

A MARXIST  
QUARTERLY

WINTER  
1956

*Fourth  
International*

# **The New Precedents In the Kutcher Case**

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## **The Debs Centennial**

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***Nationalism and Economic Life***

*by Leon Trotsky*

***Early Years of American Communism***

*by James P. Cannon*

***A Socialist Looks at Art***

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***On the Politics of Outer Mongolia***

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**35 cents**

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## FROM OUR READERS

Joyce Cowley's article "Youth in a Delinquent Society," which appeared in the fall issue of *Fourth International*, won an unusually favorable response from our readers.

In Los Angeles, for instance, J. M. wrote that "there's been a lot of appreciative remarks and complimentary comment around here on the scholarship and insight" of this study of the problems

facing youth in today's world.

A New York psychiatrist, whose main interest is in the field of child psychology, appears to have felt the same way, for he considered it "the best thing I have read on this subject yet."

P. A. reported from Boston that the first copies featuring the article "were gobbled up almost as soon as they were on display" and to please send more.

Our Oakland agent B. F. wrote us, "The latest issue of the FI is terrific. The

last issue sold out on the campus and we expect to order more of this issue soon. The lead article on the youth ought to attract a wider audience and our wonderful magazine will begin to reach many new readers as a result. A newsstand dealer told me he thinks this issue will sell like the old hot cakes."

Theodore Edwards' exposure of the drug-makers and the American Medical Association in "The Polio Vaccine Scandal" also received favorable comment as a type of article that should be regularly represented in our table of contents.

The series by James P. Cannon "Early Years of the American Communist Movement" written in the form of letters to a historian, has aroused considerable interest in radical circles. Through the grapevine we have learned that this even includes prominent Stalinists who were once sincere revolutionists and who are mentioned by Cannon in his account of the problems that beset the early leader-

(Continued on page 35)

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a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: (This information is required from daily, weekly, semi-weekly, and triweekly newspapers only.)

(Signed) JOSEPH HANSEN  
Editor

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of September, 1955.  
(Seal) CARNIG AJAMIAN

Notary Public, State of New York No. 31-5033400 Qualified in New York County.

Term expires Mar. 30, 1956.

# The New Precedents In the Kutcher Case

## An Editorial

On December 30, 1955 the crowds in Times Square, the "crossroads of the world," saw the following bulletin flashing on the electric news ribbon around the building that houses America's most influential newspaper: "V. A. Hearing on Kutcher's Loyalty — Legless Veteran Fights for Pension — Charge His Activities Aided Communists During Korean War."

The *New York Times* did not need to explain. All America knew what the case was about. Every major TV channel that evening was featuring newsreel shots of the valiant member of the Socialist Workers Party as he defied the government witch hunters in Washington earlier in the day. Every major radio chain was broadcasting the latest news in the infamous effort of the Eisenhower Administration to deprive the Purple Heart soldier of his pension because of his political beliefs. Every major newspaper in the country was front-paging the stubborn battle this veteran of the war on the civil-rights and civil-liberties front was putting up for freedom of thought in America — and in many cases joining in with a stinging editorial in his behalf.

It is no exaggeration to say that from Maine to California it would have been difficult that night to find a family that was not cheering for James Kutcher.

America's most sensational witch-hunt case in 1955 was broken just before Christmas by the liberal *New York Post*, which had obtained copies of the correspondence sent the legless veteran by the Veterans Administration. A December 12 letter had levelled scurrilous accusations, based on secret "information" provided by faceless stool pigeons against the avowed

socialist. A December 15 letter announced suspension as of November 30 of the \$329-a-month pension before the administrative hearing to be granted Kutcher to answer what in fact was a charge of treason.

The December 23 *Post* printed virtually the full texts. Here are the key sentences from the earlier letter:

"The evidence shows that you are and have been an active member of the Socialist Workers' Party since 1938; that the Socialist Workers Party has been determined to be, by duly authorized officials of the United States of America an organization which seeks to alter the form of Government of the United States of America by unconstitutional means; that your numerous activities over the years which have been instrumental in furthering the aims and objectives of the Socialist Workers' Party appear to constitute a violation of the above-cited statute, in that it also appears that you rendered aid and assistance to an enemy of the United States or of its allies by espousing and defending the Socialist Workers' Party's cause and thereby giving aid and comfort to the enemy by your influence upon others in undermining public interest and cooperation and confidence in the United States Government's administration of the war effort and hampering and obstructing such effort.

"The evidence also shows that in July 1950 and the summer of 1951 you attended a camp . . . at which time you stated that you liked the 'red' system of government; that in this country half of what a worker earns goes to the Government and under the 'red' government the worker gets all he earns; that the Government of the United States is composed of people who are cheaters and crooks who oppress the working people. It is further shown that you urged and advocated that the members in attendance at the camp cause strikes and get in key positions and get the Socialist Workers' Party in control of the Government of the United States. It is further shown that you stated that the Party members couldn't wish them in, think

them in, or vote them in; therefore, they should be overthrown and killed and then get a new Government."

The *Post* headlined its story "*The War Against 'Subversion': U.S. Takes Away Pension from a Legless Veteran.*" The news flashed from coast to coast over all the major press services, reaching the public as it finished last-minute shopping for Christmas.

That was when the slow burn in America over the witch hunt turned to something warmer. Kutcher's home in Newark, New Jersey, was flooded with sympathetic calls. "All America has been calling here," said Kutcher's mother.

How much heat was registered on the telephone exchange boards of the Veterans Administration remains a secret. But within six hours after the first edition of the *Post* appeared on the streets the top bureaucrats of the inquisition publicly rescinded the suspension of Kutcher's pension. This action alone shattered all precedents in the dark eight-year history of America's worst witch hunt.

However, the public was not to be assuaged by that sop. It was taken for what it really was — a confession of guilt by the Veterans Administration. Whether the new order became permanent remained to be seen.

### Bureaucrats on the Griddle

The *New York Post* took its entire editorial column to explain the issues. Its stand, for a capitalist newspaper in our times, was unusual — it defended democratic rights on a principled basis.

The Kutcher case began, it noted, when the socialist-minded veteran was fired from his VA job as a clerk in 1948 "—in the time of Harry Truman . . ."

It agreed with Kutcher that "the fact he lost his legs is not the great point of the debate. The point is that he has lost his rights. But because he lost his legs his case dramatizes finally and beyond dispute the cruelties and idiocies of the security program."

And, referring to the VA's suspension of the pensions of veterans of Stalinist persuasion, the *Post* declared: "We oppose what it has done to Communists

like Robert Thompson and Saul Wellman who, no matter how much we loathe their present politics, earned their disability pensions serving in the United States Army."

This strong stand influenced editorial writers throughout the country. Whatever doubts some might still have felt about the merits of the case were settled definitively when the mighty *New York Times* lowered its editorial guns on the Veterans Administration December 29:

"The United States can in no way benefit from the long campaign of harassment against Mr. Kutcher. . .

"An effort to put Mr. Kutcher and his family out of a low-cost housing project because his father would not sign a statement denying that any member of the household belonged to an organization on the Attorney General's list has been overruled by unanimous decision of the Supreme Court of New Jersey. In the pension case, it seems to us that Mr. Kutcher is clearly entitled to compensation for his wartime injuries. The present attempt of the VA to deprive him of these rights, even though it is acting under a 1943 law, can be viewed as little less than retaliation for extremist political views. That isn't the kind of action that sits well in a free democracy."

Perhaps even more significant than the reaction of the press was the reaction of capitalist politicians whose stock in trade is liberalism or appeals to the millions of war veterans in America. The day after the case was publicized Chairman Olin E. Teague (D-Tex.) announced that his House Veterans Committee would investigate the halting of pension checks to Kutcher. A wounded and decorated veteran himself, Teague said that pending the investigation it was his view generally that the government must prove a very serious offense by a disabled veteran to warrant halting his compensation. (United Press, December 24.)

Apparently sensing a brewing political storm, the Veterans Administration broke all records in the witch hunt for speed in backing oars. December 27 it announced that an administrative hearing would be held three days later for Kutcher.

Joseph L. Rauh, one of Kutcher's attorneys, demanded in a telegram to the VA that it be an open hearing and that the faceless informers be dragged into the light of day:

"... we insist that Kutcher be confronted by his accusers. Whoever says Kutcher has committed treason in rendering assistance to an enemy should be willing to stand up before Kutcher and tell him and the Veterans Administration in what manner Kutcher committed this crime."

Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, a leading aspirant for the Democratic nomination to the presidency, insisted the next day that the proceedings be held in full public view:

"I think Kutcher, not only as a veteran with a gallant war record, but simply as an American citizen, is entitled to a public hearing and a full opportunity to confront his accusers. He has the right to defend himself and to tell his side of the story."

Already Senator Paul Douglas (D-Ill.) had urged the VA to go slow in

withdrawing Kutcher's benefits while Senator Margaret Chase Smith (R-Me.) expressed the hope that a Senate committee would look into the case.

On December 28 John S. Patterson, acting VA administrator, wired Kutcher, "Your wishes in this matter will be honored by this agency."

For the first time in the witch hunt, the American people were to be given a glimpse of what goes on behind the iron curtain of a government administrative hearing.

When James Kutcher, using his two canes, came into the hearing room December 30 to face the three inquisitors appointed by the Veterans Administration to rule on whether he could prove his innocence to the satisfaction of the witch hunters, scores of

### "GAD, I WISH I'D SAID THAT"



reporters and press photographers came in with him, and the television cameras began recording the scenes that were to be relayed to tens of millions of viewers.

The temper of the American people on the eve of the hearing was indicated by two significant items. An anonymous VA bureaucrat confessed to reporters the day before, "My phone has never stopped ringing." And H. V. Higley, head of the Veterans Administration, received an official telegram from the American Veterans Committee protesting "as vigorously as we know how," the threatened loss of benefits due Kutcher.

Scoring the charge of treason, the AVC said, "If such a charge is to be made . . . then he should have the right to more than an administrative hearing. He should have the right to face a jury . . . in the tradition of our law. He should have the right to face his accusers . . . and they should be made to face him and make their charges of 'treason.'"

But the Veterans Administration did not intend to turn its Star Chamber proceedings into a fair trial or anything remotely resembling it. Acting Chairman Peyton H. Moss began by announcing that "the sources of the evidence on which the charges in this case are based will not be disclosed . . ."

When Rauh demanded a copy of the rules governing the conduct of the hearing, Lipps, the Acting General Counsel for the VA, replied, "There are no written published rules for guidance . . ."

Moss thereupon ruled, "Okay. I will make the rules as I go along then."

As to the burden of proof, Moss ruled that this rested on the victim, who was, in fact, the only person in the room placed under oath.

In response to Rauh's demand that the country Kutcher "is supposed to have aided" be named, Moss said, "Communist China and North Korea."

The "evidence" consisted of the following:

(1) Alleged insults to the American flag that Kutcher was anonymously reported to have made to some unnamed person at a convention of the Socialist Workers Party. Kutcher

flatly denied any knowledge of such an incident and the VA did not attempt to refute him.

(2) "Speechmaking" by Kutcher "for the past several years in behalf of the advancement of the Socialist Workers Party." Kutcher retorted that his speeches were made on a national tour to rally support for his efforts to get back the job taken away from him in violation of his Constitutional rights.

(3) A letter published in the April 18, 1949, issue of *The Militant* defending the civil rights of the Stalinists. Rauh refused to let Kutcher answer this charge since "many millions of American citizens" likewise opposed convictions under the Smith Act without thereby committing treason. How weird this piece of "evidence" was can be judged from the fact that Kutcher was nailing Stalinist slanders of members of the Socialist Workers Party victimized under the Smith Act, and scoring Stalinist sabotage of his own case.

(4) An allegation by a faceless informer that Kutcher had advocated that members of the Socialist Workers Party should "cause strikes." Moss said that "if you are going to cause strikes during time of war, you aid an enemy." Rauh denounced the monstrousness of suggesting before the American labor movement of today that anyone who "causes" a strike is guilty of "treason."

(5) Bloodthirsty remarks alleged to have been made by Kutcher at various times to unnamed informers. Kutcher denied these under oath and the VA did not attempt to refute him.

When Rauh's colleague John Silard took over the questioning he summarized the extraordinary features of the case as follows:

"You are the first man in the history of the United States to be tried for treason or rendering assistance to the enemy, not before a jury but before a civil servant. You are the first man in the history of the United States, over 160 years, who has been accused of the highest crime against the United States by the government which has produced no witnesses and no evidence and which has asked you to come and clear yourself of the charge of guilt.

"You are also the first man in the history of this country who was ever accused of treason or rendering assistance

to the enemy of the United States, for belonging to a political party which is on the ballot in the United States in various states, or for criticizing the government of the United States here at home during wartime.

"For these reasons, Mr. Kutcher, your case will mark an historic point in the history of the United States itself.

"It will be remembered as the day when Star Chamber was reborn on this side of the Atlantic Ocean."

That was about how the American people sized it up when they saw some of the scenes of this barbarous court on their television screens that night.

## The Decision

The Veterans Administration announced its decision January 8. In a letter to Kutcher dated two days earlier it enclosed the finding "that the veteran, James Kutcher, is not shown, beyond a reasonable doubt, to have been guilty of any of the offenses proscribed . . . and that, therefore, no forfeiture . . . is in order."

This swift victory for the defendant was, however, far from complete. The Central Committee on Waivers and Forfeitures, which made the ruling, held that it had the right to suspend veterans' benefits in general without going through court to prove its charges; that is, to deprive veterans of their benefits on the basis of their political views as determined through the "derogatory" concoctions the government buys from faceless informers, stool pigeons and provocateurs. It maintained, moreover, that it had the right specifically to suspend Kutcher's benefits if it believed the legless veteran's "utterances" had been "established beyond a reasonable doubt."

In other words, if the Committee had believed it were established "beyond a reasonable doubt" that Kutcher had actually said to some one or other, some time or other, some place or other, that in his opinion the "Government of the United States is composed of people who are cheaters and crooks who oppress the working people," then the Committee would have the authority and the justification to at once cancel the benefits due him for the loss of his legs in World War II.

How arbitrary this is can be judged

by the fact that the entire Republican campaign in 1952 was hinged on the charge that the Truman Administration consisted of a bunch of cheaters and crooks who dragged the U.S. into a useless war in Korea. Shouldn't every Republican veteran who echoed such sentiments have his benefits canceled by this Committee as part of its war on "subversion"?

On the other hand, if derogatory information in the secret files of the FBI offers substantiation of McCarthy's charge that the Democrats were guilty of "20 years of treason," shouldn't the Committee cancel the benefits of every veteran who was "instrumental in furthering the aims and objectives" of the Democratic Party?

As for strikers in wartime, or those who "cause" strikes in wartime, or "advocate" strikes in wartime, they too are guilty of "treason" and are subject to cancellation of benefits by this patriotic Committee no matter what wounds they might have suffered in fighting the wars of the country.

The decision amounted, in brief, to a tactical retreat in the face of the tremendous public anger but at the same time an affirmation of the principles of the witch hunt and an announcement of intention to continue the witch hunt. That is why Thompson and Wellman are still denied the benefits due them. That is why in a letter dated January 13 — one week after its letter conceding Kutcher's right to his pension — the VA demanded that Wellman pay back every nickel given him for his wounds, a total of \$9,581.85. (The VA generously granted Wellman the choice of liquidating "the indebtedness by regular monthly payments" if "it will cause undue hardship for you to remit the full amount . . . at one time . . .")

Further confirmation for this conclusion can be drawn from the fact that the Committee was forced to decide that it did not have a shred of evidence against Kutcher that could stand any fair legal examination in court. Yet it still denies him his job!

What happened in the Kutcher case in the brief two weeks between December 23 and January 6 must hearten every opponent of the witch hunt in America. The American people are

sick of thought control and government persecution of people holding minority political views. The nationwide surge of support for Kutcher was a testimonial to the strength of the belief in freedom of thought. The rapidity and spontaneity with which



JAMES KUTCHER

the public mobilized were impressive signs of the strength of the wish to have done with the witch hunt. America is tired of being gagged.

The public action in behalf of Kutcher scored some important gains. First of all it forced open a government administrative hearing. The American people had a chance to see for themselves for the first time that it is like a McCarthy hearing, only more "outrageous," as Rauh observed. This establishes a powerful precedent for future hearings.

Second, it forced the government to reverse its usual procedure. Instead of inflicting the punishment on the victim *before* a hearing, the VA felt compelled to stage the hearing first.

This is another powerful precedent.

Third, it forced the government to retreat on its blanket "treason" charge. The VA attorneys did some truly phenomenal hairsplitting to maintain that their definition, based on the definition of treason in the Constitution, did not really mean treason but something else. The objective of this was to avoid going to the courts, but at the same time it was a confession of the weakness of the treason charge.

Fourth, it forced the government to concede in fact that the anonymous charges of faceless informers are not as powerful as the sworn denials of the victim. The sworn denials of Kutcher were enough to establish a "reasonable doubt" as to the veracity of the government's stool pigeons. This is another powerful precedent.

Fifth, it forced the government — despite the rules made up by Moss as he went along — to assume the burden of proof. In all cases up to then, including Kutcher's, it was up to the victim to establish his innocence. When the VA decided it could not prove guilt it felt forced to reinstate Kutcher's pension. That reversal, too, sets a new precedent.

Yet despite all this, as we indicated above, the Committee insisted on the main principles of the witch hunt. How is this to be explained?

The truth is that the inspirers of the witch hunt recognize the mounting resistance. They are prepared to make "reforms" but not give up the system. They have in fact been following this pattern since they put McCarthy on the shelf. One after another, some of the shocking excesses have been "adjusted," particularly those involving guilt by blood relationship or guilt by association.

At the same time they have sought "better" victims — those most vulnerable from the viewpoint of their citizenship or the unpopularity of their political views. They put Kutcher in the latter category and that is why they thought they could get away with suspending his pension. As soon as they saw that they had miscalculated in his case they beat a tactical retreat.

The government is following a pattern designed to arouse less general resistance. At the same time the government seeks in new ways to arouse

even greater fear than before. By depriving a person of his pension on "loyalty" grounds, it continues the logical process begun when it deprived a person of his job on "loyalty" grounds, the process that spread into industry and even into the unions. It seeks to establish now that no rights are inviolate, even those of a legless veteran, that any person who insists on his political rights in America is automatically stigmatized and automatically deprived of all source of livelihood.

If the witch hunters could have gotten away with cutting off Kutcher's pension, and perhaps sending him a bill for what he has already received, it would have made a perfect precedent from their point of view. They were simply trying to repeat in 1955 what they did in 1948 when they took away his job. They failed for the time being only because the resistance to the witch hunt is higher now than when it began.

### The Political Reasons

Since 1946 when Churchill gave his Fulton, Missouri, speech laying down the line of preparation for a Third

World War, a single great excuse has been advanced by the witch hunters for every outrage, every invasion of democratic rights, every link in the heavy chain that shackles freedom of thought and expression in America today. That excuse is the "communist danger."

This feeling of a dangerous "conspiracy" against their interests is more than a symptom of the growing irrationality of America's 60 ruling families. The insecurity the dollar plutocracy feel in the basis of their rule is objectively justified. From this follows the rabidness of their insistence on "security" measures.

No matter what the relative prosperity in America, the world-wide system they are in charge of is in a bad way. Capitalism came out of World War II battered and beaten and crumbling. Parts of it were absorbed by the Soviet Union. A mighty revolution tore China out of the imperialist grip. Uprisings elsewhere promise a repeat performance. The colonial world is not safe for investments. Nationalization of industry threatens Wall Street's dollars on all continents. The clear fact is that the majority of humanity is consciously turning toward socialism.

How is this situation to be remedied? Wall Street's master minds have a solution—war. But they know that the American people cannot be trusted to support a Third World War. What guarantee can there be that the socialist outlook will not entrance them too by revealing a realistic alternative to capitalism, an alternative that guarantees enduring peace?

Like previous ruling classes in similar situations, America's rulers place extravagant hopes in the police — first of all the thought police. Erect a Chinese wall to keep out dangerous thoughts and beat any dangerous thoughts already in the country out of the heads of the people. That is the political essence of the witch hunt.

Striking confirmation of this came in the hearing when Moss named "the enemy" Kutcher was alleged to have aided and comforted. "Communist China and North Korea," he said.

And what was the most that Kutcher or any other member of the Socialist Workers Party ever did?

*Defend the right of the Chinese and Korean peoples to follow the course America itself followed in 1776 — choose their own form of government without interference from abroad.*

For taking that stand, Kutcher came to symbolize to these witch hunters the sympathy the American people instinctively feel for the revolutionary aspirations of the Asian masses.

Kutcher is also a symbol for the opponents of the witch hunt. For almost eight long years he has been fighting for his job. The twelfth appeal will soon be heard in Washington, D.C., preparatory to reaching the Supreme Court. It is the clearest and sharpest challenge yet made to the witch hunt of government employes.

At the same time the Kutcher eviction case has gone through several hearings since 1952. This case was taken by the American Civil Liberties Union to test the notorious Gwinn Amendment that requires a "loyalty" oath from tenants of federal housing. Thus Kutcher became a symbol on this front of the opposition to the witch hunt.

Kutcher became known personally to hundreds of labor bodies and minority organizations in the prolonged battle over his job. His refusal to be worn out or to duck out won him wide admiration. He is thus a personal symbol to hundreds of thousands as a demonstrated fighter against the witch hunt.

On January 20 Warren K. Billings, defendant in the world-famous Mooney-Billings case, made a public appeal:

"Kutcher's fight is not over. He is still without his clerk's job from which he has been fired because he is a member of the Socialist Workers Party. Though it sometimes takes a long time in a seemingly endless fight, as I know from personal experience, it is important to keep fighting.

"I believe Kutcher's fight is everyone's fight, and I urge everyone to support the struggle of this legless veteran to maintain his beliefs and to regain his job."

That expresses our sentiments too. The address of the Kutcher Civil Rights Committee is 325 E. 17th St., New York 3, N. Y. Make out your contribution to George L. Weissman, Treasurer.

## The Case of the Legless Veteran

BY JAMES KUTCHER

"A document of our times which will cast light for the future. Sometimes one phase of a generation is fully illuminated by a single incident, and Kutcher's experience sums up one of the less desirable aspects of our time. May many read it and devote themselves to seeing that its like does not occur again!" — Frank Kingdon, New York Post.

"A useful service in reminding us that in the pursuit of that will-o'-the-wisp 'loyalty' we have been both cruel and stupid. I hope that thousands of Americans will read this quiet, unemotional account of the treatment accorded one man who fought in the defense of his country." — Prof. H. H. Wilson, Princeton University.

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# The Debs Centennial

by James P. Cannon

## I. Labor and Socialism Today

**T**HE CENTENNIAL of the birth of Debs coincided with the merger of the AFL and CIO in a year of standstill, which appears to present a mixed picture of progress and reaction.

The organized labor movement as it stands today, with industrial unionism predominant, owes a lot to Debs, but his name was not mentioned at the merger convention. Debs was the greatest of the pioneers of industrial unionism who prepared the way — but that was yesterday. The smug bureaucrats who ran the convention are practical men who live strictly in the present, and they are convinced that progress is something you can see and count, here and now.

They counted approximately 15 million members in the affiliated organizations, and even more millions of dollars in the various treasuries, and found the situation better than ever. The official mood was never more complacent and conservative.

On the other hand, various groups and organizations calling themselves socialists, taking the numerical size of the present-day movement of political radicalism as their own criterion, found nothing to cheer about in Debs' centennial year. They compared the present membership and support of all the radical organizations with the tens of thousands of members and hundreds of thousands of votes of the Socialist Party in Debs' time, and concluded that things were never so bad. Their celebrations of the Debs Centennial were devoted mainly to nostalgic reminiscences about the "Golden Age of American Socialism" and sighs and lamentations for a return to "the way of Debs."

In my opinion, both of these estimates derive from a misunderstanding of the present reality of the labor movement and of its perspectives for the future. The changes since the time of Debs are not all progressive as the complacent trade-union bureaucrats imagine, and not all reactionary as some others assume, but a combination of both.

The organization of 15 million workers in the AFL-CIO, plus about 2 million more in the independent unions — and the acquisition of a trade-union consciousness that has come with it — represents in itself a progressive achievement of incalculable significance. And more than trade-union expansion is involved in this achievement.

There has been a transformation of the position of the working class in American capitalist society, which is implicitly revolutionary. Properly understood, the achievements on the trade-union field represent a tremendous advance of the cause of American socialism; since the socialist movement is a part of the general movement of the working class, and has no independent interests or meaning of its own.

In addition to that — and no less important — there should be to study its defeats as well as its victories, in

revolutionary socialist movement of the present, although numerically smaller, is ideologically richer than its predecessors. Insofar as it has assimilated the experience of the past, in this and other countries, and incorporated their lessons in its program, it is better prepared to understand its tasks. That represents progress for American socialism in the highest degree, for in the last analysis the program decides everything.

At the same time, it is obvious that the progressive growth of the industrial labor movement has not been accompanied by a corresponding development of the class-consciousness of the workers. On the contrary, the recent years have seen a decline in this respect; and this is reflected in the numerical weakness of socialist political organization.

That is certainly a reactionary manifestation, but it is far outweighed by the other factors in the situation. The over-all picture is one of tremendous progress of the American working class since the time of Debs. And the present position is a springboard for another forward leap.

In their next advance the organized trade unionists will become class conscious and proceed to class political organization and action. That will be accomplished easier than was the first transformation of a disorganized, atomized class into the organized labor movement of the present day. And most probably it will take less time.

The same conditions and forces, arising from the contradictions of the class society, which produced the one will produce the other. We can take it for granted without fear of going wrong, that the artificial prosperity of present-day American capitalism will explode sooner and more devastatingly than did the more stable prosperity of expanding capitalism in the time of Debs; and that the next explosion will produce deeper changes in the consciousness of the workers than did the crisis of the Thirties, which brought about the CIO.

In the light of that perspective, the work of revolutionary socialists in the present difficult period acquires an extraordinary historical significance. With that prospect in view, the present momentary lull in the class struggle, which gives time for thought and reflection, can be turned to advantage. It can be, and probably will be, one of the richest periods in the history of American socialism — a period of preparation for great events to come. A study of the socialist movement of the past can be a useful part of this preparation for the future.

That is the only sensible way to observe the Debs Centennial. It should be an occasion, not for nostalgic reminiscence, not for moping and sighing for the return of times and conditions that are gone beyond recall, but for a thoroughgoing examination and critical evaluation of the early socialist movement. It should be seen as a stage of development, not as a pattern to copy. The aim should be to study its defeats as well as its victories, in

order to learn something from the whole experience.

The first rule for such an inquiry should be to dig out the truth and to tell it; to represent the Debsian movement as it really was. Debs deserves this, and he can stand it too. Even his mistakes were the mistakes of a giant and a pioneer. In an objective survey they only make his monumental virtues stand out more sharply in contrast.

## 2. The Making of a Socialist

The real history of America is the history of a process leading up to socialism, and an essential part of that process is the activity of those who see the goal and show it to others. From that point of view Eugene V. Debs is a man to remember. The day of his birth one hundred years ago — November 5, 1855 — was a good day for this country. Debs saw the future and worked for it as no one else has been privileged to do. On the honor roll of the socialist pioneers his name leads all the rest.

The life of Debs is a great American story; but like everything else American, it is partly foreign. He was truly indigenous, about as American as you can get, and he did far more than anyone else to "Americanize" socialism. But he was not, as he is sometimes pictured, the exponent of a peculiar home-made socialism, figured out all by himself, without benefit of "foreign" ideas and influences.

Debs was the perfect example of an American worker whose life was transformed by the ideas of others, and imported ideas at that. Many influences, national and international, his own experiences and the ideas and actions of others at home and abroad, conspired to shape his life, and then to transform it when he was already on the threshold of middle age.

The employers and their political tools did all they could to help. When President Cleveland sent federal troops to break the strike of the American Railway Union in 1894, and a federal judge put Debs in jail for violating an injunction, they made a great, if unintended, contribution to the auspicious launching of the native American socialist movement.

The inspired agitator began to "study socialism" in Woodstock jail. That was the starting point of the great change in the life of Debs, and thereby in the prospects of socialism in this country. It was to lead a little later to the organization of the first indigenous movement of American socialism under the name of the Socialist Party.

The transformation of Debs, from a progressive unionist and Populist into a revolutionary socialist, didn't happen all at once, as if by a sudden revelation. It took him several more years after he left Woodstock jail, carefully checking the new idea against his own experiences in the class struggle, and experimenting with various reformist and utopian conceptions along the route, to find his way to the revolutionary socialism of Marx and Engels.

But when he finally got it, he got it straight and never changed. Debs learned the basic essentials from Kautsky, the best popularizer of Marxism known in this country in the epoch before the First World War. Thereafter the Marxist theory of the class struggle was the central theme

of all his agitation. He scornfully denounced the Compton theory that the interests of capital and labor are identical. And he would have no truck with the delusive theory that capitalism will grow into socialism through a series of reforms.

Debs campaigned for the overthrow of capitalism by workers' revolution, and refused to settle for anything less. As he himself expressed it, he "determined to stick to the main issue and stay on the main track, no matter how alluring some of the by-ways may appear."

Debs was the main influence and most popular attraction making possible the formation of the Socialist Party of America at the "Unity Convention" in 1901, and the party became an important factor in American life mainly because of him.

There had been socialists and socialist organizations in this country for a half century before that; but they had been derailed every time by a combination of objective circumstances and their own misunderstanding of the doctrine they espoused. The original socialists had been mainly utopians of various kinds, or German immigrants who brought their socialist ideas with them and never learned to relate them to American conditions.

Engels who, like Marx, was foreign to no country, saw no future for that kind of socialism in the United States. In his letters to friends in this country, up to the time of his death in 1895, he continuously insisted that American socialism would never amount to anything until it learned to "speak English" and find expression through the native workers.

In Debs the movement finally found a man who really spoke the language of the country, and who knew how to explain the imported idea of socialism to the American workers in relation to their own experiences.

When he came to socialism, Debs had already attained national fame as a labor leader. He brought to the new party the rich benefits of his reputation and popularity, the splendor of his oratorical gifts, and a great good will to work for the cause. Debs made the difference; Debs, plus conditions at the time which produced an audience ready to respond. With Debs as its outstanding spokesman after the turn of the century, socialism began for the first time to get a hearing in this country.

## 3. The Role of the Agitator

Part of what I have to say about Debs and the movement he symbolized is the testimony of a witness who was there at the time. The rest is afterthought. My own appreciation of Debs goes all the way back to the beginning of my conscious life as a socialist. I never knew Debs personally, but I heard him speak several times and he loomed large in my life, as in the lives of all other radicals of my generation.

Debs was an ever-present influence in the home where I was raised. My father was a real Debs man — all the way through. Of all the public figures of the time, Debs was his favorite. Debs' character and general disposition, his way of life — his whole radiant personality — appealed strongly to my father.

Most of the pioneer socialists I came to know were like

that. They were good people, and they felt warmly toward Debs as one of their own — the best representative of what they themselves were, or wanted to be. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they loved Debs as a man, as a fellow human being, as much as they admired and trusted him as a socialist leader and orator.

My father's political evolution had been along the same line as that of Debs. He had been a "labor man" since the old Knights of Labor days, then a Populist, then a Bryanite in the presidential campaign of '96, and he finally came to socialism, along with Debs, around the turn of the century.

The *Appeal to Reason*, for which Debs was then the chief editorial writer, came to our house in the little town of Rosedale, Kansas, every week. When Moyer and Haywood, then leaders of the Western Federation of Miners, were arrested in 1906 on a framed-up charge of murder, the *Appeal*, with Debs in the lead, opened up a tremendous campaign for their defense. Debs called for revolutionary action to prevent the judicial murder, with his famous declaration: "If they hang Moyer and Haywood, they will have to hang me!"

That was when I first began to take notice of the paper and of Debs. From week to week I was deeply stirred by the thunderous appeals of Debs and the dispatches of George H. Shoaf, the *Appeal's* "war correspondent" in the Western mine fields. My father and other local socialists chipped in to order extra bundles of the paper for free distribution. I was enlisted to help in that work. My first activity for the movement — in the memory of which I still take pride — was to distribute these special Moyer-Haywood editions of the *Appeal* from house to house in Rosedale.

The campaign for the defense of Moyer and Haywood was the biggest socialist action of the time. All the agitation seemed to center around that one burning issue, and it really stirred up the people. I believe it was the action itself, rather than the political arguments, that influenced me most at first. It was an action for justice, and that always appeals powerfully to the heart of youth. My commitment to the action led to further inquiry into the deeper social issues involved in the affair.

It was this great Moyer-Haywood campaign of Debs and the *Appeal to Reason* that started me on the road to socialism while I was still a boy, and I have always remembered them gratefully for that. In later years I met many people all around the country whose starting impulse had been the same as mine. Debs and the *Appeal to Reason* were the most decisive influences inspiring my generation of native radicals with the great promise of socialism.

Debs was a man of many talents, but he played his greatest role as an agitator, stirring up the people and sowing the seed of socialism far and wide. He was made for that and he gloried in it. The enduring work of Debs and the *Appeal to Reason*, with which he was long associated, was to wake people up, to shake them loose from habits of conformity and resignation, to show them a new road.

Debs denounced capitalism with a tongue of fire, but

that was only one side of his agitation. He brought a message of hope for the good time coming. He bore down heavily on the prospect of a new social order based on cooperation and comradeship, and made people see it and believe in it. The socialist movement of the early days was made up, in the main, of people who got their first introduction to socialism in the most elementary form from Debs and the *Appeal to Reason*.

That's a long time ago. In the meantime history has moved at an accelerated pace, here and everywhere else. Many things have happened in the world of which America is a part — but only a part — and these world events have had their influence on American socialism. The modern revolutionary movement has drawn its inspiration and its ideas from many sources and many experiences since the time of Debs, and these later acquisitions have become an essential part of its program.

But for all that, the movement of the present and the future in the United States is the lineal descendant of the earlier movement for which Debs was the outstanding spokesman, and owes its existence to that pioneering endeavor. The centennial of the birth of Debs is a good time to remind ourselves of that and to take a deeper look at the movement of his time.

#### 4. The Double Story

Those of the younger generation who want to study the ancestral origins of their movement, can easily find the necessary material already assembled. A group of conscientious scholars have been at work reclaiming the record as it was actually written in life and pointing it up with all the necessary documentation.

The published results of their work are already quite substantial. Almost as though in anticipation of the Debs Centennial, we have seen the publication of a number of books on the theme of Debs and American socialism within the last decade.

*The Forging of American Socialism*, by Howard H. Quint, gives an account of the tributary movements and organizations in the nineteenth century and ends with the launching of the Socialist Party at the Unity Convention in 1901.

*The American Socialist Movement—1897-1912*, by Ira Kipnis, takes the story up to the presidential campaign of 1912, and gives an extensive report of the internal conflicts in the Socialist Party up to that time. The reformist leaders of the party come off badly in this account. The glaring contrast between them and Debs is fully documented on every point.

Following that, the Debs Centennial this year coincides with the publication of a rather concise history of *The Socialist Party of America* by David A. Shannon. Professor Shannon's research has evidently been thoroughgoing and his documentary references are valuable. In his interpretation, however, he appears to be moved by a tolerance for the reformist bosses of the party, who did an efficient job of exploiting the popularity of Debs and counteracting his revolutionary policy at the same time.

On top of these historical works, Debs speaks for himself in *Writings and Speeches of Eugene V. Debs*. This

priceless volume, published in 1948, contains an "explanatory" introduction by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. which in simple decency had better been left out.

Schlesinger, the sophisticated apologist of American imperialism, has no right to introduce Debs, the thoroughgoing and fully committed revolutionary socialist; and still less right to "explain" him because he can't begin to understand him. Schlesinger's ruminations stick out of this treasury of Debs' own speeches and writings like a dirty thumb; but everything else in the book is clean and clear. It is the real Debs, explained in his own words.

Finally, there is the truly admirable biography of Debs by Ray Ginger, entitled *The Bending Cross*. Following after earlier biographies by David Karsner and McAlister Coleman, Ginger gives a more complete and rounded report. This is a sweet book if there ever was one; the incomparable Gene comes to life in its pages. All the lights and shadows in that marvelous life as it was actually lived are there, the shadows making the lights shine brighter.

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Out of this imposing mass of documentary material — allowing for the shadings of opinion and interpretation by the authors — emerges a pretty clear picture of what the Socialist Party was and what Debs was. Debs was by far the most popular socialist in the heyday of the party, and in the public mind he stood for the party. But the history of American socialism in the first two decades of this century is a double story.

It is the story of the party itself — its official policies and actions — and the story of the unofficial and largely independent policies and actions of Debs. They were related to each other and they went on at the same time, but they were not the same thing. Debs was in and of the party, but at the same time he was bigger than the party — bigger and better.

## 5. The Debs Legend

Ray Ginger, the biographer of Debs, remarks that he was a legendary figure while he was still alive. Many stories — some of them of doubtful authenticity — were told about him, and many people professed devotion to him for different and even contradictory reasons.

Debs was a many-sided man, the like of which the movement has not seen, and this gave rise to misinterpretations by some who saw only one facet of his remarkable personality; and to misrepresentations by others who knew the whole man but chose to report only that part which seemed to serve their purpose. This business of presenting fragmentary pictures of Debs is still going on.

There is no doubt that Debs was friendly and generous, as befits a socialist, and that he lived by the socialist ideal even in the jungle of class society. For that he was praised more than he was imitated, and attempts were often made to pass him off as a harmless saint. It was the fashion to say that Debs was a good man, but that's not what they put him in prison for. There was nothing saintly about his denunciation of the exploiters of the workers and the labor fakers who preached the brotherhood of workers and exploiters.

For all the complexity of his personality, Debs was as rigidly simple in his dedication to a single idea, and in suiting his actions to his words, as was John Brown, his acknowledged hero. His beliefs and his practices as a socialist agitator were related to each other with a singular consistency in everything he said and did. The record is there to prove it.

He was a famous labor organizer and strike leader — a man of action — long before he came to socialism, and he never lost his love and feel for the firing line of the class struggle after he turned to the platform. Striking workers in trouble could always depend on Gene. He responded to every call, and wherever there was action he was apt to turn up in the thick of it.

Debs was a plain man of the people, of limited formal education, in a party swarming with slick lawyers, professional writers and unctuous doctors of divinity. It was customary for such people to say — flattering themselves by implication — that Debs was a good fellow and a great orator, but not the "brains" of the party; that he was no good for theory and politics.

The truth is, as the documentary record clearly shows, that as a political thinker on the broad questions of working-class policy in his time, Debs was wiser than all the pretentious intellectuals, theoreticians and politicians in the Socialist Party put together. On practically all such questions his judgment was also better than that of any of the left-wing leaders of his time, most of whom turned to syndicalism to one degree or another.

Debs' own speeches and writings, which stand up so well even today, make the Socialist Party for which he spoke appear better than it really was. The simplicity, clarity and revolutionary vigor of Debs were part of the party's baggage — but only a part. The Socialist Party, by its nature and composition, had other qualities and the other qualities predominated.

## 6. The All-Inclusive Party

The political law that every workers' party develops through internal struggles, splits and unifications is vividly illustrated in the stormy history of the Socialist Party — from start to finish. There is nothing obscure about this history; it is quite fully documented in the historical works previously mentioned.

The Socialist Party came into existence at the "Unity Convention" of 1901, but it had roots in the movements of the past. The new unity followed from and was made possible by a split in the old Socialist Labor Party, which was left on the sidelines in dogmatic isolation; a split in the original, short-lived "Social Democracy," in which Debs and Berger broke away from the utopian colonist elements of that organization; and an earlier split of thousands of native radicals — including Debs and J. A. Wayland, the famed publisher of the *Appeal to Reason* — from the Populist movement, which in its turn, had been "united" with the Democratic Party and swallowed up by it.

These currents of different origins, plus many other local groups and individuals who had begun to call themselves socialists, were finally brought together in one camp in

## the Socialist Party.

Revolutionists and reformists were present at the first convention, and even after, until the definitive split in 1919. In addition, the new organization made room for a wide variety of people who believed in socialism in general and had all kinds of ideas as to what it really meant and how it was to be achieved. All hues of the political rainbow, from dogmatic ultra-radicalism to Christian Socialism, showed up in the party from the start.

The mixed assemblage was held together in uneasy unity by a loose organizational structure that left all hands free from any real central control. The principle of "States' Rights" was written into the constitution by a provision for the complete autonomy of the separate state organizations; each one retained the right to run its own affairs and, by implication, to advocate its own brand of socialism. Decentralization was further reinforced by the refusal to sanction a national official organ of the party. This measure was designed to strengthen the local and state publications — and incidentally, the local bosses such as Berger — in their own bailiwicks.

The party's principle of the free press included "free enterprise" in that domain. The most influential national publications of large circulation — *Appeal to Reason*, *Wilshire's Magazine*, *The Ripsaw*, and *The International Socialist Review* — were all privately owned. The individual owners interpreted socialism as they saw fit and the party members had no say, and this was accepted as the natural order of things.

To complete the picture of a socialist variety store, each party speaker, writer, editor and organizer, and — in actual practice — each individual, promoted his own kind of socialism in his own way; and the general unification, giving rise to the feeling of greater strength, stimulated all of them to greater effort. The net result was that socialism as a general idea got a good work-out, and many thousands of people heard about it for the first time, and accepted it as a desirable goal.

That in itself was a big step forward, although the internal conflict of tendencies was bound to store up problems and difficulties for the future. Such a heterogeneous party was made possible, and perhaps was historically justified as an experimental starting point, by the conditions of the time.

The socialist movement, such as it was, was new in this country. In its experiences, as well as in its thinking, it lagged far behind the European movement. The different groups and tendencies espousing socialism had yet to test out the possibility of working out a common policy by working together in a single organization. The new Socialist Party provided an arena for the experiment.

The trade unions embraced only a narrow stratum of the skilled and privileged workers; the problem of organizing the basic proletariat in the trustified industries — the essential starting point in the development of a real class movement — had not yet been seriously tackled. It was easier to organize general centers of radicalism, in the shape of socialist locals, than industrial unions which brought down the direct and immediate opposition of the entrenched employers in the basic industries.

In the country at large there was widespread discontent with the crude brutalities of expanding capitalism, just entering into its first violent stage of trustification and crushing everything in its path. Workers, exploited without the restraints of union organization; tenant and mortgaged farmers waging an unequal struggle to survive on the land; and small businessmen squeezed to the wall by the trend to monopolization — they all felt the oppression of the "money power" and were looking about for some means of defense and protest.

The ruling capitalists, for their part, were happy with things as they were. They thought everything was fine and saw no need of ameliorating reforms. The two big political parties of capitalism had not yet developed the flexibility and capacity for reformist demagoguery which they displayed in later decades; they stood pat on the status quo and showed little interest in the complaints of its victims. The collapse of the Populist Party had left a political vacuum.

The stage was set in the first decade of the present century for a general movement of social protest. And the new Socialist Party, with its appeal to all people with grievances, and its promise of a better deal all the way around in a new social order, soon became its principal rallying center.

## 7. The Years of Growth and Expansion

With Debs as its presidential candidate and most popular agitator, and powerfully supported by the widely-circulated *Appeal to Reason*, the new party got off to a good start and soon began to snowball into a movement of imposing proportions. Already in 1900, as the presidential candidate of the new combination of forces before the formal unification in the following year, Debs polled nearly 100,000 votes. This was about three times the vote for a presidential candidate of any previous socialist ticket.

In 1904 the Debs vote leaped to 402,283, a sensational four-fold increase; and many people, calculating the rate of growth, began to predict a socialist majority in the foreseeable future. In 1908 the presidential vote remained stationary at 420,713; but this electoral disappointment was more than counter-balanced by the organizational growth of the party.

In the intervening four years the party membership had doubled, going from 20,763 in 1904 to 41,751 in 1908. (Official figures cited by Shannon.) The party still had the wind in its sails, and the next four years saw spectacular advances all along the line.

Socialist mayors were elected all the way across the country from Schenectady, New York, to Berkeley, California, with Milwaukee, the home of small-time municipal reform socialism — almost as famous and even milder than its beer — the shining light in between.

We had a socialist mayor in New Castle, Pennsylvania when I was there in 1912-1913, working on *Solidarity*, eastern organ of the IWW. Ohio, a center of "red socialism," had a number of socialist mayors in the smaller industrial towns. On a tour for the IWW Akron rubber strike in 1913, I spoke in the City Hall at St. Marys, Ohio, with Scott Wilkins, the socialist mayor of the town, as

chairman of the meeting. Scott was a "red socialist," friendly to the IWW.

By 1912, according to official records cited by Kipnis, the party had "more than one thousand of its members elected to political office in 337 towns and cities. These included 56 mayors, 305 aldermen and councilmen, 22 police officials, 155 school officials and four pound-keepers."

If the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism was simply a process of electing enough socialist mayors and aldermen, as a great many leaders of the Socialist Party — especially its candidates for office — fervently believed, the great change was well underway by 1912.

In the campaign of 1912 the socialist cause was promoted by 323 papers and periodicals — five dailies, 262 weeklies and 10 monthlies, plus 46 publications in foreign languages, of which eight were dailies. The *Appeal to Reason*, always the most widely read socialist paper, reached a circulation of over 600,000 in that year. The party membership, from a claimed 10,000 (probably an exaggeration) at the formation of the party 11 years earlier, had climbed to an average of 117,984 dues-payers for 1912, according to official records cited by Shannon.

In the 1912 presidential election Debs polled 897,000 votes on the Socialist ticket. This was before woman suffrage, and it was about six percent of the total vote that year. Proportionally, this showing would represent more than three million votes in the 1952 election.

Considering that Debs, as always, campaigned on a program of straight class-struggle socialism, the 1912 vote was an impressive showing of socialist sentiment in this country at that time, even though a large percentage of the total must be discounted as protest, rather than socialist, votes, garnered by the reform socialists working the other side of the street.

But things were not as rosy as this statistical record of growth and expansion might seem to indicate. The year 1912 was the Socialist Party's peak year, in terms of membership as well as votes, and it never reached that peak again. The decline, in fact, had already set in before the votes were counted. This was due, not to public disfavor at the time, but to internal troubles.

At the moment of its greatest external success the contradictions of the "all-inclusive party" were beginning to catch up with it and tear it apart. After 1912 the Socialist Party's road was downhill to catastrophe.

## 8. Internal Conflict and Decline

The Socialist Party was more radical in its first years than it later became. The left wing was strong at the founding convention and still stronger at the second convention in 1904. As we see it now, the original left wing was faulty in some of its tactical positions; but it stood foursquare for industrial unionism and took a clear and definite stand on the basic principle of the class struggle — the essential starting point of any real socialist policy. The class struggle was the dominant theme of the party's pronouncements in its first — and best — period.

A loose alliance of the left and center constituted the

party majority at that time. The right-wing faction led by Berger, the Milwaukee slow-motion, step-at-a-time municipal reformer, was a definite minority. But the opportunists fought for control of the party from the very beginning. As a pressure tactic in the fight, Berger threatened, at least once a year, to split off his Wisconsin section.

Soon after the 1904 convention the centrists led by Hillquit combined with the Milwaukee reformists against the proletarian left wing. Thereafter the policy of Berger — with a few modifications provided by Hillquit to make it go down easier — became the prevailing policy of the party. With this right-wing combination in control, "political action" was construed as the pure and simple business of socialists getting elected and serving in public office, and the party organization became primarily an electoral machine.

The fight for industrial unionism — the burning issue of the labor movement championed by Debs and the left wing — was abandoned and betrayed by the opportunists in the hope of propitiating the AFL bureaucracy and roping in the votes of conservative craft unionists. The doctrine of socialism was watered down to make it more acceptable to "respectable" middle-class voters. The official Socialist Party turned more and more from the program of the class struggle to the scramble for electoral success by a program of reform.

This transformation did not take place all at once and without internal convulsions. The battle between left and right — the revolutionists and the reformists — raged without let up in all sections of the party. Many locals and state organizations were left-wing strongholds, and there is little room for doubt that the majority sentiment of the rank and file leaned toward the left.

Debs, who voiced the sentiments of the rank and file more sensitively and accurately than anyone else, always stood for the class-struggle policy, and always made the same kind of speeches no matter what the official party platform said. But Debs poured out all his energies in external agitation; the full weight of his overwhelming influence was never brought to bear in the internal struggle.

The professional opportunists, on the other hand, worked at internal party politics all the time. They wangled their way into control of the national party machinery, and used it unscrupulously in their unceasing factional maneuvers and manipulations. They fought, not only to impose their policy on an unwilling party, whose majority never trusted them, but also to drive out the revolutionary workers who consciously opposed them.

In 1910 Victor Berger, promoting the respectable reformist brand of socialism, was elected as the first socialist congressman; and a socialist city administration was swept into office in Milwaukee in the same year. These electoral victories had the double effect of strengthening the reformist influence in the party and of stimulating the hunger and thirst for office in other parts of the country by the Milwaukee method. Municipal elections, in which the opportunist wing of the party specialized, on a program of petty municipal reform, yielded many victories for socialist office-seekers, if not for socialism.

Says Kipnis: "Few of these local victories were won on the issue of capitalism versus socialism. In fact, this issue was usually kept well in the background. The great majority of Socialists elected to office between 1910 and 1912 were ministers and professional men who conducted their successful campaigns on reform questions that appeared crucial in their own communities; local option, prohibition, liquor law enforcement; corruption, inefficiency, maladministration, graft, and extravagance; bipartisan combinations, boss and gang rule, and commission government; public improvements, aid to schools, playgrounds, and public health; municipal ownership, franchises, and equitable taxation; and, in a small minority of the elections, industrial depression and labor disputes."

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The steady shift of the official policy from the class struggle to reformist gradualism, and the appeal to moderation and respectability that went with it, had its effects on the social composition of the party. Drove of office-hunting careerists, ministers of the gospel, businessmen, lawyers and other professional people were attracted to the organization which agreeably combined the promise of free and easy social progress with possible personal advantages for the ambitious. In large part they came, not to serve in the ranks but to take charge and run the show. Lawyers, professional writers and preachers became the party's most prominent spokesmen and candidates for office.

At a Christian Socialist Congress in 1908 it was claimed that more than 300 preachers belonged to the Socialist Party. The preachers were all over the place; and in the nature of things they exerted their influence to blunt the edge of party policy. Kipnis pertinently remarks: "Since the Christian Socialists based their analysis on the brotherhood of man rather than on the class struggle, they aligned themselves with the opportunist, rather than the revolutionary, wing of the party."

The revolutionary workers in the party ranks were repelled by this middle-class invasion, as well as by the policy that induced it. Thousands left the party by the other door. Part of them, recoiling against the parliamentary idiocy of the official policy, renounced "politics" altogether and turned onto the by-path of syndicalism. Others simply dropped out. Thousands of revolutionary-minded workers, first-class human material out of which a great party might have been built, were scattered and lost to the movement in this period.

The revolutionary militants who remained in the party found themselves fighting a losing battle as a minority, without adequate leadership. In a drawn-out process the "all-inclusive" Socialist Party was being transformed into a predominantly reformist organization in which revolutionary workers were no longer welcome.

At the 1912 convention the right-wing majority mobilized to finish the job. They pushed through an amendment to the constitution committing the party to bourgeois law and order, and proscribing the advocacy of any methods of working-class action which might infringe upon it. This amendment — the notorious "Article 11,

Section 6" — which later was included almost verbatim in the "Criminal Syndicalism" laws adopted by various states to outlaw the IWW, read as follows:

"Any member of the party who opposes political action or advocates crime, sabotage, or other methods of violence as a weapon of the working class to aid in its emancipation shall be expelled from membership in the party. Political action shall be construed to mean participation in elections for public office and practical legislative and administrative work along the lines of the Socialist Party platform."

This tricky worded amendment was deliberately designed to split the party by forcing out the revolutionary workers. This aim was largely realized. The convention action was followed by the recall of Bill Haywood, the fighting leader of the left wing, from the National Executive Committee, and a general exodus of revolutionary workers from the party.

The reformist bosses had also calculated that their demonstration of respectability would gain more recruits and more votes for the Socialist Party, if not for socialism. But in this they were sadly disappointed. The party membership declined precipitately after that, and so did the votes. By 1916 the party membership was down to an average of 83,138, a drop of close to 35,000 from the 1912 average. And the party vote that year — with Benson, a reformist, as presidential candidate in place of Debs — fell to 588,113, a decline of one-third from the Debs vote of 1912.

The Socialist Party never recovered from the purge of 1912, and came up to the First World War in a weakened condition. The war brought further mass desertions — this time primarily from the right-wing elements, who were finding the struggle for socialism far more difficult and dangerous than the program of reformist gradualism had made it appear. At the same time, the war, and then the Russian Revolution, also brought a new influx of foreign-born workers who swelled the membership of the language federations and provided a new base of support for a reinvigorated left wing.

This new left wing, armed with the great ideas of the Russian Revolution, fought far more effectively than its predecessor. There was no disorganized withdrawal and dispersal this time. The opportunist leaders, finding themselves in a minority, resorted to wholesale expulsions, and the split became definitive. The new left wing emerged from the internal struggle and split as the Communist Party.

The new Communist Party became the pole of attraction for all the vital elements in American radicalism in the next decade. The Socialist Party was left on the sidelines; after the split it declined steadily. The membership in 1922 was down to 11,277; and by 1928 it had declined to 7,793, of which almost half were foreign-language affiliates. (All figures from official records cited by Shannon.)

Debs remained a member of the shattered organization, but that couldn't save it. Nothing could save it. The Socialist Party had lost its appeal to the rebel youth, and not even the magic name of Debs could give it credit

any more. The great agitator died in 1926. In the last years of his life the Socialist Party had less members and less influence — less everything — than it had started with a quarter of a century before.

## 9. The Role of Debs in the Internal Conflict

The Socialist Party was bound to change in any case. It could begin as an all-inclusive political organization, hospitably accommodating all shades and tendencies of radical thought; but it could not permanently retain the character of its founding days. It was destined, by its nature, to move toward a more homogeneous composition and a more definite policy. But the direction of the change, and the eventual transformation of the party into a reformist electoral machine, were not pre-determined. Here individuals, by their actions and omissions, played their parts, and the most decisive part of all was played by Debs.

The role of Debs in the internal struggles of the Socialist Party is one of the most interesting and instructive aspects of the entire history of the movement. By a strange anomaly, the conduct of this irreproachable revolutionist was the most important single factor enabling the reformist right wing to control the party and drive out the revolutionary workers.

He didn't want it that way, and he could have prevented it, but he let it happen just the same. That stands out clearly in the record, and it cannot be glossed over without falsifying the record and concealing one of the most important lessons of the whole experience.

Debs was by far the most popular and influential member of the party. If he had thrown his full weight into the internal conflict there is no doubt that he could have carried the majority with him. But that he would never do. At every critical turning point he stepped aside. His abstention from the fight was just what the reformists needed to win, and they could not have won without it.

Debs never deviated from the class-struggle line in his own public agitation. He fought steadfastly for industrial unionism, and he never compromised or dodged that issue as the official party did. He had no use for vote-catching nostrums. He was opposed to middle-class intellectuals and preachers occupying positions of leadership in the party. His stand against the war was magnificent. He supported the Russian Revolution and proclaimed himself a Bolshevik.

On all these basic issues his sympathies were always consistently with the left wing, and he frequently took occasion to make his own position clear in the *International Socialist Review*, the organ of the left wing. But that's as far as he would go. Having stated his position, he withdrew from the conflict every time.

This seems paradoxical, for Debs certainly was no pacifist. In the direct class struggle of the workers against the capitalists Debs was a fighter beyond reproach. Nothing and nobody could soften him up or cool his anger in that domain. He didn't waste any of his good nature on the capitalist-minded labor fakers either.

Debs' blind spot was the narrower, but no less im-

portant, field of internal party politics and organization. On that field he evaded the fight. This evasion was not inspired by pacifism; it followed from his own theory of the party.

As far as I know, Debs' theory of the party was never formally stated, but it is clearly indicated in the course he consistently followed in all the internal conflicts of the party — from beginning to end. He himself always spoke for a revolutionary program. But at the same time he thought the party should have room for other kinds of socialists; he stood for an all-inclusive socialist party, and party unity was his first consideration.

Debs was against expulsions and splits from either side. He was opposed to the split in 1919 and saddened by it. Even after the split had become definitive, and the Rights and Lefts had parted company for good, he still appealed for unity.

Debs believed that all who called themselves socialists should work together in peace and harmony in one organization. For him all members of the party, regardless of their tendency, were comrades in the struggle for socialism, and he couldn't stand quarreling among comrades.

This excellent sentiment, which really ought to govern the relations between comrades who are united on the basic principles of the program, usually gets lost in the shuffle when factions fight over conflicting programs which express conflicting class interests. The reformists see to that, if the revolutionists don't. That's the way it was in the Socialist Party. Debs held aloof from the factions, but that didn't stop the factional struggles. And there was not much love lost in them either.

Debs' course in the internal conflicts of the party was also influenced by his theory of leadership, which he was inclined to equate with bureaucracy. He deliberately limited his own role to that of an agitator for socialism; the rest was up to the rank and file.

His repeated declarations — often quoted approvingly by thoughtless people — that he was not a leader and did not want to be a leader, were sincerely meant, like everything else he said. But the decisive role that leadership plays in every organization and every collective action cannot be wished away. Debs' renunciation of leadership created a vacuum that other leaders — far less worthy — came to fill. And the program they brought with them was not the program of Debs.

Debs had an almost mystic faith in the rank and file, and repeatedly expressed his confidence that, with good will all around, the rank and file, with its sound revolutionary instincts, would set everything straight. Things didn't work out that way, and they never do. The rank and file, in the internal conflicts of the party, as in the trade unions, and in the broader class struggle, can assert its will only when it is organized; and organization never happens by itself. It requires leadership.

Debs' refusal to take an active part in the factional struggle, and to play his rightful part as the leader of an organized left wing, played into the hands of the reformist politicians. There his beautiful friendliness and generosity played him false, for the party was also an arena



of the struggle for socialism. Debs spoke of "the love of comrades" — and he really meant it — but the opportunist sharpers didn't believe a word of it. They never do. They waged a vicious, organized fight against the revolutionary workers of the party all the time. And they were the gainers from Debs' abstention.

Debs' mistaken theory of the party was certainly one of the most costly mistakes a revolutionist ever made in the entire history of the American movement.

The strength of capitalism is not in itself and its own institutions; it survives only because it has bases of support in the organizations of the workers. As we see it now, in the light of what we have learned from the Russian Revolution and its aftermath, nine-tenths of the struggle for socialism is the struggle against bourgeois influence in the workers' organizations, including the party.

The reformist leaders were the carriers of bourgeois influence in the Socialist Party, and at bottom the conflict of factions was an expression of the class struggle. Debs obviously didn't see it that way. His aloofness from the conflict enabled the opportunists to dominate the party machine and to undo much of his great work as an agitator for the cause.

Debs' mistaken theory of the party was one of the most important reasons why the Socialist Party, which he did more than anyone else to build up, ended so disgracefully and left so little behind.

## 10. Debs and Lenin

Here we can make an instructive comparison between the course of Debs — to whom we owe so much — and that of Lenin — to whom we owe even more.

As we see them in their words and works, which were always in harmony, they were much alike in character — honest and loyal in all circumstances; unselfish; big men, free from all pettiness. For both of them the general welfare of the human race stood higher than any concerns of self. Each of them, in his own way, has given us an example of a beautiful, heroic life devoted to a single idea which was also an ideal. There was a difference in one of their conceptions of method to realize the ideal.

Both men started out from the assumption that the transformation of society requires a workers' revolution. But Lenin went a step farther. He saw the workers' revolution as a concrete actuality of this epoch; and he concerned himself particularly with the question of how it was to be prepared and organized.

Lenin believed that for victory the workers required a party fit to lead a revolution; and to him that meant a party with a revolutionary program and leadership — a party of revolutionists. He concentrated the main energies of his life on the construction of just such a party, and on the struggle to keep it free from bourgeois ideas and influences.

Lenin recognized that this involved internal discussion and conflict, and he never shirked it. The Menshevik philistines — the Russian counterparts of the American Bergers and Hillquits — hated him for that, especially for his single-minded concentration on the struggle for a revolutionary program, and for his effectiveness in that

struggle, but that did not deter him. Lenin believed in his bones that the internal problems of the party were the problems of the revolution, and he was on top of them all the time.

After 1904 Debs consistently refused to attend party conventions, where policy was decided, and always declined nomination for the National Committee, where policy was interpreted and put into practice. Lenin's attitude was directly opposite. He saw the Party Congress as the highest expression of party life, and he was always on hand there, ready to fight for his program. He regarded the Central Committee as the executive leadership of the movement, and he took his place at the head of it.

Lenin wrote a whole book about the conflict at the Second Congress of the party in 1903, where the first basic division between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks took place. He was in his element there, in that internal struggle which was to prove so fateful for the Russian Revolution and the future of all mankind.

Contrasting his own feeling about it to that of another delegate dismayed by the conflict, Lenin wrote:

"I cannot help recalling in this connection a conversation I happened to have at the Congress with one of the 'Centre' delegates. 'How oppressive the atmosphere is at our Congress!' he complained. 'This bitter fighting, this agitation one against the other, this biting controversy, this uncomradely attitude' . . .

"'What a splendid thing our Congress is!' I replied. 'A free and open struggle. Opinions have been stated. The shades have been brought out. The groups have taken shape. Hands have been raised. A decision has been taken. A stage has been passed. Forward! That's the stuff for me! That's life! That's not like the endless, tedious, word-chopping of intellectuals which terminates not because the question has been settled, but because they are too tired to talk any more . . .'

"The comrade of the 'Centre' stared at me in perplexity and shrugged his shoulders. We were talking in different languages." (*One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, p. 225 footnote.)

In her book, *Memories of Lenin*, Krupskaya, his widow, quoted those words of Lenin with the remark: "That quotation sums up Ilyich to a 't'."

The practical wisecracks in Lenin's time looked disdainfully at the ideological conflicts of the Russian emigres, and regarded Lenin as a sectarian fanatic who loved factional squabbling for its own sake. But Lenin was not fighting over trifles. He saw the struggle against opportunism in the Russian Social Democratic Party as an essential part of the struggle for the revolution. That's why he plunged into it.

It is important to remember that the Bolshevik Party, constructed in the course of that struggle, became the organizer and leader of the greatest revolution in history.

## 11. The Most Important Lesson

Debs and Lenin, united on the broad program of revolutionary socialism, were divided on the narrower question of the character and role of the party. This turned out to be the most important question of our epoch for

socialists in this country, as in every other country.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 clarified the question. Lenin's party of revolutionists stood up and demonstrated its historical rightness at the same time that the all-inclusive party of Debs was demonstrating its inadequacy.

This is the most important lesson to be derived from the experiences in the two countries, so far apart from each other yet so interdependent and alike in their eventual destiny.

The validity of the comparison is not impaired by reference to the well-known fact that Russia came to a revolutionary situation before America, which hasn't come to it yet. Lenin's greatest contribution to the success of the Russian Revolution was the work of *preparation* for it. That began with the construction of a revolutionary party in a time of reaction, *before* the revolution; and the Bolshevik Party, in turn, began with *Lenin's theory of the party*.

The Socialist Party of Debs' time has to be judged, not for its failure to lead a revolution, but for its failure to work with that end in view and to select its membership accordingly. Socialism signifies and requires the revolutionary transformation of society; anything less than that is mere bourgeois reform. A socialist party deserves the name only to the extent that it acts as the conscious agency in preparing the workers for the necessary social revolution. That can only be a party of revolutionists; an all-inclusive party of diverse elements with conflicting programs will not do.

The achievements of American socialism in the early years of the present century are not to be discounted, but it would be well to understand just what these achievements were. The movement, of which the party was the central organizing force, gave many thousands of people their first introduction to the general perspective of socialism; and it provided the arena where the main cadres of the revolutionary movement of the future were first assembled. These were the net results that remained after everything else became only a memory, and they stand to the historic credit of the early Socialist Party — above all to Debs.

But these irrevocable achievements were rather the by-products of an experimental form of socialist organization which, by its nature, could only be transitory. By including petty-bourgeois reformists and proletarian revolutionists in one political organization, the Socialist Party, presumed to be an instrument of the class struggle of the workers against the capitalists, was simply introducing a form

of the class struggle into its own ranks. The result was unceasing internal conflict from the first day the party was constituted. The eventual breakup of the party, and the decision of the revolutionary elements to launch a party of their own, was the necessary outcome of the whole experiment.

In the Russian movement Lenin saw all that beforehand, and the revolution was the gainer for it. After the Russian Revolution, the left wing of the American Socialist Party, and some of the syndicalists too, recognized the superiority of Lenin's method. Those who took the program of socialism seriously had no choice but to follow the path of Lenin. The Bolshevik Party of Lenin rightly became the model for the revolutionary workers in all countries, including this country.

The launching of the Communist Party in 1919 represented, not simply a break with the old Socialist Party, but even more important a break with the whole conception of a common party of revolutionists and opportunists. That signified a new beginning for American socialism, far more important historically than everything that had happened before, including the organization of the Socialist Party in 1901. There can be no return to the out-lived and discredited experiment of the past.

The reconstituted movement has encountered its own difficulties and made its own mistakes since that new beginning in 1919. But these are of a different order from the difficulties and mistakes of the earlier time and have to be considered separately. In any case, the poor ideological equipment of the old movement cannot help in their solution.

The struggle against the crimes and betrayals of Stalinism, the prerequisite for the construction of an honest revolutionary party, requires weapons from a different arsenal. Here also the Russian are our teachers. The programmatic weapons for the fight against Stalinist treachery were given to us by Trotsky, the coequal and successor of Lenin.

There can be no return to the past of the American movement. In connection with the Debs Centennial some charlatans, who measure the worth of a socialist movement by its numerical strength at the moment, have discovered new virtues in the old Socialist Party, which polled so many votes in the time of Debs, and have recommended a new experiment on the same lines. Besides its worthlessness as advice to the socialist vanguard of the present day, that prescription does an injustice to the memory of Debs.

He deserves to be honored for his great positive contributions to the cause of socialism, not for his mistakes. The life work of Debs, as the foremost agitator for socialism we have ever had, as the man of principle who always stood at his post in the class struggle in times of danger and difficulty, will always remain a treasured heritage of the revolutionary workers.

It is best — and it is enough — to honor him for that. The triumph of the cause he served so magnificently will require a different political instrument — a different kind of party — than the one he supported. The model for that is the party of Lenin.

### By James P. Cannon

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# Nationalism And Economic Life

by Leon Trotsky

**I**TALIAN fascism has proclaimed national "sacred egoism" as the sole creative factor. After reducing the history of humanity to national history, German fascism proceeded to reduce nation to race, and race to blood. Moreover, in those countries which politically have not risen — or rather, descended — to fascism, the problems of economy are more and more being forced into national frameworks. Not all of them have the courage to inscribe "autarchy" openly upon their banners. But everywhere policy is being directed toward as hermetic a segregation as possible of national life away from world economy. Only twenty years ago all the school books taught that the mightiest factor in producing wealth and culture is the world-wide division of labor, lodged in the natural and historic conditions of the development of mankind. Now it turns out that world exchange is the source of all misfortunes and all dangers. Homeward ho! Back to the national hearth! Not only must we correct the mistake of Admiral Perry, who blasted the breach in Japan's "autarchy," but a correction must also be made of the much bigger mistake of Christopher Columbus, which resulted in so immoderately extending the arena of human culture.

The enduring value of the nation, discovered by Mussolini and Hitler, is now set off against the false values of the nineteenth century: democracy and socialism. Here, too, we come into an irreconcilable contradiction with the old primers, and worst yet, with the irrefutable facts of history. Only vicious ignorance can draw a sharp contrast between the nation and liberal democracy.

As a matter of fact, all the movements of liberation in modern history,

This article first appeared in the magazine *Foreign Affairs* in April 1934. Trotsky's analysis of the disruptive effect of World War I on world capitalist economy sheds light on the still more violent effect of World War II, particularly its effect on the normal economic cycle. The growth of autarchy, which he comments on, is duplicated today in its most extreme form by the economic blockade initiated by Wall Street against the Soviet bloc. Trotsky wrote in the depths of the depression that followed the postwar prosperity of the Twenties. Our prosperity, paralleling the prosperity of the Twenties, has not yet been matched by a plunge like that of the Thirties, but the very height of the prosperity is an indication of the abyss we can reach in the coming depression.

beginning, say, with Holland's struggle for independence, had both a national and democratic character. The awakening of the oppressed and dismembered nations, their struggle to unite their severed parts and to throw off the foreign yoke, would have been impossible without a struggle for political liberty. The French nation was consolidated in the storms and stresses of democratic revolution at the close of the eighteenth century. The Italian and German nations emerged from a series of wars and revolutions in the nineteenth century. The powerful development of the American nation, which had received its baptism of freedom in its uprising in the eighteenth century, was finally guaranteed by the victory of the North over the South in the Civil War. Neither Mussolini nor Hitler is the discoverer of the nation. Patriotism in its modern sense — or more precisely its bourgeois sense — is the product of the nineteenth century. The national consciousness of the

French people is perhaps the most conservative and the most stable of any; and to this very day it feeds from the springs of democratic traditions.

## Growth of World Economy

But the economic development of mankind which overthrew medieval particularism did not stop within national boundaries. The growth of world exchange took place parallel with the formation of national economies. The tendency of this development — for advanced countries, at any rate — found its expression in the shift of the center of gravity from the domestic to the foreign market. The nineteenth century was marked by the fusion of the nation's fate with the fate of its economic life; but the basic tendency of our century is the growing contradiction between the nation and economic life. In Europe this contradiction has become intolerably acute.

The development of German capitalism was of the most dynamic character. In the middle of the nineteenth century the German people felt themselves stifled in the cages of several dozen feudal fatherlands. Less than four decades after the creation of the German Empire, German industry was suffocating within the framework of the national state. One of the main causes of the [First] World War was the striving of German capital to break through into a wider arena. Hitler fought as a corporal in 1914-1918 not to unite the German nation but in the name of a supra-national, imperialistic program that expressed itself in the famous formula — "Organize Europe!" Unified under the domination of German militarism, Europe was to become the drill ground for a much bigger enterprise — the organization of the entire planet.

But Germany was no exception. She only expressed in a more intense and aggressive form the tendency of every other national capitalist economy. The clash between these tendencies resulted in the war. The war, it is true, like all the grandiose upheavals of history stirred up various historical

questions and in passing gave the impulse to national revolutions in the more backward sections of Europe — Czarist Russia and Austria-Hungary. But these were only the belated echoes of an epoch that had already passed away. Essentially the war was imperialist in character. With lethal and barbaric methods it attempted to solve a problem of progressive historic development — the problem of organizing economic life over the entire arena which has been prepared by the world-wide division of labor.

### No Solution

Needless to say, the war did not find the solution to this problem. On the contrary, it atomized Europe even more. It deepened the interdependence of Europe and America at the same time that it deepened the antagonism between them. It gave the impetus to the independent development of colonial countries and simultaneously sharpened the dependence of the metropolitan centers upon colonial markets. As a consequence of the war, all the contradictions of the past were aggravated. One could half-shut one's eyes to this during the first years after the war, when Europe, aided by America, was busy repairing her devastated economy from top to bottom. But to restore productive forces inevitably implied the reinvigorating of all those evils that had led to the war. The present crisis, in which are synthesized all the capitalist crises of the past, signifies above all the crisis of national economic life.

The League of Nations attempted to translate from the language of militarism into the language of diplomatic pacts the task which the war left unsolved. After Ludendorff had failed to "organize Europe" by the sword, Briand attempted to create "the United States of Europe" by means of sugary diplomatic eloquence. But the interminable series of political, economic, financial, tariff, and monetary conferences only unfolded the panorama of the bankruptcy of the ruling classes in face of the unpostponable and burning task of our epoch.

Theoretically this task may be formulated as follows: How may the economic unity of Europe be guar-

anteed, while preserving complete freedom of cultural development to the peoples living there? How may unified Europe be included within a co-ordinated world economy? The solution to this question can be reached not by deifying the nation, but on the contrary by completely liberating productive forces from the fetters imposed upon them by the national state. But the ruling classes of Europe, demoralized by the bankruptcy of military and diplomatic methods, approach the task today from the opposite end, that is, they attempt by force to subordinate economy to the outdated national state. The legend of the bed of Procrustes is being reproduced on a grand scale. Instead of clearing away a suitably large arena for the operations of modern technology, the rulers chop and slice the living organism of economy to pieces.

In a recent programmatic speech Mussolini hailed the death of "economic liberalism," that is, of the reign of free competition. The idea itself is not new. The epoch of trusts, syndicates, and cartels has long since relegated free competition to the back yard. But trusts are even less reconcilable with restricted national markets than are the enterprises of liberal capitalism. Monopoly devoured competition in proportion as the world economy subordinated the national market. Economic liberalism and economic nationalism became outdated at the same time. Attempts to save economic life by inoculating it with virus from the corpse of nationalism result in blood poisoning which bears the name of fascism.

Mankind is impelled in its historic ascent by the urge to attain the greatest possible quantity of goods with the least expenditure of labor. This material foundation of cultural growth provides also the most profound criterion by which we may appraise social regimes and political programs. The law of the productivity of labor is of the same significance in the sphere of human society as the law of gravitation in the sphere of mechanics. The disappearance of outgrown social formations is but the manifestation of this cruel law that determined the victory of slavery over cannibalism, of serfdom over slavery,

of hired labor over serfdom. The law of the productivity of labor finds its way not in a straight line but in a contradictory manner, by spurts and jerks, leaps and zigzags, surmounting on its way geographical, anthropological and social barriers. Whence so many "exceptions" in history, which are in reality only specific refractions of the "rule."

In the nineteenth century the struggle for the greatest productivity of labor took mainly the form of free competition, which maintained the dynamic equilibrium of capitalist economy through cyclical fluctuations. But precisely because of its progressive role competition has led to a monstrous concentration of trusts and syndicates, and this in turn has meant a concentration of economic and social contradictions. Free competition is like a chicken that hatched not a duckling but a crocodile. No wonder she cannot manage her offspring!

Economic liberalism has completely outlived its day. With less and less conviction its Mohegans appeal to the automatic interplay of forces. New methods are needed to make skyscraper trusts correspond to human needs. There must be radical changes in the structure of society and economy. But new methods come into clash with old habits and, what is infinitely more important, with old interests. The law of the productivity of labor beats convulsively against barriers which it itself set up. This is what lies at the core of the grandiose crisis of the modern economic system.

### A Tragic Paradox

Conservative politicians and theorists, taken unawares by the destructive tendencies of national and international economy, incline towards the conclusion that the overdevelopment of technology is the principal cause of present evils. It is difficult to imagine a more tragic paradox! A French politician and financier, Joseph Caillaux, sees salvation in artificial limitations on the process of mechanization. Thus the most enlightened representatives of the liberal doctrine suddenly draw inspiration from the sentiments of those ignorant workers of over a hundred years ago who smashed weaving looms. The

progressive task of how to adapt the arena of economic and social relations to the new technology is turned upside down, and is made to seem a problem of how to restrain and cut down productive forces so as to fit them to the old national arena and to the old social relations. On both sides of the Atlantic no little mental energy is wasted on efforts to solve the fantastic problem of how to drive the crocodile back into the chicken egg. The ultra-modern economic nationalism is irrevocably doomed by its own reactionary character; it retards and lowers the productive forces of man.

The policies of a closed economy imply the artificial constriction of those branches of industry which are capable of fertilizing successfully the economy and culture of other countries. They also imply an artificial planting of those industries which lack favorable conditions for growth on national soil. The fiction of economic self-sufficiency thus causes tremendous overhead expenditures in two directions. Added to this is inflation. During the nineteenth century, gold as a universal measure of value became the foundation of all monetary systems worthy of the name. Departures from the gold standard tear world economy apart even more successfully than do tariff walls. Inflation, itself an expression of disordered internal relationships and of disordered economic ties between nations, intensifies the disorder and helps to turn it from a functional into an organic one. Thus the "national" monetary system crowns the sinister work of economic nationalism.

The most intrepid representatives of this school console themselves with the prospect that the nation, while becoming poorer under a closed economy will become more "unified" (Hitler), and that as the importance of the world market declines the causes for external conflicts will also diminish. Such hopes only demonstrate that the doctrine of autarchy is both reactionary and utterly utopian. The fact is that the breeding places of nationalism also are the laboratories of terrific conflicts in the future; like a hungry tiger, imperialism has

withdrawn into its own national lair to gather itself for a new leap.

### Bourgeois Rationalizations

Actually, theories about economic nationalism which seem to base themselves on the "eternal" laws of race show only how desperate the world crisis really is — a classic example of making a virtue of bitter need. Shivering on bare benches in some Godforsaken little station, the passengers of a wrecked train may stoically assure each other that creature comforts are corrupting to body and soul. But all of them are dreaming of a locomotive that would get them to a place where they could stretch their tired bodies between two clean sheets. The immediate concern of the business world in all countries is to hold out, to survive somehow, even if in a coma, on the hard bed of the national market. But all these involuntary stoics are longing for the powerful engine of a new world "conjunction," a new economic phase.

Will it come? Predictions are rendered difficult, if not altogether impossible, by the present structural disturbance of the whole economic system. Old industrial cycles, like the heartbeats of a healthy body, had a stable rhythm. Since the war we no longer observe the orderly sequence of economic phases; the old heart skips beats. In addition, there is the policy of so-called "state capitalism." Driven on by restless interests and by social dangers, governments burst into the economic realm with emergency measures, the effects of which in most cases it cannot itself foresee. But even leaving aside the possibility of a new war that would upset for a long time the elemental work of economic forces as well as conscious attempts at planned control, we nevertheless can confidently foresee the turning point from the crisis and depression to a revival, whether or not the favorable symptoms present in England and to some degree in the United States prove later on to have been first swallows that did not bring the spring. The destructive work of the crisis must reach the point — if it has not already reached it — where impoverished mankind will need a new mass of goods. Chimneys will smoke, wheels

will turn. And when the revival is sufficiently advanced, the business world will shake off its stupor, will promptly forget yesterday's lessons, and will contemptuously cast aside self-denying theories along with their authors.

But it would be the greatest delusion to hope that the scope of the impending revival will correspond to the depth of the present crisis. In childhood, in maturity, and in old age the heart beats at a different tempo. During capitalism's ascent successive crises had a fleeting character and the temporary decline in production was more than compensated at the next stage. Not so now. We have entered an epoch when the periods of economic revival are short-lived, while the periods of depression become deeper and deeper. The lean cows devour the fat cows without a trace and still continue to bellow with hunger.

All the capitalist states will be more aggressively impatient, then, as soon as the economic barometer begins to rise. The struggle for foreign markets will become unprecedentedly sharp. Pious notions about the advantages of autarchy will at once be cast aside, and sage plans for national harmony will be thrown in the wastepaper basket. This applies not only to German capitalism, with its explosive dynamics, or to the belated and greedy capitalism of Japan, but also the capitalism of America, which still is powerful despite its new contradictions.

The United States represented the most perfect type of capitalist development. The relative equilibrium of its internal and seemingly inexhaustible market assured the United States a decided technical and economic preponderance over Europe. But its intervention in the [First] World War was really an expression of the fact that its internal equilibrium had already been disrupted. The changes introduced by the war into the American structure have in turn made entry into the world arena a life-and-death question for American capitalism. There is ample evidence that this entry must assume extremely dramatic forms.

The law of the productivity of labor is of decisive significance in the interrelations of America and Europe,

# The Workers' Stake In Bourgeois Culture

by Trent Hutter

and in general in determining the future place of the United States in the world. That highest form which the Yankees gave to the law of the productivity of labor is called conveyor, standardized, or mass production. It would seem that the spot from which the lever of Archimedes was to turn the world over had been found. But the old planet refuses to be turned over. Everyone defends himself against everybody else, protecting himself by a customs wall and a hedge of bayonets. Europe buys no goods, pays no debts, and in addition arms herself. With five miserable divisions starved Japan seizes a whole country. The most advanced technique in the world suddenly seems impotent before obstacles basing themselves on a much lower technique. The law of the productivity of labor seems to lose its force.

But it only seems so. The basic law of human history must inevitably take revenge on derivative and secondary phenomena. Sooner or later American capitalism must open up ways for itself through the length and breadth of our entire planet. By what methods? By *all* methods. A high coefficient of productivity denotes also a high coefficient of destructive force. Am I preaching war? Not in the least. I am not preaching anything. I am only attempting to analyze the world situation and to draw conclusions from the laws of economic mechanics. There is nothing worse than the sort of mental cowardice which turns its back on facts and tendencies when they contradict ideals or prejudices.

Only in the historic framework of world development can we assign fascism its proper place. It contains nothing creative, nothing independent. Its historic mission is to reduce to an absurdity the theory and practice of the economic impasse.

In its day democratic nationalism led mankind forward. Even now, it is still capable of playing a progressive role in the colonial countries of the East. But decadent fascist nationalism, preparing volcanic explosions and grandiose clashes in the world arena, bears nothing except ruin. All our experiences on this score during the last twenty-five or thirty years will seem only an idyllic overture com-

IN THE WIDEST sense the culture of a class includes its politics. Trotsky pointed out that the culture of the proletariat is concentrated in its political struggle. The bourgeoisie had the leisure, the wealth, the education necessary for developing an artistic culture. The peasantry in many countries was able to develop a traditional folk culture because of the farmer's leisure during the winter which allowed him and his wife to devote some time to artistic occupations or crafts.

But the cultural situation of the proletariat is quite different from that of the bourgeoisie or the traditional peasantry. The proletariat has neither wealth nor adequate leisure. Its traditions are mostly political or unionist. Except in these fields its education is limited and elementary.

This does not mean that the political culture which the world working class has been able to develop is unimportant. On the contrary, we trust that this very contribution will save mankind and all its wider cultural values and possibilities from annihilation.

Perhaps some of our friends will reply: "Quite right. But apart from this political culture, cannot the working class also produce an artistic cul-

ture of its own? Don't we see painters who paint the struggle of the workers, their tribulations and heroism; writers who write novels about problems of workers and the class as a whole?"

There are, indeed, such painters, writers, sculptors, etc. However, what they produce — impressive as it may be — is not a proletarian culture. Trotsky explained in *Literature and Revolution* that the proletariat has no time to develop an art of its own and that those works of art which depict proletarian life and struggles are still rooted in bourgeois culture and are necessarily part of this culture. Even if these works of art criticize and attack the bourgeoisie, they are a product of the bourgeois world. They cannot avoid the influence of its forms, traditions and social conditions, although they may fight its ideology.

While the workers have developed forms of action and organization of their own, the anti-bourgeois artist must continue to use the art forms of bourgeois culture. A class like the proletariat whose main energies are wholly taken up in daily toil and whose brief hours of leisure are really only preparation for more toil, or at best devoted to the struggle for better living and working conditions, cannot create new art forms; for this is a long and involved process.

The Negro slaves of the South sought solace in religion and music for many years before emancipation became a realistic possibility. Thus they developed valuable elements of musical folk culture although not a fully grown culture. The situation of the industrial worker, however, is entirely different. Singing does not fit

pared to the music of hell that is impending. And this time it is not a temporary economic decline which is involved but complete economic devastation and the destruction of our entire culture, in the event that toiling and thinking humanity proves incapable of grasping in time the reins of its productive forces and of organizing those forces correctly on a European and a world scale.

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in with machines. The belt line stimulates any feelings but musical ones. When the going is rough he does not turn to song for consolation. It is true that the building of the railroads in 19th century America gave birth to some extent to "railroad" songs, and it is likewise true that the workers have fine union and revolutionary songs, but when today's industrial worker does feel inclined to sing he turns to the old folk songs that did not originate in the atmosphere of industrial mass production, or, more frequently, to the songs provided by the highly commercialized "Tin Pan Alley" for the show business.

Even after coming to power the working class will have no time to develop a new culture of its own, although its ideology will certainly dominate literature and other fields of artistic creation. The style of life generated by bourgeois society, its artistic forms, will not disappear overnight. Only the classless society of socialism that will follow the transitional period of the workers' state is bound to create an entirely new culture — new artistic forms the nature of which we cannot foresee, a flowering of the arts that will permeate the daily life of everyone, an entirely new way of life.

This culture will not be proletarian. The proletariat will have disappeared as a class; no classes will be left; no class struggle; and culture will not be the product of a class but of mankind. In his pamphlet *America's Road to Socialism*, James P. Cannon has given an excellent description of the immense possibilities and richness of that socialist culture, based on a short period of obligatory industrial work for everyone, lots of time for the development of individual talents and creative activities free from the problem of gaining a livelihood. This will open up an undreamt of perspective for the arts and sciences, for the appearance of a new human type — neither today's bourgeois or petty-bourgeois, nor today's proletarian, although socialist man will continue to cherish all that is valuable in bourgeois culture and the cultures of previous societies, all that is valuable in the traditions of the proletariat, above all its tradition of indomitable

hope, of courage, revolutionary outlook and the teachings of its greatest leaders.

### The Proletariat and the Arts

Recognizing that the concept of "proletarian culture" is erroneous, what should the working-class attitude be toward works of art today in literature, music, painting, sculpture, the theater and the movies?

It is obvious that of all these only the motion picture is thoroughly popular along with music to the extent that it is light and entertaining. We must frankly recognize that while admission prices to concerts of serious music are not prohibitive, we do not see many workers in the halls where symphonies and chamber music are played. The theater would be more popular with workers if a good network existed and productions were properly publicized. This, however, is not the case. The worker's interest in painting and sculpture is limited; and only a minority read the master works of world literature although these are now available in cheap pocket editions.

Many efforts have been made, especially in Europe, to introduce the worker to the world of the arts with its magnificent traditions. Among others, the reformists have been active in this field. Some of these efforts have had a measure of success. And it is possible that on a large enough scale they could advance the education of the working class — not creating a proletarian culture but making a good many workers more familiar with some real values generated by bourgeois and feudal culture.

Nevertheless we cannot hope that under capitalism even a generous program of popular adult education will transform the proletariat as a whole into an enthusiastic public for serious music, the fine arts and literature. The enjoyment of great works of art requires in most cases a certain effort and also education or at least self-education. If this is acquired, the effort made, the possibility opens of the richer and deeper life of the art lover. Thousands of workers, especially those in the vanguard do manage to realize this possibility despite all the handicaps. But they are the ex-

ception rather than the rule. Capitalism does not permit the average worker to become thoroughly educated. Because of this the worker who loves a Beethoven symphony or a Faulkner novel is a rare bird indeed.

Moreover, the general handicaps faced by the American worker in this respect are further aggravated by two other factors — the lack of popular cultural traditions as compared to Europe and the present anti-intellectual trend in the U.S., the constant pressure of reaction to divert interest, especially that of the younger generation, away from cultural and intellectual matters. In addition, as long as the witch hunt lasts with its tendency toward thought control in all fields we shall not see much progress in popular art appreciation.

The working-class vanguard, which has the extra energy needed for better assimilation of bourgeois culture, must become as familiar with it as possible. On the other hand we must respect the sentiments of the big majority of workers whose present artistic needs are satisfied by light music, the movies, TV shows, etc. The motion picture, for example, is the art form of the masses in our time, hence the tremendous importance of securing good films. Light music can be good music; not all of it is commercial trash. As for popular TV shows, some are very bad, the educational possibilities of TV are shamelessly neglected; the hucksters wield deplorable power; and yet — who will deny that there are a few great comedians, many talented actors, dancers and musicians on TV and at least a few educational programs worth watching?

Contempt for light entertainment is foolish. Even the socialist society of the future, we may imagine, will appreciate light music and comedy. Only it will be a part of a much wider range of artistic experience.

### Bourgeois Sophistication

When we say that the culture of our time is still a bourgeois culture and can be only a bourgeois culture until socialism is triumphant, we do not mean that today's bourgeoisie are cultured as a whole. In the era of their decadence the bourgeoisie are subject to cultural disintegration.

Some of the most remarkable works of art of this era of ours express various degrees of opposition to capitalism.

An outstanding feature of the times is the loss of that comparative unity of education which the cultural public showed in the Nineteenth and at the beginning of the Twentieth century. Traces can still be seen in several European countries, principally England, France and Italy. But in Germany it was destroyed by the anti-intellectual virus of Nazism. As in America, where the tendencies of monopolistic capitalism likewise operate most strongly, the cultural crisis of the bourgeoisie takes glaring form. It is no coincidence that it is a German historian Arnold Hauser who particularly stresses the disintegration of the cultural public in his excellent Marxist *Socialist History of Art*.

The Renaissance and Eighteenth century idea of general culture was already endangered by the rise of modern capitalism at the beginning of the Nineteenth century. Capitalism brought with it a trend toward increased specialization. Nonetheless, Nineteenth century bourgeois society still tried to combine this with the old ideal of general culture. The American bourgeoisie abandoned the ideal with more ease than the European ruling classes because the tremendous expansion of American economy made almost anything that did not directly fit into the struggle for wealth seem unimportant and because the cultural traditions of America were relatively poor and not so deeply rooted in the people as were the cultural traditions of Europe.

The cultural public of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth century were still united by the language of culture and a liberal education that included humanistic traditions. Certain quotations and allusions were understood by everyone belonging to this public, and as with the forms of bourgeois parliamentarism in politics so in the field of culture a definite standard of manners was universally accepted. The unity of the cultural public included different outlooks, ideas and tastes.

On the whole this public was quite cultured. It made an effort toward

understanding an artist or thinker. The effort was not always successful but it was seriously made; and because it was seriously made, it frequently generated heated discussions and controversies; for example, the struggle between Wagnerians and anti-Wagnerians about ninety years ago. Cultured people knew that a more complex work of art, especially in the fields of music and literature, cannot be enjoyed without a preliminary effort to get acquainted with the artist's intentions, style, method and background; and that this effort is often rewarded by an all the more profound pleasure. They still felt that art is worth that effort.

Contemporary capitalism does not favor general culture for the individual, not even the Nineteenth century norm for the individual bourgeois. The contemporary bourgeois or petty-bourgeois individual either rejects any but purely entertaining works of art, or, if he has cultural ambitions, often expresses them in a confused way, since he has not received an education equipping him for the appreciation of art, has not grown up in a cultured atmosphere or in an atmosphere of cultural ambition, has not been nurtured by solid cultural traditions and is living in a period of bourgeois uncertainty, shattered standards of values and complete separation of entertainment from serious art.

These people hardly speak a common language. They do not form a uniform cultured public. They have lost the cultured person's deep respect for artistic achievement, even if they claim to be art lovers. They are no longer willing (although there are exceptions of course) to make an effort to understand an artist's work. They judge before studying a work of art. Instead of trying to enter the artist's world, they want the artist to enter theirs and demand that he pay them with entertainment.

Since they judge a work of art before trying to enjoy it, since they consider it mainly for the purpose of judging it, and since they want the artist to enter their world instead of the other way around, they necessarily reject most of the works of art they consider. The idea that they

might not be equipped to judge a work of art or that such judgment requires a preliminary effort does not seem to enter their heads. Nor do they know that the basic purpose of considering a work of art is its enjoyment, not the attempt to find fault with it. Only when our effort to enjoy a work of art, to enter the artist's world has failed are we entitled to attempt criticism. But the sophisticated person — and it is the so-called sophisticated type of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois critic that we want to describe here — thinks much more of expressing an "original" opinion about a work of art than of an effort that may lead to its appreciation and possible enjoyment. They use art as a means to display what they fancy to be their intelligence and taste.

Sophistication has become the substitute for culture in the monopolistic phase of capitalism. The de-personalization of the individual, the conventionalism of political views and ideological outlook, the crippling effect of professional specialization on personality make the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois look for a field in which opinion can still be voiced freely without fear of reprisal, where exciting experiences and discoveries are still possible. Thus the anti-cultural forces of capitalism finally provoke some kind of reaction. However, since the bourgeois who reacts against the anti-cultural trends has lost the cultural background needed to establish communication with the artist, he merely becomes sophisticated, replacing artistic enjoyment and the cultured person's constant experience of greatness and beauty with an exercise of wit at the expense of the artist.

Comparing and judging becomes the spectator's main preoccupation with works of art. And this is done in a very superficial and narrow-minded way. The sophisticate does not aim at assimilation of a wide range of artistic experience, a more intense enjoyment of art and of life. All this requires a general culture.

### Artistic Creation And Today's Public

I hope that in stressing the main trend I will not be thought to have



exaggerated. Of course great works of art are still being created and they find an appreciative public. The cultural decadence of the bourgeoisie does not completely prevent great artists from creating master works nor does it prevent thousands of people from enjoying them. But this cultural elite, consisting of working-class vanguard elements, the more serious and promising representatives of the petty-bourgeoisie and the last remnants of the cultured bourgeoisie, is very thin numerically.

We note too that the number of record collectors interested in serious music has increased considerably with the introduction of the long-playing record and high-fidelity amplifying equipment for the home. Symphony orchestras have been organized in some parts of the country, even in smaller towns. Recognizing this as part of the reaction against conformist, anti-cultural trends, still it is quite doubtful that musical culture has actually widened much. We note, for instance, that the number of concertgoers in cities where symphony orchestras have long existed has scarcely increased. Moreover, the very gap between concert and light music — two worlds that rarely meet in our time in contrast to the Eighteenth century and before — testifies to the continued isolation of "high brow" music in America.

Apart from the movies and from light entertainment, the artist and his work have but a small public or a partly uncultured one. Artistic creation in the U.S. is taking place in something almost resembling a vacuum. It is all the more credit to the artists who continue to work despite everything and refuse to give in to discouragement. They feel somehow that in today's limited public are the forerunners of tomorrow's wider, more cultured public and that it is important to reach them.

The cultural decadence of the bourgeoisie as a class does not spell the end of noteworthy artistic achievement within the framework of bourgeois culture. The relation between the artist and the ruling class is always rather complex, particularly that between the artist and the bourgeoisie. Anti-bourgeois trends and moods have

been strong in many artists throughout the bourgeois era. Today the artist, especially the American artist, finds himself in a strange situation. The old bourgeois public with its relatively uniform culture and cultural ambitions has ceased to exist. The much broader public of the future does not yet exist. Today's artist finds himself separated from the people. In fact, for the painter, the sculptor, the composer of "long hair" music, even the writer of outstanding novels, it is the general rule. William Faulkner's name is fairly well known, but how many actually read his novels as compared to those of Micky Spillane?

The government does not encourage the artist at all in contrast to European governments who at least make a pretense at it and in some cases really help due to the European tradition of considering the artist a necessary ornament to the community.

The European tradition also grants the artist a certain leeway in political opinion that the American bourgeoisie refuse "their" artists. Not long ago the Italian President Luigi Einaudi, an anti-Communist bourgeois liberal, opened an exhibit of paintings by Pablo Picasso, a "Red." Can you imagine President Eisenhower doing that? In America no orchestras, no opera houses, no theaters are government-supported; no travel scholarships are granted talented young painters and sculptors.

Even if many artists refuse to give up, it is inevitable that their work

sometimes reflects uncertainty, searching, confusion, escapism, despair, destruction of form, or a mixture of realism and illusion. How could it be otherwise? Very few are able to approximate clarity in a period of confusion.

In the Nineteenth century the cultural aspirations of the American bourgeoisie were far more ambitious than today. Shakespearean actors toured the frontier West and the rough miners of Central City, Colorado, built a splendid opera house. But American culture was still largely based on importation of foreign culture and native art remained comparatively undeveloped. Today the great majority of American people stand aloof from culture, but the cultural life of America is incomparably richer than in the Nineteenth century. American literature, including the drama, has conquered an international position, as has its symphony orchestras and ballet troupes.

The development of the arts in the U.S., already remarkable considering the artist's difficulties, points to the overwhelming height of artistic achievement a socialist America promises. Socialist culture will be more artistic, will put greater emphasis on all the arts than any previous culture, including ancient Greece and the Italian Renaissance. For the first time the entire population will actually become identical with the art public; for the first time art will become a necessary part of everyday life.

## BY LEON TROTSKY

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# Early Years Of the American Communist Movement

by James P. Cannon

## Origins of the Labor Party Policy

March 17, 1955

Dear Sir:

I think there is enough evidence to establish beyond dispute that the initiative for a positive attitude toward a prospective labor party in the United States came from Moscow. Just when the decision was first made by the Comintern, and the specific steps taken by the American party in the process of putting the policy into effect, are not so easy to sort out.

My own recollections are far from clear. It had been my impression that the definitive decision of the Comintern on this question was made only at the time of the Fourth Congress at the end of 1922. I think the statement of the Foster-Cannon group, published in the *Daily Worker* of November 26, 1924, to the effect that the Comintern's approval was obtained "mainly on the strength of the information supplied to the Comintern by our delegates" — was intended to refer to the discussions in Moscow at the time of the Fourth Congress, and not to an earlier discussion.

It may be that the earlier 1922 American delegation — Bedacht and Katterfeld — discussed the question at the Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern in February-March, 1922, and that some sort of directive issued from the discussion. But I have no recollection of it.

I don't remember the labor party statement issued by the American party in May 1922. Prior to my departure for Moscow about the middle of that month, I have remembered only general talk and general sym-

A student who is doing research work on the history of early American communism asked James P. Cannon, as well as other participants, a number of questions about the events and prominent figures of the pioneer movement. Cannon's answers, which began in the summer 1954 issue of *Fourth International*, are continued here.

pathy for the idea "in principle" but no concrete action to implement it. But now that you refresh my memory, I would say you are probably correct in your guess that the meeting of the Conference for Progressive Political Action in February 1922 stimulated the first action by the party. I recall a conversation on the subject with Lovestone, initiated by him. By party standards at that time, we were both "right wingers," looking for all possible openings for the party to break out of its isolation and become a factor in American life. That was probably his reason for approaching me first.

Lovestone said the party should try to get into this CPPA movement some way or other. I was sympathetic to the idea, although it had not occurred to me until he brought it up. I don't recall anything concrete being done before I left for Moscow. But reconstructing the evolution of the question, it is probably safe to assume that Lovestone continued to press his idea after my departure and that his persistence contributed, first to the affirmative statement on the labor party question published in the *Worker*, June 24, 1922 and, later, to the deci-

sion to send Ruthenberg to the second conference of the CPPA in Cleveland, in December 1922.

In my memory, therefore, Lovestone stands out as the initiator of the first positive proposal to approach this CPPA movement, which led, in a chain of circumstances, to the Chicago Farmer-Labor convention of July 1923, arranged by a collaboration of the Workers Party with the Fitzpatrick leadership of the Chicago Federation of Labor.

\* \* \*

It must be remembered, however, that in the meantime Pepper had become a factor in the affairs of the American CP — and what a factor! — and that he undoubtedly was the driving force in all the labor party experiments and adventures thereafter. When he entered the situation, the production of ideas and decisions was put on a whirling conveyor and things really moved. I recall now that toward the end of 1922, or early in the next year, before he had his feet wet in the country, he wrote a pamphlet on the problem of the labor party in America. This pamphlet was widely distributed in 1923 as an exposition of the party's position.

I was outside all these developments during my long stay in Moscow, and again for many months on my tour after my return. For that reason, I had no direct part in the decisions, but I was involved in them by a general sympathy with every move in an outward direction, even at the risk of opportunist errors to which, I must admit, I was not very sensitive at that time.

I do not recall that the question of the labor party was a specific issue between the liquidators and the leftists. But the liquidators had a more affirmative tendency to expand party activity and were undoubtedly the initiators of all the concrete moves, even if the leftists did not specifically oppose them. By the middle of 1923 the "Goose Caucus" of the leftists had been demolished and any opposition from its few recalcitrant members wouldn't have counted for much anyhow.

As far as I know, all the liquidators went along with the various decisions that led up to the organization of the July 3 convention at Chicago. The differences within their camp became

serious, and took definite form, only after the catastrophe of the July 3 affair.

Yours truly,  
James P. Cannon

## After the 1924 Elections

March 22, 1955

Dear Sir:

Here are some brief comments on matter-of-fact questions in your letters of December 21 and February 28, not specifically dealt with in my long letter of March 17.

After the 1924 presidential election, as I recall it, the Ruthenberg faction (still master-minded to a considerable extent by Pepper from Moscow) wanted to continue the old labor party policy as if nothing had happened. We considered the labor party a dead issue for the time being and were opposed to any policy that would lead to the creation of a caricature of a labor party under communist control without any mass base in the trade unions.

In one of my articles in the *Daily Worker*, in the public party discussion after the November 1924 election, I stated that we were not opposed to the labor party in principle but conditioned our support of the labor party slogan on the existence of a mass sentiment for it in the trade unions. There's no doubt, however, that we did bend the stick backward in the course of the conflict and that we began to show a decided sectarian trend. I think it fair to say that Bittleman's influence came into play in this situation more than at any other time.

Foster himself was the initiator of the proposal to drop the labor party slogan, on the ground that the movement lacked vitality and that it would be a waste of time and effort to try to build a shadow labor party which in essence would be a mere duplicate of the Communist Party. I repeat, Foster was the initiator of this change of policy; but we all readily agreed with him. The change was accomplished without difficulty in all the leading circles of our faction. As I recall it, there were some objections from the Loreites such as Zimmerman (now a vice-president of the ILGWU).

It was also Foster who initiated the proposal to drop the candidates of the

"Farmer-Labor Party" nominated at the St. Paul Convention in June 1924 and to nominate our own party candidates instead. On this we also followed Foster's lead, and the Ruthenberg group went along without opposition.

In general, the main initiative in determining the policy of our faction, from the time of Foster's return from the Comintern Plenum of April-May 1924 until the conflict within the faction over the Comintern cable at the 1925 Convention, came from him. I went along in general agreement. But I did not share the sectarian twist which Bittleman and Browder tended to give to the policy, and was careful to emphasize in my writings during the discussion that our opposition to the labor party at the given time was based on the lack of mass sentiment for it and was not put as a question of principle.

I believe Foster tended to go overboard a little bit in the direction of Bittleman's slant, but this was probably due more to overzealousness in the factional struggle than to real conviction. Foster was no sectarian. While Foster and I were in Moscow in the early part of 1925, Bittleman and Browder were running things in the party, and I remember that we were both quite dissatisfied with the sectarian trend they were manifesting.

I probably had less difficulty in accepting the Comintern decision in favor of a continuation of the labor party policy than Foster did. In retrospect it appears to me now that this decision of the Comintern was dead wrong, as were virtually all of its decisions on the American question thereafter. After the internal struggle broke out in the Russian party, the American party, like all other sections of the Comintern, became a pawn in the Moscow game and Comintern decisions on national questions were no longer made objectively. But that is the wisdom of hindsight. I was a thoroughgoing "Cominternist" in those

days and it took me three more years to get the picture straight.

I didn't know what was really going on in the Comintern, and I can't recall than I even knew of any differences between Trotsky and Zinoviev on the American question. It may be true that Pepper was in reality Zinoviev's agent, and that Zinoviev yielded to Trotsky on the La Follette question to avoid a showdown on an inconvenient issue. Trotsky's polemics against the Zinovievist policy on the so-called "Peasants' International," and the whole business of seeking to build a communist party by maneuvers with petty-bourgeois leaders of peasant movements, later revealed a big controversy around this point.

I did not get a grasp of this dispute until I first saw Trotsky's "Criticism of the Draft Program" (published later in America under the title *The Third International After Lenin*) at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928. As I have related in my *History of American Trotskyism*, I was preoccupied with "our own" American questions at that time and did not know, or even suspect, that the fate of our party was so directly involved in the Russian party struggle.

## Lore

I didn't know Lore very well personally and never had close relations with him, but I always thought he was a very likeable fellow. His tradition was that of the pre-war left Social Democracy. I don't think he ever felt really at home in the Comintern, or that he ever became an all-out communist in the sense that the rest of us did. As I recall it, he interpreted the united front policy of the Comintern favorably as a step toward reconciliation and reunification with the Second International and not as, among other things, a means of struggle against the Social Democrats.

I think his opposition to the "Third Party Alliance" was determined by his left social-democratic orthodoxy on the question of the peasantry. I don't know whether he was influenced by Trotsky in his position or whether he knew what stand Trotsky was taking in Moscow on this question. I doubt it.

Lore's political tendency in general

was to the right. In the first stages of the fight in the Russian party, Lore, like some others in Europe, supported Trotsky under the mistaken impression that his opposition represented a revolt against the "leftism" of Zinoviev. Lore's later evolution showed very clearly that he was no "Trotskyist" in a political sense. Looking back now, there is little doubt that the Comintern blasts against Lore were motivated by his original declaration in favor of Trotsky and not, as alleged, by his policies in American affairs.

I don't think the La Follette policy was the only or main reason for Lore's break with the Ruthenberg-Pepper group and his support of the Foster-Cannon group. He was decidedly anti-Pepper and against "maneuverism" in general. He was also anti-Zinoviev, but whether he considered Pepper Zinoviev's agent or not, I do not know.

Lore was popular in the party ranks in New York but not decisively influential in a factional showdown. He was a supporter of the Foster-Cannon faction but was never a decisive member of its inner councils. The two strong factions between them completely dominated the party. This state of affairs confronted Lore and his sub-group with the necessity of making a choice; there was no prospect whatever for his group to contest with the others for party control.

I think his determining reasons for supporting us were that he considered us more American, more proletarian trade-unionist, and therefore more capable of establishing the party as a factor in the real life of the country.

### Third Party Convention

The Third Convention (1923) took place before the extensive organization of caucuses of the factions in the party ranks. Probably a majority of the delegates came to the Convention uncommitted. As the delegates straggled into town on the eve of the Convention, both factions worked industriously to secure their allegiance. I suppose I was most active and effective on this front for our faction and Lovestone for the Pepperites.

The general disposition of the ma-

ajority of the delegates in our favor, and their dissatisfaction with the Pepper regime, became fairly evident before the formal opening of the Convention. The election of Bittleman as Convention Chairman at the first session, by a decisive majority over the candidate of the Pepper faction, indicated a Convention line-up which was never changed during the subsequent debates.

We made no special efforts to win the support of Lore and the Finnish leaders and offered them no special inducements. That would not have been necessary in any case; they indicated their preference in the first discussions with them before the Convention was formally started.

I recall that they were pleased at the prospect of Foster graduating from his position as trade-union specialist and taking his place as a party

## The Beginning of the Degeneration

March 31, 1955

Dear Sir:

### Fourth Plenum of the Comintern

I did not attend the Fourth Plenum of the Comintern in 1924. We had no report of it except that given by Foster. This was not so much a report on the Plenum as on the decisions on the "American Question." At least, that's what we were primarily interested in and that's all I remember. We had been prepared for the decision against the "Third Party Alliance" by previous letters from Foster as well as by a telegram directly from the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

I don't recall that anybody in either faction raised any objections to the decision. We were pronounced "Cominternists" at that time and Comintern decisions, especially those on political questions, were accepted as coming from the highest authority and as binding on all. Both sides were far more interested in the question of party control, and what bearing the Moscow decisions might have on that, than in the La Follette question.

I don't recall that anybody in the top caucus of our faction got excited about the Comintern's criticisms of Lore. He had been with us, so to speak, but not of us; we did not feel responsible for him as an all-out

leader, and that they strongly objected to Bittleman having a prominent position in the new leadership. In fact, they objected to Bittleman altogether. This was in deference to Olgin and his supporters in the Jewish Federation, who were closely associated with Lore, and who had had plenty of trouble with Bittleman.

Foster was impressed and worried by this opposition to Bittleman. Foster was always ready to dump anybody who was under fire, but I learned of his addiction to this annoying peccadillo only later. At the time, I attributed his concern in this matter to his unfamiliarity with party affairs and party people, and he yielded to my insistence on Bittleman. The Loreites finally accepted Bittleman as a "concession" on their part.

Yours truly,  
James P. Cannon

member of our faction. It is true that he had supported us in the Convention, but in his daily practice he acted pretty much as a free lance. He had his own little principality in the *Volkzeitung*, and his own ideas, and he expounded them freely from day to day without consulting us.

We took the Comintern's political criticisms of Lore, like all its other political pronouncements, for good coin and thought it was up to Lore to straighten himself out with the Comintern. At the same time, it can be safely said that we would have paid no attention to Lore's "deviations," and most probably would not have noticed them, if they had not been pounced on in Moscow. I am sure that it did not occur to any of us at the time that the strictures against Lore were in reality motivated by factional considerations in the struggle against Trotsky in the Russian party and in the Comintern.

\* \* \*

I believe it would be risky to say flatly that "the beginnings of anti-Trotskyism coincide with the beginnings of pro-Stalinism" in the American party — or for that matter, in the Russian party and in the Comintern. That's the way it worked out, but the process by which Stalin came to complete domination was gradual

and insidious, and all the more effective because of that.

I do not recall that we identified Stalin as the leader of the Russian majority in 1924 as much as Zinoviev, who was the Chairman of the Comintern with whom the party had had the most direct dealings.

The opposition of Trotsky had been represented to us as the revolt of a single individual against the "Old Guard" of Lenin who constituted the Central Committee of the Russian party, the official leadership. We knew nothing of any differences within the ruling group at that time. Stalin came fully into prominence in our understanding only after the split between him and Zinoviev, and even then Stalin appeared in alliance with Bukharin, with the latter as Chairman of the Comintern.

It may be that the conflict between Zinoviev and Stalin within the camp of the Russian majority was already being prepared in 1924 and that the Ruthenberg faction, which had Pepper in Moscow as a representative and source of information, knew what was pending better than we did, and were better prepared to jump on the new bandwagon before it started rolling. But even at that, they were not sharp enough to break with Bukharin in time, and this hesitancy cost Lovestone his head in 1929.

### **Fifth Plenum of the Comintern**

I attended the Fifth Plenum of the CI in 1925 together with Foster. Both factions had their delegates in Moscow weeks in advance of the Plenum. Our work there before the Plenum consisted chiefly of an endless round of interviews with various leading people in the Comintern, particularly the Russian leaders, in an attempt to gain their support.

The eventual decision was pretty clearly intimated beforehand. I soon got the chilling impression, and I think Foster did too, that the position of our faction was far weaker in Moscow than at home, and that we couldn't do anything about it. The other faction had the advantage there. With Pepper as an active representative, busy in the apparatus of the Comintern, the Ruthenberg faction seemed to have the inside track.

Bukharin was particularly outspoken in favor of the Ruthenberg faction and acted like a factional partisan. So also did the leftists then representing the German party, particularly Heinz Neumann. Zinoviev appeared to be more friendly and impartial.

I had the definite impression that he wanted to correct our position on the labor party question without upsetting our majority, to restrain the majority from any suppression of the minority, and in general to slow down the factional struggle. I remember him saying to Foster at the end of one of our talks, in a friendly, persuading tone: "Frieden ist besser." If I remember correctly, we did not see Stalin and did not know that he was becoming the real power behind the scenes.

\* \* \*

My memory is not too sharp about the details of the negotiations and proceedings that led up to Zinoviev's original proposal that "the new Central Committee [of the American party] is to be so elected at the Party Conference that the Foster group obtains a majority and the Ruthenberg group is represented proportionally at least by one-third."

Foster was jubilant about the proposal, but I wasn't. The idea that the composition of the American party leadership should be arbitrarily fixed in Moscow did not sit well with me, even if we were to be the beneficiaries of the decision at the moment. In arguing with me Foster emphasized the point that it would guarantee our majority control of the party. He was more interested in the bare question of party control than I was at that time, and this difference between us — at first apparently a nuance — grew wider later on.

I was disturbed because I had become convinced in our discussions with the Russians, that we had made a political error in our estimate of the prospects of a labor party in the United States, and I was most concerned that we make a real correction. With inadequate theoretical schooling I was already groping my way to the conception, which later became a governing principle, that a correct political line is more important than any organizational question, including the

question of party control.

Looking back on it now, in the light of later developments in the United States, I think the evaluation we had made of labor party prospects in this country, and our proposals for party policy on the question, were far more correct and closer to American reality than those of the Ruthenberg faction. Even the 1925 Comintern decision on the question, which was more restrained and qualified, was away off the beam. But at the time I was convinced by the arguments of the Russians, and perhaps also by the weight of their authority.

There was hardly a trace of a genuine labor party movement in the United States in the ensuing years, and the feverish agitation of the party around the question, based on the Comintern decision came to nothing. This was tacitly recognized in 1928 when the party again nominated its own independent candidates for President and Vice President and relegated the labor party to a mere slogan of propaganda.

### **The "Parity Commission" of 1924**

The decision of the Comintern to set up a Parity Commission to arrange the Fourth Convention of our party, with Gusev, a Russian, as chairman, was manifestly a decision against us, for in effect it robbed us of our rights as an elected majority. I do not think Zinoviev was the author of this decision; it was far different from his original proposal. His acceptance of the parity commission formula manifestly represented a change on his part, and probably a compromise with others who wanted to give open support to the Ruthenberg faction.

After the arrival of Gusev and the setting up of the Parity Commission — Foster, Bittleman and Cannon for our faction, Ruthenberg, Lovestone and Bedacht for the other side — the elected Central Committee and its Political Committee, as such, virtually ceased to exist. All questions of party policy, organization matters, convention preparations and everything else were decided by the Parity Commission, with Gusev casting the deciding vote in case of any disagreements.

Within that strict framework the struggle for Convention delegates

proceeded furiously. Gusev proclaimed a strict neutrality, but he gave us the worst of it whenever he could do so neatly and plausibly. The fact that under such conditions we gained a majority of 40 to 21 at the Convention, is the most convincing evidence, I think, of the real will of the party members to support our majority and to reject the Ruthenberg group, which should more properly be called the Ruthenberg-Lovestone group, with the latter playing an increasingly important role in the struggle.

I think the beginning of the degeneration of the internal life of the party, from conflicts of clearly defined political tendencies, which had characterized all the previous factional fights since the beginning of the movement in 1918, into an increasingly unprincipled struggle of factional gangs, can be traced to the year 1925.

As far as political issues were concerned, the situation in the party, in the period of preparation for the Fourth Convention, could be approximately described as follows: Both sides had accepted the Comintern decision on the labor party, which had favored the Ruthenberg position with some important modifications. The trade union policy of Foster had been accepted by the Ruthenbergites. From a political point of view there really wasn't much to fight about. This was shown most convincingly by the circumstance that the Parity Commission agreed unanimously on both the political and trade union resolutions, the former written for the greater part by Bittleman and the latter by Foster.

The party members had only one set of resolutions before them, and they accepted them unanimously all up and down the party. Normally, such unanimity should have called for a moderation of the factional atmosphere, a trend toward the unification of the contending groups in the leadership, and toward the liquidation of the factions. But that's not the way things went. The factional struggle raged more fiercely than ever before in the history of the party — over the issue of party control.

The debate over political issues, insofar as there was such a debate, could deal only with nuances and factional exaggerations. There was not

much for the party members to learn in that kind of a fight, and not much satisfaction in it for conscientious communists who hadn't forgotten the great ideal they had started out to serve. I believe I already began to feel at that time that we were all caught in a trap; and that the only sensible thing to do was to look forward to a liquidation of the factional gangs and an agreement of the leading people to work together in a united leadership.

But the task in hand at the time was to secure a majority for our faction in the Convention, and I worked at that as earnestly as anyone else. We won a two to one majority in the fight for delegates on a strict basis of proportional representation. But it didn't do us any good.

### The "Cable from Moscow"

As the drawn-out Fourth Convention in the summer of 1925 was nearing its end, Gusev called us to a meeting of the Parity Commission to hand us the famous "cable from Moscow." This cable stated that "the Ruthenberg group is more loyal to the Communist International and stands closer to its views," and prescribed that the Ruthenberg group should be allotted not less than 40 per cent of the representatives in the new Central Committee. That was a sudden blow for which we were in no way prepared, a blow calculated to put one's confidence in the Comintern to a rather severe test.

My immediate reaction was to wait, to say nothing there at the session of the Parity Commission. As I recall, Bittleman also kept silent. But Foster exploded with a statement that he would not accept the majority under such conditions, that the Ruthenberg group should take over the majority of the new Central Committee, and that he personally would not accept membership. I decided immediately to oppose such an attitude but did not say it there. I think it was on my proposal that we adjourned the meeting to report the cable to the majority caucus of the Convention delegates who were assembled and waiting for us.

This was the one time that Foster, Bittleman and I went straight into

a caucus meeting without prior consultation and agreement among ourselves as to what we would recommend. I don't know why we skipped this customary procedure, but that's the way it happened. Foster seemed bent on taking his defiance directly to the caucus and I was no less determined to oppose it.

He had no sooner reported the cable to the caucus and announced his decision to let the Ruthenbergites have the majority in the Central Committee, to which he would not belong, than I took the floor with a counterproposal that we lock up the new Central Committee on a 50-50 basis, with each faction sharing equally in the responsibility in the leadership.

Dunne supported my position, Bittleman and Browder supported Foster. Abern and Schachtman spoke for my proposal. Johnstone and Krumbein spoke for Foster's. One by one, as the ominous debate proceeded, the leading people from all parts of the country took positions, and the split of our faction right down the middle began.

\* \* \*

It is an effort to describe this stormy conflict in tranquillity thirty years afterward, without the embellishment of hindsight wisdom; to report it as it really happened, what we did with what we knew and didn't know and with the sentiments which actuated us at the time.

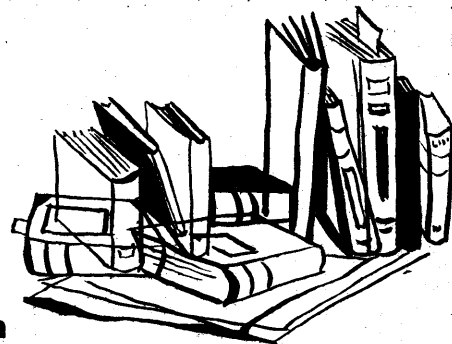
As I have remarked previously, I was then a convinced "Cominternist." I had faith in the wisdom and also in the fairness of the Russian leaders. I thought they had made a mistake through false information and that the mistake could later be rectified. I did not even suspect that this monstrous violation of the democratic rights of our party was one of the moves in the Moscow chess game, in which our party, like all the other parties in the Comintern, was to be a mere pawn.

I thought Foster's attitude was *disloyal*; that his ostensible willingness to hand over the majority to the Ruthenbergites, and to withdraw from the Central Committee himself, was in reality designed to provoke a revolt of our faction against the Comintern.

(Continued on page 35)

# On the Politics Of Outer Mongolia

by Joseph Hansen



**Nationalism and Revolution in Mongolia**, by Owen Lattimore. With a translation from the Mongol of Sh. Nachukdorji's **Life of Sukebatur**, by Owen Lattimore and Urgungge Onon. Oxford University Press, New York. 186 pp. 1955. \$4.75.

The history and politics of Outer Mongolia are not exactly high on the list of subjects of popular interest in America. In fact to most Americans Outer Mongolia is still as remote as, say, Korea once was.

But in December the Mongolian People's Republic was in the headlines, forcing political attention; and everyone interested in world affairs had to consider the problem of its bid for membership in the United Nations and Dietator Chiang's veto of that bid. The political provincialism characteristic of America thus got another jolt — although not as rude as some it has received — from the peoples clamoring for recognition and equality on the planet we share with them.

Lattimore's book, appearing at the height of the squabble in the United Nations, could scarcely have been more timely. Unfortunately, its timeliness surpasses its substance — at least the substance that might have been expected from the author of **Inner Asian Frontiers of China**. Lattimore himself apologizes for the "defects" in his study. He explains that it "had to be completed in odds and ends of time when I have been much preoccupied with legal and political matters."

This is an obvious reference to his painful victimization at the hands of the McCarthyite witch hunters and must certainly be borne in mind in appraising the book. We can readily agree that the lack of rounded analysis should be charged up to the fascist-minded Senator from Wisconsin who sought to imprison this specialist because he really knows something about the Far East, particularly China and Mongolia. Yet a more rounded treatment, I believe would only have deepened some of the defects I have in mind, since to Lattimore they appear to be anything but defects.

Before coming to the points of difference, however, the joint translation by Lattimore and Onon of the **Life of**

**Sukebatur**, which takes up half the book, should be considered. According to the jacket, "This is probably the first translation of a contemporary Mongol book to be published in a Western language." Carrying the imprimature of the Propaganda and Enlightenment Bureau of the Central Committee of the Mongol People's Revolutionary Party, it is an official biography of the Sun Yat-sen of Mongolia together with a build-up for his now deceased successor the Stalinist Choibalsang.

Published in 1943, the **Life** fits into Moscow's propaganda line during World War II — advocacy of nationalism, "people's frontism," and subordination (really abandonment) of the class struggle. The Stalinist author Nachukdorji shapes Mongolia's history of nationalism and revolution since 1911 to this pattern. He does so largely by projecting the line into the image he constructs of Sukebatur as national saviour. The closeness with which the biography mirrors the real life of Sukebatur is therefore questionable, to say the least. Sukebatur, of course, is in no position to defend himself, having died in 1923, unfortunate victim of "cunning doctors" who, if we are to believe the Stalinist author, dosed him with "poisoned medicine."

Despite the heavy demands of Stalinist hagiology and Moscow's general line, something of the turmoil and revolution in Mongolia since 1911 seeps through. There is nothing extraordinary about this. To exploit the revolutionary sentiments of the masses, Stalinist bureaucrats must talk as well as lie about revolution. That is how they attract and try to hold the following needed as part of their political stock-in-trade.

## "Urgently Contemporary"

Lattimore's essay is an attempt to account for production of the biography of Sukebatur. It is also an attempt at a basic explanation of the politics of Outer Mongolia; and, more important, an attempt to generalize the explanation so that it applies to all the satellites in the Soviet orbit.

In the opinion of Lattimore "the political life of a country like Mongolia is not only real politics but urgently con-

temporary politics. If this cannot be understood by modern Western men, it is not only Mongolia but the whole of Asia that cannot be understood."

Amplifying this in his conclusion, Lattimore declares: "If the topics that have here been discussed lead up to anything, as an introduction to a political document that was originally designed not to influence foreign opinion but to affect the thinking of the Mongols themselves they lead, I think, to the conclusion that Mongol politics are not an exotic study. There is much here, I suggest, that can be applied to improve our understanding of how other peoples are likely to act who have newly entered or are just entering the world of modern politics. Many of these peoples, but by no means all of them, are in Asia. At first sight, when reading in the Mongol and Russian sources about 'monarchists,' 'feudalists,' 'reactionaries,' 'new bourgeois' and so forth the terminology seems fantastically doctrinaire and unreal, when the events take place within a society primarily of herdsmen, with no industrial proletariat, no native private capital invested in industry, and almost none in trade. In terms of the potentials involved, on the other hand — the setting of a trend in one direction and not in another — it can be seen that the issues of the last few decades of Mongol politics have been real issues and the controversies real controversies."

The essential facts underlined by Lattimore are the survival into the twentieth century of medieval conditions and a medieval psychology in Asia, the breakdown of these conditions and psychology and the rise of revolutionary nationalism at a grass-roots level. He offers the **Life of Sukebatur** as proof. His aim is to convince the powers that be in America to recognize these facts, to accept them as irreversible, and to shape American foreign policy accordingly. It was this political position that got Lattimore crossed up with McCarthy and the China Lobby crowd. His hope to influence the trend in the direction of capitalist instead of socialist development was taken by the McCarthyites as proof that he was a master "spy." All he was really guilty of, in thinking that imperialist capitalism might be persuaded

ed to foster democratic capitalism in the colonial areas, was utopianism.

In his eagerness to stress the revolutionary nationalism apparent in the *Life of Sukebatur*, Lattimore misses something of at least equal importance — the significance of the specifically Stalinist character of the document. Moscow's policy is to contain, or at worst control, revolutionary nationalism, subjecting it to the conservative interests of the Soviet ruling caste. Hence the biography is forced to play down the initiative of the masses, the inherent drive of their movement toward socialism, and the 1917 revolution in Russia as a pattern for achieving national freedom. From this we can conclude that the revolutionary potential in Mongolia must be, in general, considerably higher than the biography, taken at face value, would lead us to believe.

If this is true for Outer Mongolia, it can be taken to hold true elsewhere in the Far East. The validity of this hypothesis is demonstrated empirically by what happened, for instance, in China, Korea and Indochina. To paraphrase Lattimore, the study of Stalinism is not "exotic." By putting Stalinism aside — which we can do if we know what it is — we are also able to put aside a considerable amount of distortion and thus reach a much clearer comprehension of the facts as they really are.

### Lattimore's Thesis

This defect in Lattimore's analysis leads him astray in something even more fundamental. Despite the rise of nationalism and revolution, Outer Mongolia's capacity for genuine independence, he holds, is quite low. How explain this contradiction?

"The outlook not only of nobles and high lamas but of the common people and the leaders who were beginning to emerge among them was still confined within the framework of a feudal society," says Lattimore; "and the feudal society was still so much the only known form of society that even 'independence' could only be thought of in feudal terms."

This meant specifically that the top feudal personages, besides ruling the base of society's "pyramid," required a "patron" themselves in order to move "with assurance in the ordering of their domestic affairs."

Thus when the Chinese revolution of 1911 swept the Manchu dynasty into the ash can of history, the rulers of both Tibet and Outer Mongolia were impelled by their feudalistic type of thinking to seek a new patron.

"It is a habit of thinking in dual terms of authority over those below and the backing of a patron which explains why it was in the outlying territories of Tibet and Mongolia, where the most autonomy had survived, that the Dalai Lama for Tibet and the Jebtsundamba Hutukhtu or

Living Buddha of Urga for Outer Mongolia, backed by the great princes, reacted instinctively or automatically to the fall of the Manchus not by striking out boldly for a full independence but by searching for a new patron. The Dalai Lama turned to England, or rather to the British government in India, and the Mongols to the Tsar because the need of a patron was a habit of their political thinking."

Lattimore comes to a far-reaching conclusion:

"This analysis leads up to the new suggestion that I should now like to make: that the habit of thinking I have just described permeated the whole society of Mongolia, and not just the hereditary class of nobles and the self-perpetuating class of high lamas. It also affected the new leaders who were beginning to emerge among the common people. They were at a loss how to move from mere rebellion to real revolution involving great economic changes and a sweeping redistribution of power socially until they, too, were able to move with the assurance—and moral assurance was as important as assurance in the form of arms and other aid — of being backed by a patron of their own. This patron was the new revolutionary order in Russia."

Four reasons convince Lattimore that this is the right analysis: (1) There were practically no "intermediate, evolutionary stages in Outer Mongolia between rebellion and true revolution. They jumped suddenly from rebellion to revolution when the Russian Revolution provided them not only with inspiration, and not only with a model for action and a standard for creating new institutions, but with a political patron." (2) "... Russian writers about the Mongol Revolution are so often smug, complacent, and — to use the appropriate word — patronizing." (3) "Unwavering personal loyalty is one of the good and admirable characteristics of the feudal cast of mind..." The Mongol feudal heritage can be seen in the "frank loyalty" of a Choibalsang, who was no "sycophant," toward his "Russian backers." (4) "It helps to explain the fact that the satellite relationship of Outer Mongolia to Russia has been less troubled by conflicting nationalisms than that of any other Russian satellite."

Lattimore believes that this approach "throws light not only on the Mongol satellite relationship but on relations between Russia and other satellites, and provides the beginning of a method for analyzing the range of differences among satellites, instead of discussing them, as is usually done, as if they had been uniformly subjugated under a new colonialism as possessions of a new Soviet imperialism."

However, Lattimore is not so much interested in the range of concrete dif-

ferences as in the abstract characteristics of satellites in general. (He compiles a list in a two-page chapter, "Anatomy of Satellitism.") That is because he wants to stress the importance of Outer Mongolia as "the pilot model of the contemporary Soviet satellite state."

As a complement to this analysis, Lattimore believes it "necessary to make a corresponding analysis of the peculiarly delicate and quick response of politics in a satellite country to political changes in the protector, or patron, or dominant country, for this response is of the essence of satellite politics and distinguishes it from colonial politics and the puppet politics of, say, a country like Manchukuo under the Japanese. An independent analysis is especially needed because the whole subject is treated by both Mongol and Russian writers in a way that is so stereotyped as to be virtually meaningless."

### "The Track of the Orbit"

Lattimore notes the following phases in what he calls "the track of the orbit in satellite politics":

(1) In 1919-1920 when the Bolsheviks sought the defeat of Kolchak, Semenov and other counter-revolutionaries and an end to foreign intervention, "the principal activity of Soviet policy was to give the Mongols military assistance in driving out the remnants of Chinese forces . . . together with Ungern-Sternberg and the other 'White' Russians." The same period saw Sukebatur and Choibalsang organizing their political party and Partisan detachments. "What was useful to the Russians at this juncture was Mongol unity — something that could not be attained, or could not be attained quickly enough, through revolution against the existing government, conservative and even reactionary though it might be."

(2) In 1920-1923 when the New Economic Policy permitted a temporary and partial return to capitalist relations in the Soviet Union, the right wing of the People's Revolutionary Party came to the fore in Outer Mongolia. These were bourgeois proto-types.

(3) In 1924-1927 when Trotsky led the Leninist internationalists against the usurping bureaucratic caste headed by Stalin, the factional struggle was reflected in Outer Mongolia. "These were the years in which the Revolutionary Youth League came near to being an independent second party, and the fact that it was regarded as more Left than the senior People's Revolutionary Party may perhaps indicate that it was in this Mongol group that Russian Trotskyism found its echo." But it was also a period of "Right deviation," reflecting Stalinist support of Chiang Kai-shek in China.

(4) In 1929-1932 when Stalin took over the program of the Trotskyist Opposition calling for industrialization and planning in the Soviet Union and pushed it to a



bureaucratic absurdity, "the Mongols entered on their 1929-32 course of spectacularly unsuccessful attempted collectivization." (The rudimentary state of Mongol industrialization and the incapacity of the Soviet Union to supply surplus machinery doomed the move.) The adventure was so devastating that in 1932 it was abruptly reversed. The correct course was declared to be "gradual development toward noncapitalism." In the quarter of a century since, no attempt has been made to renew the experiment and Outer Mongolia still retains the structure of a "people's democracy."

(5) In the Thirties the bloody purge in the Soviet Union was faithfully reflected by a similar purge in Outer Mongolia. The turn toward "people's frontism" was likewise mirrored in this buffer state as Japanese imperialism invaded and occupied Northeast China and Inner Mongolia.

All this appears to offer substantial confirmation of Lattimore's basic thesis. It must be admitted, moreover, that a rough parallel can be drawn between the developments in Outer Mongolia and those in the other satellites in the Soviet orbit. However, it does not require much analysis to show that Lattimore's approach is superficial.

### American Feudalism?

Consider, for instance, his assumption that the so-called patron-satellite relation reduces in the final instance to a feudal mentality so far as the satellite is concerned. What about the struggle over patronage that is such a big part of machine politics in the United States? Does that reduce to a feudal mentality? Was "frank loyalty" toward Pendergast evidence of Truman's feudal cast of mind? Or take the politics of the union bureaucracy in America. It is shot through with the "patron-satellite" relation. Was Beck's servile attitude toward Tobin a reflection of feudal economic relations persisting in the United States in the Twentieth century? Does the feudal environment of Taunton, Mass., explain a Foster's taste for Stalin's shoe polish? We might even take the case of an enlightened expert on the politics of the Far East who seeks the patronage of the State Department. Does he thereby display his feudal mentality?

Suppose we admit that the urge to find a patron is really something properly belonging to the Middle Ages. How does it advance us an inch in understanding the politics of a Truman, a Beck, a Foster, a Lattimore? Still worse, isn't it a bit — to use the appropriate word — patronizing to use this broad standard solely in explaining the politics of a . . . Choibalsang? On what grounds are the primitives in imperialist America exempted?

Shifting from feudal-minded individuals to the feudal structure of the country as a whole will not save Lattimore's theoretical tent from collapsing. In both World War I and World War II, and the period between, all the small European countries, even though they enjoyed advanced capitalist structures, were pulled toward either German or Allied imperialism. In some countries the opposing attraction was reflected in balanced factions of the capitalist class. Even where opposition to German imperialism was part of the "nationalism" of a capitalist class, being conquered by Hitler was sufficient to convert the foreign dictator into a "patron." In perfect symmetry to each other stand King Haakon and Quisling, De Gaulle and Petain, typical political representatives of capitalist factions that in Lattimore's logic would have to be called "feudal" in outlook since they sought "patrons" outside the country in order to move "with assurance in the ordering of their domestic affairs." The truth is that the patron-satellite relation, albeit with modifications, applies as much to the capitalist as to the Soviet orbit.

Lattimore's basic concepts, taken perhaps unwittingly from the idealist school, thus lead only to mystification. To understand Mongolia and the whole of Asia, indeed politics on a world scale, we need a consistent materialist approach. Our fundamental basis must be the world's major economic system, capitalism itself. It is their experience with this system that fundamentally determines the mental outlook of the Asian masses. And their judgment of what to expect from it fundamentally determines their politics.

### The Basic World Reality

The outstanding fact about world capitalism today is its decay. The Asian masses do not need to be propagandized about this. They learned about it in the hard school of colonial oppression, under the "tutelage" of the Kuomintang and the heel of Japan's imperialist armies. Even if they did not take lessons personally, they have heard enough to draw a few common-sense conclusions.

Next in importance to the decay of capitalism is its weakness. The capitalist classes did not succeed in uniting against the Soviet Union and the colonial peoples. Instead, they tore at each other's throats in World War II. All of them ended up with gaping wounds and some with considerable loss of limbs.

In World War I the only real victor was America. Britain, although on the winning side, came out on crutches, as did France and the other Allied powers. In World War II America won, but as the head of a ravaged world economic system, emerged greatly weakened in relation to the Soviet Union and the colonial peoples.

Apoplectic rattling of the H-bomb does not compensate for this weakness. It only arouses fright and stirs the masses to more determined defensive action to prevent a Third World War.

To this we must add the really colossal fact that the Soviet Union not only defeated the German imperialist invasion, it came out of World War II as the second world power. The reasons for this spectacular rise from semi-Asian backwardness were perfectly clear to the oppressed peoples throughout the colonial areas. Credit was due to the planned economy made possible by the October 1917 Revolution.

Is it any wonder then that tens of millions of people in Asia, as an expression of "frank loyalty" to the Soviet Union, attempted to follow the path thus blazed out? That many of them still lived under feudal conditions actually facilitated this course, and not just because they were oppressed. Free from capitalist reflexes, they found it no great feat to step right across capitalism — at least in their consciousness — and see the possibility of building a better world than the one offered by the dying order of capitalism. That is why, in accordance with the law of combined development long ago noted by Marxists, their rebellions have tended to develop into "true revolutions," turning the direction of Asian politics toward socialism without the "intermediate, evolutionary stages" of capitalism expected by a Lattimore.

Rejection of capitalism and longing for socialism are the two sides of the reflection in the minds of the Asian masses of the reality facing the world since the end of the war. Without taking this as the point of departure you can understand nothing about the politics affecting the bulk of humanity today.

The Third Chinese Revolution, one of the great consequences of these trends, become in turn a force tending to deepen and confirm them. The success in disposing of Chiang Kai-shek and beating off his imperialist backers demonstrated afresh to every fighter for freedom that his own aspirations were not illusory but completely realistic. Foreign capitalist support of Chiang, on the other hand, serves as a constant reminder of what this system means in life for Asia.

### The Role of Stalinism

The appreciation by the colonial masses of the revolutionary meaning of the Soviet Union is perfectly understandable. The masses, however, ran into an unexpected and enigmatical paradox. They sought revolutionary leadership from the Soviet Union. They found instead a conservative ruling caste headed by a dictatorial regime fearful of their revolutionary aspirations but interested in what they might bring in the stock market of international diplomacy. Instead of furthering revolutionary nationalism, as

you might conclude from Lattimore's book, the Stalinist regime has done its best to contain and exploit it.

At the same time it must be stressed that fearful as they are of revolution because of the possibility that it will sweep them aside, the Stalinists make it an axiom of policy not to be outflanked from the left. Under enormous mass pressure they can be forced to go much further than their plans call for. This has been exemplified above all in China. Moreover, in face of great danger, as in World War II, they are capable of giving an impulse to revolution. However, these possibilities do not constitute the axis of Stalinist politics.

The existence of a conservative ruling caste in the Soviet Union is a fact that cannot be escaped. Its reactionary politics flow from its parasitic economic interests. Its regime is not the same as that of the workers in the time of Lenin and Trotsky. The truth is that it is the political opposite of the Bolshevik regime which it destroyed. To differentiate between the Soviet Union and its regime is not easy for the masses. Their tendency is to identify the two.

Thus we come to another component of Asian politics — the effect of Stalinism. This is visible in distortions of the struggle for socialism so enormous they tend to vitiate and derail it where they do not cut it off outright. The history of nationalism and revolution in Outer Mongolia is a case in point.

Furthermore, Stalinism assists the national bourgeoisie in Asia in taking on the protective coloration of "socialism," giving us a still further complication.

Lattimore's interest in feudal mentality as an ingredient in politics should attract him to a study of the origin of Stalinism. He will discover that one of its roots happens to be Russia's feudal heritage, which the Bolsheviks could not overcome without the help from abroad that was denied them. If he followed the study through to the end, Lattimore — no doubt to his surprise — would find that the feudal mentality of the Stalinist "patron" has a great deal to do with the attitude of the unfortunate Stalinist satellite recipient of "patronage," particularly after the patron has had a few years in which to suppress opposition and build a servile machine as in Outer Mongolia.

The politics of the Soviet satellites simply cannot be understood at all without understanding Stalinism. The typical satellite, although Lattimore seems to have failed to note this, is one occupied by Soviet troops. Sooner or later in the occupied area, the bureaucracy to assure its rule is compelled to extend its own economic base.

The immense power of the Stalinist regime, the variety of forms of bribery at its disposal, its intolerance of political opposition or expression of inde-

pendent opinion, its ruthless use of witch hunts, frame ups, purges and terror through the occupying troops and secret political police are sufficient to explain the type of regimes existing in the satellite countries.

The point in brief is that while the movement away from capitalism and toward socialism must be sought in the general conditions of world capitalism, the particular form of the satellite

## How Honest Is Honest Weight?

by Paul Abbott

The Story of Standards, by John Perry. Funk & Wagnalls Co., New York. 271 pp. 1955. \$5.

A pound equals a pound. Nothing could be more obvious than that.

Yet suppose you let the pound of whatever you weighed stand around for a while and weigh it again. Will it be the same?

The substance, of course, might change between weighings. Let us discount that. Can you be sure the scales are the same? That they haven't changed between weighings? Can you even be sure that "the pound," which the scales are supposed to put up as "the standard," remains without change in a world where everything changes? Are you sure it hasn't grown or shrunk? In fact are you sure you know precisely what the pound in itself is?

Of course, you may agree that all this can be of some practical interest perhaps when it comes to checking up on the butcher's scales or arguing with his attorney in court, but outside of such cases the question reduces to a mere quibble over terms, or at best involves hairsplitting questions of theory remote from the real world of precision weights and measures where science rules.

Not so fast. A precision inch equals a precision inch. Then how do you explain the strange fact that the British "inch" is no longer precisely the same today as the American "inch," although both British and Americans agreed on what an inch is, and took the best care to keep that inch fixed? Despite all the precautions, over the years a difference developed in the standard, a difference that has grown big enough to be troublesome to scientists and engineers of the two countries using "the same" measurements.

Or take time. No matter what difficulty we may have in determining an hour precisely, we can tell when 24 of them have passed by noting the moment when a fixed star again crosses the zenith after a previous observation. That gives us our standard of Naval time. But now astronomers have become convinced that the earth's spin is irregular. "It is slow-

regimes originates in Moscow. To hunt for an explanation in the "feudal" outlook of Moscow's agents, dupes and victims really takes us out of theory into the realm of farce.

We expect a doomed ruling class to give up thinking; but need a Lattimore follow suit? The irony of it is that a victim of the witch hunt should carry frank loyalty to an ungrateful patron to such extreme lengths.

ing down, losing about one second in 6,000 years. What is worse, its rate of spin varies a little, a variation of about one part in 25 million, for reasons not yet fully understood.

"One part in 25 million isn't much, about 0.003 second per day, but it is more than enough to make scientists unhappy. Their present methods and instruments are capable of substantially greater precision, but only if they can be related to an even more precise standard."

A more precise standard has been chosen. It is the vibration of the nitrogen atom in the ammonia molecule: 23,870,100,000 cycles equal one second. All you have to do is count the vibrations to determine an exact second — that is, scientists expect, exact within one part in 10 billion.

Most of John Perry's book deals with problems of scientific standards in today's world of incredibly exacting demands in measurement. That and the political barriers that have been placed in the way of achieving increasingly better standards, beginning with medieval England and the early days of the American Republic and culminating in the infamous scandal of 1953 when Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks sought to purge the National Bureau of Standards because of its unfavorable report on a commercial battery nostrum named "AD-X2."

By way of background to today's problems, Perry sketches the history of standards. For instance, the "pound." The principal one bequeathed us from Anglo-Saxon times was the mint pound, derived from the German apothecaries' pound. "This was the pound of the moneyers, the king's private coiners, and while men might tamper freely with other standards, this one was protected by the king's wrath." The standard one from which copies were derived was kept at the Tower of London and so become known as the Tower pound.

In addition "there was also the merchants' pound, which, generally speaking, was a fourth heavier, thus containing fifteen Tower ounces. Another pound, much used in cross-Channel trade, contained sixteen Tower ounces."

"Raw silk was bought by an 18-ounce pound. Dyed wool was sold by a 15½-ounce pound." The Troy pound was brought from France. In England it contained 12 ounces; but in Scotland it contained 16 ounces. Among still other pounds some had as much as 27 ounces.

Edward III pressed for acceptance of an old French commercial pound, the one we use today, the pound avoirdupois. He succeeded in introducing it but not in eliminating the others in his day. In fact the struggle for standard weights and measures in Britain took some 500 years before success could be said to have been achieved.

This slow development was not due to the inherent difficulty of finding a standard; it was due — Perry does not bring this out — to the resistance of the rising capitalist class, precisely the class that most required exact standards. Each capitalist sought his own gain at the expense of the others and therefore was inclined to oppose fixed standards. At the same time the needs of his class as a whole impelled their eventual adoption.

How the existence of several standards fits the individual outlook of an enterprising merchant can be gathered from the fact that for many years, according to Perry, coal dealers in England and America bought by the long ton of 2,240 pounds and sold by the short ton of 2,000 pounds.

In his final chapter, the author intimates that fraud in weights and measures is still common in America. West Virginia, one of the few states to name names in its annual report on this subject, "has a chamber of horrors, where confiscated short-weight packages are on display; and the collection includes some of the best-known brands of coffee, soaps, meat products, beans, motor oil, flour, baking powder, spices and canned vegetables."

The book is interesting and instructive, yet it does not measure up to the promise implied in the title. It is more the story of the National Bureau of Standards and its role in two world wars than the story of standards. The importance of coinage in the development of standards is scarcely indicated. The contradiction in the capitalist outlook toward standards is never really explained or developed.

At first one might feel inclined to ascribe this weakness to the author's lack of a scientific standard in presenting his subject and to refer him to, say, Marx's treatise on money in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* for an example of scientific presentation of a subject included in Perry's field of interest.

But on second thought, the trouble seems to be not so much lack of a standard as possession of a false one. In dealing with the ambivalent attitude of Congress toward the development of

more precise standards, its virtual sabotage in fact of the National Bureau of Standards in recent years, Perry displays the very political "caution" he ridicules in the legislators. In his final chapter where he indicates that fraud in weights and measures is fairly common today, he follows the same discreet course of avoiding names. Even in his defense of scientists who have been victimized by the witch hunt, his stand-

ard appears to be to step on as few political corns as possible.

This unseemly caution is no doubt in consonance with the norms of liberalism today. But in the age of the atomic clock something better is called for. An author who is so clearly interested in the development of scientific standards owes it to science to examine his own social and political outlook a bit more scientifically.

## Labor Leaders on Automation

by Robert Chester

**The Challenge of Automation.** Papers delivered at the National Conference on Automation. Public Affairs Press, Washington, D. C. 77 pp. \$2.

On April 14, 1955 the National Conference on Automation convened in Washington under the auspices of the CIO Committee on Economic Policy. The major purpose of the conference, as revealed in the speeches, was to build up the pressure for a Congressional investigation of the impact of automation on the economy.

Invited to present papers were Senator Joseph C. O'Mahoney, John Diebold, editor of the magazine *Automatic Control*, Donald Campbell of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Walter S. Buckingham Jr., Associate Professor of Industrial Management of Georgia Institute of Technology. In addition to these papers the book contains the addresses of Walter Reuther and six other CIO union officials.

Significantly absent were any spokesmen of industry. As a result the book is one-sided in its expression of the different views on automation. However, the book is of value as a record of the views of the labor leaders.

Heads of represented unions — auto, steel, electrical products and telephone — give the facts on the effects of automation in their industries. Some of it is striking. Walter Reuther reported that "Already obsolete are those auto plants that can turn out a complete engine block, fully machined, in 15 minutes. They are obsolete because there are plans on the drawing board to do the same job in 10 minutes with not a human hand touching it."

James Carey of the International Union of Electrical Workers described an "Autofab" machine that will "assemble in a little more than a minute the same number of multiple-part electronic units that it now takes a worker a full day to assemble."

All the labor spokesmen indicated fear of the effect of automation on jobs. They posed a series of demands — not to

answer the basic problem — but only to ease the immediate shock. Reuther admits that his demand for a Guaranteed Annual Wage was designed to tide the worker over his first period of technological displacement. "... it will mean, when automation does replace a worker, that during the period of his guarantee, he can be retrained and go through the process of being relocated without the impact of unemployment being a burden on him and his family."

All the viewpoints — those of Senators, technical experts, economists and labor leaders — begin from the same major premise: that capitalism can solve the problems posed by automation "if properly handled." "We can prove it not by pious declarations," Reuther said, "but by working together..." All that is necessary they held is, to promote adequate government regulation.

The utopian nature of Reuther's stand was underlined by the Senate-House Economic Subcommittee Report hearings held in Washington in Oct. 1955. There the spokesmen for the National Association of Manufacturers demanded no interference by the government in Big Business use of automation. Despite the plaintive protests of Reuther and his cohorts, the Subcommittee Report issued on Dec. 11 stated: "... no specific broad-gauge economic legislation appears to be called for."

Throughout the entire CIO conference the fact that stood out clearly was that no one, in industry, government or labor had any definite predictions on the effects of automation. As long as they begin from the premise that the interests of labor and industry are in common, and that the government stands over them as an impartial administrator, they can not even begin to analyze the real impact of automation. Only a class analysis, beginning from the opposing interests of the working class and capitalists, can do this.

The conclusion that arises from reading this book is that when a real analysis of automation will be made it will be done by a Marxist.

## ... From Our Readers

(Continued from page 2)

ship of the American communist movement.

A comment relayed to us is perhaps typical of the reaction: "It will be a strange twist of fate if these historical recollections live long after most of Cannon's other writings have been forgotten. The odd thing is that these memories seem very much alive, whereas I find difficulty reading the doctrinal controversies of the thirties. Even his style strikes a fresh, inviting tone."

What seem to us to be some of the finest and most instructive of all the letters are yet to appear. Readers who have been following "Letters to a Historian" with special interest can count on a real treat in coming issues.

The judgment "fresh, inviting" applies, too, we think to Cannon's article in the current issue "The Debs Centennial." The contrast is to the ballyhooed ritual staged a few months ago by various circles, where hypocrisy vied with ignorance and misunderstanding of Deb's true importance. In our opinion Cannon's article submits a necessary correction for the record.

"The Debs Centennial" was conceived by Comrade Cannon as a companion piece to his appreciation of the IWW which appeared in the summer issue last year. The two articles are scheduled for publication in pamphlet form.

We regret that we could not complete the series by Plekhanov on Belinski in this issue. Due to circumstances beyond his control, the translator was unable to complete his work in time for us. However, it is definitely promised for the next number.

Plekhanov's presentation of Belinski and the development of his philosophical views appears to have met with a somewhat mixed response from our readers. We knew that it would be welcomed primarily by people particularly interested in the Marxist approach to rather deep philosophical problems, and we expected that most others would be indifferent to it. The warmth of the pro and cons surprised us.

A. S. of Long Beach, Calif., for instance, wrote us: "Thanks for a great magazine. Your article on Belinski and philosophy is a little too high brow. Give us more articles that us ordinary mortals can understand. Jim Cannon's articles are tops. He writes for us plain guys."

On the other hand H. B. of Seattle reports a reader "who is very excited" about the series on Belinski and who asks us each time we call "if the new FI with the next installment is here yet and urges us not to forget to bring it to him as soon as it arrives."

Wm. J. of New Jersey wrote us:

"Just finished reading the second installment 'Belinski and Rational Reality.' Genuinely glad there will be another part in the next issue of the magazine.

"Knowing both Plekhanov and Belinski in the original, I could not stop admiring the conscientious work of your translator. He obviously has a profound understanding of the work of the two authors, else he could not have translated the above into English so well.

"It is really a tribute to the translator and to your magazine."

G. B. of Detroit, we suppose, reflects the sentiment of those especially interested in studying Marxist philosophy. He suggests that we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Plekhanov's birth, which is in 1956, by publishing the article on Belinski as a pamphlet.

"You need not run off millions," he writes; "they won't sell fast but they'll sell steadily." In his opinion the pamphlet would be appreciated by Marxists throughout the English-speaking world.

To us that seemed a happy idea and we are going to see what can be done about putting out a 100th anniversary edition of this work by the Marxist teacher of whom Lenin said, "It is impossible to become a real communist without studying, really studying, everything that Plekhanov has written on philosophy, as this is the best of the whole world literature of Marxism."

## ... Early Years

(Continued from page 29)

Foster made the dispute between us a question of confidence in himself personally, as the leader of the faction. This hurt him more than it helped him, for the communist militants in those days were not the regimented lackeys of a later day. There was outspoken resentment at Foster's attempt to invoke the "follow the leader" principle.

I felt that I was fighting for the allegiance of the party to the Comintern, and I think the majority of the delegates who supported my motion were actuated by the same sentiment. The final vote in favor of my motion, after an all-night-and-next-day debate, not only ended Foster's revolt against the Comintern—and I repeat my conviction that that was the real meaning of his proposal to "step aside." It also ended all prospects of his ever realizing his aspiration to rule the American party with a group of subordinates who would support

him out of personal loyalty and serve in an advisory capacity, something like a presidential "cabinet," but leave final decisions to him.

\* \* \*

I had thought that the adoption of my motion for a 50-50 Central Committee would stalemate the factional struggle, make each faction equally responsible for the leadership, and compel them to work together until the situation could be worked out with the Comintern. I was not permitted to nurse that childish illusion very long.

When we went to the first meeting of the new 50-50 Central Committee, the Machiavellian Gusev made another contribution to what might be called "The Education of a Young Man" who had a lot to learn about the ways of the Comintern in the post-Lenin era. Gusev blandly announced that while the agreement was for a parity Central Committee he, as Chairman, would feel obliged to follow the spirit of the Comintern decision and support the Ruthenberg group.

That meant, he said, that the Ruthenberg faction should have a majority in the Political Committee and in other party bodies and institutions. So it turned out that Foster's caucus proposal to hand over the majority to the Ruthenbergites was actually carried out in practice, and my proposal to freeze the committee on a parity basis was deftly frustrated by Gusev.

If I admit that I went along with this treacherous double-play and still refused to have any part in any revolt against the Comintern, it is not to claim any credit for myself. I write down this distasteful recollection now simply to show that devotion to the Comintern, which had originally been one of the greatest merits of the pioneer communists, was being turned into a sickness which called for a radical cure.

That sickness, on my part, hung on for three more years and affected everything I did in the party. It was not until 1928 that I took the cure, but with the help of Trotsky, I took it then for good and all.

Yours truly,  
James P. Cannon

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