

Problems of Socialism In the Modern World

(This is the first of a series of six articles by one of America's leading Marxists, under the general heading of "Problems of Contemporary Socialism.")

By HAIM KANTOROVITCH

Once upon a time social revolutionists were deeply interested in the technic of revolution. The building of barricades, mining of bridges, preparation of explosives, etc., were problems constantly under discussion in revolutionary circles.

These discussions, however, belong to an age now past. There are still individuals, especially among the Communists, who glibly discuss the building of barricades, but they are considered anachronisms, even by their own comrades. Marxian realism has put an end to these discussions. When, however, some Socialists therefore draw the conclusion that Marxism is essentially non-revolutionary, that Marx and Engels discarded the idea of social revolution in the latest phase of their development, they are wrong.

Old Never Abdicate

Marxism is revolutionary through and through. Neither Marx nor Engels has ever discarded the idea of social revolution, nor could they have done so without discarding their belief in the dialectical nature of the social process. Nature, as well as history, they argued against the evolutionist-gradualists, proceeds by "jumps," by sudden cataclysms.

The word "sudden" may not be correct here. These "sudden cataclysms" are not really sudden. They are the result of a long chain of slow development, of a long chain of accumulation of quantitative changes. At a certain stage in this process, these quantities suddenly become a new quality. Neither in nature nor in society are these transformations of quantities into qualities easy or peaceful. The old never simply abdicates. No thing that is alive, whether useful or harmful, dies willingly. It clings to life, it fights for its existence. Inorganic matter fights for its existence by resisting destruction, living beings by fighting back.

Nothing Eternal

Whatever has outlived its natural function and therefore its usefulness, has no chance in this fight, but it will fight, and fight hard. The superiority of the new is precisely the fact that it is new. It has the promise of tomorrow as its guiding star. The old has tradition behind it, the strength of centuries. It has its forces trained and ready. At times it may seem as if the old will triumph, but this is an illusion. It may have temporary victories, but a permanent victory is prohibited by nature itself. Nothing is eternal, nothing is inimitable, nothing is immortal. Everything is changeable, finite, mortal. What is must always make place for what is to be.

Poets may decry this tragic fact of reality, sentimentalists may shed tears on the fact that whatever lives must die, but this is nature's way, this is how she manages her domain. Nature does not know of life without death, of light without darkness, of sweet without bitter, of good without bad. Everything has its opposite, and it is the clash of opposites that drives life forward, and gives life to new systems. Society, like an individual, has its childhood, its youth, its old age, decline and death. A skillful doctor can, in some cases, prolong the life of a dying man for a short time. Fascism is attempting this for capitalist society. It may succeed for a while, it may score a temporary victory, but it cannot stave off its inevitable death.

Bloody Struggle

Capitalism was born of the inner contradictions and social struggles of feudalism. Its triumph

over feudalism was determined in advance by the fact that feudalism had outlived its social function and usefulness. It was a bitter and a bloody struggle, interspersed with revolutions and counter-revolutions. In the process of these struggles, it not only changed the political and economic order of society; it also had to destroy and replace the type of civilization and culture which had grown up under feudalism.

In its fight against feudalism, it not only faced the feudal state, which served feudalism, just as the capitalist state serves capitalism; it faced an even more powerful enemy, feudal culture—a system of traditions and institutions, deeply rooted ways of life and thinking. It had to destroy and replace feudal religion, feudal art, feudal philosophy and morals, along with the political and economic system of feudalism. A new ruling class cannot replace an old class in one field only. No class struggle can be confined to economics only, or to politics only. These cannot be separated. They are branches of the same tree, they have the same roots. Every new class plants its own tree, and destroys the former tree, root and branch. Capitalist culture did not arise suddenly. It had to fight, and fight hard, for its existence. It had the same birth pangs that proletarian culture is having in our time.

Bourgeois Culture

At that time capitalism was young, progressive and revolutionary. Out of the turmoil of ideas accompanying the growth and victories of the bourgeoisie the newer materialistic philosophy rose, and the ideal of individual liberty and political democracy flourished. It is true, the pen is more far reaching than the hand. Many of the ideologists of the young bourgeoisie, went much further than the practical leaders of the new ruling class thought either necessary or safe, and came into conflict with the very class which they were unconsciously serving. Others went so far in their revolutionism that Marx found it possible to connect his own proletarian philosophy directly with theirs, and simply by continuing their work, to arrive at conclusions of which these bourgeois philosophers never dreamed (as in the case of the French materialists and historians of the 18th century).

This, however, does not lessen their importance as builders and creators of that most powerful weapon of bourgeois society—bourgeois culture. That capitalism, becoming conservative and reactionary in its later development, which is to forget, and wherever that is impossible, to disparage its early ideological protagonists, only testifies how ungrateful a victor

California Sees S. P. Lone Hope; Epic Plan Fiasco

STOCKTON, Calif. -- Political winds in California are again blowing toward the Socialist Party. A large group of Epic Democrats in this city has voted to join the Socialists en masse, and throughout the state a loss of faith in Roosevelt is turning labor toward Socialism.

The Sinclair campaign took from the Socialists a large portion of their normal vote and even some of their party members, including the leading right wing spokesmen, Stitt Wilson and John C. Packard. But now the tide is turning, and Sinclair's enthusiastic praise of Roosevelt is proving a boomerang to him now that the President's popularity is waning.

The recent State convention of the Socialists in Bakersfield found them more united than at any time in months. Despite a rumor published in an Eastern paper that the California Socialists might secede from their national organization, obviously calculated to provoke strife in a party that has been waging an uphill battle for two years, the convention voted approval of the principles and policies of the national organization without a dissenting voice or vote.

At one meeting alone the California Socialists raised three-fourths of their quota in the United Socialist Drive for funds. Members of the new state executive committee are: Raymond Henderson, chairman, Gardner Wells, Julius Levitt, Ben Sands, Milen Dempster, Samuel S. White, Alan Clark, and Clarence Rust.

may be to those who helped him gain the victory. But it cannot change historic facts.

Ivory Tower

To define capitalism as Stuart Chase does (Nation, July 25, 1934) as resting on "private ownership of the means of production" is correct only from the point of view of ivory tower economics (and there are ivory tower economists even among Socialists). For those who are engaged not only in analyzing and understanding capitalism, but in fighting it, this definition is dangerously narrow.

Capitalism is not only a system of production and distribution of wealth; it is capitalist civilization, capitalist culture, law, morals, etc., built on the economic foundations of capitalism, and serving the interests of capitalism. To reduce the definition of capitalism purely to its economic basis as a certain system of production and distribution of wealth, means reducing the class struggle also to this basis.

Not Social Reform

We must admit that under the influence of social reformism which has reigned supreme since the war in some of the most important Socialist parties in Europe,

Socialists Active

Kansas City

KANSAS CITY, Kan. -- This packing-house and railroad center is being stirred to its depths by militant Socialist activity. The Central Labor Union and the Socialists have set up a joint legislative council which has capitalist politicians worried.

Led by H. R. Rentfrow, a former I. W. W. and now chairman of the Socialist party labor committee, the packing-house workers are moving toward a strike. Rentfrow is business agent of the Amalgamated Association of Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen.

The Socialists are also influential among the teamsters and the railroad trainmen, switchmen and shopmen.

San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO, Texas. -- Pecan shellers in San Antonio, whose pay averages less than 50 cents a day, are organizing with the aid of Harry Plampin, local Socialist secretary. Most of the pecan shellers are Mexicans, a number of whom belong to the Mexican branch of the Socialist Party.

Cleveland

CLEVELAND, Ohio. -- Socialists and trade unionists will demonstrate together in Cleveland on May Day for the 30-hour week and unemployment insurance, and against the rising threats of war and fascism.

A call for a preparatory May Day conference has gone to all local unions signed by James McWeeny, president of the Metal Trades Council. Robert Dullea, Socialist state secretary; Max Hayes,

this definition has gained wide acceptance. It is a very convenient definition. It allows one "to fight" for economic reforms, while at the same time remaining a respectable member of bourgeois society. How often one hears the complaint of these respectable reformers, "What has nationalization of industry to do with religion, art, morals, or philosophy? Of course, nothing."

There certainly is no connection between religion, art and philosophy and the nationalization of certain industries. The mistake of these good reformers is that they confuse nationalization with socialism.

But this is not socialism. Socialism is the complete negation of capitalism. It is the ideal of a new type of society where for the first time class division and class antagonism will be absent. It is the ideal of a new type of human civilization and culture unlike anything that has existed before, a civilization where human misery, social inequality, enslavement and exploitation of man by man will be banished forever. It is, in the words of Engels, "Humanity's leap from the realm of necessity into the realms of freedom."

Tear Gas---Not Relief---For Oklahoma Unemployed



This bedraggled group is part of a crowd of 200 men, women and children who went to the McAlester, Okla., courthouse to get unemployment relief. Officials told them to go home and wait, but unemployed have been doing that for years. When they refused, they were evicted with teargas. They say they're going to keep on fighting until they win or know the reason why.