Only Fight for Socialism Can Defeat Fascism

Unity of Workers and Middle-Class Groups Vital

By LEWIS COREY

ALL people of decency, good will and progressive aspirations are horrified by the savagery and crimes of fascism.

Fascism is a monstrous glorification of the irrational, extolling prejudice, giving "scientific" sanctions to hatred, and twisting history to justify the most obscurantist ideas.

From the angle of the intelligent person, fascism is simply raising irrationalism into a challenge to all that civilization has achieved thru centuries of struggles and progress.

That is all true. But it is only part of the truth. And we must understand the whole truth if we are to understand and effectively fight fascism.

For the hatreds, the psychopathic feelings, and the brutality of a nation are not erected into a state system simply because of the irrationalism that they involve. Those sentiments existed before the triumph of fascism. Why do they come to power at a particular moment in history?

Behind the irrationalism of fascism, or rather behind its appeal to the irrational, there are definite rational purposes. The purposes are reactionary and barbaric, but they are still rational from the angle of the interests that those purposes serve.

INTERESTS SERVED BY FASCISM

The interests served by the irrationalism of fascism are dominant class and caste interests. They are the interests of the dominant economic class of capitalism, which wants to preserve its vested rights. And there are the interests of groups which, baffled by the decline of capitalism and the permanent economic crisis that it brings, reject a progressive solution of our problems and accept the program of fascism.

The cumulative character of capitalism, the tendency for wealth to be concentrated in the hands of financial and industrial leaders and the accompanying impoverishment of the lower classes, sharply cleaves the classes in society and makes a basic change in social relations essential. The ruling groups are willing to endure the expense and limitations of fascism as long as they retain their position of dominance. The threat of overthrow, bred by economic stress, forces the ruling class to crystallize its control of the government by forming a military police state—thus arming itself against social eruption from below.

The economic crisis is the starting point of any analysis of fascism. In post-war Germany, there was an economic crisis which could not be solved by the old parties. Neither the old bourgeois parties nor the labor parties were able to solve the crisis, to promote economic activity, to provide employment for millions of people out of work. The depression of the 1930's made matters worse. Unemployment multiplied and conditions became worse.

Along with the economic crisis came the greater inability and incompetence of the existing political parties to use that crisis to move onward toward a solution of economic problems and to a more equitable form of social organization. Reactionary interests and millions of despairing people turned to fascism. The Nazis rode the wave into power.

There was a split in the German labor movement. And there was, in addition, a split between wage workers on the one hand and salaried employees, professionals and peasants on the other. These two splits helped fascism come to power.

Most tragic was the split between the wage workers and the "new" middle class of salaried employees and professionals. The labor movement made no definite appeal to that "new" middle class, and that class, unable to rally to a progressive struggle, moved over to fascism.

In our own country, today, we, too, have an economic crisis. For nine years now we have been tormented by depression or incomplete recovery. There are still 10,000,000 unemployed people, with tens of thousands of our young people graduating into unemployment, unable to use the skills for which they have been trained. They are denied a living and society is denied their services.

Economic crises in the past have always thrown their burdens upon the manual workers. The white-collar workers, the salaried employees and professionals, were largely exempt. But, in the recent depression, and now in our permanent economic crisis, the "new" middle class of salaried employees and professionals has been hit almost as hard as the manual wage workers.

CRISIS IN AMERICA

That is something new in our history, and it is fraught with the utmost significance for the future. The economic position of this section of the middle class becomes identical with that of the industrial wage earners.

Small merchants are steadily losing their positions because of the growth of monopoly forms—a process which is accelerated by fascism.

Unless the middle class unites with the wage workers to defend their mutual interests, this country will be driven in the direction of fascism.

We cannot fight fascism by standing still. We cannot avoid the destructive totalitarianism of fascism by simply defending the status-quo against its onslaught.

It is necessary to move onward to new measures of social-economic organization, to broaden and deepen democracy if we are to prevent the menace of fascism arising in our country.

Fascism serves its rational reactionary purposes by means of irrationalism. We must serve the rational progressive purposes of the people by a rational appeal and struggle that moves onward beyond the economic and social limitations of the existing system.

And, in this struggle, the interests of the manual wage workers and of salaried employees and professionals are one and the same. They will both gain from the defeat of fascism; they will both gain from a new social order that makes possible the full utilization of our productive resources for purposes of peace, that broadens and deepens democracy instead of destroying it.

The unity of all constructive and creative workers is necessarily progressive. Reaction must destroy or limit human rights; it must move backward toward barbarism because the existing economic system has ceased to be progressive. It cannot halt the decline in the standard of living. Society can no longer benefit from private exploitation of technological progress. Capitalism is actually forced into further decline as a result of technological unemployment. Its retention is possible only by the destruction of all that is progressive and aspiring in our civilization. But any unity of the constructive and creative workers is necessarily progressive, since their interests compel them to organize society on terms that will increase abundance and strengthen democracy.

But remember this: Fascism is essentially an effort to maintain and defend a system that has ceased being progressive and has become reactionary. We cannot prevent fascism by striving to maintain that system which is in decline and decay, which cannot progressively solve its economic problems. We must go beyond the existing system, to a new social order of plenty and peace, of economic as well as political democracy. The struggle against fascism is a struggle against declining and decaying capitalism.

(*This article first appeared in the December* 19, 1938 *issue of* Avukah Student Action.—Editor.)

Lenin's Personal Side

(We publish below a very interesting impression of Lenin as a man, from the pen of Dr. Klemperer, one of the German specialists who treated Lenin in his last illness. Dr. Klemperer is now in the United States. These paragraphs are taken from a letter of his to the New York Times *of February* 5.—Ed.)

I AGREE with Mr. Denny in his judgment of Lenin's character. I should like to confirm from my own experience that "he had the qualities best suited to win not only respect and admiration but affection." I looked forward to my first meeting with him with some apprehension. After all that I had heard from many Russian refugees in Berlin, I expected to find a rude, bloodthirsty man, but to my great surprise I found a quiet, reserved and polite man with the air of a philosopher.

I saw him in his bedroom, a large plain apartment which contained only an old iron servant's-bed, a plain desk, many wooden chairs and a table covered with books. There were no decorations or pictures on the walls, no rugs. One saw that this man lived according to the principle that no one is allowed privileges. When I saw him again in June of the same year, 1922, he was established in the magnificent country estate of the former Mayor of Moscow, where he hoped to find rest and relaxation. But he did not live in the fine house itself; instead he lay in a poor room of a small house near by which had been used by servants.

I was forced to argue with him that his health would suffer in this room before he would permit himself to be taken to the larger house. There he lay in a spacious, airy room which was elegantly furnished. When I allowed him to leave his bed for the first time, he slipped on the parquet floor and fell. "This is what happens," he said, laughing, "when a proletarian lives in a palace."

He was very informal and cordial with his physicians, especially with Dr. Alexander Lewin, who was then the chief physician of the Kreml Hospital and always accompanied me on my visits to Lenin. Even tho this gifted physician did not belong to the Communist Party, he spoke in very enthusiastic terms of Lenin's human qualities. Dr. Lewin was one of the victims of last year's purge in Moscow.

When I think back on my days in Moscow I am particularly impressed with Lenin's freedom from racial prejudice. He made no distinction between the various races and nationalities which were present in Russia. Among the most outstanding officials, I found also men of German descent, Jews, Letts, Armenians and many others. The Social Revolutionary who attempted to assassinate him was a young Jewess. Neither Lenin nor any other official made the point that others of her race might be responsible or punishable for her crime.

From my personal contacts I gained the impression that he was a highly inspired idealist who sought the best for his people. I agree with Mr. Denny that Lenin was fortunate in dying early, before he saw the unhappy outcome of his gigantic experiment.

GEORGE KLEMPERER

The AMA Medical F

Top Group Fights

By MEDICUS

THE American Medical Association is the official organization of doctors in the United States. Being the organization of the general practitioners and specialists, it would naturally be expected to defend the interests of all the doctors; but this is not the case. For various reasons, the general practitioner, who is the majority, is very seldom found among the convention delegates, among the members of the House of Delegates, or even in the less important committees. It is only the "aristocrats," the $25 and $50-a-visit men who lead the A.M.A. These "aristocrats" look down with disdain on the laborers of the medical profession — the general practitioners.

It is very interesting to note that, if you talk of socializing the bread industry, the baker-magnates say that they have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the industry and that you can't take their property away from them. But talk about socializing medicine, and our lords of the A.M.A., our medicine-magnates who grow fat on the sweat and blood of the population with their exorbitant fees, will fight you to the last drop of blood in the name of medical ethics, progress of science, the best interests of humanity, etc., etc. And in the best interests of humanity, the A.M.A. was against accepting a million-dollar grant from the government for cancer research—because it would discourage private contributions . . .

The A.M.A. is still against the government's national-health program because it is not the government's business to worry about the nation's health. What does the A.M.A. care that, as Dr. Parran, surgeon general of the United States, points out in the New York Times of January 7, 1938, "forty million people in the United States are unable to provide themselves with medical care during serious illness. . . . The country is short of 360,000 hospital beds."

The A.M.A. does not seem to be

BOUND VOLUME
WORKERS AGE: 1938

Please order yours immediately at $1.75 per volume

WORKERS AGE
131 West 33rd Street
New York City

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

to the

WORKERS AGE

$1.50 per year $.85 for six months

I enclose $1.50 for a year's subscription ☐
.85 for a six month's subscription ☐

Name .....

Address .....

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