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Editorial Staff

David P. Berenberg

Anna Bercowitz

Haim Kantorovitch

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Problems Before the National Convention

MORRIS HILLQUIT

THE convention of the Socialist Party which will open in Milwaukee on the 21st of May will face extraordinary opportunities and heavy responsibilities.

It will be called upon to organize the Socialist campaign in the coming presidential election, to determine fundamental questions of Socialist principles and policy and to knit together the scattered elements of Socialist sentiment and activities into a solid, harmonious and effective body. The Milwaukee convention may not determine the ultimate fate of American Socialism, but it will deeply influence its course.

With the low level of political interest and thinking in the United States presidential campaigns offer practically the sole opportunities for general public discussion of fundamental economic and political problems.

The campaign of 1928 was conducted in such an impregnable atmosphere of indifference and complacency that the Cassandra voice of Socialist warning and protest fell on deaf ears.

1932 will find the American electorate in an entirely different mood and situation.

The much boosted prosperity of the country has collapsed like a house of cards. The powerful leaders of American finance and business heretofore surrounded with an aureole of reputed wisdom and omniscience stand unmasked as a lot of incompetent and irresponsible bunglers.

At the same time the statesmen and heads of the government, national, state and local, Republican and Democrat, have demonstrated their utter helplessness and futility, their

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callous indifference to the destitute millions and their glaring incapacity to cope with the widespread calamity.

Large masses of the American people, particularly workers, have been rudely shaken in their smug complacency and naive confidence in the wisdom and benevolence of the ruling classes. They are complaining and questioning.

With the possible exception of the Communists, whose campaign will probably be as little serious and effective as in the past, the Socialist Party will be the only one to offer to the voters a convincing explanation of the causes of the depression and unemployment and a complete program to cope with the calamity.

It will be the main task of the convention to devise effective plans and methods to secure to the organized Socialist movement of the country the full advantage of this unparalleled opportunity.

That means a concrete and practical program for creating or recreating active party organizations in the forty-eight states of the union and in all important centers within each state; mobilizing all actual and potential forces of Socialist propaganda by word of mouth and by the written word, and raising relatively substantial sums of money in these hard times to defray the expense of an extensive and effective campaign.

The building up of the Party is the paramount task before us, and the presidential campaign should be considered primarily as a means toward that end.

But this building is not a mere physical process. To be effective the Party must be reared on sound moral, spiritual and theoretical foundations. It must appear before the people with a clear-cut, convincing and aggressive program and a consistent and harmonious social and political philosophy. And it is on this point that our Party is somewhat weak.

Within recent years some fundamental differences of view have developed within our ranks. This was due to two principal reasons.

First: Since the war the Socialist movement, interna-

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tionally and nationally, has been called upon to face new and unforeseen situations which created new practical problems and new ground of debatable policy. Among such new situations in foreign countries may be mentioned the fall of the monarchies in Central Europe and the establishment of democratic republics with progressive constitutions; the Russian revolution and the resulting Soviet government; the emergence of Communism and the rise of Fascism; Socialist participation in coalition governments in the Central European republics, and all-Socialist minority governments in England and the Scandinavian countries.

The problems arising out of these situations are as involved and complex as they are novel, and the way in which the Socialist parties in Europe have attempted to solve them did not always meet with the full approval of all of their own followers. To the less initiated Socialists on this side of the Atlantic some of these policies seem puzzling, if not downright wrong.

At home the Socialist movement in the post-war years has had to contend mainly with the weakened condition of the Party due to war-time repression and the Communist split and with the incredible political indifference and backwardness of the trade-union movement, which was particularly aggravated by the years of economic prosperity.

Second: For a period of ten years after the war the party was practically stationary and stagnant in membership.

It is only the last two or three years that witnessed a considerable influx of new members. These younger members with the natural impetuosity of recent converts have undertaken to re-examine all articles of the Socialist faith and all principles of Socialist policy, a very healthy and commendable procedure, which, however, offers no guaranty against false or doubtful conclusions.

The national convention will deal with some of the most important aspects of the theoretical differences arising from these conditions.

It would be idle to expect that the convention discussions will result in a complete reconciliation of the divergent views

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within the Party. Nor is such a result at all desirable. A forced uniformity of political opinion is a Communist innovation, which a social democratic party cannot and should not adopt.

But it may be hoped that the convention will develop a sufficiently broad basis of common understanding on Socialist fundamentals and policy to insure fruitful and harmonious co-operation in our practical work with a liberal tolerance of legitimate divergences of views on minor points and without personal bitterness. Such an understanding without compromise or sacrifice of principle seems to me entirely feasible.

In the field of international politics the controversies within our ranks center largely on England, Germany and Russia.

The second labor government of Great Britain was in office a little more than two years. Its critics charge that it maintained itself in power by systematic and damaging concession to the ruling classes and that its record is barren of substantial achievements for the benefit of the British workers.

The labor government came to an end rather ingloriously with the desertion of some of its most prominent leaders.

There are opinions within the Socialist movement in and out of England which hold that the Labor Party should never have taken office as a minority party in parliament, or that having assumed the government it should have submitted a minimum program of Socialist and labor measures and either forced it *in toto* upon parliament or resigned upon its rejection.

As against this the supporters of the Labor Party policies assert that the Labor government has to its credit some substantial labor reforms at home and more important accomplishments in the field of international politics, and that at any rate it has prevented or largely palliated a general onslaught on labor standards, which a conservative government would have been sure to launch in the period of acute economic depression.

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They argue that it would have been political suicide for the Labor Party to refuse forming a government when it was entitled to do so under British parliamentary custom and precedents, and point to the fact that the Party has remained practically unimpaired in members and morale in spite of all adverse conditions.

The Socialist movement in Germany presents an even more baffling picture. Since the disastrous election of September, 1930, the Social Democratic Party has adopted a "policy of toleration" of the middle-class clerical government of Chancellor Bruening. In pursuit of this policy it has swallowed a number of odious political and economic measures including suspension of parliamentary functions, legislation by presidential decree and even a general wage cut.

In the recent presidential elections the German Socialists supported the candidacy of General Hindenburg, whom they bitterly opposed seven years ago as a militarist monarchist.

The policy is defended as a temporary strategic move to avert the menacing rule of fascism. It is asserted in its behalf that if the informal clerical Socialist coalition were dissolved and the Bruening government overthrown at this time of acute popular misery and economic and political chaos in Germany, no other constitutional government could be formed and political power would fall into the hands of Hitler's fascists either directly or as the result of a disastrous civil war. In the opinion of the German Socialists fascism would mean the physical destruction of all labor organizations and institutions of the whole Socialist movement after the approved Italian model.

The policy of the German Social Democracy seems to be to preserve the republic and the labor movement at all costs during the period of acute crisis and fascist danger with the expectation of resuming its normal economic and political class struggle upon the return of more normal conditions.

A group of Socialists in and out of the Reichstag are voicing a violent opposition to this policy of toleration. They maintain that the German workers could not fare worse under

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a Hitler dictatorship than they do under a Bruening-Hindenburg dictatorship and that the Socialist Party would force more substantial concessions from the government if it were more aggressive. This dissident group has recently seceded from the Party.

Political co-operation between the two proletarian parties, the Socialist and Communist, is rejected by both parties and the anomaly of virtual Social democratic collaboration with middle-class republicans is more than matched by the paradox of practical political co-operation of the Communists with the Hitler fascists. The Communist Party of Germany openly made common cause with the fascists in the recent effort to dislodge the Socialist-liberal coalition government of Prussia and is invariably found to side with them in the Reichstag in all moves to overthrow the Bruening government.

What should be our attitude on these debatable policies of our sister parties in England and Germany?

It is obvious that the opinion of the individual American Socialists will be determined by the degree of their knowledge or ignorance of the intricate social, economic and political situations of the two countries, their own temperaments and readiness to judge, but it seems quite clear to me that our Party as such is neither called upon nor qualified to pass judgment of approval or censure over the policies of foreign Socialist parties.

The Labor Party of Great Britain and the German Social Democratic Party represent and speak for many millions of organized workers in their respective countries. One is about thirty years old, the other has a history of seventy years of incessant work and struggle behind it. They have in the main been right in their tactics in the past. History will judge whether they have been wrong in their recent policies. But right or wrong on any given point at any given time the class instinct of the organized millions of Socialist workers in England and Germany may be trusted to correct their own errors, and to find eventually the true paths of their salvation.

Neither by proved intellectual superiority nor by outstanding practical achievements have we, American Socialists,

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gained the right to judge our European comrades. Let us practice a little more the virtue of humility and attend a little closer to our own business.

A somewhat different problem is presented by the question of our attitude to Russia.

The recent policy of intensive economic planning, popularly known as the Five-Year Plan, has made a powerful appeal to large sections of our population, particularly the liberals and radicals.

Many Socialists have succumbed to the spell. Proclaiming that "Russia is building the Socialist Commonwealth", they accept uncritically everything that comes out of Russia and charge their more analytical comrades with "lack of friendliness" for Soviet Russia.

It seems to me that this is an entirely irrelevant and fruitless formulation of the question.

It goes without saying that all Socialists have the friendliest of feelings for the working people of Russia and that they ardently wish the Soviet government to succeed to the extent of developing into a genuine Socialist republic. But the practical question before us, the question incessantly asked of us by non-Socialists and calling for a clear and unambiguous answer, is what relation does the Soviet regime bear to our own social philosophy and ideal. Does it or does it not represent the realization in whole or in part of what we are striving to bring about in the United States and, if not, wherein does it differ from our social ideal?

The Soviet regime is a political as well as an economic system. It represents a consistent and organized effort of a highly centralized government in an economically backward country to build up public industries by compulsory decrees, and presupposes a political and economical dictatorship that brooks no opposition and dissention and is maintained by force and terror.

It is argued that with a progressive industrial development and a voluntary acceptance of the system by ever growing members the dictatorship will gradually give way

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to a democratic regime and Russia will become a Socialist commonwealth in the true sense of the term.

But these expectations are somewhat speculative. In the fourteen years of its existence the Soviet regime has shown no sign of relaxing the rigor of its dictatorship and for the time being it is a unique mixture of economic state socialism and political tyranny. As constituted to-day, it is the practical application of the Communist theory, not that of a social democracy.

Our social ideal is a co-operative commonwealth in which government and industries alike will be administered by public officials and agencies freely chosen by the people and at all times responsible and accountable to them.

Our main reliance both for the establishment and the maintenance of such a commonwealth rests on industrial working classes capable of government and self-government by dint of numbers, training, intelligence and class-consciousness. Democracy is an essential element of our movement and program.

To deny the vital differences between the Socialist ideal and the Russian realities can only serve to spread confusion in our own ranks and to create false impressions outside.

The Socialists generally demand full diplomatic and political recognition of Russia and untrammelled economic intercourse with her.

They are opposed to any attempt to overthrow the Soviet government by violence and to any political or economic pressure upon it by foreign powers.

But they hold that the Soviet system springs from economic, political and historic conditions peculiar to Russia and they refuse to accept its communist philosophy and practices as valid for the countries of western civilization.

Russia is a vitally important subject, but it has only a remote bearing on the practical tasks of American Socialism and does not justify any serious division in our ranks.

At home we are confronted with the perennial question of our relations to the trade unions. It is a tantalizing ques-

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tion, one that has haunted the Socialist movement of the United States since its first days and will presumably continue harassing it for a long time to come.

The problem may be summed up in a few words. The Socialist movement is essentially a labor movement. It cannot succeed without the support of large masses of the workers. The organized workers as the most compact, active and advanced section of labor should logically be most susceptible to Socialist propaganda. They have been in all other industrial countries.

In the United States, however, organized labor has so far proved provokingly reactionary and ineffective. In this country of maximum capitalist development organized labor, consisting mainly of the American Federation of Labor and the Railway Brotherhoods, represents at a generous estimate no more than 15% of the total of industrial workers. No sustained and effective effort has ever been made to organize the vast masses of the unorganized.

Politically our trade-union movement has voluntarily condemned itself to pitiable impotence by its so-called non-partizan politics.

Intellectually and spiritually it is narrow. In its social views it is reactionary.

The general policy of the Socialist movement has been to win over the trade unions by a consistent course of co-operation and propaganda, but progress was slow and at times Socialists lost patience with the seemingly thankless task.

It was in such moments that outbursts of open opposition to the existing trade unions broke out among Socialists and radicals and led to such experiments as the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, the Industrial Workers of the World and the recent Communist trade-union centers of the different varieties.

They all failed. The workers, organized and unorganized, refused to flock to their standards of progress and revolt, and every such failure again demonstrated that the weakness of the American labor movement does not lie so much in the

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inefficiency or conservatism of its leadership as in the indifference, lack of class-consciousness and low level of political and social education of the masses themselves.

The political immaturity of the American worker is the chief obstacle in the path of Socialist progress. To educate him is the main Socialist task. Difficult and even hopeless as the task may at times seem, there is no other way.

Our efforts must be directed to the rank and file of the unions, wherever we can reach them. We must help them and teach them. Constructive criticism of their leadership and methods in a kindly and friendly spirit may at times be necessary and helpful, but mere personal antagonism and supercilious schoolmastering will only hurt our cause.

The unparalleled condition of unemployment and suffering among the large masses of American workers offers us an excellent opportunity to bring home to them the truths of Socialism in a most striking and convincing manner. The trade-union policy which the Convention will adopt must be such as to enable us to take the fullest advantage of our opportunities.

And, finally, there is a concrete and important organizational task before the Convention.

In the years of general Socialist pessimism and despondence not so far back an insidious though perhaps unformulated doubt of the possibilities of an avowed Socialist movement in the United States developed in our ranks and impelled some of us to cast about for other and indirect forms of approach. A multiplicity of "auxiliary" organizations, such as the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, the League for Independent Political Action, local "labor parties" and many similar bodies, sprang up largely with the aid of Socialists, if not on their initiative.

None of these organizations has achieved any political importance, or even promise, but in this period of Socialist revival they often tend to divide our efforts and to detract public attention from the straight Socialist movement.

I do not mean to imply that if a genuine political move-

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ment of labor should at any time spring up in this country on a sound basis and national scale the Socialist Party would not or should not ally itself with it. But there is not the faintest indication of such a movement on the political horizon. For all immediate practical purposes we may safely abandon the thought of an American labor party and devote ourselves single-mindedly to the task of building up the Socialist Party instead of wasting our efforts on the organization of local "labor parties" of questionable nature and doubtful permanence or of any other rival movements.

In these crucial times the party should consolidate rather than dissipate its forces. In my opinion the Convention would do well to adopt a definite rule calling upon all party members to confine their political activities exclusively to the Socialist Party and its affiliated institutions.

The most important contribution which the coming Convention can make to the Socialist movement in this country is to imbue the Socialists with a stronger spirit of confidence and self-reliance and with a determination to carry on the work of straight and unadulterated Socialism openly, steadily and aggressively.

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Editorials, Comments, Book Reviews

The British Labor Situation

MARK STARR

HEARTY cheers swept through the House of Commons for the surviving Chamberlains who on February 25th saw the general ten per cent tariff adopted by a majority of over seven to one. Thus the frustrated capitalists of Britain join the international suicides club in which all are determined to be sellers and never buyers of commodities. The "doctors' mandate" which MacDonald asked for has become the quick swallowing of a quack remedy which has failed to solve the difficulties of other capitalist countries. MacDonald is away sick and unnoticed. He has served his purpose and will have to use all his suppleness of mind and intrigue to remain even the nominal head of the Tory majority in the so-called National government; that majority flushed with victory already howls for the resignation of the four free traders who in the name of national unity have been allowed to remain in the Cabinet although they disagree with their colleagues.

Outside the Parliament, just previously the police had beaten back thousands of unemployed marching to interview the Minister of Labor to protest against the 10 per cent cut in unemployment insurance benefits. In Bristol in the West more sustained battles had taken place between the police and the unemployed. Increasingly severe administration of the "dole" has not prevented unemployment figures from soaring up to over the three million mark on the January reckoning. The government which was formed to save the pound saw it fall off the gold basis on September 21st and the pound sterling remains "anchored only to trade and confidence". The exporters' advantage from this proved only temporary because 24 nations now share the same position.

Turning to foreign affairs: The mad adventure of suppressing India by the jackboot methods of the Bengal or-

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dinances has been restarted by arresting 15,000 persons. Gandhi and his lieutenants are still in jail. British trade with India fell off by one-third in the year ending August 31, 1931, and all the rain of lathi blows will not revive it. How can the British Tories be anything but lukewarm in their protests against the international piracy of Japan in Manchuria and at Shanghai when they think of how dangerous Japan can be in a rebellious Orient? It is only the economically superior United States which can now talk platitudes about the "open door". Why should the hard-pressed British traders sacrifice any of that \$300,000,000 of trade which they do with both Japan and China? Hence only the Labor Party and the Trades Union Congress urge an economic boycott and the withdrawal of the British ambassador from Tokio.

The farcical nature of the Disarmament Conference at Geneva became obvious to all when Lord Robert Cecil, who for 13 years has been the chief advocate of limitation of arms expenditure, was dropped from the British delegation. But as "Augur" brutally expressed it in the *N. Y. Times*, January 29, 1932:

"The chairman of the conference is Arthur Henderson, ex-Foreign Secretary in the Socialist Cabinet of Ramsay MacDonald. The same Mr. MacDonald now attends as head of a National Government, and no amount of speechifying on his part can conceal for long the fact that the official British policy with regard to the reduction of armaments has undergone a profound change. It is safe to predict that the chairman will soon discover that the delegates from his own country hold views at variance with his own pacifist creed, and that Mr. MacDonald upholds them.

"The National Government in power today in its majority is composed not only of Nationalists, but even more of men imbued with the spirit of empire. Their devotion to the imperial idea is as fanatical as the attachment of their Socialist predecessors to the doctrine of Marx. Mr. MacDonald and his handful of Radicals are the prisoners of this solid Nationalist bloc; to save

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their posts they must shout with the imperialist crowd, which holds that the difficulties, experienced by Great Britain of late in India, in Palestine and in other places, are due to the weakness of the naval and military resources."

On the home front, attacks on wages are being continued. Already in 1931 the weekly total of wages paid the million workers had been cut by \$2,000,000 as a finishing touch to the cumulative cut during the last eleven years of about \$55,000,000 in the weekly total. Particularly in textiles the workers are being stretched out to tend more looms during longer work hours without any guaranteed minimum on which they can live. There is continued guerilla fighting (not a general stoppage) because some of the manufacturers have conceded the modest wage scales agreed to by the union. In the textile towns where strikes are proceeding the police seem to be imitating American methods of dealing with pickets and camera men.

The new general tariff is estimated to exclude only 8 to 9 per cent of the present imports and thus will mean increased prices for the rest, and this form of indirect taxation will fall heavily on the workers in addition to the cuts in their wages. Further taxes on tea and sugar with a reduction of income tax are forecast for the April budget. British dependency upon foreign supplies of raw materials and foodstuffs forced maize, meat, wheat, raw wool and cotton and other things upon the free list but enough is included to send up the cost of living. True to its landlord traditions, the Tory party has secured a guaranteed price for wheat to bring, so it is hoped, some 1,400,000 acres under the plough. The home farmer will get 10 shillings a hundredweight which is about \$1.40 per bushel at par compared to the present price of 85 cents. The difference between the actual price and the guaranteed price will be made up from a fund provided by the importers of foreign flour and the millers who must take a 19.6 per cent quota of British wheat. A fixed share of the wheat imports for the dominions will be discussed at the imperial conference at Ottawa in July but those interested in investments in Ar-

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gentina will not allow her wheat exports to be sacrificed for the sake of Canada.

Naturally the Tories are elated. They claim that the income tax has been promptly paid and that foreigners are already erecting factories in Britain because of the tariffs. So certain are they at the moment that the pound sterling will not fall further that hoarded sovereigns and gold plate and even one family feudal coronet are being turned into the melting pot and sold at about 119 shillings per ounce instead of the normal mint price of nearly 85. The bank rate was reduced from 6 to 5 per cent, to assist the industrialists, although that was still 2 per cent higher than in February, 1931, and 2 per cent above the rate in the United States. The pound was in Feb. 1932 worth a little less than \$3.50, and the rejoicing because it had recovered to that extent indicates the jeopardized existence it has suffered since last fall. Just how long the elation will last is another matter. Shipping is naturally the first industry to suffer from economic nationalism and its income in 1931 fell off \$125,000,000 to \$400,000,000. No wonder the Cunard Co. has suspended the building of its super-liner which was going to regain the blue ribbon of the Atlantic crossing.

Meanwhile the workers have to put every possible source of income under the microscope of the Public Assistance Committee (new name of the old-time Poor Law authorities) before they get relief. The worker who has drawn his 26 weeks of unemployment pay has to submit to a "means test" and some mean decisions are made. For example, one worker had his pay reduced to a dollar a week when it was discovered that his mother, aged 81 years, was still working. All this and the facts mentioned above will create a leftward swing which will give to the Labor movement its opportunity.

Elsewhere I have tried to point out that the lessons of the setback suffered by British Labor are:

- (a) That a minority government cannot attempt to clear up the mess of capitalism without dangerous discredit to itself and that Labor must be the undertaker and not the caretaker for capitalism in its decline.

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- (b) That the Labor movement must clean out of its mind the illusions of nationalism and Empire and live in its national political grouping as a man lives in a house with an expiring lease.
- (c) That Labor must build on a conscious recognition of the class struggle after such convincing proof that MacDonaldism with its loyalty to the "community" means treachery to the workers in any crisis.

These lessons give the approach to a survey of what is now happening in British Labor circles. The Labor Party is making a real push for more members and the tone of the speeches made at the various conferences held for this purpose are radical in their demand for Socialism. Encouraging too is the continued progress of the Co-operative Movement with its quarter million of employees and its six and a half million members with a retail trade of £217,000,000 in 1930 which was only slightly reduced in 1931 despite the decline in prices and the depression.

Much interest has centered upon the relations between the Labor Party and the Independent Labor Party, and the question whether the latter will decide at its Easter Conference to disaffiliate. Fenner Brockway, who is now in charge of the I. L. P. weekly *New Leader* (which by the way has recently been much improved by spirited pictorial propaganda and has added 10,000 new readers), is for a break because "continued association is now a handicap." Maxton, the Parliamentary leader of the I. L. P. group, after the first session of the new Parliament, insists that the Labor Party chiefs have not learned the lesson of their mistakes and he, with Buchanan and McGovern, is credited by the *Daily Herald* with the intention of refusing to work with the Labor Party whatever the decision of the I. L. P. Conference may be. Six out of the nine divisional conferences of the I. L. P. are against disaffiliation with only the London and the two smallest divisions in favor and therefore it looks likely that the I. L. P. may split itself and not the Labor Party by its decision. Those who want disaffiliation say that the Labor Party cannot live down its past and that parliamentary reformism still predom-

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inates instead of a desire for revolutionary change. Enforcement of the standing order that while a Labor M. P. may abstain from voting, he may not vote against the Party is taken to be an indication that the Labor Party wishes to suppress left wing critics.

The defenders of affiliation stress the difficulty of building up a rival political organization to the Labor Party and the confusion which would arise from rival Labor candidates. They insist that the I. L. P. would be deprived of exercising influence upon the mass of the organized workers; that the reformist tendencies of the Labor Party are exaggerated; that the Labor Party has learned from its experience; and that there must be unity of action in parliamentary voting when a policy has been previously discussed and accepted. If such discussion were evaded or resulting decisions over-ruled by the Labor Cabinet, then the I. L. P. should try to get the procedure improved rather than break away.

Several things may happen. Maxton and his colleagues may found a new Socialist body stressing the necessity of the rapid achievement of Socialism. The Labor Party may adapt its procedure and the I. L. P. may unitedly remain affiliated.* If, despite the vote of the divisional councils, the conference decides to disaffiliate, then the dissentients will go over into the individual membership section of the Labor Party or found a new Socialist propagandist body with the *Forward* (Glasgow) as its organ. On the other hand, if affiliation wins, the I. L. P. may lose the left fringe of its membership to the Communist Party. The mixed composition of the I. L. P. makes its future uncertain.

The new Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda (S. S. I. P.) grew out of some weekend conferences organized by G. D. H. Cole in 1931. From London it has spread out to nine of the large towns and other branches are in formation. Cole gathered Bevin and Pugh from the Trades Union Congress, Atlee and other prominent members of the Labor government and Blair from the Co-operative movement to meet

1) Negotiations to this end have begun since the above was written.

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the younger intellectuals from the universities in this propagandist body. The members accepted the label of "loyal grouseurs" and S. S. I. P. and its allied New Fabian Research Bureau hope to do for the Labor Party in the 20th century what the old Fabian Society did in the 19th century. Long before the breakdown of the Labor government, its supporters were seriously disturbed with its failure to tackle on Socialist lines the problems facing it and they recognized that a great deal of study and preparation was necessary to decide upon the next steps in transferring industry to a Socialist basis. Could, for example, the holding company be used to get control over the basic industries? If coal and transport are being organized into semi-public organizations with fixed prices, what share of control can be secured for organized Labor? How can the banks and the credit mechanism be controlled? By transforming the Bank of England into an institution under government control or by the government securing a share of the directorates of the Big Five? Then there was the larger problem of making a national plan for the whole of industry. S. S. I. P. tries to secure discussion of such problems and has already issued pamphlets on inflation, national planning, Anglo-Soviet trade, reparations, the running of the post office, and study outlines on the gold standard, the Bank of England and joint stock banks. No one who saw the Labor government helpless in many respects to overcome the influence of the civil servants and bankers can doubt the vital necessity of such work.

The character of S. S. I. P. is not yet fixed. Cole himself has dropped his near-syndicalist insistence on workers' control and national guilds. While he accepts Marx's theory of history, he makes little use of Marxian economics, as his treatment of inflation and money shows. S. S. I. P. avoids any reference in its initial documents to the class struggle and to the working class because Cole thinks that these are part of the Continental vocabulary without strong associations in the British scene. If S. S. I. P. succeeds in building up a network of branches, its character may alter and it may become the needed educational and propagandist force inside the Labor

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Party. The alternatives are that it will be mostly confined to the universities or be a small group of experts with G. D. H. and Margaret Cole repeating in S. S. I. P. the role of Sidney and Beatrice Webb in the Fabian Society. Small propagandist groups have always wielded in Britain an influence much beyond their numerical strength, and those interested in the British development would be well advised to watch the literature of this new body. From this and the workers' education movement will come in large part the new leadership required by the Labor movement.

The Communists have suffered from poor leadership and internal division as in other countries. Compared to the influence which they wielded when head of the wartime shop stewards' movement, the present power of the Communist leaders is small and the Communist attempt to run rival candidates and form dual unions has so far antagonized rather than converted the mass of organized workers. Not but what the growing desperation of the workers will tend to increase that influence if the Labor Party does not move to the left. The most capable theoretician of the Communist Party, R. Palme Dutt, is prevented by illness from living in Britain and participating in the actual leadership. His editorials are the mainstay of the *Labor Monthly* which in December tried to bring together Communists and near-Communists to work out a policy of action. Nothing but an exchange of opinion apparently resulted. The severe penance and acknowledgment of past error which would be insisted upon make it improbable that Maxton and his I. L. P. colleagues will find a home in the Communist Party.

In estimating future developments the question arises whether MacDonald when rejected by his Tory captors will try and come back to the Labor Party. Some of his supporters, e. g., Godfrey Elton in the February issue of *The Highway*, have urged the formation of a National Socialist Party in opposition to the Labor Party which must be the expression of the trade unions' vested interests. He takes some ideas of Keir Hardie to support his claim for a national and not a **class** party. But Elton is typical of the MacDonaldite

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supporters who found themselves in the Labor Party partly by hopes of a political career and partly as the inheritors of Disraeli's "Young England" group of Tories who deplored the slums, etc., of capitalism. So far all overtures made by Clifford Allen and others have been treated with contempt. The late Dr. Marion Phillips expressed the official opinion on MacDonald as the "pictorial head of a Tory army . . . the moral dupe of his own vanity and the political victim of his economic ignorance." Still the exclusion of MacDonald does not mean that the ideas for which he stood are entirely excluded, and that particular danger survives.

However, the continued attacks upon workers' standards will compel the unions to take a militant stand. There is growing resistance to wage cuts and the railroad workers are preparing to win back their extra pay for overtime, night and Sunday work. The lightermen on the Thames held out stubbornly for some weeks in an unofficial strike against cuts. If the Tory government holds out to the end of its term, Labor undoubtedly will resort to industrial action during the next four strenuous years.

No serious student of the British economic situation can think that tariffs will do anything but add to the final difficulties of British capitalists. They have lost their lead to more efficient rivals. They cannot save the system by a more intensive exploitation of the workers. Britain is most vulnerable to the world depression because of her vital interest in world trade and hence has suffered most in the dislocation of that trade in the post-war years. She has been in chronic crisis since 1921. Labor governments in 1924 and 1929 tried to save the workers from the worst effects of that crisis by various reforms. Now the imperialists are back in overwhelming power and their solution is to build up a self-sufficing British Empire ringed with tariff walls. Not that all the interests agree, for the British capitalists still have a big stake in Europe. Having defeated their dangerous rival, Germany, British capitalists found themselves faced with the more dangerous schemes of French domination so they had to help

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Germany to her feet and try to modify the terms of the Peace Treaty.

Schemes for Empire trade are also shot through with contradictions. The bankers do not suffer from illusions on this point. A writer in *Lloyds Bank Monthly Review* (Feb. 1932) said:

"The United Kingdom can never be self-sufficient, and the Empire as an economic unit is an ideal—if an ideal at all—impossible of realization at a time when (reckoning in terms of imports) only a little more than a quarter of the total trade of the British Empire is done between Empire countries, and that share has increased but little since 1913."

Even if the Dominions consented to remain industrially undeveloped, they could not, with their small population, take the whole output of Britain. The Right Honorable James Thomas, who with his fellow renegades objected to "dictatorship by the Trades Union Congress", is now getting his orders from the Federation of British Industries and the Chamber of Commerce, but he will have no easy job at Ottawa next July when Canada will point out that Britain buys more wheat and meat from Argentina than she does from Canada. Then the haggling will begin. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics reported on February 29, 1932, that the United States investments in Canada were \$3,726,745,000 compared with the British total of \$2,228,024,000, and that is only one phase of American penetration.

But even if this will-of-the-wisp is finally abandoned, the attempts to build up an independent Empire will have added fuel to the fires of imperialist rivalry. Tariff advocates in the United States, for example, will insist on retaliation because 46 per cent of American exports to England are affected by the new tariffs. And on February 29th, the day that England abandoned general free trade, the *N. Y. Times* editorially described the Hawley-Smoot act (June, 1930) as the starting signal for the race toward higher tariffs as seen in the fact that during the last eight months "no less than 31 countries have either carried through a general revision upward of their

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tariffs or substantially increased existing duties on a large number of important products." In this atmosphere an extension of the moratorium on reparations and war debt interest looks unlikely, and even if reparations were wiped off the slate that would only account for one-fifth of money owed to the creditor nations. If the capitalists of the world were far-sighted, they would drop the follies of economic nationalism and develop such institutions as the Bank of International Settlements and build up international trusts instead of each national section playing for its own hand.

The bankruptcy of capitalism has hit the British section of the capitalist class most severely and while the setting up of Socialism in Britain will be a more complex job than, say, in the United States and perforce may have to be part of an international drive to that end, it is clear that British Labor has entered into a new period of suffering and struggle. While British capitalism was expanding, reforms could be conceded. The practice of the trade unions and the Socialists was based on the assumption that better wages, shorter hours, social insurance and services and many other things to lift up the workers' standard of life could be won by agitation and organized strength and be paid for by taxation of higher range incomes. The Fabians attacked competition and not wage-slavery as the enemy. MacDonald's biological Socialism pictured the slow adaptation of the community and the gradual socialization of industry to meet that community's need. Even the I. L. P., under the influence of Hobson's "under-consumption" and Brailsford's advocacy, pushed its living wage policy in which Socialism would come through prosperity, and control of credit would iron out the trade cycles. Like a modern baby, Socialism would be born in painless twilight sleep.

That period of reform is now replaced by a period of revolution. Social services are cut in every direction. Wages are cut and working hours extended. Direct income tax barely covers the debt interest charges (in 1930-31 debt interest, war preparations and war pensions accounted for 65 per cent of the national budget expenditure; the social services for only

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20 per cent). Production declines. Markets are lost. Nearly three million tons of shipping lie idle in British harbors. The old-time purchase of raw materials and foodstuffs by the export of manufactured goods, machinery and coal, which formed the lucrative basis of British industry and its expansion in the 19th century, is now impossible. Customers are turned competitors. Imports exceed exports. Although many workers, owing to their nationalist education and economic ignorance, share the illusion of Empire as a way out, bitter experience will soon shatter such dreams.

The workers will soon be forced to fight for fundamental changes in the social system. An intensified class struggle will be waged. The sooner both the political and industrial organizations of Labor recognize their entry into this changed period of revolution and act accordingly, the quicker will be the triumph of British Labor over the present reign of reaction.

A WORD ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

MORRIS HILLQUIT

National Chairman, Socialist Party of America.

MARK STARR

*Member, British Independent Labor Party;
at present, instructor, Brookwood Labor College.*

THEODORE SHAPIRO

*Representative of group of militants in the
Socialist Party of New York City.*

SAMUEL A. De WITT

*Columnist, the "New Leader"; author, "Idyls of the
Ghetto".*

HAIM KANTOROVITCH

*Contributing editor, "The Wecker";
Former associate editor, the "Modern Quarterly".*

The Strike

An Idyl of the American Labor Movement

For years he walked along the common ways
Of unobtrusiveness and workadays;
Culled from the street whatever sprigs of truth
A sidewalk and a gutter show to youth;
Found friendship, love, and all the tenderness
The Ghetto wears for sentimental dress . . .
And every weekday morning he arose
To hurry shopward, as a dancer goes
To some fierce culmination of a spin.
Work was a sea to drown his hungers in.

* * *

He never fully knew how beauty played
A pagan lute within . . . The music flayed
His soul to shreds . . . To him a Ghetto child
Was something saintly that had been defiled.
And beauty lurked about until she caught
Him unaware. He learned to vault his thought
Over the wash-hung airshafts into nooks
Where gods and he devoured ambrosial books.

"He's studying for professor . . ." half a sneer
In envy settled on the shop. He had no ear
For them. They were forgotten prefaces. His sense
Was clutching on a fierce experience.

He had a votive manner in a place
Of learning. Radiance framed his face
When he could stand before a volumed row
And thrill to dream what there was yet to know.

The Strike

"We're going to strike . . . help save the union! . ." Then
He remembered he was one with men
Who did not pose in books. At once the street
Felt hard and solid underneath his feet.

It was no pretty thing this walking out;
No lilt of marching, and no shout
Against the gods. Just the slow pace.
Of men aware of what they had to face.

At first it caught him in a gust. He swirled
Through a mad eddy, till his settled world
Of books and dreaming frittered out
Into a windless void. And now a knout
Was pelting leaded ends against his brain.

The sullen tumult in the hall; the snarl of pain
That cut into the stream of talk and talk
Among the men, lent its jerk and tempo to his walk.
And phrases came to being, still too young.
And fierce for sane communion with his tongue.

* * *

When speakers rose and spoke, their words were lead
Against the blistering chaos in his head . . .
They seemed to speak too well. Their tone was stiff
And measured. And to him it seemed as if
The hydra-headed hunger, row on row,
Was something they were half afraid to know.

* * *

The meetings crowded out the weeks. For him
The hall became a haunt wherein a grim
Despair began to stalk about
And frighten firm heroics into doubt.

* * *

A leader said . . . "and if we lose" . . . "Hell, no!"
He leaped upon the rostrum . . . half a blow
With open hand, and he stood there
Before a thousand faces all astare . . . '

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At first a mumbled lava boiled and poured
Out of his cratered lips. Thought soared
In furious steam . . . a spurting burst
Of sound without a rhythm came at first.

Then through shamefaced silence came the light
That flooded through and set his words aright.

* * *

Pay . . . and hours . . . and pay . . . but still the slums,
The boss, the time clock and the crumbs . . .
And is there hope in hunger? Who can see
An end to this, unless the victory
Comes terribly complete . . . unless the end
Be in a high beginning? . . . Why defend
An ancient tyranny . . . why balm
Old cankers for a tiny calm
Until the next full surge of pain?

Is all the soul's worth just a pinch of gain?
Is all the dream's worth just an hour of rest
While fear against the years is pressed
With all the searing insult of a brand
Upon each brain? . . . How will leaders understand?
Such softened selves, mere entities
Of speech and appetite? . . . And how can these
Who plan within their sanctums zealously
On how to keep their sinecures in fee
Find leisure to recall how once they came
Like unto him, and spoke the words of flame? . . .

* * *

Right here a hoarsened throat rasped out, "He's off . . .
"Throw the bum out . . ." He choked into a cough . . .
A full fist mashed his nose. He fell . . . and cried
A swooning incoherence . . . He awoke outside
Upon the walk. A strange, a curious throng
Pulled him up upon his feet and asked . . .

"What's wrong?"

S. A. De Witt.

The "Militant" Point of View

THEODORE SHAPIRO

THE rise of the militant group within the American Socialist Party accompanies the growth of similar left wing groups throughout the western world. These movements are in effect an active protest against the inactive policies and tactics of the Labor and Socialist International with which our party is affiliated and are, as well, protests against the astounding inertia of so-called "Socialist leaders" the world over. International militancy is a protest against "reformism" and the deviation from the revolutionary Socialism as expounded by Marx.

The struggle between left wing groups and those who dominate the councils of the International is a struggle that has been inherent in the movement from its very inception. The differences between these groups are fundamental both as to the concept of Socialism and the goal itself. This "reformism" can best be seen not in the paper programs of the Social Democratic parties, but in their every-day activities.

In their support of reactionary governments, in compromising alliances with non-revolutionary parties, in their attitude on the question of war, in their naive reliance on bourgeois "democratic" institutions, in their hostility to the Soviet Republic, Social Democratic parties manifest their reformism and block the way to the Socialist goal. This can best be shown by a consideration of the programs and policies of the two largest parties affiliated with the L. S. I., namely, the Labor Party of Great Britain and the German Social Democracy. "Labour and the Nation", the manifesto of the English Party, is a far cry from the Erfurt program of Bebel and Liebknecht and the later programs of the German Party. One is inspired by the collectivism of the Fabian philosophy of class collaboration and gradualism—the other is Marxian in concept and approach, yet both are identical in reformist

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methods and in the negative results of their activities. The only apparent difference is this: that while Henderson's party arrived at its reformism honestly—never purporting to be revolutionary, the party of Kautsky still renders a lip service to Marxism, but is shamelessly revisionist in its daily practices.

The Militants in the American party take their stand because our party, an affiliate of the L. S. I., takes its tone from that international body. We too have our Marxists who soft-pedal the class struggle; who adopt a quiescent attitude with respect to activity and who are antagonistic to Soviet Russia.

Throughout the recent American scene the spirit of decadence and defeat and its resultant "quietism" has been the spirit all too often permeating the policies of the Socialist Party. The case of the Militants against the policies of the American Party is identical with the attitude of the left wing generally against the present policies of the Labor and Socialist International.

The following is an attempt to re-state the Marxist principles inherent in those basic problems which confront the Socialist movement. It is not a detailed program of activities but it seeks to form the background for such a program. Upon the correct application of these principles to the day by day struggle of the workers depends the success or failure of the Socialist movement.

An important criticism levelled at the L. S. I. parties is the large place they give to the programs for social reform. It is assumed by the right wing that when reforms are instituted by legislative act such reforms become the permanent possession of the "Community" and that they constitute in themselves stepping stones in a long series of events which ultimately lead to Socialism; that such legislation can in the meantime prevent the more glaring abuses of the capitalist system and bring a larger measure of well being and permanent material benefit to the working class.

Left wing Socialists maintain that there is a basic fallacy in this view; that those who hold it misinterpret the character

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of the capitalist state; and that they shut their eyes to actual events of recent years which dispel completely the view that reforms are in their nature permanent and cumulative, or that they are in the long run beneficial to the workers as a class.

The view in favor of reformism as a social panacea is seemingly supported by the fact that up to 1914 and for a period prior to it, social advance consisted of a series of concessions, political and industrial, wrung from or granted by the capitalist class. Absolutism gave way to constitutional monarchies and republican governments which, with their enlargement of democratic forms, were favorable to the growth of the working class organizations. To the efforts of these organizations and to the comparatively normal conditions existing at that time can be attributed the rising standard of living of the workers of Europe and America. Democracy was on the upgrade, the workers enjoyed a relatively high standard of living and the Socialist and Labor movement was realizing its fullest development. So, gradually, but none the less certainly it seemed, the world was marching to Socialism.

With the outbreak of the World War something happened to the idyllic conception of the gradual improvement of capitalism and progress through social reforms. This something was the manner in which capitalism was behaving.

Two rival imperialist groups with world-wide alliances began a struggle for the mastery of the earth. When greed went mad, democracy, reforms, and working class gains, were practically wiped out at a single stroke. The brutal necessities of capitalist wars had no use for such toys. In their place were substituted dictatorships in varying degrees of ruthlessness, particularly destructive to working class organizations. Poverty and unemployment became so widespread as to be unparalleled in the history of modern times. In 1932 the working class is immeasurably worse off than it was in the period prior to the World War.

Militants insist that it has become evident that it is unrealistic to emphasize measures of social reform instead of a relentless drive for political power, particularly when the

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benefits of such measures to the workers are in the last analysis dissipated by the effects of war and recurrent industrial depression.

Of democracy the parties of the L. S. I. have made a fetish. To them it is the only means for the abolition of capitalism. From the reform plus reform philosophy this viewpoint follows logically. Sometimes in rasher moments there is a dark reference to other means. This obviously is meant for the grandstand.

If by democracy we mean the absence of class rule, we are then speaking of Socialism—a stage in the future of social development. Obviously in talking of “means” this is not the democracy with which we are concerned. As realists we are compelled to deal with the kind of democracy we have now, a democracy that is not a thing of the future but an outgrowth of the capitalist state. The form in which this democracy is expressed is that of an instrument of class rule.

Capitalist democracy is in reality the property of the capitalist class in the same sense that ownership and control of the instruments of production and the public opinion forming agencies is their property. As the emerging bourgeois class they fought for it and used this democracy to restrict the power of feudal lords and for their own class development. While the capitalist class was thus engaged in “fighting for democracy” there grew up at the same time an ever increasing wage earning class to whom some of the benefits of this democracy seeped down, such as the franchise, the right to political organizations, etc. The capitalist “shared” his democracy with the workers in the same way that he shared his wealth.

Capitalist democracy can be viewed as a game between capital and labor in which the capitalist is at liberty to make the rules, count the points, or suspend the rules entirely. In comparatively normal times, that is, between crises or in those short intervals when the world is at peace the game can be indulged in by both classes with some degree of “sportsmanship”.

But in time of war, widespread strikes, industrial crises,

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or the imminence of revolution, in short when the capitalist class is struggling for self-preservation, how often have we seen, particularly in our own generation, the suspension of the rules of this game, in whole or in part, and the substitution of a new set of rules—the rule of club, tooth and fang, the law that every ruling class invokes when threatened with the loss of power.

It is upon this kind of democracy that the leaders of the L. S. I. counsel the workers to rely. It is counsel that was highly effective in the 19th century but is unrealistic in these times when capitalism is entering the phase of fascism and open military dictatorship.

While it is true that the workers began their organizational life within this democratic frame of the capitalist state and while it is equally true that working class organization can best be accomplished under democratic forms it does not follow that the working class can achieve its emancipation or materially benefit as a class by sole reliance upon an institution that is primarily an instrument of class rule over which they have little or no control.

The period that began with the war saw the end of many cherished institutions. It also saw the beginning of the end of bourgeois democracy. With no feudal barons to fight on the one hand, and with the rising menace of Communism on the other, the capitalist class has discarded this outworn weapon. It seeks more efficient instruments of class rule, such as fascism, constitutional dictatorship or militarism.

The complete negation of democracy was recently perfectly expressed in England, that most democratic of all countries, when the will of eight million British voters was nullified by a handful of French and American bankers.

Democracy like social wealth is an issue in the class war. It must be fought for and won in the same manner that every new social class rising to power fights and wins—that is, by reliance on its own organizational and cultural forces.

Perhaps the most obvious departure from the uncompromising philosophy of class struggle is the insatiable desire of L. S. I. leaders to "do business" with their governments.

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This business is conducted through the practice of entering as minorities in coalition with capitalist parties, assuming the responsibility of administering the affairs of "their" governments in the face of the glaring futility of such coalition as far as the advancement of the workers is concerned.

Left wingers point to the collapse of Socialist minority governments in Great Britain and Germany as recent examples of the attempt to serve two masters. The assumption of governmental responsibility by a minority Socialist party invariably turns out to be a "responsibility" to the capitalist class on whose "executive committees" they serve. The onslaught on the workers' standard of life in both countries either directly or with the approval of Socialist ministers is evidence of this service to capitalism.

While the right wing attitude toward the Soviet Republic has become increasingly favorable in recent years there still remain the die-hards who continue their private war on that government. To them the "fait accompli" of the Russian Revolution is not enough. They say with Kautsky that if the Russian Revolution is right they must be wrong, and for them to be wrong is unthinkable.

In the modern world the stage is set for a change from capitalism to Socialism. This transition will only begin when the workers capture complete political power. In every country it will be their task to socialize whatever institutions they find are necessary for social well-being. They will discard or build up economic and other institutions as they see fit.

In Russia, the workers and peasants have gained that political power. The degree of civilization necessary as the objective condition for Socialism obviously does not exist in the land of the Soviets. The task of building from the bottom they have set themselves in the series of plans for the industrial reorganization of that country.

While it is sound Marxist theory to state that no stage in social development can be skipped, it is not sound Marxism to say that industrialization cannot be induced in a country that is an integral part of a world civilization founded upon that very industrialism which Russia seeks to borrow.

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The "nonskip" theory would hold more water if the Soviets were located on Mars or somewhere back in the 10th century where they would be immune to machines and modern technological skill. Viewed in its proper perspective Russia's development is in harmony with the facts of social evolution. This development of society from one form into another is a universal organic process that varies in proportion to the forces, economic, political, etc., which hasten or retard it. Such variation is observable in the transition of many countries from one social stage to another particularly from feudalism to capitalism. The classical development of England is reflected only in a general way in its Eastern rival Japan. The capitalist development in Germany had not the laissez-faire character of its English prototype, and so on in every country comprising capitalist civilization we find some lagging behind an accepted standard and others catapulted forward and even surpassing that standard. In each case changes and growth were affected favorably or adversely by the factors of war, revolution, economic need, the acts of the state, geographic location, the power of religious groups, etc.

In no case was there that even, uniform development which forms the basis for the criticism of the Soviets.

Those self-styled Marxists who lay down iron laws for elastic social processes and thereby attach a species of fatalism to social behavior distort Marxism and deny the role ascribed by Marx to the workers in the control and the reshaping of their environment.

The argument that the Russian Revolution to be valid must not only reach a minimum degree of economic and industrial development characteristic of an advanced capitalism, but must reach it under the auspices of a bourgeois democracy—that is under capitalist control as well, is absurd. Those who advance this argument lay themselves open to the charge of pedantry and exhibit an indifference to the fate of the Russian workers that even the O. G. P. U. has not attained. Russia's development under the aegis of capitalism would expose the workers of that country to all the brutality and horror of colonial exploitation.

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To crucify an entire nation on the cross of a theory—and a false one at that—is a form of social sadism not in keeping with the spirit of Socialist teachings.

In contrast to the enervating philosophy of L. S. I. reformism and in order to counter the negative impression that may be gained by the necessarily broad handling of the matter under discussion, the following "working doctrine" is offered here as the constructive side of the militant point of view.

The class struggle is in the Marxian sense a struggle for supremacy between two forms of civilization, the existing capitalist state and the future classless society taking shape within it. One social form gains only at the expense of the other. In their points of contact they are therefore essentially antagonistic.

The new social form is composed of men and women impelled by economic need and conscious of their future-building roles. They lay the foundations for this new society by the formation of a comprehensive organizational life.

They form themselves into labor unions, political parties, co-operative societies, cultural groups, and are the vanguard moving forward to the Socialist goal. These organizations are the promise for labor's emancipation. In their collective strength, in their revolutionary activity alone lies the "inevitability" of Socialism. Their weakness reduces that "inevitability" to mere wish fulfillment.

The first task of Socialists is to build the radical and labor movement as a whole. For Socialists to confine their activities to a political party only, to assume a "hands-off" policy toward the labor unions and to isolate themselves from other radical groups is in effect a betrayal of the Socialist goal.

As these class-conscious organizations gain in power and become self-sufficient in an ideological and cultural sense they tend to become less and less dependent on capitalist instrumentalities.

They seek justice not from the hands of capitalist agencies, with whom they are at war, but rely on their own strength for their release from wage slavery.

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As they grow in numbers and in strength they constitute in themselves the most effective bulwark against the ever present danger of war. No onslaught on the workers' standard of life could be effective if it met the opposition of these organizations under revolutionary leadership.

With their power they could institute those reforms that would tend to strengthen them as a class and back them up with the strength of numbers. All reforms, political and economic are in the final analysis written in sand if they are not instituted and maintained by the working class. The permanence of reform is paralleled only in the permanent character of labor's organization.

Social progress, the march to a higher civilization is identical and identified with labor's organizational development. To build this movement, to give it a class-conscious character, to maintain its fighting efficiency, to hold up its revolutionary aim, and to prepare it for political power, is the first task of the Socialist Party and the creed of the militant group.

Is This Militancy?

(Comments on Comrade Shapiro's Article)

THE bulk of Comrade Shapiro's article is devoted to the problems of the International Socialist movement. With some of his criticism on the Labor and Socialist International we agree. Most of what Comrade Shapiro is trying to say Comrade Albert Lauterbach has said in his article, "Problems Confronting the Social-Democracy". We translated and reprinted that article because we agree with its author on most points, and even where we disagree, we believe that his criticism merits serious consideration.

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When Comrade Shapiro informs us that "International militancy is a protest against 'reformism' and the deviation from revolutionary Socialism as expounded by Marx," he really does not say anything. International militancy is not a homogeneous whole. The position of the Bund is far from being the same as the position of the Independent Labor Party—and the position of both is certainly far from the position of the German Socialist Labor Party which recently split off from the German Social Democracy.

Just as one cannot speak about "International militancy" as one whole, so one cannot speak of the Socialist and Labor International as one whole. All shades of Socialist opinion are represented. There one finds the German Social Democratic party which supports Hindenburg and the Polish Bund which is almost Communist, the extreme right Belgian party and the left Austrian party. The International simply reflects the national parties. "The policies and tactics of the Labor and Socialist International" can be changed only when the policies and tactics of its constituent national parties are changed. Militant or left groups therefore all over the world are first of all interested in their own parties. The I. L. P. is busy with the problems of the British Labor movement, the Bund with the problems of the Polish movement, and so on. What about our own American militants? What has Comrade Shapiro to say about our American party?

"We too have our Marxists who soft-pedal the class-struggle; who adopt a quiescent attitude with respect to activity, and who are antagonistic to Soviet Russia." This is all that Comrade Shapiro has to say about the American party.

To the readers of the A. S. Q. the first two points of criticism must sound very familiar, of course. They were expressed in the articles "What of the Class Struggle?" and "The New Capitalism—And After" in the last issue of the A. S. Q. with the difference that the comrades of the A. S. Q. could not adopt the naive belief that the defects in our party are due to the "bad influence" of the L. S. I. The Austrian party, the Polish Bund, and the I. L. P. also belong to the

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L. S. I. Why are not they influenced in the same way as the American party?

Reformism, quietism, and soft-peddalling the class-struggle in the American party are due to the specific American conditions created by the war, the New Capitalism, and Communist splits. We must fight against them and we can do so only by educating our members along Marxian lines. It is not a question of practical politics, of electing or defeating by a clever political trick this or that comrade, but a purely educational question of bringing Marxism to the rank and file of our party.

It is difficult to learn from Comrade Shapiro's article just what the militants demand. Suppose they were to get control of the party. What changes would they bring about? They are against reformism. Very well, what does reformism mean to Comrade Shapiro? It means this: "The militants insist that it has become evident that it is unrealistic to emphasize measures of social reform, instead of a relentless drive for political power?" The meaning of this sentence is unclear. It is hard to guess what is meant by the word "unrealistic"; but whatever it means, the question is—what would the militants do with regard to reformism if they had the power? Would they participate in elections? Certainly. Would they conduct political campaigns on a platform that would emphasize **only** the "relentless struggle for political power"? We hope not. Marx and Engels well knew that such a method must fail. They therefore always emphasized the fact that the fight for social reforms, if it is made an integral part of the fight for Socialism is not only beneficial, but also one of the most important means of educating the working class for Socialism. We believe that this is how the militants, too, view the matter of reformism.

But unfortunately the problem is not clearly stated. Reformism does not consist in demanding and fighting for social reforms. **It consists in divorcing these demands and fights from our general fight for Socialism.** If this is what Comrade Shapiro has in mind, it is not only the standpoint of the A. S. Q. but of every Marxist in the party. If on the other

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hand, Comrade Shapiro means to say that the militants would entirely give up the fight for social reforms as part of the fight for Socialism, it is nothing but a return to primitive communism.

Even less clear is Comrade Shapiro on the question of democracy. The parties of the L. S. I., says Comrade Shapiro, "have made a fetish" of democracy. Comrade Shapiro knows, and he is certainly right, that when capitalism is compelled to struggle for self-preservation it suspends "the rules of this game", that is, it suspends democracy. Again—"The capitalist class has discarded this outworn weapon". Not exactly true. But it seems that it is becoming true. Capitalism seems to discard democracy wherever it feels compelled to do so. But why does capitalism "discard", "suspend" democracy? When it must fight for self-preservation. Because in democracy the working class, the deadly enemy of capitalism, has a wonderful weapon for itself. If the workers only understood how to use this weapon, it would become the most dangerous thing for capitalism. Is it any wonder, Comrade Shapiro, that capitalism "discards", "suspends" democracy and is looking, as you say for "a more efficient instrument of class rule such as fascism, constitutional dictatorship, or militarism". Of course you are right; of course capitalism is looking for "more efficient instruments", for anti-democratic instruments. It turns to one or another form of dictatorship. In democracy it sees its doom; in dictatorship its salvation.

But Comrade Shapiro and the militants never seem to have thought that their anti-democratic propaganda must be very welcome to capitalism. It is a strange case of class-collaboration. Capitalism wants to suspend democracy. It is therefore in its interest to discredit the idea of democracy. It would therefore follow that it is in the interests of the proletariat to defend and uphold democracy. But instead of defending, the militants help discredit and disparage democracy; the wish to be super-revolutionary is likely to make them unconscious and unwilling helpers of the capitalist class in the latter's fight against democracy. Many well meaning and revolutionary minded comrades in America, as well as in

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other countries, labor under the false impression that such things as freedom, human happiness and moral ideas are nothing but "petit bourgeois prejudices". "We revolutionary Marxists have nothing to do with that; we want Socialism not democracy," one comrade exclaimed at the last New York City convention of the party. What is Socialism for these comrades? It is a purely economic ideal; the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, and no more. They forget that this economic Socialism is in itself only a means to an end; the end is freedom, equality, happiness for all.

These comrades have learned their Socialism not from Marx and Engels, but from Soviet Russia; not even from Lenin but from Russian practice. That Russia is building Socialism they have no doubt; but there is no freedom in Russia, no democracy, no equality. Instead there is a dictatorship, a reign of brute terror, of suppression of free thought, free criticism, and free living. Ergo, Socialism is opposed to freedom, to democracy, etc.

Some believe that this is "orthodox Marxism", but it is not. It is misunderstood and misinterpreted Marxism. Marxism does not deny the power of ideals in life and history; it only explains them. To show how ideas of freedom and human happiness arise, change and decay in conformity with the needs of the class struggle does not mean to deny either their importance or their influence. Marx and Engels were all their lives fighters for freedom, and they were Socialists precisely because real democracy, real freedom and social democracy, is possible only in a classless society.

This is not a defense of those who make a "fetish" of democracy. Democracy without Socialism is nothing but an empty phrase. There cannot be any real freedom or equality as long as there is a ruling class and an exploited class. Political democracy is valuable to us only as a bridge to social democracy. Comrade Shapiro is right. The capitalist class whenever it feels compelled to fight for its existence tries to destroy this bridge. **Shall we help them?**

It is very unfortunate, of course, that many of those who

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agree with us in our view of democracy identify democracy with electioneering and seem to think that democratic Socialism is purely political, and political in the most narrow sense. The Marxist is therefore compelled to fight against both; on the one side against those who believe that because democracy is not Socialism we do not need it, and on the other side against those who believe that democracy means conducting an election from time to time. The way of constant compromise, of denying or forgetting the class struggle, of "doing business with their governments" of some Socialist parties or majorities within their parties, we condemn together with the militants, but we deny that it is due to their belief in democracy. It is due, rather, to their loss of confidence in the working class, to their mistrust in the class struggle.

Comrade Shapiro is greatly mistaken if he thinks that those Socialists who refuse to recognize the "Russian way" as the road to Socialism, either for Russia or for any other country do so because the Soviet Government has violated a "Marxist law". "It is not sound Marxism," says Comrade Shapiro, "to say that industrialization cannot be induced" in Russia, because after all Russia is a part of an industrial world. What Comrade Shapiro means to say (at least this is the only construction we can give to this very unclear passage) is that Russia must not go through all of the stages of capitalist development that other countries went through. It can simply "borrow" the "results" of this development from the capitalist countries and jump right into Socialism. Whether this is "sound Marxism" or even "sound economic sense" we will not discuss now, but it is a mistake to think that this is why Socialists disapprove of the Russian way.

The problem of the industrialization of Russia is not a theoretical but a practical problem. Those who claim that the Five Year Plan has failed in its grandiose promises and that the industrialization of Russia will take decades, base their claims not on quotations from Marx but on official statistics of the Russian government. It is astonishing how little our comrades know of what is really going on in Russia.

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Instead of learning about Russia from Socialist sources they take their information from the bourgeois liberal press. It is of course the fault of our Socialist press which presents so little real information about Russia.

But suppose the industrialization of Russia is successful. Does that mean that we would then approve the Russian way? By no means! We would still say that the Russian way is wrong; that through democratic methods, the same or even greater results could have been achieved without paying the frightful price that the Russian workers are paying for it. The Russian way, that is the way of dictatorship, not of the working class, but of a small minority over the working class, the way of terrorism, of suppression of every vestige of liberty—even if successful, is not the way to Socialism. It is not the “nonskip” theory that determines our stand towards Russia, but our Socialism. As Socialists we cannot accept or approve Communism; if we could we would be Communists.

We certainly agree with our militant comrades that Socialists should not confine their activities to politics alone, but the most important question remains again unanswered; what practical measures do the militants propose. To be discontented, to criticize, to grumble will make our party neither more revolutionary nor more active. Discontent that does not express itself in practical propositions, usually transforms itself into cynicism.

We had expected to find in Comrade Shapiro’s article a clear statement of what the militant’s do demand from the party; what changes they propose. All that Comrade Shapiro has to say is that the militants are discontented. But whither this discontent leads—is as yet a mystery.

The Social Philosophy of Marxism

HAIM KANTOROVITCH

I.

The Social Roots of Marxism

“**B**EHIND every philosophy there lurks a man,” says F. C. S. Schiller, but behind Marxism lurk two Socialists. The usual picture of Karl Marx, the cold, impassive scientist, who always weighs and measures, who follows Spinoza’s precept, “not to love, not to hate, but to understand” is all wrong. His latest biographies, based on reliable material lately unearthed, reveal to us a passionate revolutionist, a dreamer and a fighter, a scientist and a man of action. As for Frederick Engels, every one knows him more as a passionate agitator and practical leader, than a philosopher. This does not detract in the least from their reputation as thinkers, and also does not minimize their theoretic achievements. The conception of the impassive, purely objective, impartial and absolutely unbiased scientist is nowadays more and more discarded. The theory of unconscious motivation has killed the myth of the pure scientist, who is after “truth and nothing but the truth”. Science is pragmatic. The exact sciences are limited by experimentation and verification. Nevertheless enough place is left for phantasy. Witness only the numerous conflicting theories that are born every day, based on chemistry, physics, biology. Philosophers generally arrive at their conclusions first, and only later look for rationalizations, very correctly observes the usually wrong F. C. S. Schiller. If this is a sin against science, then there is no scientist without sin, and the greater the scientist, the greater are his sins.

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Marx and Engels were both natural pragmatists. Their philosophy could not be anything but pragmatic. In their youth both were Hegelians, idealists. They left the "phantom world" of idealism because it could not serve the purpose of those who refused to be satisfied with "explaining the world" and were out to "change it".

Dreamers they were, certainly. Who that is alive does not dream? But they knew that the world is neither made nor changed by dreams. They knew life, they knew hardships; they felt the weight of "material forces" on their backs. One must bear in mind the time and conditions under which the thoughts of Marx and Engels grew and matured. Marxism was not born ready made in the heads of Marx and Engels. It was not just "thought out" by them, rather it grew up. Its elements were in the air. Its main tenets were already latent in society. Its main principles, in chaotic form, mixed with utter nonsense, had already been partly proclaimed by others. The labor movement had begun to practice Marxism, even before it was born. Marx and Engels were not out to find a new theory, rather they found a new practice, and wanted to explain it. "We do not proclaim to the world in doctrinaire fashion any principle. This is the truth, bow down before it. . . . We only want to make clear to men for what they really are struggling, and to the consciousness of it they must come whether they will or not." (From a letter from Marx to Ruge, written in 1843.) In Germany at that time every one was seeking new truths, final truths, absolute truths. Marx and Engels left this search to their academic colleagues. For themselves they chose another task: To find a method by which to explain and interpret what was really taking place before their eyes, a method through which they could uncover the hidden motives and deeper meanings of the fierce class struggle that they were witnessing.

That political, economic, and even the cultural struggles of their times were class struggles was not hard to perceive. This was the time when the bourgeoisie was preparing for its last struggle against whatever was left of feudalism, but it was also the time when the workers of Europe realizing that

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they had their own way to go, and their own interests to fight for, began to feel themselves a separate class. Class consciousness was born before it was proclaimed. "In 1842 England witnessed the first strike on a large scale . . . that bore a political revolutionary character; in 1843 the idea of an impending revolution was widely spread in England; in 1844 an insurrection broke out among the Silesian weavers; in 1845 and 1846 Socialism spread rapidly on all sides in Germany . . . the spectre of communism was abroad in Europe." * The working class did not wait for a theory to explain its rise, or to justify its class struggle. The class struggle is a justification in itself. When Proudhon theoretically disapproved of labor coalitions (trade unions) Marx replied not with a theoretical justification, not with arguments that prove that trade unions are good or necessary; he simply took their existence for granted. The question for Marx was not: are they good? are they reasonable? but why are they here? whither are they tending? It is the same with the class struggle theory, this so much abused part of the Marxian theory. Marx and Engels did not ask themselves whether the class struggle is good, or reasonable, or desirable; they applied to the class struggle the same questions, whence and whither? There is a bitter struggle going on between different social classes. Is it only an accident? It is a passing nightmare? Or is it, as the press assured its readers then, just as it is doing now, the result of the subversive propaganda of the damned agitators?

Marx and Engels lived not only in the age of rising capitalism, but also in the age of science and reason. Whatever could not stand the test of reason was to be discarded; whatever could not defend itself before science was of no account. It was the time when "metaphysics", the erstwhile queen of the sciences, was banished from actual life. Scientific method invaded every nook and corner of human thought. It began to make inroads into the social sciences; even this domain which until lately had been left entirely to metaphysics, was

* M. Beer, "Life and Teachings of Karl Marx", p. 39. National Labour Press, Ltd., 1921, England.

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invaded. It was no longer possible for anyone with a scientific frame of mind to ascribe to chance or to agitators, any social phenomenon, and especially such a significant and far reaching phenomenon as the rise of the labor movement, and the beginning of its open struggle for power.

Marx and Engels went through the mills of Hegelianism. From Hegel (and not only from him) they learned to look at things dialectically. Hegel's mysticism was turned into a beacon light of realism for them. Hegel's idealistic dialectics, which, according to Marx, was standing on its head, was placed on its feet, and its feet firmly implanted in reality. The dialectic method, shorn of its mystic language and its idealistic content, became the corner stone of the dialectic materialism of Marx and Engels. "Marx and I," writes Engels, "were almost the only persons who made it their business to save a reasonable dialectic out of the ruins of idealism, Hegelian idealism not excepted, and to transform it into a materialist conception of nature."

Engels seems to have been very proud of what he and Marx did with the Hegelian dialectic. The critics of Marxism however think that there is nothing to be proud of. Marxism, they believe, would be much better off without it. Edward Bernstein, in 1898 argued that the dialectic "spoiled" Marxism. Max Eastman repeats the same thing in 1927, only with much less knowledge of Hegelianism, and with very little insight into Marxism. From Edward Bernstein to Max Eastman to Norman Thomas critics agree that the dialectic ruined Marxism.

2.

Hegelian Elements in Marxism

In his unfinished work "The Philosophical Evolution of Marx" George Plekhanov says, "Some historians of philosophy simply consider Marx as one of the left wing Hegelians. This is not the whole truth." In his philosophic evolution Marx went through three separate stages in relation to Hegel and Hegelianism. At first he was simply a Hegelian. In his first theoretical work "On the Difference Between the Democritean

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and the Epicurean Philosophy" he accepts Hegel in his entirety. He is full of admiration for him. He refers to him as the "Giant-thinker" (den riesenhaften Denker). Hegel's idea of self-consciousness (Selbstbewusstsein) is the guiding idea of his work.

Later on, under the influence of life's experience, cooled off by the later developments of the young Hegelians, and last but not least, under the influence of Feuerbach, Marx abandoned Hegelianism. In his "Holy Family" written in collaboration with Engels, Marx is thoroughly anti-Hegelian. "Marx's writing for years past against Bruno Bauer, Feuerbach, Stirner, the Young Hegelians, and the true Socialists," says Ruehle, "had in the last analysis been shafts aimed at the Hegelian principle of the absolute, at the Hegelian priority of the idea, at Hegel's metaphysical trend . . . in a word, whatever the ostensible target, Marx's missiles had really been thrown at Hegel's head."

In this second period of his philosophic development, Marx is in full revolt against Hegel; he is in revolt against Hegel the mystic, the idealist, the metaphysician, for whom everything dissolves in a logical category. Marx was more and more drawn into practical politics. As editor of the "Rheinische Zeitung" he demanded from his contributors ". . . less vague argument, pretentious phraseology, and self satisfied contemplation of one's own image in the mirror; and . . . more definiteness, more concern with concrete actualities, more accurate knowledge of the matters in hand."

When the "Rheinische Zeitung" was closed by the censor, and Marx devoted himself largely to the study of French Socialism, he was still less in a mood to "deal in shadows". He saw that "Hegel's interpretation of history presupposes an abstract or absolute spirit, which evolves in such a way that mankind is only a mass which bears it up, unconsciously or consciously. . . . The history of mankind is transformed into history of the abstract spirit of mankind, which, because it is abstract, is something beyond real human beings." When the "Holy Family" was written, Marxism was as yet in its embryonic stage, but of one thing Marx and Engels were already

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certain, and that was that, "man, the real living man does all things . . . history is nothing else than the activity of man pursuing his own aims."* Marx and Engels were gradually drifting into materialism. They were not alone in this process. "The practical necessity of the struggle against positive religion, brought many of the most resolute young Hegelians to the English-French materialism," relates Engels in his "Feuerbach". But they were not yet ready to part entirely with Hegelianism. They dared not raise the flag of revolt.

Ludwig Feuerbach dared. "Living in rural seclusion, far from the busy world of affairs," he came out openly against Hegel. In place of Hegel's idealism he put materialism. His works were greeted with enthusiasm on all sides. Engels calls his influence "liberating". He really did liberate a whole generation of intellectuals from Hegelianism. "Materialism was raised to the throne".

The influence of Feuerbach on Marx and Engels was tremendous. In spite of the many changes and amendments to Feuerbach's philosophy by Marx and Engels, they remained Feuerbachians for the rest of their lives. The essential principles of their materialist philosophy are those of Feuerbach. They developed these principles further; they enriched them not only with a social and historic content, but also, with whatever was best, whatever was really revolutionary in Hegel.

Hegel the idealist, the conservative, was at the same time also Hegel the realist, the revolutionist. In his system, Hegel was idealistic and conservative, even reactionary, but he himself always asserted that what is important is not a system of philosophy, but a method. Philosophy is for Hegel something like an autopsy. "The owl of Minerva takes its flight when the shades of night are gathering". He even goes so far as to say that philosophy must always come too late. "When reflection awakens it is a sign that an historical form of life has drawn to a close." Philosophy does not lead; it follows. Hegel viewed philosophy from an evolutionary-dialectical standpoint. The history of philosophy was for him

* Quotations from the "Holy Family" are taken from Otto Ruehle's "Karl Marx, His Life and Works".

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not a history of mistakes or of unsuccessful essays to solve the riddles of the universe. Every system of philosophy was for him an historically determined expression of its time, place and environment. They were all "true", they were all "reasonable", because they were all necessary stages in the development of philosophy.

Hegel reached this conclusion because he here applied his dialectic method; Hegel erred in his "system", because his system was in contradiction to his method. According to his dialectic method "systems of philosophy" are as impossible as unnecessary.

According to Hegel's dialectic method reality is a constant process, a constant flux, nothing is; everything is becoming, changing, developing inner contradictions, transforming itself into something else. "Dialectics," says Engels, "comprehends things and their representations, ideas in their essential connection, concatenation, motion, origin and ending."

"According to Hegel," says Engels, "the truth to be recognized by philosophy was no longer a collection of ready made dogmatic propositions which once discovered had merely to be learned by heart. Truth lay in the very process of cognition, in the long historical evolution of science, rising from lower to ever higher stages of knowledge, but never reaching (by the discovery of a so-called absolute truth) the point beyond which no advance would be possible."

This makes an end once for all to the absolute truth. Absolute truths are abstract, metaphysical and eternal. For the dialectician no such truths exist. Truth for him is something always bound up with time, place and condition. It is always concrete. It always changes together with time and conditions. It passes through different stages. What has been true at one stage, becomes false at another, beauty becomes ugliness, and reason is transformed into absurdity. Everything not only develops, it also carries within itself its own opposite. It is contradictory in itself. Things are not either good or bad, either true or false, either beautiful or ugly, they are good and bad, true and false, beautiful and ugly, at once, though they usually reveal only one side of their contradic-

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tory natures. It is in their contradictions that Hegel (and Marx and Engels, after Hegel) see the guarantee of further evolution and of further progress.¹ "Every step in the evolution of the universe as well as in human society, is conditioned and necessary, and made unavoidable by the development of inner contradictions within everything that is. These contradictions are the constant driving force behind things and events." "Every stage is necessary, that is to say, justified for the time and under the conditions out of which it arises, but it becomes invalid and forfeits its justification under new and higher conditions which gradually develop within its own womb. It has to give place to a higher stage, which in its turn will decay and perish." (Engels)²

Some Marxists, scared by the critics of the dialectic philosophy, try to pacify the critics by reducing dialectics simply to the theory of evolution. The place of Hegel is then taken by Darwin and Spencer.³ Historically it is false. Hegelianism cannot be eradicated from Marxism, and dialectics is not simply evolution. It is much more than evolution. It is, as one Russian publicist once remarked, "the algebra of revolution". Moreover, by denying the revolutionary character of our dialectic philosophy, we do not gain anything. Our critics will find other grounds on which to criticize our theory. But we lose much; we lose our theory of revolution.

The non-dialectical theory of evolution is too often used as an argument against the theory of revolution. The evolutionary process is, according to the sociological evolutionist, a slow, gradual unbroken process of quantitative accumulations. Things grow bigger or smaller, but essentially they are always the same. This theory of evolution explains quantitative change, but it cannot explain the transformation of quantities into new qualities. Socially, such a theory of gradual, unbroken evolution is reactionary. The evolutionist, says Plekhanov, begins with the assertion, *natura non fecit saltum*, nature

1) "The Fundamental Principles of Marxism", by George Plekhanov, English translation, and "Feuerbach", by Frederick Engels.

2) The differences between Hegel's idealistic dialectic and Marx's materialistic dialectics are treated in a separate chapter.

3) As for instance in Enrico Ferri's "Socialism and Modern Science".

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does not leap. It hates to jump. It goes on slowly and continuously. From nature this principle is brought over into sociology and history. *Historia non fecit saltum*, history does not leap. History is the same slow, gradual, unbroken, even process. Unscientific Socialists may speak of revolutions, but we evolutionists know better. *Historia non fecit saltum*,—evolution really excludes revolution.

Now Hegel was not a Socialist, and certainly not a revolutionist. He did not think of revolution when he worked out his fertile dialectical theory. He did not even grasp the revolutionary potentialities of his philosophy. But he grasped the fact that the "metaphysical"¹ theory of evolution was wrong. Nature as well as history continually makes jumps. Revolutions are constantly taking place, **as part of the evolutionary process.** At certain points in their evolution the accumulation of quantities goes over into new qualities.²

The metaphysician is especially afraid of contradictions. He is the slave of formal logic. A is always A. A cannot be A and not A at the same time. But dialectic is first of all a revolt against formal logic. It is not true that A must always be A. Things, (for Hegel it is ideas) are not always either this or that, they are this and that. It is not either evolution or revolution. It is evolution and revolution, each determining and calling forth the other, each a result of the other. "It is a common notion," says Hegel, "that things have their origin through gradual increase or decrease, but, there is also such a thing as sudden transformation from quantity to a new quality."

Everything eventually negates itself, transforms itself into something else. This transformation is due to the fact that every phenomenon has within itself the forces that will bring about its transformation. The inner contradictions which everything bears within itself are bound, sooner or later, to bring about the revolution that will change the thing into its opposite.

¹ Metaphysical here simply means non-dialectical. See Engel's "Socialism, Utopian and Scientific".

² George Plekhanov "A Contribution to the History of Materialism", p. 129, collected works, Vol. 8 (Russian). There is also a German translation.

Editorials

How fruitful this theory became in the hands of Marx and Engels we will see in a later chapter.

NOTE OF EDITORS:

This is a chapter from a forthcoming book, "The Social Philosophy of Marxism". The next chapter is on "Pre-Marxian Socialism".

Pre-Marxian Socialism, or Utopian Socialism, appeared for many years to be dead, but it seems to have come to life again especially in the American Movement. The criticism of Utopian Socialism by Marx and Engels therefore becomes timely.

Editorials

THE Convention of the Socialist Party is faced with a task of more than ordinary importance and difficulty.

Not only members of the Party but sympathizers by the thousands, and new-comers who have never before been interested in Socialism look to it to clarify issues, to resolve doubts, and to formulate a program which will unite Socialists of all shades of opinion into one vigorous fighting force. The workers are ready as never before for Socialist ideas. No program that the Convention can formulate can possibly satisfy the intransigents of either the right or the left. They do not ask that they be fully satisfied. They ask only that the program which is to come from the Convention shall be one which will make Socialist action possible. The A S Q believes that such a program will be forthcoming. It believes also that this Convention will rise to the occasion and will give to the American Socialist movement the impulse that it needs for further growth and development as the movement of the working class of America.

What the Party Needs

A Trade Union policy that will make it possible for Socialist propaganda to reach the organized workers. Without them there will never be a Socialist movement capable of constructing the co-operative commonwealth.

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A well thought out plan for organizing the unorganized.

An agrarian program that will knit the farmer and the worker into a fighting unit for Socialism.

An appeal to the middle classes based on their impending disappearance. The "new proletarians" must be made to realize that the day of the middle classes is over.

A well thought out program of Socialist education to reach first, members of the Party, and through them other workers.

A well thought out literature to reach every type of mind.

An active and plain spoken press.

A program for Socialist organization that will bring into the movement all who have left it, all who need it, and all whom it needs.

A youth movement that will inspire the young workers with enthusiasm for Socialism.

A disciplined membership.

A clear cut workers' program as to war and imperialism.

A clear cut policy in opposition to class-collaboration and political alliances.

A clear definition of the differences between Socialism and Communism.

A clear statement of the Party's attitude towards Russia.

A definition of the possibilities for Socialism inherent in the co-operative movement.

A clear statement of the meaning of immediate demands.

A clarification of the possibilities for Socialism inherent in municipal government.

A clear statement of the working class nature of the Socialist movement.

A re-orientation of Socialist Party tactics to emphasize the class nature of the movement.

A definition of what Social Democracy is, and is not.

THE A S Q disagrees with Comrade Hillquit when he takes the position that it does not become members of a weak and small party like ours to criticize the German Social Democratic Party and the British Labor Party, because

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they are old and have solid achievements to their credit, because their tactics in the past were on the whole right. Size and success are not evidence of sound tactics. The pursuit of a correct course in the past is no proof that their course is to-day sound. Nor is it an assertion of intellectual superiority to criticize these parties adversely. Democracy includes the right of even the least and the humblest to criticize the great and the powerful.

Socialism is international not only as an idea but also as a practical movement. Victory or defeat in one country reacts favorably or unfavorably on all other countries. If a Socialist party anywhere does not live up to its socialist principles, it is not the only one to pay for it.

In the second place Comrade Hillquit dismisses the grave question of the Trade Unions with the statement that we "must educate the rank and file" and that "we must help them and teach them". This is sound but does not go far enough. We should like to know more of the machinery that can be created to "educate the rank and file". How are we to "help them and teach them"? What will the Convention say about the present status of the Trade Unions? The declaration of the Convention on the present status of the Trades Unions will become the guide to our educational work in the unions. What is that declaration to be?

THE formation of the Independent Labor Party of West Virginia will further bedevil a situation already sufficiently tangled. The A S Q is pleased to see evidence of independent political thought and action on the part of a labor organization. Not until all of labor is politically awake will the labor movement come into its own. We regret, however, that we must note the poor judgment, the poor tactics displayed in West Virginia when the new party failed to become an internal part of the Socialist Party.

There can be only one reason for this decision: fear that the name Socialist might frighten away the more timid adherents of the new movement. We cannot take seriously the assertion of the *Labor Age* that the new party stands to the

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left of the Socialist Party. Sudden growths such as this are chaotic in their reasoning, and inconsistent in their utterances. They may pass "left" resolutions, and make "revolutionary" gestures. At the same time they adopt opportunistic programs and follow cautious political tactics. These things have been before and will be again.

It was a tactical error for the Socialist Party to give up its right to organize anywhere in West Virginia or elsewhere. Another arrangement, calling for co-operation but not for cessation of Socialist activity, would have been better strategy.

Adherence to the Socialist Party, or failure to adhere, may well mean life or death to the I. L. P. of W. Va. Without a Socialist philosophy, without Socialist guidance, the movement will become one more political hulk for the old parties to bargain for. There is still time for the I. L. P. of W. Va. to reconsider its action.

THE killing of workers engaged in public demonstration is nothing new to America. It has occurred often, whenever in fact, there has been economic stress, and whenever the unrest of the workers has seemed dangerous to the panicky masters of industry. Is it necessary to repeat such tactics inevitably defeat their ends? Is not the teaching of history plain?

The A S Q has no sympathy with irresponsible Communist agitation. It has as little with the suppression of the freedom of speech or of assemblage. We do not mistake the Dearborn killings for the impending revolution. We are certain that they have left behind a heritage of bitterness that the years will not eradicate.

As long as there is economic oppression, there will be protests against it. There will be meetings and demonstrations. It should be a warning to the workers that the Dearborn incident is a prelude to what is bound to come; that it shows the length to which the capitalists are ready to go. If the class struggle will become sharp and bitter, Dearborn will be repeated everywhere. How long will the mass of workers refrain from voicing their protest?

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THE A S Q is opposed to class collaboration. Coalition governments are extreme examples of class collaboration. We believe that the German Social Democrats should not have supported Hindenburg in the recent election. It may be granted that a Socialist candidate would not have won, and that a Socialist candidacy might have resulted in giving Hitler a plurality in the first election. Nevertheless, it would have served not only to keep intact the strength that the German Social Democracy has built up in the last sixty years, but would undoubtedly have gained adherents who, under the circumstances, voted Communist.

Granted, too, that the German Social Democracy had much to lose from a Hitler victory. There would have been time enough to join in a coalition with Hindenburg in the second election, which as it turns out must be held. The strength claimed for Hitler even by his own adherents was not so great that the Socialists need have feared that a separate Socialist candidacy would result in his election.

We believe that the predicament in which the Social Democrats now find themselves is in part of their own making and might have been avoided had the Social Democratic Party pursued a more sound and aggressive Socialist course in the last decade. Yet we confess to a feeling of satisfaction that the German worker in this electoral crisis has refused to allow himself to be stampeded either in the direction of Fascism or Communism.

Book Reviews

History of the Russian Revolution, by Leon Trotsky

Simon and Schuster, New York. (Translated by Max Eastman), \$4.00

It is not often that the story of a great historic event is written by one of the men who figured in it. This very fact, coupled with another circumstance, that Trotsky is known to be a polemical writer of vast skill and experience, should put the reader on his guard. That this is no objective history, the writer himself tells us.

Many have forgotten that there was a revolution in Russia before the Bolsheviks seized power. Trotsky's book is of great service here, in tracing the intricate story of decay that led to the downfall of the Romanov dynasty. His analysis of the contending forces that brought about the collapse, often working without intention, but nonetheless effectively, is penetrating and valuable. But he cannot paint the picture of a man, or state the program of a group, without sneering. Even the reader without knowledge of the situation must be led to wonder whether the man is writing history, or venting grudges.

It is good to be reminded of the evil and tragic part that the Allied governments, in their blind war-madness, played in betraying the Provisional Government. It is good to be reminded that this government had the backing of the people, and that it lost this backing because the Allied governments insisted on continuing the war.

There can no longer be any doubt that the Provisional Government misread the temper of the workers. Kerensky, Tseretelli, *et al* made mistake after mistake. It is not necessary to hold a brief for them.

It is good, however, to have Trotsky tell us that, in fact, the Bolsheviks had no program other than to wait for the natural resentment of the people against war and hunger to

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assert itself. This confession ought to do much to put to rest the myth of the carefully planned revolution.

A good part of the book is taken up by a careful explanation of how the Bolsheviks, under Lenin's influence, abandoned whatever plan they had, for a policy of frank opportunism. (Chapter XVI, Rearming The Party.) The opponents of Bolshevism have often asserted that Bolshevism was not a philosophy; that it was merely the policy of using the revolutionary energy generated by the masses in a given situation to whatever ends the momentary leader had in mind. Trotsky's book is ample demonstration of this. Previous history, theory, plan—all were thrown to the winds by Lenin when the time seemed ripe to ride to power on the crest of popular anger.

To Lenin, Trotsky assigns the role of superman. "Without Lenin the crisis, which the opportunist leadership was inevitably bound to produce, would have assumed an extraordinary sharp and protracted character. . . . Thus it is by no means excluded that a disoriented and split party might have let slip the revolutionary opportunity for many years. The role of personality arises before us here on a truly gigantic scale."

This toward the end of Chapter XVI, in which Lenin's role in single-handedly recreating the Bolshevik program. The chapter closes with an illuminating statement in which Trotsky's hatred for Stalin shines forth.

"From the extraordinary significance which Lenin's arrival received, it should only be inferred that leaders are not accidentally created, that they are *gradually chosen out and trained up in the course of decades*, that they cannot be *capriciously replaced*, that *their mechanical exclusion* from the struggle gives the party a living wound, and in many cases *may paralyze it for a long period.*"

Poor Trotsky! How it must hurt to realize that Lenin's game can be played by Stalin, whom he despises, and whom he systematically ridicules and belittles. Not only played, but played successfully. For it is, after all, only the Tammany game, the process of manipulating majorities, of assassinating

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character, of creating false issues, of prejudicing the masses.

This, then, is not history. It is a stupendous effort to use the facts of history to prove a point, and this point is not so much that the Bolsheviks were right in ousting Kerensky, as it is that Trotsky was "gradually chosen out" to be the leader after Lenin, and that he should not have been "mechanically excluded". The story goes only so far as the preparation for the July insurrection. There will be two more volumes, in which we may be sure, we shall learn much more of the great Trotsky-Stalin contest, than of Russia.

D. P. B.

Lassalle by Arnold Shirokauer

The Century Co., New York. (Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul) \$5.00

Among the most important figures in the development of the German Social Democracy was Ferdinand Lassalle. This Jewish lawyer, a thoroughgoing egotist, with the impulses of a flaneur, and with a strong streak of the charlatan in his make-up, managed somehow to win the confidence of the industrial workers, particularly of the Rhineland, and to lead them to that union which Marx and Engels knew was necessary but did not bring about. If there is any reason for a new biography of Lassalle it is that we could well do with an explanation of this deed. How did the advocate in the *cause celebre* of the Countess Hatzfeld win such influence over the workers? How did he overcome their hatred of the Jew? How did he surmount their inertia and their fear of novelty? On these points Shirokauer's book is disappointing. It belongs rather to the genre of "psychological" biographies, a form rapidly losing its usefulness. It is an attempt to show us the "whole man". It is a question whether it does not achieve caricature.

Much is made in the book of Lassalle's dealing with Bismarck. We are led to believe that this story is one of the original contributions of the author to the Lassalle story. Unfortunately the story, in its main outlines, has already been told in the Autobiography of Helene von Dönniges, the

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woman for whom Lassalle entered the duel in which he met his death. There are a number of points in which Helene's book and Shirokauer's clash; in themselves they are not important, but they raise the question whether Shirokauer knew of Helene's book; whether if he did, he checked her version of certain incidents and found it incorrect; why he nowhere mentions this fact; why, indeed, he nowhere mentions the book. It would seem that the memoirs of as important a person as Helene would be of first importance to Lassalle's biographer.

Finally, Shirokauer assigns to Lassalle the role, not merely of creator of the German Social Democracy, but of the modern German and Russian (sic.) states. This is too much. Of one, or the other, M. Shirokauer, not of both!

The book is admirably translated by Eden and Cedar Paul. It has an index, but (regrettably) no bibliography.

D. P. B.

Time Stood Still, by Paul Cohen-Portheim

E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, \$3.00

In addition to newer and more deadly means of warfare, the World War produced another phenomenon never seen before—civilian internment camps. Paul Cohen-Portheim, a German painter, making his yearly visit to England in the fall of 1914 found himself branded as a dangerous alien and was interned in one of these camps.

In a dispassionate objective manner he describes the conditions under which the prisoners lived—a horrible, impersonal system which vitiated all initiative and sense of responsibility. He points out that nothing else could be expected when soldiers who were fighting for their countries were subjected to a similar system. The utter futility of their life, so monotonous that it caused them to lose all sense of time, is made more impressive by his straight-forward, unadorned style of writing.

The impossibility of engaging in any purposeful activity caused some of the men to become slightly unbalanced. In

Cohen-Porthheim's case it resulted in a complete reversal of his life. His change from a painter to a writer is described in a few masterly chapters of self-analysis. An interesting relationship is made between the lack of food at the camp and his preoccupation with spiritism and Eastern philosophies.

This is a remarkable human document and a worthy addition to the books which have come out of the War. It is especially interesting because it treats of the War from an angle hitherto rarely touched.

O. S.

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