic phases come into conflict that life and death struggles occur between classes.

Certainly to the superficial reader of Marx and Engels, it would seem as if Hook has here squeezed the essence of the materialist conception out of their combined writings. Who would dare deny that, for Marx and Engels, society grows or decays as a result of the contradictions which develop between the productive forces and productive relations of any social order? But how, on the basis of this generalization, can Hook uphold the theory that historical materialism is limited in application to class society? There can only be one other answer besides the one already mentioned: that productive relations are only expressed in the form of the private ownership of the means of production.\*

There are, therefore, two arguments for Hook's position: (1) that historical materialism only applies where man cannot control economic forces; or (2) that productive relations are only expressed in the form of the private ownership of the means of production.

### I

The first proposition rests upon the indisputable truism that capitalism is unable to plan or control its economic destiny; that all class societies, up till now, have been unable to plan or control production. This inability of man to control his economic circumstances ends, however, with the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Society, then, can be planned and controlled, and man is no longer the victim of his environment. The opposite now becomes true: the environment is his slave, a reluctant and dangerous slave, perhaps, but a slave nevertheless. But according to Hook, where control exists, there historical materialism cannot apply. The proletarian dictatorship, therefore, finds itself theoretically in a very unique position. Historical materialism is applicable to the capitalist world around it and to its relation to that world, but within the dictatorship, it has to discover an entirely new method of historical analysis.

Contemporary facts might seem to substantiate the correctness of Hook's position. The Stalintern has repudiated, if not openly, than in actuality, the basic theories of Marxism. It has invented the theories of socialism in one country; the united front only from below; social-Fascism; the independent revolutionary character of the peasantry; and party art and science. These new theories cannot be built on the foundation of the materialist method, for they are, in essence, a repudiation of it. Yet why does Hook agree with us that these theories, because they are non-Marxian, constitute a perpetual danger to the Soviet state as well as the world proletariat? Why should he agree with us, in insisting that the best defense for the workers' state is a return to revolutionary Marxism, in short, to the materialist method? Why does he not

\*P. 142. The social relations of production, which are synonymous with the expressions "the *property relations*", and "the economic foundation of culture . . ." (My italics.)

repudiate our criticism as slanderous and counter-revolutionary? Ought he not to do honor to this bureaucracy for being the first to see, onesidedly, in contradistinction to old-type Marxists like Lenin and Trotsky, that the proletarian state needed an entirely different method of analysis, and, therefore, evolved the theory of socialism in one country as the only solution for the problems facing a proletarian dictatorship?

Ought he not, in actuality, to agree with Brandler and Lovestone? These men may not have clarified for themselves the basic principle upon which their theories rest, but, in essence, they are putting into practise his principle. They say socialism in one country is the right theory for the Soviet Union; it is the world-shaking, never-to-be-forgotten contribution of Stalin to the theory of the working class. But it has its limitations, its geographical boundaries. All other theories, logically developed from this basic conception, cannot be applied to the rest of the world, because it is capitalist. To the rest of the world, the old-fashioned Marxian theories of democratic centralism within the party, united front, world revolution, etc., still apply with unabated theoretical force.

Hook, however, will have nothing to do with such philistine reasoning. He knows that the theory of socialism in one country is not only the basic source of the internal difficulties of the Soviet Union, but it is also the reason for the continued defeats of the proletariat of the world. He knows it has no firm scientific basis; that those who accept it find their important conclusions always in contradiction with the actual facts; that it destroys the possibility of any correct interpretation of social trends or proper preparation for the tasks of tomorrow.

Hook, too, if he were asked to explain the curious situation of a proletarian state officially upholding doctrines which are non-Marxian, in essence, would not give as his reason: the inapplicability of the materialist conception to a controlled society; instead he would make it very clear that no one can possibly understand the development of social theories in the Soviet Union, without considering the economic basis, the productive relations, the level of economic development, the relations of various sections or strata of a class to each other, etc.

Let us try, then, to put Hook's advice into practise and see how the materialist method helps to explain, *even in a controlled society*, the existence of an ideology in contradiction with its fundamental interests.

One of the fundamental presuppositions of the materialist method is that the predominant political theories of a society are the theories of the ruling class. In the Soviet Union, the proletariat is the ruling class; and yet its fundamental principles, its ideology—Marxism—are, in practise, distorted and corrupted. How explain this? It is a second principle of the materialist method that every class is not a homogeneous, completely integrated mass; it is divided into groups, the members of which are tied together by the fact that they perform a special function for the social order. These functions are also the basis for the development of special interests peculiar only to a given group. These special interests, therefore, are often the causes for groups coming into conflict with each other. At these critical moments of difference, each group tries to impose ideas on the others, which may be only to its own interests, or, despite the failure to recognize them as such, to the interests of all concerned. When theories are accepted which are apparently in disagreement with the accepted conceptions of a given ruling class, it is necessary, then, to look for the particular groups within that class who do play, because of their social function, a significant rôle in the formation of policy. Such groups are nearly always distinguished by the fact that they are better taken care of economically; they are granted special social privileges, like the use of state automobiles, not permitted to the ordinary members; and finally, they show in manner and behavior the important rôle they are required to play in that

society.

In the Soviet Union, one particular group stands out as possessing all of these characteristics: the bureaucracy. It has become so important that even the communist party is subordinate to it. Through its leader, Stalin, the bureaucracy dictates the policy of the Soviet Union to the party; and the party masses accept it, without daring to disagree. This bureaucracy was responsible for the theory of socialism in one country, as well as all the other theoretical caricatures of Marxism.

We have reached the center of our problem: to seek those social factors which would explain not only the extraordinary power of the bureaucracy today, but also why it had to pervert Marxism.

A bureaucracy in modern society is an absolute necessity, for it performs the very essential function of managing the social order. And so, the proletariat sets up one composed of a selection from its members of those it considers best suited for the task.

One may say the bureaucracy is an evil, but it is a necessary evil which no society can do without. But as Robert Michels long ago pointed out, its existence, however necessary and important, often bring abuses in its train.\* To prevent these abuses from flowering into great blossoms of evil, a society or class must ever be on its guard against the violation, by its bureaucracy, of what it has come to consider its fundamental rights. Often however, special historical conditions may require that society or class to give up these rights temporarily, or may actually prevent either from maintaining them.

In the Soviet Union, special historical conditions existed which made it possible for the bureaucracy to usurp great and absolute powers for itself and abrogate the fundamental rights of the masses. The first of these conditions was the economic backwardness of Russia. Its economic backwardness meant, of course, an economic poverty that would take years to eradicate. The bureaucracy, which increased in numbers at a very rapid rate, was given economic privileges that made its standard of living far superior to the subsistence level of the majority of the proletariat and peasantry. Many of the bureaucrats also became members of the party, because of the advantages attached, the possibility, for instance, of achieving very high positions in the management of industry and agriculture. Fearful of extreme poverty, and made pessimistic by the long span of time necessary to build a highly industrialized society, the bureaucracy became extremely anxious to retain its special privileges and advantages. Therefore, it turned conservative, afraid of innovations which might possibly upset the social balance to its disadvantage, a turn characteristic of every bureaucracy under similar circumstances. Naturally, its conservatism was molded in its character by the pressure and form of the proletarian state. In other words, it had to use the language of Marxism, and shape existing institutions to its purpose, in order to protect and defend itself.

The second condition was the defeat suffered by the German workers in 1923. Terribly frightened, the bureaucracy saw its own existence threatened by the immanent possibility of a capitalist attack. From that time on, it rang the changes, in and out of season, of capitalist intervention. Out of this fear, which meant, on the one hand, a lack of faith in the world proletariat, and on the other, exaggerated ideas of the power of the bourgeoisie, grew the theory of socialism in one country. This theory, in substance, said that the major task of the world proletariat was not making the world revolution, but aiding the Soviet Union in the building of a classless society within its geographic boundaries.

\*Michels goes further and generalizes his discovery into an inalienable law of society which he calls the Iron Law of Oligarchy. Hook, pointing out the basic shortcoming of the Swiss professor's analysis; a failure to consider adequately the social and economic factors which make, not only for the appearance of abuses, but also for their disappearance. (*Vide*, Hook, p. 311 ff.)

The third factor was the peasantry. After the civil war, the N.E.P. was inaugurated as a means of restoring the destroyed economic foundation. The N.E.P. brought economic revival, but also certain very great dangers, one from the side of the peasantry who were rapidly being differentiated into rich and poor; the other, from increasing unemployment among the proletariat. Both together meant the possibility of counter-revolution.

During the years of the N.E.P., the bureaucracy leaned invariably on the peasantry because it was the source of all good things. Criticism by the workers was retaliated with the loss of jobs, for the reserve army of the unemployed could always replace those who were fired. Thus bureaucratic intimidation and the constant fear of starvation reduced the proletariat, already exhausted by the revolution and the civil war, to an effective silence and passivity. During this period the corruption and incompetence of the bureaucracy exceeded all bounds.

Naturally, within the party itself—the domain within which all differences, at first, were fought out—there sprang up different factions who expressed, in more or less complete ideological form, the reactions of different strata of the proletariat and of other classes to social developments at home and abroad. One section, the Right, expressed the influence of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie upon it; another section, the Left, the interests of the proletariat, as a whole; a middle section, Centrist in character, the special needs of the bureaucracy within the Soviet dictatorship. The bureaucracy had no need to fear the Right, which was even more conservative than itself. Therefore, it used the Right with whom it was broadly in agreement to deadly purpose in reducing the Left to a state of impotence. The bureaucratization of the party, the reformulation—in essence, the destruction—of the fundamental principles of democratic centralism within the party, was the basic prerequisite for the success of the bureaucracy. It accomplished this task, with the aid of the Right, by methods known to bureaucrats the world over.

The fourth and last condition which assured the victory of the bureaucracy was the continued defeats of the world proletariat after 1923.\* Though the defeats followed from the completely false evaluation and falsified Marxism of the Right and Center, the Soviet and international press was used to explain away these defeats, suppress the documents of the Left Opposition, and finally

\*See *Draft Program, Strategy* by Leon Trotsky. Pioneer Publishers of the World Revolution, Problems of the Chinese Revolution,

to expel the Left in 1927. After that, the bureaucracy had an easy time reducing the Right to impotence in the Soviet Union and expelling them abroad.\*

We see, then, that the materialist method is as adequate for explaining the contradictory character of the theories of a controlled society as it is in explaining the developments of capitalism. And if the Left Opposition had not used this method, it would not have exposed to the Russian proletariat its danger, or forced the bureaucracy to carry out, however belated and distorted, policies which saved the Soviet Union from utter destruction from within; even though historical conditions were such that it could not be the instrument for carrying out the correct policy.

Nevertheless are we not arguing against a straw man? Hook was speaking of the classless society, not of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is still a class society even though transitional in character? The objection is absurd, as is easily shown. If it is assumed that the dictatorship, because it is a class society, can be explained by historical materialism, then it follows, from our original hypothesis, that it has no control over economic forces. But it can control them; there is a planned economy in the Soviet Union; therefore two things follow: (a) it is not a class society, and (b) historical materialism cannot explain it. The dictatorship, nevertheless, is a class society, even though transitional in character; therefore, this truth contradicts the assertion that no class society can be controlled. Finally, since historical materialism is actually applicable to a controlled society, it invalidates completely Hook's first argument. It must be admitted that actual control over economic forces does not involve repudiation of historical materialism.

Rubin GOTESKY

\*Those who follow world and Soviet events know that the day of judgment for the bureaucracy must come. The proletariat will not allow it to retain irresponsibly the seat of power forever. Already signs of this are manifest in the regrettable Kirov affair. The secrecy of the trials, the youth of the communists supposedly complicit in the crime, the actual complicity of the G.P.U., the positive stupidity of the arguments and the

fraudulence of the evidence used in an attempt to involve Leon Trotsky, and even the recent turn to the Right—the doing away with bread rations, the parliamentary reforms shortly to be instituted which are intended to increase the voting strength of the peasantry—all indicate an attempt on the part of the bureaucracy, a desperate attempt, to avoid the fatal day of reckoning by resting its weight upon the peasants.

## The Abolition of the Bread Cards in the Soviet Union

UP TO NOW, 55,000,000 Soviet Russians received definite rations at definite low—privileged—prices at exclusive distribution centers. The card system embraced bread, flour, barley, legumes, potatoes, meat, lard, vegetables, sugar, fish, herring, preserves; further, clothing, shoes, linen, yarn, sewing needles, etc.

In these distribution centers established for workers and employees, there was a daily bread ration of 800 grams\* for the worker, 400 grams for the employee in the main cities; in the provinces, this norm went down to 500 and 300, and even to 200 and 100 grams per day in the hard times of 1932-1933. In addition, there was received for the whole month one kilo of barley or legumes, a few kilo of potatoes, from one-half to one kilo of meat, some margarine, a couple of herrings, a half-kilo of sugar. "Shock brigaders" [*udarniki*] received from one to two kilos of meat per

month, butter and still other special rations.

In the better supplied distribution centers (like those for the workers in heavy industry), the norm was higher. The technicians, the engineers, the artists, the scholars, the foreigners had their special distribution centers where they had an ample selection of definite amounts of normated commodities to buy from. The best distribution centers were those of the upper governmental, party and G.P.U. officials. The highest party and government officials were not bound by any norms.

This intricate system of small, larger and largest privileges created social inequality in the restaurant provisioning. Whereas the working woman of a Moscow textile factory received a cabbage soup and a piece of bread for 80 copecks\*, the higher party official obtained an excellent menu

\*100 copecks equals 1 rouble. Not quoted on foreign exchange, the "normal" (uninflated) rouble used to equal the "normal" American half-dollar.—ED.

of five courses in the Kremlin restaurant for the same sum.

In the distribution centers, the following prices per kilogram were paid in 1933: black bread, 27 copecks; white bread, 52 copecks; meat, 2 to 4 rubles; herrings, 3 to 10 rubles; sugar, 2 rubles; butter, 6 to 8 rubles. (These figures—like those that follow—are taken from the official Moscow reports.)

On April 1, 1934, the bread prices were increased 100% to 54 and 104 copecks respectively.

With these rations, it was very difficult to manage. Whoever did not possess foreign currency, gold, silver and objects of value and thereby have the privilege of being able to buy all goods in the "Torgsin" stores at cheap prices, was compelled to purchase supplementary food supplies in the government "commercial stores" or on the market (the free or the kolkhoz market). The commercial stores are governmental sales centers with appreciably increased, but nonetheless controlled prices.

In the commercial stores established in the middle of 1933, prices per kilogram were (figures in parentheses represent the prices in the privileged distribution centers):

	Rubles	Rubles
Black bread	2.00	(0.54)
White bread	3.00	(1.04)
Meat	10. to 12.	(2. to 4.)
Butter	30.00	(6. to 8.)

On the market, prices were 2 to 4 rubles per liter [ap. 1 liquid quart] of milk, 1 rouble per egg, in addition to which there were vegetables and meat. The peasant came to the market not as a seller but as a purchaser of bread; he paid for it in coin or exchanged milk and eggs for it.

From January 1, 1935 onward, the provisions card for bread, flour, barley and legumes is abolished; the card system is to remain in effect for the time being so far as other living needs are concerned.

Instead of definite rations at privileged prices, every consumer now receives any amount of goods he desires—but at higher prices.

The whole Soviet Union has been divided into eight price districts. Goods are cheapest in the first district (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan) and dearest in the eighth (Far East). Moscow is part of the third, and Leningrad part of the fourth price district.

The spread of prices among the districts is as follows: black bread from 0.80 rubles to 1.50 rubles, white bread from 1.20 rubles to 2.80 rubles, flour from 1.35 to 3.50 rubles.

For a comparison with the prices up to now, we take the fourth district (Leningrad). In the following table, the hitherto existing privileged prices are in parentheses and the hitherto existing commercial prices are in brackets:

	Rubles	Rubles	Rubles
Black bread	1.20	(0.54)	[ 2.00]
White bread	2.40	(1.08)	[ 3.00]
Flour	4.00	(2.00)	[ 8.00]
Grits	6.20	(1.00)	[10.00]
Pearl-barley	4.20	(0.80)	[ 8.00]
Maccaroni	5.60	(1.20)	[ 8.00]
Peas	5.10	(0.80)	[ 8.00]
Beans	5.50	(0.80)	[ 8.00]
Rice	10.00	(2.00)	[12.00]

One sees immediately: an extraordinary price rise compared with the previous privileged prices; but it is a burden upon the worker's household essentially only with regard to the bread price, for up to now the worker obtained from his distribution center only slight amounts of the other provisions anyway.

The additional burden is to be equalized by a wage increase. How does this work out?

This total wage amount is increased in the budget year of 1935 by 4,200,000,000 rubles; there are 22,000,000 wage and salary recipients in the Soviet Union, so that each one is to receive an average of 190 rubles per year more than at present—that is, 16 rubles per month.

Every wage recipient has to take care of himself and in addition an average of one and a half mouths (55,000,000 who must receive victuals from 22,000,000 who receive wages).

The monthly bread requirement in Russia (where bread is the principal means of sustenance) amounts to 20 kilograms per person, making 50 kilograms for 2½ months. For these 50 kilograms, the worker paid:

13.50 rubles on January 1, 1934.

27.00 rubles on April 1, 1934

60.00 rubles from January 1, 1935 on.

This is an increased burdening of the proletarian household of 13.50 rubles at first, then of an additional 33 rubles—a total of 46.50 rubles.

As against this, there is first a wage increase on April 1, 1934 of from 10% to 15% for all workers and employees who received less than 140 rubles per month (a total of 12,000,000 wage, salary, stipend and annuity recipients); and second, the present wage increase of 16 rubles per person.

The total wage increase in the course of the years amounts—for persons

Who earned more than 140 rubles monthly—to 16 rubles
Who earned less than 140 rubles monthly—to 30 rubles
Who earned less than 100 rubles monthly—to 26 rubles
Who earned less than 50* rubles monthly—to 21 rubles.

The result of all this, therefore—cogent and on the basis of official Moscow figures—is: After the abolition of the bread cards the average person with an income has additional expenses of 46.50 rubles and additional income of 30 rubles; the deficit is 16.50 rubles or—if one assumes the average wage to be the pretty high figure of 140 rubles—12%. After the abolition of the bread cards, the real value of the average Russian wage, as compared with January 1934, has been diminished by twelve percent.

The elimination of the bread cards nevertheless registers an advance in economy taken as a whole. Two years ago it was impossible. At that time it would have led to complete chaos, to a war of everyone against everybody. Now, disorganized and

\*According to reports of the Commissariat of Labor, in March 1934 around 270,000 invalids in the Soviet Union received less than 40 rubles support per month, and around 300,000 beneficiaries of annuities less than 20 rubles.

weakened agriculture has recuperated to the point where bread is at hand for the population as a whole in town and country in adequate amounts. The gravest agrarian crisis of Soviet Russia—graver than the one during war communism—is beginning to be overcome.

Early in 1933, an old Moscow working woman told me: "If we are to weather these hunger years, we all ought to get the Order of Lenin; we have earned it a thousand times more than the heroes of the civil war."

Now they have put the very worst of the hunger years behind them. But why must this advance be paid for by the workers with new sacrifices? The Soviet government was guided by the following considerations:

1. Bread is at hand, but even today it suffices for the population as a whole only with a certain restriction of consumption. This restriction can be achieved either administratively (by those very bread cards) or by market measures, by lowering the purchasing power. This time the decision went for the second way.

2. In recent years the peasants bore the heaviest burdens. The present enactment shifts them; it signifies a heavier burdening of the workers in favor of the peasants: a portion of the surplus revenue from the price increases is to be turned over by the government to the peasants in the form of raised governmental purchasing prices for agricultural products.

3. The largest portion of the surplus revenues of the government is to be invested in industry, especially in the war industry. The price increases are a special form, specific to Russia (where there can be no property taxes), of renewed indirect taxation. The tempos of development of industry, which were somewhat slowed down in 1933 and 1934, will again be accelerated at the expense of the urban working population. (*Europäische Hefte.*)

Erich WOLLENBERG

PRAGUE, Jan. 18, 1935.

## Stalin the Theoretician

THESIS: "It is not true that the theory of the permanent revolution . . . was advanced in 1905 by Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky. As a matter of fact, this theory was advanced by Parvus and Trotsky."—(Stalin in 1924; cf. *Questions of Leninism*, Russian ed., p. 185)

ANTITHESIS (7 years later): It is "Parvus and Rosa Luxemburg . . . who are the authors of the utopian and semi-Menshevik schema of the permanent revolution".—(Stalin in 1931; cf. *On Some Questions in the History of Bolshevism, a Letter to the Editors of PROLETARSKAYA REVOLUTSIYA.*)

SYNTHESIS (7 months later): "Comrade Aristov,

"You have become befuddled, comrade Aistov.

"There is no contradiction at all between my article, *The October Revolution and the Tactic of Russian Communists* (1924) and my *Letters to the Editors of PROLETARSKAYA REVOLUTSIYA* (1931). These two documents stress different aspects of the same question, and you took it for a 'contradiction'. But there is no 'contradiction' here.

"In my article, *The October Revolution,*

I speak about the fact that, in 1905, it was not Rosa Luxemburg but Parvus and Trotsky who advanced the theory of the 'permanent' revolution against Lenin. This is entirely in accord with historical facts. . . . As regards Rosa Luxemburg, she, you see, remained behind the scenes at that time, restraining herself from active struggle against Lenin on this subject, preferring, apparently, not to mix into the struggle as yet.

"In my polemic against Radek, in my article, *The October Revolution and the Tactic of Russian Communists*, I bore hard upon the question of Parvus, because Radek in speaking about 1905 and the 'permanent' revolution, deliberately kept quiet about Parvus. And he kept mum about Parvus, because Parvus, after 1905, became an odious figure, becoming a millionaire, and turning into a direct agent of the German imperialists; and Radek did not want to connect the theory of the 'permanent' revolution with the odious name of Parvus. He tried to sneak around history. So, I made a frontal attack and spoiled Radek's maneuver by reestablishing the historical truth, and giving Parvus his due. [See next page.]

# BOOKS

## Wells' Autobiography

### EXPERIMENT IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866). By H. G. WELLS. 432 pp. New York. The Macmillan Company. \$4.

It has been H. G. Wells' job to voice the non-revolutionary radicalism of the middle class and make it respectable. No one has done so more successfully. Certainly no writer can boast of having more thoroughly exposed, though quite unwittingly, the futility of this radicalism and the reactionary character it assumes in times of crisis.

In his *Experiment in Autobiography*, Wells gives us a report on his job.

He describes his life as the growth and development of an average brain. He never tires of repeating this. It sounds the keynote not only to his life but to his ideas. It has earned for his autobiography the title of "Honest".

Born of lower middle class parents, in a squalid environment, Wells considers his rise to the position of an intellectual as an accident. When a child, a broken leg limited his activity to reading. It is in this period of his life that the roots of his radicalism are to be found. His early reading made him conscious of the drabness of his home. His mother was a simple, religious woman; he became passionately anti-religious.

Much as today, it was both a custom and an economic necessity in the '80s for middle class parents to indenture their children as apprentices in the trade they wished them to follow. Wells became a draper's

apprentice at the age of 14 and hated it. His early reading and dreaming had given him a sense of superiority, so he rebelled not with but against labor. In his own words, his "want of enthusiasm for the proletarian ideal" goes back to those early years.

He reached London University in time to study biology under T. H. Huxley. At this point Wells' radicalism began to assume a definite shape. He acquired a "feel" of the scientific concept of evolution, and translated it literally into social terms. Social evolution became for him an inevitable and good thing. The idea that humanity is gradually moving towards a "world scientific state" began to crystallize. Years later he was to set down the result of his thinking on the subject in his *Outline of History*.

There was no room for the middle class intellectual in the scheme of contemporary English society. Wells was acutely aware of that. He saw that teaching was hampered on all sides by old pedagogical and moral forms. It was in no way possible to teach science, as Latin and history had hitherto been taught, without destroying its social implications. The reform of the educational system became therefore a leading issue for him. Such a reform would not only speed the development of science itself, but would make its findings available to the thousands of other little Wellses who had not broken a leg. In addition, with so much new and promising material released from the drapery emporia, would it not be possible to transform through education the whole of civilized life?

It is typical of Wells' thinking that while he asks very tentative questions about the world, he is already unshakably convinced of the answers. He contributed nothing scientific to the theory of evolution, but Progress (evolution plus education) has become a matter of profound moral significance to him.

The form his radicalism assumed was moulded by his childhood reactions. Furthermore these reactions were based upon experiences shared by the great majority of the middle class. Hence the importance and popularity of Wells. He has been able to articulate the hopes and aspirations of his class. Politically and intellectually he has lived them.

To follow the idea of Progress throughout Wells' life, its twists and turns, the manner in which it becomes interwoven with minor themes and subjective moods is to witness an amazing spectacle of intellectual vanity and dishonesty. He revolted against academic tradition, and pretentious vagueness became "free and searching thought". His struggle for internal and external peace, his yearning for the "perfect study", has been identified in his mind with a struggle between good and evil in society. "Make the world safe for intellectuals!"

He has much contempt for what he calls the "governess-trained minds" which control the British Foreign Office. But he has no real feeling of social indignation or hatred for the ruling class. Just a tinge of envy which takes the form of "I am as good as they are", a thought that can easily

be reversed! Thus his revolt is confined to the fact that the aristocracy would not accept him, the middle class intellectual, as one of its own. His republicanism has prevented his getting a peerage. What he wants is a world in which his kind would just naturally be peers.

It is quite consistent with his views that the spiritual peace and intellectual freedom of inquiry which the 18th century aristocrat enjoyed should be Wells' private notion of the good life. He is not blind to the fact that such a life rests upon the shoulders of sweating, ignorant masses. But that is on the whole just a subject for research. Besides, he asks, wouldn't the masses benefit by this leisure which their labor has made possible? Can't intellectuals use this leisure to draw up the blueprints of a society in which it will not be necessary to have a working class at all, to draw these blueprints quietly, uninterrupted by the constant pressure of events? He and his kind hold the key to a better world, the World State. True, to get humanity to see this requires a "bold handling of stupidity, obstruction and perversity". But in the last analysis the responsibility lies with mankind. After all, he can't do more than show the way! The implication: Mankind is stupid and perverse if it doesn't follow Wells. At this point he pouts. What then becomes of Progress, one wonders?

On the one hand Wells envies the "spaciousness and leisure" enjoyed by the aristocrats, on the other he shares the typical middle class mistrust of the proletariat and its organizations. He would call himself a socialist, and sometimes does, but the idea of socialism has been hopelessly corrupted by Marx. He played about with the Fabians for a while, but criticized them severely: "Let us have a new world, they said, and they called it socialism. But they did not realize that a new world, new in scale and power was coming up all about them." What is this new world? It is the locomotive, the transatlantic liner, and the growing respectability of H. G. Wells. He didn't like the Fabians because they were too political and narrow. He wanted them to become the nucleus of a new world aristocracy, but they wouldn't do anything of the kind.

His contempt and hatred of Marx know no bounds. Marxism is not the least of the "stupidities and perversities" that stand in the way of his world state. He calls Marx a "stuffy, egocentered, malicious theorist". The theory of the class struggle merely released "an epidemic of spite" which retards mankind in its march towards order, peace, and light.

Here the tragedy of Wells the Radical is made evident. Suspicious of workingmen's organizations, he was condemned to play the rôle of valet to the governing class just as surely as his mother had been the chambermaid to a gentlewoman. But his mother *knew* she was a chambermaid, and she believed in God. Her inflated offspring on the other hand, with his conceited naïveté, invented the slogan: "A war to end wars", and thought he was doing his bit for a happy new world!

Wells complained towards the end of the war that "we were used as decoys". He became disillusioned like so many others. But did he learn anything? According to him his attitude at the outset of the war was not wrong; he was just a man ahead of his time. He supported the worst mass murder for profit in history, urged workers to slaughter, because he hoped that the war

"That is how matters stand regarding my article, *The October Revolution and the Tactic of Russian Communists*.

"As regards my *Letters to the Editors of PROLETARSKAYA REVOLUTSIA*, there I dealt with the other side of the question, to wit, with the fact that Rosa Luxemburg and Parvus were the authors of the theory of the 'permanent' revolution. Again, this is also entirely in accord with historical facts. Not Trotsky, but Rosa Luxemburg and Parvus were the authors of the theory of the 'permanent' revolution. Not Rosa Luxemburg, but Parvus and Trotsky advanced the theory of the 'permanent' revolution, in 1905, and actively struggled for it against Lenin. Subsequently, Rosa Luxemburg also began to struggle actively against the Leninist schema of revolution. But that was already after 1905.

"That is all.

[signed] "J. Stalin".

The above letter is dated January 25, 1932. It was published seven months later (cf. *Bolshevik*, No. 16, August 30, 1932).

What a synthesis! What a style! What a man!

To complete the picture, we need only add what comrade Trotsky once said: "Stalin's falsifications are conscious in so far as they are dictated at each given moment by entirely concrete and personal interests. At the same time, they are semi-conscious in so far as his congenital ignorance places no impediment whatever in front of his theoretical propensities."

John G. WRIGHT

would be the "last wave of folly" and the World State would emerge. He toyed a bit with the idea of a League of Nations, but no . . . he had overestimated Humanity! When he saw thousands cheering the returning soldiers, peace, and the full dress parades, his only thought was: "And this is the proletariat of dear old Marx in being. . . . This is the stuff that old dogmatist counted upon for his dictatorship of the proletariat." Wells had reassumed his rôle of the Free and Searching Thinker. Long live the day when such Thinkers and Deceys will govern our destinies! We can count upon Wells to do his bit for the next imperialist war.

After 1918 he realized things were a bit different. The Russian revolution and the Treaty of Versailles left their mark even on Wells. Something must be done to speed the coming of the new World Economy. He still talks about education, but after forty years of thinking on the subject, the most constructive suggestion he has to offer is: "I wish I had a virus with which one might bite people and make them aad for education." But more serious is his great scheme, "The Open Conspiracy", whereby middle class intellectuals, both professional and Thinkers, would band together and save the world from the orthodox stuffed shirts, Right and Left. This idea has since had its practical application in this country in the shape of our "Brain Trust", trying to outwit both the "rapacious capitalist" and the impatient worker.

Although Wells' Open Conspiracy, like the "government by experts" idea of the most radical of our New Dealers, could lend itself to Fascism, it would be quite mistaken to think that Wells might ever become a Fascist. He is too mature a liberal. He hardly mentions Fascism at all. When he does it is to dismiss it as childishness and stupidity. It is a phenomenon which he can't explain because it runs counter to his religion of Progress. He is one of those "enlightened" people who, should Fascism come to their country, will blindly walk over the edge of the cliff at the bottom of which lies a concentration camp. The Stalinists have nothing on him in this respect. In fact I rather think he is the kind of intellectual they would love to have in one of their "Against War and Fascism" organizations, if only they could catch him. He is a social-Fascist.

If one were to approach Wells and ask him: "But don't you think that it is important to fight for the immediate demands of the workers?" he would undoubtedly answer: "Oh, very possible, but I can't be bothered with that, I am thinking of the future." What then, of the future? He has spent a great deal of time thinking about it. He owes us a nice blueprint; the kind that will save generations to come the trouble of planning that would otherwise be in store for them. But from all we can gather the World State will realize itself more or less automatically. If any part of it doesn't, that will be taken care of "by myself and a few other people that inhabit my world". He sees signs of this emergence here and there in the acts of some individual or in the draft of some movement. Since he is unable in any way to describe the mechanism of this process, he can choose his illustrations at random according to his fancy, a fancy clearly dominated by his class interests. The more obscure an idea, the wider the field of spec-

ulation and surmise. The question of organization does not concern him. This gives him an enormous advantage over scientists and Marxists. It permits him to look way ahead of them, untrammelled by any immediate problems. He even goes so far as to speculate about what will happen when the sun cools off. He is a man ahead of his time.

*Anticipating a legend.* Wells goes to sleep for three hundred years. During his prolonged somnolence many things happen: Wars, revolutions, periods of Fascism and reaction, in the course of which books are burned, thousands upon thousands killed, and Wells' name has been forgotten. Finally the revolution is successful, socialism is built, the communist society established. Wells wakes up, looks around him and says: "Ah! I see the world has finally decided to follow my advise."

John HART

## Labor Historian

MYSELF. By JOHN R. COMMONS. 201 pp. New York. The Macmillan Company. \$3.

John R. Commons is the outstanding American labor scholar of his generation—a generation noteworthy in our labor movement for the rise and domination of the Gompers-Green régime in the American Federation of Labor. As the academic counterpart of Gompersism, his theory of the relations between labor and capital is an elaboration of the official philosophy of the American Federation of Labor: collective bargaining and simon-pure craft unionism, bureaucratically controlled. Commons has recently given us his complete theory of the collective action of conflicting interests in his *magnum opus*, *Institutional Economics*. *Myself* is an autobiographical account of his participation in such activities, which he offers as an explanation of the genesis of his ideas.

It is impossible in a short review to deal adequately with Commons' economic theory. Essentially it recognizes conflicting economic interests (fundamentally labor and capital) as the kernel of the problem. It proposes a solution through a collectivization of these interests and the adoption without arbitration of a peaceful agreement between them, based on a mutual recognition of the relation of forces. It rests on a volitional psychology, and a centralization of authority in the respective collectives and requires accordingly that trade union leaders gain "possession" of the union (through deprivation of local strike rights, through the withholding of national funds, etc.). In brief, the theory says: don't fight it out—write it out!

Commons conceived his theory from the observations he made at a joint conference of miners and their employers in 1901 which he named "Constitutional Government in Industry". He gave the theory its first test when he participated in the National Civic Federation as liaison man between labor leaders and the Federation. During his long career as professor of economics and labor historian at Wisconsin University, he served periodically in many local and national governmental capacities. Most often he was a conciliator. He became a force in Wisconsin politics, supporting LaFollette until the latter opposed the war, and aided in an advisory capacity the reorgan-

ization of the government of Milwaukee after the socialist victory in 1911. He drafted many laws, civil service, public utility, and industrial. The last several years of his public life were spent in conciliating conflicts between capitalist groups. All these activities he regards as demonstrations of his theory of the collective agreement.

On the theoretical side the position does not provide an argument for the fact that even if the collective agreement were widely practised, the objective relation between profits and wages, with consequent accumulation of capital, would remain to destroy this equilibrium. On the practical side, it never has worked, a point conceded in Commons' expressed pessimism. Intangible elements such as the potential value of an agitational program to bring pressure on the government during a strike, to rally the unemployed for mass picketing and the general proletarian and petty bourgeois public for a boycott, etc., make an actual test of strength necessary as the basis even for a temporary agreement. The historical fact is that practically all powerful unions have been established and sustained by actual strikes. The miners' conference which Commons observed existed only by virtue of the fact that the miners had established their union a few years previously by a strike.

The un-democratic centralization of authority requisite to the position, is a negation of the true collective. The leader does not represent a collective when the collective is rebelling. Dictatorial leadership leads to bureaucracy. Bureaucracy develops its own needs, as apart from the collective, and the agreements it makes are influenced by these needs. An internal conflict is thereby set up in the collective. The "possession" of unions by their leaders, which Commons encouraged and used as a necessary part of his Civic Federation activity, encouraged the already growing bureaucracy in the American Federation of Labor. In an attempt to fill these cracks in his position Commons brands militant trade union leaders as "hot-heads" or "intellectuals". Exclusion of the latter, however, excludes himself and the recommendation. To explain the influence of the "hot-heads", he is forced into a contempt for the masses in the trade unions. "I based it [his theory] on leaders, bosses and conquerors of the Malthusian more or less stupid and passionate masses." The collective dissolves into an aggregation, volition into coercion.

The rise of the A. F. of L. gave, in the past, a degree of plausibility to Commons' theory. Trade unions in light industry, involving only skilled labor, and organized on craft lines during a period of budding imperialism and expanding capitalism, found it possible to make moderate progress with a minimum of struggle. "Good" employers came into existence ready to buy off the aristocracy of labor, while the masses of unskilled in light industry, and most of the workers in heavy industry remained unorganized and defenseless against unchecked exploitation. Today in the period of declining capitalism none of these factors exists, and the theory, as theory, retains only a historical interest as a by-product of the halcyon days. In practise, however, without its historical economic base, it becomes entirely reactionary. Conciliation today is strikebreaking, as in steel

and autos.

Commons' life has not been without social effect. He is one of the few outstanding American intellectuals who have devoted their lives to participation in the labor movement. Unlike Ely, De Leon, Hillquit and others, he has not been identified actively as a partisan of the labor movement. In action he has always been a conciliator. His positive value to the labor movement lies in his scholarly productions. A pioneer in the field of American labor history, he is responsible, together with Professor Ely, for having assembled the best collection of labor literature in the country at Madison, the essence of which was published in 1908 in ten volumes, *The Documentary History of American Industrial Society*. Later he edited and contributed to those most informative volumes, *The History of Labor in the United States*, the standard work in the field for the period covered. His other writings, beginning in 1894, are voluminous. He has earned the title of dean of American labor historians. His students have become a movement—the Commons school of labor writers—and they have a majority in the field. Over thirty of them are in the "brain trust" at Washington today. As he says of himself, "I am not a person, I am a syndicate."

This autobiography is the history of an important school of liberal thought in America from the days of its enthusiastic Republican origin in the Civil War, through years of petty bourgeois resentment at the ruthless growth of monopoly and hope for the growth of a trade union balance, to a contemporary pessimism before the onrush of Fascism.

His last word on his life work is a pessimistic confession of failure. "I concede to my radical friends that my trade union philosophy has always made me a conservative. It is not revolutions and strikes that we want, but collective bargaining on something like an organized equilibrium of equality. This I take it, was the social philosophy of Samuel Gompers. It seems to me the only way to save us from Communism, Fascism or Nazism. Yet my employer friends are opposed to it, or seeking to control it. I think they are leading us to Fascism." The great conciliator surrenders before the advance of reaction.

Dennis BROWN

## To Make a Revolution

HOW TO MAKE A REVOLUTION. By RAYMOND W. POSTGATE. The Vanguard Press. New York. 199 pp. \$1.90.

From one point of view, this is a contemptible book. There is such an air of pretentious "realism", of hard-boiled "facing the facts", like a Boy Scout at his first sex talk. A skillful snobbery is woven into the style, which suggests that reader and author have a private understanding as thinking and sensible men, in contrast to the hare-brained fanatics who at present try to lead the revolutionary movement. We must be, author and reader, so thoroughly objective, weighing all the evidence, uninfluenced by wishful thinking. It is not, perhaps, surprising that all this objectivity leads us tumbling into the warm bosom of the British Labour party. A genuinely objective bosom indeed—not even making class distinctions.

Postgate attempts to be scientific. He states his question precisely on the first page: "The object of this book is to answer, as scientifically as possible, the question: 'How can a [social] change be brought about?' Given that the readers of this book desire a thorough social change, and that they have some adequate idea of the measures that radical reformers should apply when once in power, there still remains the question: 'How can power be taken over?'" He attempts to answer the question by reviewing the classic answers that have been given to it in the past; by estimating their validity in the light both of historical examples of their application and of contemporary developments in the mechanism of power; and by considering in the struggle for power—the general usefulness of certain specific practises strike, financial pressure, armed revolution.

Postgate examines the positions held with respect to his central question by Fascism, syndicalism, anarchism, Blanquism. He finds them all wanting both theoretically and by the test of history. To the general strike he grants a certain efficacy, particularly the first time it is tried within a country, and for negative purposes ("preventing a war or defending an attacked government"). Nevertheless, the general strike, so far as the more positive problem of achieving drastic social change goes, "requires other means—electoral or military—to bring it to final success, and it is very difficult to maneuver". The control over electoral machinery makes parliamentary hopes illusory. "Armed revolution", moreover, "must be wholly rejected from our arsenal. Direct armed revolt is no longer practical", even though a discreet use of violence on certain occasions may be effective within restricted limits.

Indeed, Postgate ends by rejecting all traditional methods for effecting social change as having either been proved useless by history or been made useless by the contemporary development of military technique and propaganda control. This conclusion, though hardly satisfactory, is at least more intelligible than the abrupt right about face of the last chapter. Here, in the most romantic denial of all that has preceded in the book, Postgate makes his jump into the Labour party. There, he states, revolutionists should gather to build a kind of party within a party, a band of "storm troopers of labour", who, when the Labour party is voted into power (which he had previously ruled out as impossible), will see to it that the party carries through the social revolution.

This whole book is characterized by what might be called political superficiality. Postgate remains throughout on the plane of strategy and tactics, never digging down to the theoretic roots of the questions he attempts to analyze. This is strikingly evident in his treatment of Marxism and anarchism. Nowhere does he deal with the social and historical foundations of the positions he is discussing. He writes as if the positions existed in a vacuum, to be taken up and applied by anyone or any group that might feel like it. Even more obviously superficial is the chapter he devotes to "The Communist Tactics", where he deals chiefly with the Communist party of Great Britain, of which he was for several years a leading member. He never looks behind the tactics which he criticizes to the principles or historic causes from

which these tactics flow.

Nevertheless, this theoretical failing is, in a sense, the strength of the book, and the reason why—in spite of its cheapness and superficiality—it should be read widely and thought about at length by serious revolutionists. This book does indeed deal with strategy and tactics, above all with the concrete plans for taking power in the present era, and it is precisely these concrete and practical problems that have been most grossly and tragically neglected by Marxists. There has been for too long a time the naïve belief that correct tactics will automatically flow from correct theory; and consequently the fight of Marxists has been far too exclusively a fight for principle. Naturally this fight had to be made, and must continue. Moreover, it is true that without correct principle, tactics, in the long run, are sure to be wrong. But it is far from the case that correct tactics will automatically flow from principles correct in the abstract. Correct tactics require intelligence, effort, activity. Indeed, a Marxian principle is distinguished by just the fact that it gets meaning and content only through correct revolutionary activity—that it cannot be even "correct" merely as principle, as abstraction.

It is time for a re-direction of energies. We know the correct principles. We must apply them in stimulating and guiding a movement. We must stop relying on a mystic faith in "the inevitability of communism" to make things turn out all right in the end, so long as we repeat the right phrases; and thereby excuse our practical stupidities. They will turn out all right in the end if Marxists make them.

The major problems of the day are practical problems. The great value of Postgate's book is to help drive this lesson home. If he gives the wrong answers, he at least asks the right questions. And where are the right answers to be found? The unfortunate truth is precisely: Nowhere. The practical methods of all branches of the revolutionary movement, both with reference to their day by day activities and their plans up to and including the seizure of power and the workers' rule, are a chaotic compound of Paris Commune, pre-war social democratic trade union and parliamentary habits, and the October revolution. Nowhere is the realization that capitalism in rapid decline and capitalism with modern military and publicity methods is a far different matter from pre-war capitalism. And being far different, so must be the revolutionary methods that oppose it.

J. W.

## Problems of the Pacific

STORM CLOUDS OVER ASIA. Our Growing Pacific Problem. By ROBERT S. PICKENS. Funk and Wagnalls Co. New York. x+ 242 pp. \$1.50.

This is one of a growing series of books devoted to a problem whose solution becomes more urgent daily to the American bourgeoisie. For it is from the point of view of American imperialism that the writer analyzes the tangled skein of events in the Far East. Reluctant as the capitalist governments may be to engage in armed hostilities (the October revolution has cast the deepest shadow of uncertainty on the fate of the imperialist nations in the next war), American necessities are speeding

this country headlong into the Pacific maelstrom to put an end once for all to the uncertainty as to who shall be master in the Pacific. The ruling class in the United States has to stake its future on the outcome of war, for it is determined that American and not Japanese imperialism shall subjugate China and then all Asia for the purposes of exploitation.

The "literary" preparation for the inevitable war in the Orient will soon take on the proportions of a flood of propaganda to justify all the actions deemed necessary by monopoly capitalism. Pickens sets the tone for the rallying of the masses to the "just" cause of the Morgans and Lamonts and to aid them to see the righteousness of sending the navy to defend the future of the American bankers in the East. Naturally it is the Japanese who are alone responsible for making it impossible to preserve the peace of the world. Of course in the past American imperialism did play a rôle that one cannot justify, but this was more through blundering and ineptness of statesmen than by design. And at any rate modern America is different and has mended its ways. And not only the United States but all the major powers—except Japan! "All the major powers excepting Japan have come to the realization that old methods [of imperialist plundering] have not worked either towards peace or prosperity." At the moment Italy is proving this by dropping bombs on the aggressive Abyssinians, the United States shows its idealist aspirations in Cuba and Bolivia, France and Spain are heartbroken each time they are "forced" to bayonet the natives of North Africa, etc. It is tragically unfortunate that the Japanese people (and they alone!) groan under the yoke of a brutally rampant militarism, still feudal in character and under no restraint of government since they control their government in the vise of armed dictatorship. Surely it is clear to the entire world that "the sincere but childlike idealism of the U. S., and the enlightened selfishness of Europe have gone on the rocks of a highly developed and cynical Japanese militarism". The situation in the Pacific "will show whether the peace can be kept by a country which has not been subdued by war. It is the trial of strength between intelligence and force."

The special pleading for an imperialism that threatens, in seeking world hegemony, to engulf the earth in wars more destructive, more devastating than any the world has yet seen—for American capitalist technique will introduce a new scale of measurement in the powers of destruction—is mingled with a superficial, journalistic survey of the forces at work in Asia. Profound social (class) analysis is far beyond the depths of the author. After a cataloguing of the events of the Chinese revolutions, Pickens draws a great sigh of relief that Chiang Kai-Shek showed real ability by beheading the proletarian revolution and ending the communist menace. Thus was defeated the purpose of Borodin, that genius of revolution who understood the Chinese mind as nobody had ever done before (Pickens' version), who sought "to bring on complete chaos". The social volcano on which Japanese militarism rests is dismissed with a few sentences of acknowledgment. The Soviet Union is dealt with gingerly, as the possible ally of the U. S. in the coming struggle. But the book

appeared before the recent change in policy towards Soviet Russia.

By far the best chapter in a book that offers little beyond the well-known facts, is that which treats of Roosevelt's New Deal in the Pacific. Here the writer drops the tone of cant and presents the facts realistically. Roosevelt's financial policies have been used wherever possible to combat the financial penetration of Japan into China. This is shown by the remonetizing of silver and by the loan made through the R.F.C., ostensibly for the purchase of American cotton, actually to be converted into cash for the purchasing of American munitions and to aid Chinese war preparations. Roosevelt is treading softly, but preparing "the big stick". He is completely militarizing the Pacific. Thus the Hawaiian government is undergoing drastic reorganization, with a "mainland" governor working under the control of the U.S. navy. A tremendous naval base is being constructed in Hawaii. The navy has been sent permanently into the Pacific to lay out its strategy and to be ready for The Day. As to the Philippines, Pickens almost froths at the mouth at the criminal idea of relinquishing them at the moment when they become of such paramount importance. "The Hawes-Cutting-Hare Bill, purporting to give them their independence, is the dirtiest blot on the soiled pages of the history of American dealings in the Philippines." Recognition of Soviet Russia is shown to have given pause to the Japanese and at the same time to have stiffened the resistance of the workers' state. Pickens wrote the book before Roosevelt gave the clear indication recently that his aim is to involve the Japanese in a war against the Soviets, with the American bourgeoisie preparing during this war to reap the benefits at the expense of both the weakened combatants. This is the essence of the New Deal in the Pacific.

Jack WEBER

## Neurotic Society

THE NEW ROAD TO PROGRESS. By SAMUEL D. SCHMALHAUSEN. xi+409 pp. New York. Falcon Press. \$3.

It is understandable that the "scientific" journals have greeted this book with a campaign of stony silence. The sense of disaster which it conveys is disturbing enough to the bourgeois theorists, but that the only solution available should be the refreshing therapy of revolutionary Marxism—no, that is too much.

Ernest Sutherland Bates has well said of this book that it "arouses and sustains that sense of horror, that feeling of being confined in a madhouse", that every thinking person must sometimes experience in the contemporary world. For Dr. Schmalhausen has illuminated our bourgeois society with Marxian insight; he has searched out the conflicts of our decaying social order in their most far-reaching and subtle reflections, as they appear in religious obscurantism, familial disorganization, individual maladjustments, and reactionary social philosophy. Once the tissue of crumbling capitalism has been ripped apart, he finds a symbol of contemporary civilization in the picture of "God committing suicide in a speakeasy". Home-sweet-home turns out to be the cradle of pathology, love no longer a bond but a bondage.

In our outlook he sees the joyous mood

replaced by a decadent sneer; the emphasis has shifted from wholesome life to a desperate concern with existence on the lowest level of blind, primitive sensation. Scientific thought, instead of pointing the way to social improvement, has goose-stepped all along the reactionary line of march; "scholarship has been a brilliant adjunct of the counter-revolution". Progress to the post-war sophisticate has become a hollow catchword; our cultural energy is expended in a mad psychology of escape. We blind our eyes, we flee from the horror of social reality.

Schmalhausen finds the solution of our cultural and psychic dilemmas to be a social one. For him, as for every thinking psychologist, the slogan is: *mens sana in societate sana*—for the prerequisite of normality is the stimulus of a healthy social environment. How, he asks, can a well-functioning mind be reared, or a mal-functioning mind adjusted, in a society rampant with conflict and shot through with frenzied individualism? The Freudians hemmed in by their bourgeois thought, can aim only at returning the neurotic mind to the mediocre, the statistical average—but can a mind out of gear be adjusted to a social order which is itself maladjusted, rife with maddening antagonisms? It must be clear enough that, if mental and emotional development is molded and canalized by socio-economic reality (as amply proved by genetic and child psychology), then human potentialities can be actualized only in a milieu which is stimulating and liberating, rather than inhibitory and conflict-breeding. When the whole rotten superstructure threatens imminent collapse, Schmalhausen insists that we must concern ourselves with the maladjustments of society rather than with those of the individual—for the former are primary, the latter derivative.

Schmalhausen concludes that our contemporary culture is "insane", "neurotic", "psychotic", "psychoneurotic"; our social order suffers from a "cultural psychosis". But with this analysis we must take issue. To become indignant at the dominant social ideology is admirable, but in the haste of our attack we must not confuse categories. And to diagnose the social structure as psychopathological is to do just that: for we are arguing by analogy from the individual organism to some sort of social organism, and then applying terms descriptive of the former to the latter without justifying the carry-over.\*

Now, clearly, such a theory of social pathology must assume that society is an organism with its parts well or badly ordered in some quasi-biological sense. But the organic concept of society (Herbert Spencer, Paul de Lilienfeld) has for the most part been discarded in sociology. And to a Marxist, above all, it must be patent that society in its structure and function exhibits laws peculiar to it alone, not as some hypothetical super-organism but as a unique organization in motion. Just as the bodily organism is governed by laws other than those which apply to its cellular components, so the social structure presents

\*This type of reasoning, of course, is not unique to Schmalhausen: Read Bain (of the University of Florida) has characterized our society as "schizoid," and Dr. Triggant Burrow has a theory of "social insanity".



## A Picture of the Socialist Party

BELOW, WE publish a copy of two letters which were sent out to members of the socialist party in New York just as our forms were being closed. They give a revealing picture of the situation within that party at the present time. The second letter in particular gives the reader a political portrait of the titular leader of the party, under whose direction the party was guided to the land of revolutionary principle where it would be the proletarian party in the United States. To aid in this noble endeavor, all "unattached radicals", all the politically homeless, were urged, not only by him but also by several gullible and not so naive persons, to join the party. The results to date are far from inspiring. Frightened by the furore of the Right wing's resistance to their first steps, the "Militant" leaders have since been engaged in heaping apology and lamentation upon capitulation and retreat. Where yesterday the crusaders spoke bravely about principles, their slogan now is: Unity, unity above all and before everything else, unity at all costs. Meanwhile, with no strong motor, no real captain, no firm rudder, the S. P. ship is disintegrating in the storm.

The first letter, inspired by the "Militants", is signed by one of their leaders. Sent along with it was the letter from Norman Thomas. They follow:

"March 11, 1935.

"TO ALL COMRADES—Left, Right or Center:

"DO YOU WANT a healthy functioning Socialist party in New York, which will take a vigorous part in all labor and socialist activities?

"DO YOU KNOW that nine branches have been illegally dissolved without a hearing?

"DO YOU KNOW that the action was taken on the recommendation of an investigating committee that had never investigated, but had its only meeting for ten minutes prior to the Executive Committee session?

"DO YOU KNOW that the City office has deliberately colonized several branches

by transferring members who had already voted in their own branches, to other branches in order to elect pro-administration delegates to the City Central Committee?

"DO YOU KNOW that the City office has refused to admit hundreds of nineteen-year old Yipsels to membership, despite the instruction of the Detroit convention, and the N.E.C.?

"DO YOU KNOW that the City Executive Committee has systematically rejected many applicants for membership because their viewpoint on theoretical questions differs from the position of the City office?

"DO YOU KNOW that several new branches have been immediately given delegates to the City Central Committee in order to increase the administration vote, whereas the precedent established last year in the case of the proposed Staten Island Branch (not a pro-administration branch) was to put new branches on a six month probation period before granting a charter?

"COMRADES, show your belief in our socialist traditions, and your indignation at this un-socialistic, un-democratic series of acts.

"Come, and bring all your comrades and branch members to Stuyvesant Casino, 192 Second Ave., Friday, March 15, 8:00 P.M.

"Listen to reports on the activities, and join in the discussion. Admission by party membership card only.

"Fraternally,  
[Signed] "Max Delson."

\* \* \*

"STATEMENT BY NORMAN THOMAS  
"TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF NEW  
YORK CITY:

"The time has come when, irrespective of our belief about any of the questions which have agitated our party, those of us in New York, who are loyal to an American Socialist party must save it from suicide by violent split, or death by creeping paralysis.

"As long as there was hope that by truly democratic procedure New York City could settle its own affairs, I have been inactive in most controversies. I have made my general opinion known, but I have taken little part in the battles in the Executive and Central Committees. Now I ask you to read this enclosed statement. It shows that in a frantic desire to keep a majority in the Central Committee at all costs, a faction in the party has flouted all constitutional and democratic procedure. To submit to this is to complete the destruction of any idealistic and vigorous socialism in New York. I believe that there is a chance that a carefully selected committee, appointed by the N.E.C., might perhaps bring about an amicable reorganization in New York, or at any rate, guarantee rights of democracy to New York socialists. Let us unite to demand action from the governing body of our party before it is too late.

"In thus taking the lead in New York to try to remedy a situation which makes our socialist struggles impossible, and nullifies

all that I and others have been trying to do in the nation, I want to make it plain that I stand ready to renounce my right to vote in the N.E.C. on this particular question, provided, of course, that Oneal, who is editor of the *New Leader*, a purely factional organ over which the party has no true control, is similarly disqualified. Certain it is that socialists cannot advocate democracy in the world, and then in their own affairs, practise methods worthy of the old parties in order to maintain power.

"I ask your support in order to save our party. This, be it remembered, is an issue independent of, and infinitely more important than any opinion you may have on the Declaration of Principles, or the united front.

"Fraternally yours,  
[Signed] "Norman Thomas."

### A Note to the Reader

WE ARE once more obliged to call the attention of our readers to technical difficulties, created by circumstances beyond our control, which made it impossible to avoid omitting the regular February number of our review. Up to now, THE NEW INTERNATIONAL has been printed in our small establishment, without very elaborate equipment, and crowded for space. The increased requirements of our party made it imperative not only that we find larger quarters for our printing plant but also that we add to the equipment in order that our publications and our general literature might be produced more efficiently and in larger quantities. By a considerable strain upon slender resources, additional equipment and a new headquarters were obtained towards the end of last month.

Unfortunately and unavoidably, in the process of moving and setting up the new machinery, a disruption of production regularity was created. The result was that our weekly official organ, *New Militant*, was compelled to skip one issue and to come out late with the next one. THE NEW INTERNATIONAL suffered likewise, and the February issue was regrettably omitted from schedule. It goes without saying that subscribers will be credited with an additional number.

However that may be, we were anxious to make up for the omission in the best way at our command. We therefore decided, in face of the tremendous effort required both by the editorial staff and the business department, to publish the March issue with a fifty percent increase in size, but without an increase either in the wholesale or retail price. We have been told that a 32-page magazine like the one we publish, is too good to be true at fifteen cents a copy. We do not know exactly what will be said when this issue appears with 48 pages. But we do hope that it will serve to diminish the irritation caused by the delay and that we shall be repaid in the long run for the additional expense we have incurred by an even warmer support from our readers than heretofore. Our new technical equipment will henceforward facilitate the timely appearance of each issue of our review. We ask for a little forbearance from our readers—and their aid.

### HAVE YOU HEARD ?

John Hart, Arthur Graham, A. Weaver, J. Becker all of New York City and Chris Johnson of Los Angeles, have each pledged One Dollar monthly for a period of one year toward the support of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. Florence Becker of Long Island pledged Five Dollars monthly.

### WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

We need forty more dollar pledges to secure regular publication of the magazine. Won't you send yours today? For our part, we will give you a free subscription for one year.

*Don't delay. Send your pledge at once and we promise you a bigger and better*

NEW INTERNATIONAL

# The Press

## COMRADE LITVINOV vs. COMRADE PFORDT

THE official Comintern paper, *Rundschau* (Basel, January 24, 1935), prints the texts of two declarations made to the Council of the League of Nations on the same day, January 17, 1935, in connection with the Saar referendum vote.

The first, sent in the name of his party by comrade Fritz Pfordt, member from the Saar of the Central Committee of the Communist party of Germany (Section of the Communist International), asks the League Council to invalidate the Saar vote:

"The Communist party of the Saar district has commissioned me to enter a protest before the Council of the League of Nations and the entire world against the validity of the vote cast on January 13, as it was neither a free nor an uninfluenced and honest vote. . . . We declare before the Supreme Council of the League of Nations and the world: A free, secret and uninfluenced vote can never look like this! This terror-vote can never be declared valid according to the principles which should prevail for this vote, according to the principles of the right of the Saar people to a free referendum. This vote is no genuine expression of will."

The second declaration on the Saar is contained in a speech made to the Council by comrade Maxim Litvinov, member of the Central Committee of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (Section of the Communist International):

"With great satisfaction, we can today record the success of the application of the right of the self-determination of the peoples, which represents one of the basic principles of the international policy of my government. The application of this principle must have the aim of determining the nationality of the majority of the population of a given territory. History has decided that the test of this principle should be made on the nationality of the Saar population. This test, which took place on the 13th of this month, led to results which put an end to all doubts, if any existed, about the nationality of the Saar province. It cannot be expected from the League of Nations that, after the results of this test, it should broach the question of why the Saar people voted as it did. If, as many believe, the voters took into particular consideration circumstances which spoke against their national aspirations, then the fact that these considerations were finally eliminated can only reinforce the significance of the vote from the purely national standpoint. The great majority of the Saar people has told us that it wishes to remain German and that it wishes to share the destiny of its countrymen in every respect. We must confine ourselves to respecting such a decision and to congratulating the German people upon the return of its sons in the Saar."

### DECISION, ACTION, DISCUSSION

WE rescue from undeserved oblivion the following pearl plucked from an article on the labor party policy of the American C.P. in the *Daily Worker* (February 16, 1935):

"Question: Why was the question of the labor party raised by comrade Browder before there was any discussion in the party?"

Was this a violation of inner party democracy?

"Answer: The Political Bureau of the party thought that the Unemployment and Social Insurance Congress presented a golden opportunity of presenting the question to 2,500 delegates from all over the country. It was a springboard from which to launch the idea of a class struggle labor party as opposed to a third capitalist progressive party or a reformist party differing from the progressive one only in demagoguery.

"The enthusiasm with which the party membership and the non-party masses have received the announcement of the labor party is proof of the correctness of the decision of the Political Bureau. It demonstrated once again that the communists exercise political initiative in all fields.

"There was no violation of party democracy. The widest discussion is being carried on within the party on all phases of the question. Action and discussion is being carried on simultaneously. The Central Committee at its last plenum made decisions concerning the policies of the party with respect to the labor party movement. This decision is being carried out throughout the country. At the same time party discussions are going on which can modify or elaborate this decision as can be done with all other decisions of the Central Committee.

"The Political Bureau could act because it was putting forward a basic principle of the party. This decision like all other decisions is based on the mutual confidence of the membership and the leadership, and its correctness is established by the collective experiences of the entire party. It should be emphasized that the communist party, at those times when immediate decisions are necessary, acts and discusses at the same time."

## TOWARDS THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

TO THE Workers party of the United States, the Workers party of Canada, the Bolshevik-Leninist party of Cuba, the (Left) Communist party of Chile, the (when this appears) united revolutionary socialist party of Holland, the Workers party of Australia, and other parties and groups rallied under the banner of the Fourth International, comes a new adherent, *Partido Obrero (Marxista Leninista)* of Panama. Its official organ, *Organizacion* (January 31, 1935), contains the manifesto of the Organizing Central Committee of the party, "to the workers and the poor and middle class peasants, and to the intellectuals, students and revolutionary elements of the middle classes", which announces the launching of the party and sets out its platform.

Somewhat less unequivocally but moving along the same line of development is the recent appeal issued by the socialist youth organization of Spain to the youth organizations of the communist party, the Maurin group, the International Communists (Trotskyists) and the proletarian youth of Spain in general. From the appeal, as reprinted in the *International Bulletin of the Youth* (Stockholm, February 1935), issued by the International Bureau of Revolutionary Youth Organizations, we take the following:

"The Socialist Youth has finally broken with social democratic reformism and it desires, together with the socialist youth of

# At Home

WE WERE not aware of the numerous friends THE NEW INTERNATIONAL has until the January issue came out with the Monthly Pledge Fund. To assure continuous publication and to help us build the circulation to 6,000 we asked our friends to pledge themselves to THE NEW INTERNATIONAL a certain sum each month for the period of one year, from one dollar to anything up.

C. Johnson of Los Angeles answers the appeal and writes "Donating to the N. I. the sum of \$1.00 which I pledge myself to send regularly each month. Enclosed is my contribution to your fund for maintaining it and make it grow." Four of our friends in New York City send in a dollar each and each pledges \$1.00 a month.

R. R. K. of New York City sends in \$15.00, one year's pledge in advance.

F. Becker of Long Island tells us that she is "temporarily hard up. . . . I did not forget my January pledge but some of my other creditors were much more impressive. . . . I will be able to return to the fray on March 1 with a monthly ten bucks." We feel sure that there are more friends who have not yet sent in their pledges. (A subscription for one year goes to each one year pledge.)

Branches are still sending in increases in bundles but Allentown, Pa. beats them all. They started in January with a bundle of 10. As soon as their bundle reached them they wrote "Send us an additional 25. . . . Make our February bundle 50 copies." That, in our opinion, is being on the job.

A comrade from an underground branch in the south starts off with five copies, saying: "We realize the importance of raising the circulation to 6,000 within six months. Rest assured that we shall do our part." The Oakland branch, too, is on the job. They write: "Put the N. I. on the newsstand in the student's building at the University of Calif. today, also on the biggest news stand in Berkeley. It won't be long now until we will be increasing our bundle order."

A friend in Madison, Wis., tells us: "I accidentally came across one of your past issues and it was a revelation. I had no such idea of the calibre of your literature although I still remain a loyal supporter of the official C.P."

Our circle of friends is rapidly growing. Subscriptions, pledges, bundle orders, increases in bundles—each is another dash of cement to the strengthening of the foundation of a skyscraping NEW INTERNATIONAL.

THE MANAGER

France, Belgium, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, England and Austria, to begin the reconstruction of the youth movement on the clear foundation of revolutionary Marxism. The international leadership required for the achievement of victory does not yet exist. The Second and Third Internationals have lost their position of leadership. After Hitler's triumph a new movement has come to life. We believe that it is urgently necessary to lead this movement to its destination. Let us return to Marx and Lenin. Let us unite the proletarian youth into an International which has broken with the mistakes of the past."

# Ammunition Needed



A PEASANT-SOLDIER  
By Diego Rivera

to insure regular appearance of the magazine.

This reproduction is of an early Diego Rivera drawing. The original measures 15 by 22 inches and will be sent to you already framed in simple unvarnished wood. It was donated to us by a comrade, in response to an appeal for funds. The friend writes:

*"I am sending you an early Diego Rivera drawing which was given to me and which I prize very highly. I should like to contribute \$200 to the magazine, as I believe it to be the best theoretical organ in the United States, but I am not in a position to do it at this time. I trust you can realize a substantial sum on the drawing and so enable the magazine to expand."*

As an "early Rivera", this drawing is extremely valuable to art collectors, even commercially speaking.

## free

The original of the peasant-soldier drawing together with one year's subscription to the

## New International

to the highest bidder. Make your bid in the light of a contribution to the magazine to make possible its regular and uninterrupted publication. The drawing will be sent to you as a token of thanks for your coöperation.

SIGN THIS  
BLANK AND  
RETURN  
AT ONCE

NEW INTERNATIONAL  
2 West 15th Street  
New York City

I can contribute \$..... Please inform me whether you can send me the Rivera drawing and I will send check.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State.....