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The Campaign of 1934—Norman Thomas

Notes of a Marxist—Haim Kantorovitch

**A Basis for a Proposed Program of
Revolutionary Socialism—David Felix**

On the Road to Power—James O Neal

Socialism and War—David P. Berenberg

The White Collar Worker—Harry W. Laidler

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Table of Contents

	Page
The Campaign of 1934 By Norman Thomas	3
Notes of a Marxist By Haim Kantorovitch	9
A Basis for a Proposed Program for Revolutionary Socialism By David Felix	20
On the Road to Power By James Oneal	35
Socialism and War By David P. Berenberg	43
The White Collar Worker By Harry W. Laidler	53
Books Reviewed	
What Marx Really Meant G. D. H. Cole	59
A History of Bolshevism By Arthur Rosenberg	61

The A S Q assumes no responsibility for signed articles. Such articles express the opinion of the writers. The A S Q strives to serve as a free forum for all shades of opinion within our movement.

The Campaign of 1934

NORMAN THOMAS

THE editors of the Quarterly have asked me to write an article on the campaign. They mean, the political campaign culminating at the polls on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Of course that is only an episode in the continuing campaign. We must carry on this political campaign parallel to our campaign to help labor to organize and to strengthen organized labor in its struggle for the emancipation of the workers. As important as any election is the next A. F. of L. convention at San Francisco.* Socialist trade unionists who are delegates to that convention ought to have a program which they can advance honestly and ably on its floor. We ought to take advantage of that feeling in the labor unions which led President William Green to talk openly about the possibility that ten million unemployed workers might have to take matters in their own hands and march into idle factories.

This is a good place to begin an analysis of present conditions which is the first step in planning any campaign. Rather faster than I had thought the New Deal has revealed its essential impotence to better things for masses of workers or to check the disintegration of the capitalist order. Rather faster than I had feared farmers and workers are becoming aware of this failure of the New Deal. It is not primarily a failure of individual men. The New Deal would not have been greatly strengthened had some particular mistakes been avoided. What is failing is capitalism under the New Deal as under the old deal. What is failing is the economy of scarcity which capitalism assumes is the road to prosperity. It is true that the A.A.A. program has been made to look ridiculous by the superior efficiency of drought in reducing an agricultural surplus in a country where millions are without proper food. But drought

* This article was written before the A. F. of L. convention.

The American Socialist Quarterly

or no drought the A.A.A. program began at the wrong end. It had to begin at the wrong end because it was working under capitalism. That is, it began at the end of reducing production instead of increasing consumption. To increase consumption it would have had to increase the effective purchasing power of masses of share croppers who can raise cotton but not buy underclothes for their children, of tobacco and beet sugar growers who live in shacks unfit for human habitation, of artificial flower makers at ten cents an hour, of onion pickers in Ohio who earn from seven to eleven cents an hour, and so on down the line.

We shall not begin to have to do the work that a few months ago I thought we might have to do in this election. We shall not have to prove to the workers that weekly wages on the average have not gone up quite as fast for the employed as prices. We shall not have to prove that the New Deal cannot conquer unemployment while ten million or more workers are out of jobs and the figures for production, for employment, and for wage payments are going down.

On the other hand, I think the memory of Herbert Hoover and his administration is still too fresh in the minds of the masses to make it likely that the exploited millions will turn to the good old capitalism as the way out. Indeed, we must exercise reasonable pains to make it clear that our attacks on the New Deal are as far removed as the North Pole from the South Pole from such attacks as the Republicans and the *Chicago Tribune* make upon it. They attack the New Deal in the interest of an unregulated capitalism. We attack it in the interest of socialism, of the planned economy of abundance in the cooperative commonwealth. The failure of Governor Bryan in the Nebraska primaries seems to have been a failure from within the Democratic Party to force the New Deal farther to the left. It shows Roosevelt's popularity and the strength of his organization but it also shows the existence of a discontent within Roosevelt's own party which we ought to utilize and interpret.

The ground is being prepared for us by the growing dis-

The Campaign of 1934

illusionment of the masses, by the unrest which has been expressed so widely in strikes, and by the desperate plight of the farmers. The danger in America is not so much the strength of the capitalist system as it is the weakness of the organized forces which must build the future. Capitalism and nationalism automatically may lead to destruction of themselves and of us. Socialism requires building. And that process necessitates a strong aggressive organization both on the political and the economic field. Doubtless the A. F. of L. will show progress at its next convention. It has received, however, a somewhat serious check by recent developments in the steel mills and in the automobile industry. The unions which are deserting the A. F. of L. in the automobile field are badly misguided, but there can be no question that their desertion is in large part the result of A. F. of L. policy. The Federation did not put enough organizers in the field and certainly not the right kind of organizers. It did not meet the demand of the automobile workers for their own national or international union organized on industrial lines. It kept them in federal unions with a national council not welcomed by the workers. In other words, the fight for effective industrial organization of American workers is still to be won.

On the political field there is even less progress to be recorded in the direction of a mass movement. There is a great deal of sentiment abroad in the land for a Farmer-Labor Party. It has not yet materialized. In South Dakota it died aborning. In Iowa it declared a moratorium while its leaders sought nominations in one or another of the old parties. Most of them did not get nominations and now I believe that there are two farmer-labor movements in that state, neither possessed of great strength or of a very satisfactory program. The turn of the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota to the left on paper has not yet expressed itself in action. Governor Olson apparently has offended the ultra reactionary employers in the trucking business in Minneapolis, but he has not dared to take over the business and operate it since it cannot preserve the peace. Instead, he has kept the troops at the expense of the

The American Socialist Quarterly

taxpayers of a drought stricken state in the war zone of Minneapolis. Perhaps something is going to come of the LaFollette party movement in Wisconsin, but to date it is a highly personal movement which has carefully avoided giving itself any kind of class basis by a conscious appeal to farmers and workers. It still talks the language of an outworn progressivism and seems to welcome President Roosevelt's endorsement of Bob LaFollette.

We socialists ought to be immensely sympathetic to every sign of a *genuine* farmer-labor movement on the political field. We should be ready to join in a coalition in which I hope we could win leadership by our experience and the excellence of our program. But we cannot water down socialism to mere progressivism to capture a vaguely discontented vote. To do that would be for the party to make a mistake similar to the mistake made by our old friend, Upton Sinclair. The tragedy for him would be his success at the election. Never in the world can he, surrounded by Democrats, carry out in two years a program to abolish poverty in California. He could not were his program better thought out than it is. It is an ominous, even a tragic sign, that so many of the American people still fall for the twin delusion of a good man and a good patent medicine as the cure for their ills when there is no hope for them save in a new social order.

Now it is precisely this lesson which it is our business to drive home in this campaign. It is good that our Congressional Platform is short and insistent on the one point that what we socialists want is at once to begin the process of rapid socialization of our resources and industry. There is no other hope. Our campaign will fail unless it educates people in this truth. I am more than ever convinced that in this campaign we should concentrate on electing men to legislative bodies where they can advance socialist principles. In these times of great unrest it is only in exceptional instances that we can afford to take the risk of putting socialists in executive office, sworn to enforce capitalist laws. We cannot have our men act as receivers in bankruptcy for a broken down system nor can we

The Campaign of 1934

make ourselves responsible for preserving or restoring for capitalism the order that its own tyranny and exploitation are constantly destroying. Under the American scheme of things the President and the Governors, at least of many of the states, have such great powers that they are not so completely bound by the chains of capitalist laws as the Mayors of cities or other executive officers.

Candidates for legislative offices must have an intelligent opinion on immediate issues. Here we ought sharply to discriminate between measures which at best can only doctor things up and perhaps prolong the life of the capitalist system, and measures which are designed to give immediate relief to workers and to strengthen them for the struggle. It is not the business of the Socialist Party in this campaign to advocate laws to regulate banking. We demand its socialization. It is not particularly our business to demand laws to protect the poor little fish of investors from their cannibal relations. We want to get rid of absentee ownership and to hasten socialization.

On the other hand, it is our business to fight for unemployment insurance or indemnity and all other forms of unemployment relief. It is our business to fight for all the demands of labor—the shorter working week, the right to organize, the right to strike. It is our business to bring to light the plight of the worst exploited—the share croppers of the South, the migratory workers and the laborers in beet sugar fields. It is our business to stand against all forms of racial discrimination, and that ought to lead us, among other things, to support a Federal anti-lynching law. Most emphatically it is our business to fight in the campaign and all year round to end the disfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of American workers by the poll tax or by laws which deny to families on relief rolls the right of suffrage. Any aggressive campaign against fascism must concentrate on extending the suffrage. The New York State Economic Council which recently presented to the public a thoroughgoing fascist program had as one of its demands the prohibition of the gen-

The American Socialist Quarterly

eral strike and as another the denial of suffrage to voters on the relief rolls. It is for us to take the aggressive in this matter.

Of course we are committed by our platform and by our principles to relentless war against war and against the armament ring and against the preparation for war. That means a real fight against this big navy administration.

But important as these things are in this campaign it will be our duty to show how they fit into the general socialist platform. We cannot allow them to be more important than our main drive which is for socialism and for the cooperative commonwealth.

Every election is important. This election is peculiarly important. If we make a bad showing it will not be the end of socialism or of the Socialist Party. But it will greatly retard our growth and our possibilities of usefulness. This is an hour of unusual opportunity. If we can impress ourselves upon the masses of American workers with hand and brain we shall be in a position to take a vigorous leadership. If we fail we shall have to fight doubly hard to recapture lost ground.

It is from this point of view that it is a tragedy which may almost become a calamity that in some centers, notably in New York, so much money has been diverted to fight against the Declaration of Principles. The discussion of the Declaration of Principles and a referendum on it of themselves might have been useful and educational. What is not useful and educational is a situation in which money is found from socialist sources to print and widely circulate a paper like *The Socialist Voice* when we have not yet raised our quota for the national drive, and have not begun to put either the organizers or the literature into the field which this critical opportunity imperatively demands. If the Socialist Party fails to make the most of its opportunity this year the blame will not rest by any means upon difficulties inherent in the situation or the backwardness of the workers. It will rest in large part upon any and all of us who forget that more important than any issue in the party is fundamental education in socialism and basic organization of workers with hand and brain in their own behalf. The campaign is our opportunity and our challenge.

Notes of a Marxist

HAIM KANTOROVITCH

A Note on Marxian Orthodoxy

MARXISM is not based on faith. It exacts no obedience; it knows of no heretics. To disagree with Marx is no crime. One may disagree with Marx on this or that point without losing the right to call himself Marxist. Orthodoxy, if at all applied to Marxism, does not and can not mean blind belief in everything that Marx or Engels ever said. Belief is generally not a Marxian virtue. Marx was no holy prophet. He was a scientist. Great as he was, he may have made mistakes just as Newton, Darwin, Hegel or any other great scientist may have made mistakes. It was Marx himself who warned us against "infallible" science. Science is just as relative, just as fallible, as everything else in the universe. Science is relative, changeable, transient. It carries with it the marks of its epoch. Marxism is a method and not a catechism. The Marxian method is of immense value to the socialist movement if rightly applied to the problems of every day. As soon as it becomes a "holy book" in which every word is sacred, and must be "obeyed", it becomes positively dangerous.

In the discussion on the Declaration of Principles, one "Marxist" argued: we are Marxists, therefore we must understand that it is useless now to "bother" with such remote problems as social revolution, because Marx on a certain occasion said distinctly that it is too early now to discuss these problems. This particular Marxist sees in Marxism a holy scripture that is eternal, immutable, unchangeable. Eighty years ago Marx said that it was too early to discuss the details of the conquest of power. Therefore it will always be too early for these Marxists, because the "holy book" says so.

People who speak about pure Marxism, undiluted Marxism, unrevised Marxism, know very little of the history of Marxism. Marxism has been revised continually, from the left

The American Socialist Quarterly

as well as from the right. That some people call their revision of Marxism only "interpretations" does not change anything. When the communists are incensed at Kautsky for revising Marx, they do not state the entire truth. The whole truth is that they are angry at Kautsky not because he revised Marx, but because they do not agree with the results of his revision. Lenin "revised" Marx more than Kautsky did, but his revisions are "well taken" because the communists agree with the results of his revision. In the *Labor Monthly*, September, 1934, the communist theoretician L. Rudas makes the following very significant admission:—

"Marx maintained the possibility of peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism for England and America. This view was justifiable at that time, in view of the fact that these countries were states considerably different from the states of other highly developed capitalist countries (for instance, France and Germany). Such a possibility (very rare even in the time of Marx), however, completely disappears during the imperialist period when England and America no longer differ from other imperialist states. Lenin consequently "abandoned" this antiquated opinion of Marx precisely because he regarded Marxism not as a dogma but as a living theory, a manual for action. He abandoned it in consequence of a *deep analysis* of the imperialist period and on the basis of 'new research'."

Here is another example from the same article:

"Or take the following case: Marx and Engels held the view that socialism will come as the result of the simultaneous uprising of the proletariat of the most advanced capitalist countries. Lenin and Stalin prove that this view of Marx and Engels has become antiquated in consequence of certain peculiarities of the imperialist epoch (the unequal development of imperialism, etc.). The deep analysis and new research of Lenin and Stalin show that owing to these changed conditions of the imperialist period the building up of socialism has become possible *in one country with an average development of capitalism.*"

Notes of a Marxist

Many more examples could be furnished in which Lenin and his disciples have "revised" Marx "in consequence of a deep analysis". Space, however, prevents doing so. Besides, it really is not necessary. One may agree or disagree with the changes wrought by Lenin in Marxism, but no one will say that the Marxism of Lenin is "pure" while the Marxism of Kautsky or Otto Bauer is "revised". "It is the rankest injustice to Marx", J. D. H. Cole says: "to suppose that he would have written exactly as he wrote in 1848 or 1859 or 1867 or 1883, if he had been alive and writing today."* The problems that the socialist movement faces today cannot be solved by quotations from Marx. Producing quotations from Marx that he believed in gradualism does not prove that gradualism is possible, just as quotations that Marx believed in armed insurrection do not prove that armed insurrection is possible. Marxism will help us solve our problems, not when we find quotations to strengthen our pet theories, but only when we are able to apply the Marxian method to the realities of our own time. A Marxian analysis of the class interests, class forces and economic conditions of our own contemporary society, will help us much more than the exact knowledge of what Marx said about the class forces and class relations of the society in which he lived.

Marxism and the Concepts of Social Revolution.

It is one thing to disagree with Marx, but it is another to read into Marx what he never said or could not have said. After Lenin had convinced himself that Marx was wrong on certain points, he had a right to replace them with his own theories which he believed to be true. When his disciples however demand that we believe that Lenin's innovations are part of Marxism which one must accept if he is **really** a Marxist, they are wrong. One may or may not accept Lenin's innovations. If he does he accepts Leninism; it has nothing to do with his Marxism. If he refuses to accept Leninism he still

* "What Marx Really Meant", p. 4.

The American Socialist Quarterly

remains a true Marxist. All that the Leninist may say is that he is just as wrong as Marx was.

The same naturally applies to Kautsky and the revisionists from the right. Kautsky has convinced himself that Marx was wrong on the most important problem in the socialist movement—on the question of social revolution. For decades Karl Kautsky, as the chief exponent of Marxism, believed with Marx and Engels that socialism can be established only as a result of a social revolution. So extreme was he in his belief in the social revolution that he denied the right of any one to call himself "socialist" if he did not accept this belief. In his book "The Social Revolution" Kautsky wrote:

" . . . as each animal creature must at one time go through a catastrophe in order to reach a higher stage of development (the act of birth, breaking of shell), so society can only be raised to a higher stage of development through a catastrophe." *

When Kautsky spoke about the unavoidable "catastrophe", he did not, as he and especially his American disciples do of today, think of it as a bill introduced by a socialist congressman, and adopted by other socialist congressmen who are in a majority. Before Kautsky revised Marxism, he did not believe that the social revolution will be made in and through parliament. In the book quoted above he says:

"The parliament which was formerly the means of pressing the government forward upon the road of progress, becomes ever more and more the means to nullify the little progress that conditions compel the government to make. In the degree that the class which rules through parliamentarism is rendered superfluous and indeed injurious, the parliamentary machinery loses its significance." **

In another book, written much later than the one quoted above, Kautsky says:

"The idea of the gradual conquest of the various departments of the ministry by socialists, is not less absurd

* The Social Revolution, p. 20.

** Ibid, p. 78-79.

Notes of a Marxist

than would be an attempt to divide the act of birth into a number of consecutive monthly acts." *

Kautsky considers those who believe in the possibility of such a gradual growth into socialism, Utopians and social reformers.

"Those who repudiate political revolution as the principal means of social transformation, or wish to confine this to such measures as have been granted by the ruling class, are social reformers, no matter how much their social ideas antagonize existing social forces.**

Kautsky has changed his opinions. He now believes that he was wrong all his life, and only when old age has overtaken him has he seen the "true light". He seems to believe now that "to divide the act of birth into a number of consecutive monthly acts" is not absurd but natural, practical and wise. We do not share Kautsky's new theories. We believe that the Kautsky before 1914 was right, and that the Kautsky of the post-war era is wrong.*** We believe Kautsky to be wrong, and his present theories harmful to the socialist movement however, not because he now disagrees with Marx. Disagreeing with Marx is no crime in itself. Ideas do not become wrong or harmful because Marx said or thought otherwise. We do not share Kautsky's opinions because the experiences of the socialist and labor movement have proved them to be wrong.

History has played a tragic joke on Karl Kautsky. Now, after he has repudiated his entire life work, history has proved that just what he repudiated was right.

Our quarrel with Kautsky, however, is not on why he changed his opinion. That is his private concern. Our quarrel with Kautsky, and many like him, is that they want us to believe that whatever they now believe is the true, the real Marxism. Neither Leninism nor Kautskyism is the "true", the

* "The Road to Power".

** "The Road to Power", pp. 9 and 19.

*** In an article in honor of Kautsky's eightieth birthday, Comrade Abraham Cahan mentions, among other praiseworthy things the fact that the greatness of Kautsky can be seen in the fact that after fighting Bernstein's revisionism practically all his life, he has "at last" convinced himself that Bernstein was right. Forward, Oct. 14, 1934.

The American Socialist Quarterly

"real" Marxism. For the "true", the "real" Marxism we must still go to Marx himself.

After preaching and defending Marxism as the doctrine of social revolution for many decades, Kautsky in his old age discovered that the evolution of Marxism has gone through at least two distinct stages. It is true Marx was a revolutionist when he was young:

"Opposed as Marx already was at the time of the Communist Manifesto' to the policy of plots and coups des mains preached by the Blanquists, he was still strongly influenced by their Jacobin tradition. In the first month of 1850, in his articles on 'The Class Struggle in France', published in 1895 by Engels in pamphlet form, he regarded the Blanquists as properly the workers' party of France. They above all others held his sympathy."*

That was not "real" Marxism. All the writings of Marx and Engels up to this time, including the "Communist Manifesto", are premature works written while the founders of Marxism were still under the influence of Jacobinism and Blanquism. They later gave up these ideas, especially the idea of social revolution. They realized later that "under conditions of adequate freedom the workers could by their own efforts lift themselves to a high enough level to be able to finally achieve political power not through 'civil strife and foreign wars' but through the class struggle waged by their political and economic mass organization." The reader will notice that "civil strife" is here opposed to class-struggle. A society rended by class-struggle is not in a state of civil strife. There are Jacobins, Blanquists who talk about civil strife, but "we" oppose to it the class-struggle. The real difference between civil strife and class-struggle as understood by Kautsky could have been observed in the practice of the German Social Democratic Party during and after the war, where the class struggle took on the character of peaceful, "civilized" round table discussions.

* Marxism and Bolshevism, in "Socialism, Fascism and Communism", published by the American League for Democratic Socialism.

Notes of a Marxist

These discussions would still be going on, if Hitler had not stopped them.

In his later life, Marx changed many of his ideas, Kautsky assures us. Is this true? Undoubtedly. But is it true also that Marx changed his ideas on social transformation through political revolution? That is not true. In order to change his ideas of social revolution Marx would have had to change his whole philosophy of history of which the idea of social revolutions is an organic part. One cannot remain a dialectical materialist and discard the idea of revolution. Both stand or fall together.

Marxism is revolutionary through and through; neither Marx nor Engels ever discarded the idea of social revolution, nor could they have done so without discarding their belief in the dialectical nature of the social process. Nature as well as history, they argued against the evolutionist—gradualists, proceeds by “jumps”, by sudden cataclysms. The word “sudden” may not be correct here. These “sudden cataclysms” are not really sudden. They are the result of a long chain of slow development, of a long chain of accumulation of quantitative changes. At a certain stage in this process, the quantities suddenly become a new quality. Neither in nature nor in society are these transformations of quantities into qualities easy and peaceful. The old never simply abdicates. Nothing that is alive, whether useful or harmful, dies willingly. It clings to life, it fights for its existence. Inorganic matter fights for its existence by resisting destruction, living beings by fighting back. Whatever has outlived its natural function and therefore its usefulness, has no chance in this fight, but it will fight, and fight hard. The superiority of the new is precisely the fact that it is new. It has the promise of tomorrow as its guiding star. But the old has tradition behind it. It has the strength of centuries behind it. It has its forces trained and ready. At times it may seem that the old will triumph, but this is an illusion. It may have temporary victories, but a permanent victory is prohibited for it by nature itself. Nothing is eternal, nothing is immutable, nothing is immortal. Everything is changeable,

The American Socialist Quarterly

finite, mortal. What is must always make place for what is to be. Poets may decry this tragic fact of reality, sentimentalists may shed tears over the fact that whatever lives must die, but this is nature's way. This is how she manages her domain. Nature does not know of life without death, of light without darkness, of sweet without bitter, of good without bad. Everything has its opposite, and it is the clash of opposites that drives life forward, and gives birth to new systems. Social systems, just like individuals, have their childhood, youth, old age, decline and death. A skillful doctor can, in some cases, prolong the life of a dying man for a short while. Fascism is trying to do the same for capitalist society. It may succeed for a while, it may score a temporary victory, but it cannot stave off its inevitable death.

Marx and Engels fought against the ideas of the romantic revolutionaries of their time, the Bakuninists, Blanquists and others, not because they did not share their ideas that a social revolution is inevitable, but because they did not share their romantic—"putchist" ideas of revolution. Marx and Engels never gave up their idea of social revolution, but they did not believe that revolutions can be made artificially according to a plan decided on by a congress in Moscow or Paris. Revolutions, Marx and Engels knew, are not made at will, in fact they are not "made" at all. Revolution is not an act, it is a process. It grows and gathers strength for generations. The problem for the revolutionary party is to find its place in the growing revolution, to use the growing revolutionary forces for its own purpose, and direct the revolutionary process in its own channels.

The Road to Power.

The idea of an armed insurrection to destroy the state, as Bakunin and his followers believed, or to capture and use the state, as Blanqui hoped, are not really dead yet, though both Bakuninism and Blanquism are practically dead.* Many of its elements have become important constituent elements of con-

* See R. W. Postgate, "Out of the Past", on Blanquism.

Notes of a Marxist

temporary communist theory. The fact that these elements are paraded as Marxism does not change their essential character. The program of the Communist International still maintains that there is only one way for the working class to conquer political power. This one way is the way of the armed insurrection.

Marx and Engels did not share this view. They did not believe that there is, or there can be, any one exclusive royal road to power. The first step in the social revolution is for the working class to conquer political power, to get control of the state machinery, to constitute itself "the ruling class". But how can the working class conquer political power? Marx and Engels knew of no universal principle that could be applied for this purpose everywhere and at all times. At the close of the Hague Congress of the First International Marx said that in countries like England and the United States the revolution will probably be peaceful and democratic, in Germany it will be bloody, and as to Holland, he did not want to commit himself, because he explained, he did not know enough about the country, its traditions, its circumstances, etc.

History may reverse Marx's dictum on this or that particular country. It may happen that just in those countries where he expected the revolution to be peaceful, the revolutions may turn out to be the bloodiest. But neither history, nor sophistry can "reverse" Marx's belief that there is more than one way to power for the working class. The methods by which the working class will attain political power will not depend on the decisions of a socialist or communist congress. It will not follow the "blue print of revolution" prepared by a revolutionary party, or theoretically predicted by a theoretician, whether it be a Marx or a Lenin. The tactics and strategy of the proletarian revolution will be determined by the objective conditions under which the decisive battles in the class struggle will be fought. It will be determined by the relation of forces within the capitalist state; by the conditions, economic, political and cultural of the country; by its international position; and last but not least by the deeply rooted

The American Socialist Quarterly

national traditions and national psychology of every given country.

"The class struggle," the Communist Manifesto says, "is of necessity at first limited to national boundaries. The proletariat of every country must fight first of all its own national bourgeoisie," etc.

No one, we hope, will accuse Marx and Engels of a "nationalistic deviation" on account of this. Socialism for them always was, and could be nothing else but international. But Marxism is realistic to the core. As realists, Marx and Engels realized that while the good for which socialists fight is international, the fight itself will of necessity have to be fought within national boundaries, and will therefore have to adapt itself not only to the different political and economic conditions of every country, but also to its ways and customs. What may be good and effective tactics in one country may turn out to be suicidal tactics in other countries. The sad experiences that the Communist International had in trying to enforce its "mechanical unity of thought and action" on the international communist movement is best proof of this.

The rising tide of democracy, which Marx and Engels witnessed, led them, especially Engels, to believe that "The rebellion of the old style, the street fight behind barricades, which up to 1848 has prevailed, has become antiquated." Engels even warns the working class that "the ruling classes, by some means or another, would get us where the rifle pops and saber slashes." A lifetime of study, observation and experience in the socialist movement led him to the conclusion that "the time is past when revolutions can be carried through by small minorities at the head of unconscious masses." *

The period of revolution and counter-revolution in post-war Europe, the tragic failures of the many attempted minority revolutions of the communists, have fully proved the truth and wisdom of Engels' judgment. An armed insurrection, not only of a minority, but even of a majority, under normal circumstances,

* Fr. Engels, *The Revolutionary Act* (preface to Marx "Civil War in France"). Labor News Co., N. Y.

Notes of a Marxist

that is when the capitalist state is not decayed and its forces demolished, is even less possible in our time than it was while Marx and Engels were alive. No proletarian party, no matter how well organized and disciplined and "prepared" for the revolution, can ever hope to be successful in an open war against a modern state with its modern military technique.

The lessons that the socialist movement has learned from its tragic experiences in post-war Europe, were summed up by the present writer elsewhere in the following words:

"There is no one way in which the proletariat may get political power. It may get political power as a result of the utter collapse of the existing state machinery as in Russia; as a result of a revolution brought about by a defeat in war as in Germany; as a result of a successful revolution as in Spain; or as a result of an electoral victory as in Great Britain." * It will all depend on when, where and under what circumstances the transfer of power will take place.

Those who love to speak about armed insurrection (it sounds so revolutionary!) in our time, have however failed up to now to discuss the possibility of such uprisings and its chances for success. They, also, choose the easiest way. They simply find a sentence somewhere in a letter by Marx or Engels, that "shows" that Marx shared their opinion, and they forget that revolutions and armed uprisings are not made by sentences from Marx or Lenin.

* "Towards Socialist Reorientation", American Socialist Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 4. Autumn 1933.

A WORD ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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A Basis for a Proposed Program for Revolutionary Socialism

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THE responsibility of left socialists is especially heavy today. In all socialist parties of the world there is going on now a ceaseless questioning and analysis of past action and future planning. The world shattering events of the past two years have brushed aside forever the bland optimism of traditional social democratic theory. The irresistible surge of ever mounting socialist electoral majorities has been checked. Where this is not true there is no longer the certainty that this rising tide of votes is in itself enough to assure the attainment of the ultimate objective.*

This is not the place to point out where the traditional doctrine has failed.** It is sufficient here to point to the turn of events and say, "That path led to disaster. Let us see if there is not another." It is unquestionably true that there is no divine assurance that the new path will lead to the Promised Land, but then, divine assurance is small comfort to radicals and revolutionaries. It is at least comforting to know that the trail is not one that has already proven itself a cul de sac.

A frank confession of shortcomings will go far to disarm criticism. There is no genuine left wing in the American Socialist Party. Detroit proved that beyond dispute.*** There are

* In England there is the open questioning of the Socialist League. Czechoslovakia and the Scandinavian countries are perhaps freer from doubt but there too the spectre of fascism (especially Nazism) has infected at least a larger minority than ever before with the virus of suspicion.

** For an excellent analysis of this important question, see "Germany's New Beginning" by Miles, published by The League for Industrial Democracy.

*** A striking, if humiliating proof of this assertion is afforded by an analysis of the so-called "left vote". It reveals the utmost confusion and blending of lines on all votes which might properly be considered left and right contests.

Program for Revolutionary Socialism

at best "left tendencies". This is hardly an original observation but it can do no harm to repeat it in view of the assertion of some that the left wing is a definite communist force propelling an unhappy party in the unmistakable direction of Moscow.

Beside a lack of unanimity, or perhaps because of it, the left forces suffer from organizational and intellectual immaturity. The right wingers have had, in the past, almost complete possession of the loci of organizational and propaganda strength. Also, with but a few honorable exceptions, the intellectual leaders of the left have been of tender years.

Despite all, there is a very real sentiment for left wing unity and infinite possibilities of socialist achievement once it is realized. There has been already a certain coalescing of doctrine among fractions of the left wing. Examples of this may be found in the two Militant Programs and the Revolutionary Policy Committee's statements. These manifestos are of indisputable value in formalizing the currents of thought and also in provoking discussion. None is complete or satisfactory in itself as a program for a unified left wing. This their sponsors recognize, if not on theoretical grounds, at least for tactical reasons. A broader and more basic synthesis is needed, taking in not only these documents but the voluminous literature now appearing in Europe as well.* In order to allay suspicion it might be well to state here that this article does not pretend to be such a synthesis. It is hoped, however, that it may serve as a draft

In answer to those who think that theoretical unity is of minor importance today and who would shelve it in favor of organizational problems and questions of practical politics, let it be stated that while there is Engels' word for it that a step forward in the movement is worth more than any amount of disputation over theoretical exactitude, there is equally high scriptural authority to the effect that without

* Such a document is the Thesis of the International Left Wing (unpublished). Also Heinrich Ehrlich's "Struggle for Revolutionary Socialism" published in English by the Bund Club of New York.

The American Socialist Quarterly

a firm intellectual basis the movement may progress rapidly in an undesirable direction. To those for whom citation from authority carries little weight, the examples of other so-called "militant radical" groups with insufficient or definitely bad theoretical foundations may be pointed to.* Meat as it is for the intellectual rather than the worker, theoretical unity, fortunately or unfortunately, is indispensable.

Before proceeding to an indication, however incomplete, of such a program, there is one more preliminary matter that must be disposed of. To some, the following remarks may seem an impertinence, but honesty, both to the left and the right, impels their observance. It is simply a necessity of describing what the left wing is **not**, as well as what it is; what it is **not** trying to do, as well as what it is trying to do.

It is not now, nor is it trying to become, an anonymous and inglorious appendage to the Communist Party. Nor is it studying for that honor with any of the unofficial communist parties, the so-called "splinter" parties. This point cannot be emphasized too strongly. The ideological leaders of the left wing are not trying to gain the benediction of Lenin by sneaking in the back door. There is a Communist Party for all who want to join it. There are as well, communist prophets crying in the wilderness and leading their little bands hither and yon—each one claiming to be the true fruit of the union of Marx and Lenin—if a desperately mixed metaphor be forgiven. These left wing leaders are not interested in proving their legitimacy and their right to the mantle of Lenin. They acknowledge profoundly the worth of the great leader but they recognize that Lenin will not lead the American Revolution.

There are many radicals, who like the prophets before mentioned, seek to distinguish between the body of doctrine called communism and the present application of that doctrine by the Communist International and Joseph Stalin. Granted that there are differences, still the attempt is not to lay down a communist line for the Socialist Party. Communism has proven its bankruptcy as thoroughly as ever has the tradi-

* The various fascist groups, technocrats, Utopian societies, Epic planners, etc.

Program for Revolutionary Socialism

tional social democracy, indeed even more so. No matter how deplorable one may consider the present condition of the socialist parties—they are the picture of glowing health compared to the communist shambles. One notes tense ideological struggles in the Labor and Socialist International, struggles between reformism and revolutionary policy, struggles which may indeed split the International asunder, but at least it is a sign of life, of questioning, of searching, a sign that it is reacting to the times. What does one see in the direction of Moscow? The Communist International, a dying man, plucking at the bed covers and mumbling “Social-Fascism”.* A dying man kept alive by doses of Russian adrenalin. If communism as well as traditional social democracy be discarded as an aim, the query may be put as to whether there is any middle ground.

Kirby Page has answered the query by stating that there is not. With this answer it is permissible to disagree, as indeed the left wing does—not because of a constitutional repugnance for either communism or traditional social democracy—but because of a sincere belief, backed up by indisputable facts, that both have failed and that in this country, at least, the true road lies elsewhere—in what for want of a better name is called left socialism or revolutionary socialism.

It then becomes necessary to face a new challenge. If the premise is true, what hope is there in either party? Why not start a new International, or at least a new party? This thrust is not as mortal as it may at first seem. In the first place, the left forces are growing so fast and so unanimously in the social democratic parties of the world that this step is not necessary. Further, the social democratic parties and, of course, the Labor and Socialist International, comprise the vast majority of the class conscious workers of the world—they are parties of inner democracy (which the communist parties certainly are not).

* Since this was written the patient has been muttering this mumbo-jumbo in a lower voice and it is to be hoped that a complete cessation of this invocation will be accompanied by a strengthening of the forces of working class unity. It is too soon, however, to predict.

The American Socialist Quarterly

It would indeed be foolish to throw away the opportunity to reach, influence and orient these masses just when they are moving and when it is possible to meet them and influence the party programs through inner party democracy.*

One further word before proceeding to a consideration of the proposed program for left wing socialists. It will be observed that what follows is not simply a declaration of principles but that there is also a good deal of explanatory matter attaching to each proposal. It is believed that this supplementary matter is not only permissible but essential in what is after all, merely a thesis for discussion and elaboration. A finished declaration of principles would be a more polished affair, with more emphasis on positive affirmation and less on the reasoning by which such affirmations were derived.

Present day democracy affords as good a jumping off place as any in a discussion of left wing principles. It is evident that it is a "bogus" democracy (as far as the workers are concerned), a veiled dictatorship of the capitalist class. It is equally evident to the "Lefts" of today, as it was to Marx and Lenin, that notwithstanding its defects, the bourgeois democratic republic provides the best forum (under capitalism) for the prosecution of the class struggle. It is therefore to the interest of the revolutionary movement to retain this particular form of capitalist dictatorship for as long as it is found necessary to tolerate capitalism itself. It would be madness to fall into the position the communists found themselves in in Germany—admitting no difference between Bruening, Von Papen, Von Schleicher and Hitler.

Judging by past experience, it would seem that the over-

* Further reasons might, of course, be given, but they are not particularly pertinent for those who are already members of the Socialist Party. At the International Congress of Independent Revolutionary Socialist Parties, held in Paris in August 1933, a delegate, representing the Spanish Communist Federation (opposition) drew the attention of the conference to the fact that both Internationals were quite strong. He did not believe that efforts for a new International would prove successful. To assure the success of a new International, two things were necessary: Some great historical event, and at least, one large party to serve as a backbone. Neither of these conditions is today present. (Struggle for Revolutionary Socialism, p. 43.)

Program for Revolutionary Socialism

whelming probability is that when the rising might of the working class is combined with the eventual accelerating decline of capitalism—the ruling class will not hesitate to cast aside the democratic velvet glove and attempt to rule with the mailed fist of fascism—for as long as it can, and today it cannot be predicted how long that would be.

Granted these two premises, the desirability of retaining the bourgeois democratic republic until capitalism itself is done away with, and the overwhelming probability (amounting to certainty) of the attempt at fascism, what is to be the course of socialism?

While it is necessary to continuously emphasize the repressive nature of the capitalist state, to point out that it is the executive committee of the ruling class—it is at the same time of paramount importance not to allow the least diversion from the duty of fighting for and preserving and enlarging civil liberties. This does not mean an eternal compromising to maintain the bourgeois republic. It **does** mean putting up a determined battle against anyone who attempts to curtail the freedom the workers now enjoy as well as fighting to enlarge this freedom. It does not mean, as it has meant in other countries, granting extraordinary powers to a bourgeois government (by either active participation or passive acquiescence) on the strength of its assertion that it will use these powers to combat fascism.

It **most emphatically** does not mean condoning a curtailment of workers' rights and lowering of living conditions as a "lesser evil" to a future fascism. It means an aggressive fight at all times. The fight to preserve civil liberties is not, by any means, the steady parliamentary retrogression that was witnessed in Germany. The fight for civil liberty is more often an anti-government fight than otherwise. It implies disregarding injunctions, encouraging strikes (at the proper times), leading demonstrations—all of which actions are done in the teeth of governmental opposition.

But socialists must never give up the battlecry that it is they who are fighting for freedom and democracy. Again the

The American Socialist Quarterly

communist dilemma must be avoided—scorning liberty and then wailing when it is gone. In order to tie up this fight for civil liberty with the conviction of the ultimate necessity of using other than electoral methods to achieve power, it must be made apparent that there is in reality no freedom of choice between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary methods, between peaceful and violent methods.

In this regard it is necessary to adopt the reasoning of the thesis of the International Left Wing Socialists (before referred to) to the effect that the choice between peacefulness and violence, between democracy and dictatorship, is apparent rather than real. The real choice is between who shall rule—capitalists or workers. If the capitalist class is to continue in power, then it will be forced to use fascist methods in order to try to resolve its inner contradictions. If, on the other hand, the working class is to rule, it must be prepared to adapt itself to all methods of struggle.

To recapitulate. The left wing program must point out unhesitatingly the class character of present day democracy. It must nevertheless show the value of this very democracy in the formation of a mass revolutionary movement and the necessity of fighting to retain and enlarge civil liberties. Side by side with this it must emphasize, unmistakably and without equivocation, in the light of post-war events, at home and abroad, and Marxian analysis, implied if not expressed, the probability of having to fight the ultimate battle with weapons other than the customary folded ballots, and the consequent desirability and necessity of preparation and training for this eventuality.*

The fight against fascism demands that the Socialist Party take the lead in welding a common front against its ever increasing danger. Unity of all groups, even of those that may

* Lest this phrase be ravished from its context by unfriendly critics of the right and construed to mean the immediate and forthwith armament of the workers with lead pipes and target rifles and their drilling in tenement basements, let it be said that such is not the intention. Preparation today would be quite sufficient if it extended to enlistment of the mass of the workers into disciplined unions and a political party of their own.

Program for Revolutionary Socialism

be opposed for other than strictly socialist reasons, is a crying need. However, no reliance may be reposed in groups that are not working class and anti-capitalist in nature. The others may be induced to relinquish the fight for minor concessions, (racial, religious, etc.), which, while they lessen certain phases of the fascist terror and repression, do not strike at the heart of the monster; its capitalist and anti-working class character.

The phrase "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" is to many the tocsin to battle. They are pathetically eager to do or die—some for, some against it. Nevertheless, as a form of words it does not do to get worked up about it. As a concept meaning the retention of power by the victorious working class against all counter-revolutionary groups, it must be defended by all left wing socialists.

No one can predict what steps will be necessary in order to retain this power, once it is first grasped. No one can predict the ultimate success or failure of any particular line of action. All that can be done is to study the actions of all classes that have come to power after a revolution.

As an example of a working class revolution Marx had only the Paris Commune. The student of today has as well, Russia in 1905 and 1917, Germany in 1918, Austria in 1918 and 1934 and other examples, Bavaria, Hungary, Cuba, Finland, etc. Instruction may also be gained from observation of the successes and failures of enemy groups—the fascists, the White Guards, etc. Not one or all of these can give a definite answer to the question, because of the impossibility of knowing under just what conditions the American Revolution will occur. Lenin, on the very eve of the October Revolution, in his "State and Revolution" conceived of the dictatorship in a very different form from what it subsequently assumed.

However, certain fundamental conclusions can be drawn—and a host of errors avoided. One immediate lesson can be learned, the determination to hold and defend power by whatever means may become necessary, and of equal importance—the value of proclaiming the fact, here and now.

A moment to digress. These is a form of pseudo super-

The American Socialist Quarterly

revolutionaryism which says:

"We agree on the necessity of holding power and also on the probability of being forced to use extra-legal methods to obtain it—only we are too wise in revolutionary ways to proclaim it. When the time comes, we'll act. But in the meantime we don't talk about it. We don't tip off the enemy."

At first glance the reasoning seems sound—until it is remembered that these were the very words of Otto Wels and the other leaders of the German Social Democratic Party at the International Congress in Vienna in 1931. Until it is realized that no matter how sincere the holders of this opinion may be, the great masses that follow them are not aware of these valiant plans lying unuttered in their minds. Until it is realized that unless these plans are known openly, and preparations made for their execution—there is not the slightest chance of their being put into effect.

To return to Proletarian Dictatorship. There are grave objections to the use of the word "Dictatorship". These objections are tactical. The word has unholy and indeed unsafe and misleading connotations. It is impossible to use the word today without calling up visions of Mussolini, Dollfuss and Hitler, as well as any number of cracked-brained demagogues. True, it recalls Russia as well, but the least attractive side of Russia—of that, more later.

The use of this word will make the socialist task doubly difficult, nevertheless if it were the only word that expressed the concept clearly, the obligation to use it would be inescapable. Fortunately this is not so. There is a phrase which properly means the same yet is not open to the same tactical objections. That is "Workers' Democracy".*

Despite all certain people have done of late in attempting to disavow what this phrase means, it remains what it was. It no more means "Social" or "Industrial Democracy" than "Left" means "Right". It is disturbing that there are members of the left wing who make such essays in philology. At the

* There is no lack of other phrases. Marx's own phrase was "Dictatorship of the Revolutionary Classes."

Program for Revolutionary Socialism

risk of appearing elementary it might not be unwise to state what this term really means.

Capitalist democracy is a method of capitalist rule. Workers' democracy is a method of workers' rule. Just as capitalist democracy sees to it that capitalists control the essential points in present day society, so will workers' democracy insure workers' control. It is not the final stage of socialism—and it must be made clear that it is not—it is the government of the transition period.

There is another reason for preferring "Workers' Democracy" and that is because Russia typifies the Dictatorship of the Proletariat today. Regardless of individual opinions concerning the merits or demerits of the Russian form, it is folly to be bound by it. Russia evolved its own form of proletarian rule—the United States should be at least as free.

It is significant that the Bolsheviks themselves, in agitating for the October Revolution, did not cry:

"Down with democracy. Long live dictatorship."

but rather the opposite:

"Down with dictatorship. Long live democracy."

Their reasoning, which appears impeccable, was to the effect that the Provisional Government of Kerensky was a dictatorship, being no longer supported by popular mandate and that the Soviets represented the true democratic institutions. What they did with the Soviets after they came into power is another question—the important thing to note is that as a matter of strategy they used the democratic slogan.

To conclude this point. A left wing declaration must include the concept of Proletarian Dictatorship. It were however better if this term were not used and "Workers' Democracy" substituted instead.

In organic connection with the question of Workers' Democracy is the further question of arming the victorious workers. The strongest barrier to counter-revolution is an armed and informed working class. A socialist party, representing the working class, must have the fullest reliance upon that class. There is no attempt at ruling the workers from

The American Socialist Quarterly

above and there must be no fear of placing the greatest measure of confidence in them. Consequently, the **first** duty of the party once it comes to power, as the result of revolution, is the placing of the means of defense in the hands of its people. Only in this way will the chances of being overthrown by the armed hirelings of the capitalists be reduced.

The next point in a left wing declaration should be the statement of the **form** of a Workers' Government. The catchphrase is "Workers' Councils" or "Soviets". Socialists are agreed that their first task is not the destruction of the bourgeois forms of government but rather their capture. It is further understood that it is impossible to attain to socialism within the framework of the present bourgeois state. Distinctly proletarian forms will have to be evolved to fit the requirements of the proletarian state. It would be a mistake of the first order to proclaim dogmatically that this proletarian form will be the Workers' Council or Soviet. Here again the word "Soviet" carries with it the inevitable Russian connotation and in this case it would be farcical.

In this regard, a brief review of the history of Workers' Councils in Russia will be illuminating. In the first place—they are a Menshevik, not a Bolshevik invention. The first Soviet, that of St. Petersburg in October 1905, was set up as a council of all the democratic factions—the differences between Menshevik, Bolshevik, and Social Revolutionary as well as other non-party groups were too deep to be resolved in any other way. The first president of the St. Petersburg Soviet was a non-socialist, non-party lawyer named Nosar Khristalev. It was only after he was sent to prison in December that Trotsky as one of the committee became the head.

The anarchists were not allowed to sit in the Soviet and it is interesting to note that Lenin justified this action on the ground that the Soviet was **neither a Workers' Parliament nor the organ of a proletarian system of self-government**—indeed in no sense an organ of self-government—but a fighting organization for the attainment of a definite end.

The Bolsheviks never, until after the revolution of Feb-

Program for Revolutionary Socialism

ruary 1917, considered the Soviet as a permanent working class institution of government. It is not necessary now to consider the reasons that caused Lenin to change his mind and proclaim:

“All power to the Soviets.”

What is more important is to take note of what has happened to the Soviets since the October Revolution. The Soviets have become nothing more than a democratic front for the dictatorship of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. They have **no** real power, they do not govern. What power they have is derived from their hand-picked membership—hand-picked by the Central Committee of the C. P. U. S. R.*

These facts are mentioned for only one purpose—to show that the Workers' Councils are not a Bolshevik invention (indeed, they are much more a Menshevik patent) and that the Russian Soviets are very poor examples of forms of proletarian government. One thing is evident. It is not now the task of the Socialist Party to build Workers' Councils in order to have something to carry on with after the revolution,—there is no place for them. The labor unions, the central labor bodies and the working class political party absorb all the activity of the workers—there is no room today for an intermediate “semi-political, semi-economic” organization.

A left wing program should state the necessity of proletarian forms of government in the transitional state but would weaken itself if it were to point to the Russian Soviets as an example. It might go so far as to point out the classic form that all workers' governing bodies take—whether Soviets or Parliaments—that is, the combination of the legislative and administrative functions in a one camera body.

No program would be complete without a declaration of its sponsors' position on the vexatious question of working class unity. It is only fair to state that no program has ever been issued without a pious hope for its consummation. Nevertheless, the cumulative effect of all these prayers has been,

* Vide Arthur Rosenberg, “History of Bolshevism”.

The American Socialist Quarterly

until quite recently, exactly nothing. In order that there may be no misunderstanding, it is as well to state frankly that unity between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party is the sore point. The logic of recent events has changed all this and the prospect of achieving what all recognize as an indispensable prelude to working class victory is brighter than ever before.*

Left wing socialists must press energetically for such unity on terms which will make possible a vigorous and sincere fight against war, fascism and the other dangers facing the working class.** Ultimate organic unity, however remote it may appear now, is the goal. In the meanwhile, negotiations for unity on specific issues should begin.

That favorite gambit of parlor debate—confiscation versus compensation—need cause no lengthy dispute. It is best approached in a hard-boiled, capitalistic, businessman's way, i.e.: The Workers' State will take over what it wants in the cheapest and easiest fashion. Circumstances attendant at the time will determine the exact procedure. Certainly there is no commitment to compensate anyone. In the case of wealthy owners of large industry there is just the opposite.

Because of the weakness of the Socialist Party at the present time, but principally because of the structure of the United States government, the question of coalition does not appear pertinent. In all probability it will never arise. However there is a corresponding temptation in the guise of fusion. The left wing's unalterable opposition to fusion with capitalist controlled parties would, of course, be a part of any declaration.

Immediate demands are a just and necessary part of any socialist program. To disregard them is to substitute Utopian

* There is no need here to recite all the familiar events of the past six months. It is sufficient to state that steps *have* been taken toward unity in France, Italy, Spain, the Saar.

** The most important matter to be disposed of in trying to arrive at unity—more important than vicious personal attacks, than the abandonment of the theory of "Social-Fascism"—is *Trade Union Unity*. If this formidable obstacle could be removed, many of the objections now pleaded by those against united action would collapse. However, no progress can be made unless negotiations are started.

Program for Revolutionary Socialism

radicalism for scientific socialism. They are advanced for two purposes. To better the living conditions of the workers and to increase the workers' sense of their own power by rallying them behind these demands. Indirectly they accomplish a third purpose. When capitalism reaches the period of diminishing returns (which it has in this country already) the effect of granting these demands is to further weaken its structure.

There are a few points that would appear in a left wing program that are so evident as to need little or no explanation. They are: a declaration of unalterable opposition to all capitalist and imperialist wars, and a further threat of mass resistance to such wars and plans for such wars—the Detroit declaration. A pledge of aid to Soviet Russia in the event of an imperialist attack (not as a grand gesture but as an earnest promise of all possible help), a declaration of solidarity to the left forces of the Labor and Socialist International in other countries and the setting up of a secretariat to correspond with them.

The foregoing is submitted as a draft for a proposed left wing declaration of principles. Its purpose would be to solidify all left forces in the Socialist Party and to act as a guide to the next convention of the party, where it is to be hoped that it or a program similar to it will be adopted as the party's program.

The scattered forces of the left must realize that if they are to do more than sound occasional groans of protest at the undeniable tendencies to reformism present in the party, they must themselves unite on a minimum program of action. The present policy of each little group spending most of its energy "exposing" other groups can accomplish little. It is a communist tactic of doubtful value. In the eighteen months ahead, months pregnant with momentous happenings for American labor, theoretical unity in the left wing, on the basis of a minimum theoretical program, will do much to

The American Socialist Quarterly

strengthen the Socialist Party and make it what it rightfully should be—the instrument for effectuating the Coming American Revolution.*

* It will be noted that nothing has been said here about two problems that are commonly dealt with in all theoretical discussions. They are, 1. The Party's position on the trade union question, and 2. The vanguard versus mass party theory. In answer to the first question, let it be said that no amount of declarations are of much use. Actions speak louder than words, and the actions of the party during the recent great strikes, particularly the textile strike, leave little to be desired. Since there is little danger of the party espousing the dual union policy of the communists it is only necessary to sound a warning against the fanatical A. F. of L. policy of the Lovestoneites. In regard to the second question, this is not a matter for declaration. It is not a question of choosing which type of party is preferred. If the principles of the proposed declaration are adhered to, the logic of future events will inexorably decide whether the party is to be a spear-head or the mass party of American labor. The important thing is to remain the *revolutionary* party.

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On the Road to Power

JAMES ONEAL

HE who considers the problems involved in the road to power will not solve them with a slogan or by some rigid formula to be applied to all countries. First it may be said that the working class is the only class which, because it has no property stake in capitalism and has no class below it which it can exploit, is a potentially revolutionary class once it is conscious of its interests and mission. Unless its political and economic organizations are pledged to the aim of reorganizing capitalism on a socialist basis and unless both intimately cooperate in the immediate struggle as well as for the ultimate aim, an essential of the road to power is lacking. A working class movement so divided lacks the educational preparation, the cooperation, discipline and solidarity that are essential to any march to power, whatever the road chosen may be. No slogan and no formula will make up for this defect.

In forecasting the present decay of capitalism Marx and Engels in the "Communist Manifesto" expected certain non-proletarian sections of the population to join "the revolutionary class". This has occurred in some countries but large sections—more than Marx and Engels anticipated—have gone over to reaction, especially in Germany. Below the proletariat and as part of it they estimated the role which a "dangerous class" would play in a period of social upheaval. "The social scum," they wrote, "that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; **its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.**"

This forecast has had remarkable verification in the rise of fascist movements and it is unnecessary to present evidence of it.

A few years after writing the "Manifesto" Marx and

The American Socialist Quarterly

Engels considered the proletarian battles of 1848. Marx late in 1852, writing in the New York Tribune, summed up the results of the struggle in the following passage: "The Communist or Proletarian party, as well as other parties, had lost, by suppression of the rights of association and meeting, the means of giving to itself a legal organization on the Continent. Its leaders, besides, had been exiled from their countries."

This reads much like the present period in those countries where fascist or semi-fascist movements have obtained control. In the same article he goes on to show that police spies had invaded the secret organization of the workers and some members of the "place-hunting" type tried to "turn it into a conspiracy for making an extempore revolution," but they "were speedily turned out." In the ensuing years the socialist movement emerged as an open organization of the masses and its founders opposed a return to the methods and form of organization of 1848.

In the last year of his life, 1895, Engels considered this phase of working class history in his preface to Marx's "Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850", and expressed some opinions that are interesting. Engels studied changes in military technique and enumerated in some detail the marked changes that had taken place in the armed powers of the state, giving the ruling classes an enormous advantage compared with their equipment available in 1848. He concluded that while our comrades are "far from renouncing their right to revolution" in the old sense, yet it would be silly to "play the role of cannon fodder" against such great odds. He added that "The day of surprise attacks has passed, the day when small but resolute minorities could achieve revolutions by **leading unwitting masses to the onslaught.**" This was not the road to power but the road to suicide.

Even in France, Engels observed, where the "ground has been mined by revolution after revolution, where there is not a single party which has not contributed its quota in the way of conspiracies, revolts and other activities" the workers never

On the Road to Power

"expect a lasting victory unless beforehand they win over to their side the great masses of the people, which in France means the peasantry."

Engels draws a conclusion which is interesting in view of our post-war history. He declared that "The parties of law and order, as they term themselves, are being destroyed by the constitutional implements which they themselves have fashioned. . . . We, on our side, find constitutionalism gives us health and strength. Unless we are such idiots as to please our adversaries by letting them force street fighting upon us, **they will have at last no resource but to tamper with legality which is proving so disastrous to themselves.**"

This is actually what has occurred and the prediction again shows the remarkable insight Engels had in interpreting class forces and trends. Engels, like Marx, did not expect in the present period that as large layers of the population will go over to the proletariat as in the mid-nineteenth century and "thus a powerful lever, so effective in 1848, **will be missing.**"

Another observation of Engels is important. He asserted that there is only one way in which our growing forces can be "temporarily arrested, nay for the moment converted into a decline. I mean, **an extensive collision with the army, a blood-letting like that which occurred in Paris in 1871.** In the long run we shall outlive even that reverse. Not all the magazine rifles of Europe and America can shoot out of the world a party whose adherents are numbered by millions."

To sum up, Engels did not solve the problems involved in the road to power although he faced them. He believed that the socialist movement grows strong by constitutional means, that the ruling classes would welcome our resort to extra-legal action, that it would be folly for us to do so, that the ruling classes may "tamper with legality" because of our growing strength, but if we are "such idiots as to please our adversaries" by fighting, we will face an "extensive collision with the army." With what result? A certain "reverse".

One thing we may conclude from these views of Engels. **The powers of destruction in the possession of the ruling**

The American Socialist Quarterly

classes are decisive in any conflict with the proletariat. This is also verified by post-war history. There is no instance in this period of a working class victory where the coercive powers of the state remained loyal to the old order; on the other hand where these powers in whole or in large part went over to the proletariat the workers ascended to power.

Of course, we are considering abnormal situations which occur at the end of a war, some crisis growing out of a depression, or an attempt at suppressing democracy by the classes in power or by some fascist movement. In such situations the problem may be stated as follows:

With the enormous powers of destruction possessed by governments, what hope is there for the workers if these powers are directed against them or if they are ranged in support of fascism? Assume any form of action workers may take, can it possibly be effective against police, army, militia, tanks, tear gas, poison gas, bombing planes, machine guns, artillery, possession of railroads, industries, munition plants, wireless communications, the radio, mails and telegraph?

To be sure, the general strike is available, but this presupposes a powerful, a well-organized and disciplined working class, a strong political movement with considerable representation, a considerable section of the farmers and the middle class sympathetic or neutral, and full realization of the fact that if the strike is prolonged beyond a certain period—say a week, it means conflict with the deadly power and force which an intelligent movement will seek to avoid. In short, even under favorable conditions the working masses hazard a terrible risk in resorting to a general strike. Facing a conspiracy of reaction, the workers would be justified in taking the risk, **but it is by no means an assured road to power.** It may be the road to a terrible defeat.

It is easy enough to formulate a course of action for the countries under fascism because there is only one course open where the free action of the workers in political, economic and cooperative organizations no longer exist. Revolution in the sense of 1848 is the only alternative but even in the fascist

On the Road to Power

states this is hopeless without winning part of the armed forces for the revolutionary movement. However, it is obvious that the program adapted for a fascist country is not adapted for the non-fascist countries.

The road to power in the light of post-war Europe reveals four important facts. First, if the working class is divided into fighting camps during some crisis it is hopeless to think of power and the realization of socialism. Second, that without the soldiers going over to the masses power is not likely to be won by the workers. Third, even if soldiers are ranged with the masses and the workers are involved in civil war the revolutionary promise will expire in futility. Fourth, if workers acquire power in a single nation which is surrounded by reactionary states its existence will be precarious and it may be destroyed by those states.

Germany is a case of the soldiers going over to the revolution while the workers divided into three warring organizations with consequent sterility. Geographical location of a nation or its dependence upon the aid of bourgeois countries, may mean defeat. The short-lived Hungarian revolution is an example of geography, insufficient bread, and outside armed forces combining to bring reaction. In Austria, not only geography, but a general shortage of foodstuffs, lack of raw materials, and absolute dependence upon Allied alms made impossible any large program of socialism. Had the Austrian movement attempted to go as far as the Hungarian there is little doubt that it would have met the fate of the Bela Kun regime. That the Austrian movement was finally driven underground by fascism does not in the slightest degree change the situation that faced the Austrian workers at the end of the World War.

The occupation of the factories by the Italian workers in the fall of 1920 brought realization of an important fact. Italy lacks raw materials and has to import them for her industries. Without raw materials, technical direction and credit, the workers were helpless and in a few weeks, without any interference by the government, the workers left the factories.

The American Socialist Quarterly

The road to power in some countries may be blocked by lack of raw materials which are essential to the life of any country. Bourgeois governments could strangle a social revolution in such a nation by withholding some basic economic essential like ore or coal.

But Italian workers were also split into four factions with the Communist International directing one and the anarchists active in the unions. The civil war between organizations of the workers opened the road to power for fascism, with the government forces benevolently standing by while Mussolini's murder squads marched into Rome.

Now one may conceive of the acquirement of power by the working class under certain conditions that may be enumerated as follows: (1) a political victory with a powerful industrial movement of the workers supporting their political movement; (2) at the end of a disastrous war when, due to economic exhaustion and general resentment against the ruling classes, the soldiers and sailors—or a majority of them—go over to the masses; (3) a general rising against a fascist regime facing economic decline, providing a large section of the armed forces go over to the revolution; (4) during an attempt at a fascist *coup*, countered by a strike by the organized workers and supported by democratic elements of the population, providing that the governing powers do not side with the reaction. In that case even a powerfully organized working class is likely to be defeated. Even the general strike in such a situation, as stated above, is not a sure road to power.

Now the new programs being adopted abroad are of two types, each adapted to fundamentally different conditions. First, there are the German and Austrian programs intended for countries where normal political and economic action cannot be employed because of fascist dictatorships. Second, countries like Belgium where normal forms of action continue. It is, therefore, irrelevant to cite programs in the first category for comparison with programs in the other. The statement of Norman Thomas that the Detroit Declaration is, "if anything, to the right" of the German and Austrian programs is, there-

On the Road to Power

fore, meaningless. They are not comparable because each type is adapted to basically different situations. To speak of "right" and "left" in such comparisons only confuses thought. It assumes that the **form** of organization and action determines what is revolutionary when it is the **aim** that determines whether a movement is revolutionary or not. The same thing is true of violence as force is not necessarily revolutionary for reaction can and does use force for its aims. Wilhelm Liebknecht said at the Congress of the International in 1893 that "There is no such thing as revolutionary or reactionary tactics. **Only the aim is revolutionary.** If the proletariat wishes to emancipate itself from the capitalist yoke, it must first emancipate itself from the revolutionary phrase."

If we consider the disparity between the physical power available to the state and the power available to the proletariat when Engels wrote in 1895, and then consider the disparity between the two today, the balance has been tipped even more enormously in favor of the ruling classes. In the face of this fact, one party local has adopted a resolution in favor of "armed insurrection" and wishes to have a referendum on the proposal. **This harks back to the romanticism of 1848 which Marx and Engels rejected when they studied that period in the perspective of years.**

This brings us to a final question. Is there some royal road to power? The answer is, No. In fascist countries there is little doubt that success can come only "shod in the iron sandals of revolution" as Lassalle once said. In the other countries the masses cannot make the program of force their own without inviting the use of the terrible powers of the modern state against them. In other words, they assure defeat in advance.

The working class in the non-fascist countries must struggle for the preservation of every right of organization, propaganda and action available and fight for the extension of these rights. At the same time the workers must learn that vast masses must be drawn into the economic and political organizations of the proletariat; they must be thoroughly in-

The American Socialist Quarterly

formed of their class interests, thoroughly disciplined and inspired by the sense of class solidarity and a will to power. **Short of this, the conquest of capitalism is impossible.**

Should such a movement face some dangerous attempt of reaction at oligarchy, the working class should be prepared to face it with determination to use all its resources to avert the danger, even to making the last sacrifice that may be necessary. However, such a movement cannot turn to some magic formula that will serve it in each country and in each situation. Least of all can it rely upon some revolutionary staff in some single country to direct it. That would be to paralyze the will and make speedy action in an emergency impossible. It still remains true that the workers of each country must settle accounts with its own bourgeoisie. At the same time each movement owes the world movement the duty of cultivating the ethic of proletarian and international solidarity and be ready to help the workers in other nations when they are involved in bitter struggles. We may learn from each other but we cannot slavishly copy each other, for this would be to cultivate the ape-like faculty of imitation.

Finally, the road to power in a country like the United States with its small and weak movement is not an immediate problem. All our energies should be devoted to building a powerful movement and hasten the time when that road will really be a burning issue precisely because the movement has won the allegiance of millions of the toiling masses.

NEXT ISSUE

American Labor in Revolt

A critical analysis of the strike wave.

Theodor Dan

Russian Socialism and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Translated by Albert Meyers

Paul Porter

Symposium on Communism:

Stalinism, Lovestoneism and Trotskyism.

Socialism and War

DAVID P. BERENBERG

1.

TWENTY years have passed since the myth of capitalist peace exploded, and the decline of capitalist civilization began. All the journals of opinion are celebrating this anniversary by holding solemn *post mortems*, trying still to place the blame for the catastrophe, and trying, too, to weigh humanity's chances of escaping from another, and final cataclysm. Final, not in the sense of Wilson's "war to end war", the next war will have the finality of death.

When the sentimental pacifist speaks of war he means the overt war of howitzers and machine guns, of trenches and typhus, of rotting corpses and starving populations. This is the war against which his humanity rebels, and he yearns to stop it. What he does not realize is that overt war is only a phase of a war that goes on continually, and that cannot be prevented unless the covert war that precedes and follows it is first destroyed.

Capitalism is war. Capitalists and groups of capitalists seek control of markets, of lands, of labor armies and investment opportunities, of raw materials and trade monopolies. Every capitalist is at war with every other. Alliances are formed and dissolved; the enemy of to-day may be the friend of to-morrow. Groups of varying stability form to do battle with other groups. National groups of capitalists war with other national groups, if the stakes are large enough, even at the cost of dropping for a time the minor wars within the natural boundary.

In what are called normal times of peace this war is fought with relatively mild weapons. Tariff walls, trade agreements, closed doors, trade monopolies, rumors, lies, war-scares, armament races, diplomacy—these are the means of the perpetual war. Only when these fail do the guns begin to speak. The

The American Socialist Quarterly

point is that they may fail at any moment to give an aggressor what he wants. The covert war that is capitalism can become overt war overnight.

The costs of the last war have not yet been paid. The memories of its ravages are yet fresh. It is known that in the next general war there will be no front, no non-combatants. Airplanes and chemical weapons (not to mention the persistent rumors of death-rays and deadly bacilli) make it probable that the next war will equal or exceed H. G. Wells' most gloomy predictions, and that civilization itself may perish. Even capitalists may well shrink at the thought. Yet Sarajevo burst upon an unsuspecting world in 1914. Even if no capitalist wants a war (and many do!), wars happen. The eternal economic warfare, plus the policy of drift, may create a war crisis overnight. Then any indiscrimination, an accident, an intentional provocation may launch the thunderbolt.

Fear of war may cause a war. The pride of rulers, the presence of armed forces, the pressure of the military caste, the secret machinations of the armament industry and the persistent proddings of the bought press, may produce a war.

The crisis created by recent events in Austria has in it all the war-making elements. Without question the world's peace is hanging in the balance. It is clear that Hitler wants no immediate war. He must have five years or more to get ready for war. Mussolini knows that war may destroy him. France and England are not eager to **begin** a war. Japan is content, for the time, to extend her sway over Manchuria, and the capitalist world seems willing to let her do so. In spite of all this, war may come at any moment, and over an unconsidered trifle. France and England may decide that "preventive war" on Germany now is safer than a war five years hence. The United States and Russia may conclude that now is the time to cut off Japanese growth. Mussolini may believe that now, or never, is the time to seize Austria.

2.

The socialist movement has always been opposed to war. This attitude is not based on sentimental pacifism, but on a

Socialism and War

realization that modern wars are fought for capitalist-imperialist ends, and that the capitalist masters of industry use the workers as tools in their war-game. The lives of the workers are staked to win the markets, the raw materials, the trade routes and investment opportunities that the capitalists covet.

The anti-war attitude of the socialist parties the world over has been stated well in the Basle resolution (1912): "Should war (nevertheless) break out, it is the duty of socialists to intervene with the object of putting a speedy end to it; it is their duty to make use of the economic and political crisis in the fullest possible measure to rouse the common people and thus accelerate the downfall of the domination of capital." This is a re-iteration of the stand taken at Stuttgart in 1907.

In spite of this clear statement of working class opposition to war, the main component elements of the Second International—the Socialist Parties of Germany and France, the Social Democrats of Russia, the Labor Party of England—agreed to the war. The majority of the socialists in the German Reichstag voted war-credits; it was not until 1915, after Zimmerwald, that the Independents and the later Spartacists began to carry on war against war within Germany. In France the assassination of Jaures seemed to paralyze the French socialists, but it would be a blunder to imagine that the death of this one man, granted his pre-eminence among French socialists, was the sole cause of the abandonment by the French socialists of the Basle and Stuttgart resolutions. It is worth noting here that Guesde and Hervé, the most vehement anti-militarists of pre-war days, were among the most violent of the war-mongers in August, 1914. In England labor representatives joined a coalition war cabinet, and only a handful were present at Keswich in 1915 to register their protest against war.

Why? How did it come about that the International that proclaimed that it was its duty "to intervene and put a speedy end" to war, abjectly surrendered its principles, and aided the capitalist masters of society to fight a war for capitalist ends,

The American Socialist Quarterly

even at the cost of the lives of millions of workers?

There is no one answer. In Germany the rulers of society raised the cry of "defense against Russian barbarism", and offered the bribe of "civil peace" and of concessions to the workers after victory. But why were the socialists deceived? Did they not know that the war was a war of aggression against France, and that there would have been no necessity for "defense against Czarist Russia" had there been no "Mittel Europa" plan and no Berlin to Bagdad Railway? Did they not realize that they were pulling chestnuts out of the fire for their capitalist exploiters? Did they not see through the myth of the "civil peace" and realize that it was a one-sided bargain, in which the workers promised not to strike, and to fight at the front, in return for—nothing? Did they really believe that they would get concessions after victory?

The answers to these questions lie in the composition of the Social Democratic Party, and more particularly in the nature of the German State in 1914. The Social Democrats did represent in large measure the workers. They also represented the lower middle classes—white collar workers, teachers, etc.—and other bourgeois elements, who desired a limited monarchy or a republic on the American model, and who had no political haven other than that offered by the S. D. P. The bureaucracy of the party was overloaded with these petty-bourgeois elements, and with former workers spoiled by long years at soft desk jobs. These resented the Kaiser's description of the socialists as "Vaterlandslose Gesellen" (Rogues without a country) and ached for an opportunity to prove their patriotism. It came—and with it the debacle of socialism in Germany.

The social legislation inaugurated by Bismarck, and continued in augmented form under Wilhelm II, supplies the rest of the answer. Bismarck, and later Wilhelm, conceived the policy of undermining the growth of revolutionary socialism by granting social insurance, living wages, model dwellings as a free gift. Whether the resistance offered at times by government to the extension of this social legislation was

Socialism and War

a word battle inspired by Machiavellian craft, or whether it was real, is of less importance than the circumstance that from 1890 to 1914 the chief objective of the S. D. P. seems to have been the expansion of social legislation. Socialism seemed to lie at the end of an infinite series of laws gradually increasing insurance benefits. Under these circumstances it becomes clear why the German socialists believed the promise of concessions after victory. Nor is there any reason to doubt that Wilhelm would have kept his promise at the expense of French, Italian and Russian workers—if there had been a victory.

Why then had the German socialists subscribed to the Basle and Stuttgart resolutions? We do not know with what misgivings and with what mental reservations they did subscribe. We do know that in 1907, and even in 1912, it was fashionable to oppose war. It was being done by Carnegie, Nicholas II, Nicholas Murray Butler and Frau von Suttner. It was easy. Why not pass another anti-war resolution? When in 1914 they faced the imperative of living up to their pledge, they failed. Their conditioning was too much for them. They were not socialists.

The debacle of the French socialists was as disgraceful. There, too, the cry of defense was waged. There, too, there was loud and loose talk of "la patrie", and "revanche". The death of Jaurés did paralyze the movement for a moment. But a sound and clear-seeing socialist movement would have recovered quickly, and would have rallied to the attack. The French party did not, and for reasons not dissimilar from those that influenced the Germans. The careerist element in French socialism—always strong—and the syndicalist cleavage, also strong, contributed to the disaster. The diversion of the syndicalists by Guesde and Hervé completed the rout.

The British Labor Party had in 1914 not fully accepted socialism. It had never trained its membership in Marxist thought, and did not itself fully understand the nature of capitalism and its relation to war. Its pacifism was of religious origin. The membership of the party had been subjected to no influence that could counteract the patriotic conditioning

The American Socialist Quarterly

of the state schools. Not until the realities of the war became familiar did the ghost of war resistance show itself. And then it was too late.

It is argued, and with some plausibility, that the socialists even of Germany and France, could not have prevented the war. This may be true, but if it is true it is a far greater indictment of German and French socialism than any brought by their critics. The argument means, in effect, that the German and the French socialists, in practically complete control of the trades unions of their respective countries, failed to utilize their position and their opportunities. They had not adequately taught the truth about imperialist war. With all the resources for a general strike in their hands they had failed to teach the workers their own strength—or they failed to use that strength when the crisis came.

They could have prevented the war. A general strike would have disorganized the military plans of all the contending forces. The loss in lives would have been great—but far, far less than the ten millions who died, in the end, because the German and the French socialists betrayed the Basle resolution.

3.

American socialists are proud of their war record. After war was declared the convention at St. Louis, on April, 1917, adopted a ringing resolution in opposition to war.

“ . . . the Socialist Party emphatically rejects the proposal that in time of war the workers should suspend their struggle for better conditions. On the contrary, the acute situation created by war calls for an even more vigorous prosecution of the class struggle, and we recommend to the workers, and pledge ourselves, to the following course of action: **Continuous, active and public opposition to the war, through demonstrations, mass petitions, and all other means within our power.** . . . Unyielding opposition to all proposed legislation for military and industrial conscription. . . . Vigorous resistance to all reactionary measures, such as censorship of press and mails, restriction of the rights of free speech, assemblage and organization, or compulsory arbitration and limitation of the right to strike.”

Socialism and War

The party was too weak numerically, and in influence, actually to prevent war. It had, in 1916, a following of some 600,000 people. It gained, by its anti-war stand, the doubtful adherence of several millions in 1917. If we are to take the vote of the party in the fall elections of 1917 as indicative of true anti-war feeling, it is possible that 25% of the whole American people were enough opposed to the war to register their attitude. But this group was not organized. It was heterogeneous. It included German, Irish, pacifists and other elements, that were not so much against war, as against American participation on the side of England and France. And too little of this opposition came from the ranks of labor. Most of organized labor allowed itself to be delivered to Wilson by Gompers, in return for the same promises that had bribed the German socialists.

The pledge of the party was amply kept. Enormous mass-meetings against war were held in Madison Square Garden, on the streets of the great cities, and in the open fields near the smaller towns. Socialists spoke fearlessly against the war. Debs went to jail for what he said. Kate Richards O'Hare followed him. By the time the war ended the entire National Executive Committee was under indictment for anti-war activities. Hundreds of socialists were in jail for refusal to serve in the armed forces.

No one will venture to say that the Socialist Party should have called a general strike,—that it should have interfered actively to prevent the draft,—that it should have committed acts of sabotage against the armed forces. We would have advocated a general strike, had any considerable part of labor been with us. It was not with us. A call for a general strike under the circumstances would have meant the betrayal of the few who might have heeded the call. It would have meant the bloody death of a few for no gain to the movement. "Demonstrations, mass petitions, and all other means within our power." These were called for by the St. Louis Resolution. These we used. If we did not stop the war, that was the result of the immaturity of the working class movement in

The American Socialist Quarterly

America.

There are those who will say that it was a mistake even to oppose the war. They argue that, since we could not hope to stop the war, we should have kept quiet about it. Or we should even have accepted the mores of the community, and gone with the current. Those who argue in this way assert that the post-war weakness of the Socialist Party was a result of its anti-war stand.

This is unsound reasoning. It leaves out of account the communist split, and the fantastic post-war prosperity. No! the socialist movement could not have taken any other stand than the one it took at St. Louis. War is not an incident or an accident. It is an integral part of capitalism. If we fight capitalism—we must oppose its wars.

4.

In the Detroit Declaration of Principles (1934) the St. Louis position of 1917 is reiterated. "They (the socialists) will meet war and the detailed plans for war already mapped out by the war-making arms of the government, by massed war resistance, organized so far as practicable in a general strike of labor unions and professional groups in a united effort to make the waging of war a practical impossibility and to convert the capitalist war crisis into a victory for socialism." This is not only St. Louis, but* Stuttgart and Basle over again. What does it mean?

In the first place it is an assertion that the Socialist Party does not retract the St. Louis resolution. It means that socialists realize, as always the capitalist-imperialist nature of wars. It means that only the workers, by massed resistance and the general strike can prevent war. "Massed war resistance" has been interpreted to mean riots, sabotage and violence. It means none of these; it does mean the use of whatever power the working masses have—in demonstration, at the ballot-boxes, in strikes,—to prevent their own destruction.

Can socialists prevent a war? No. Not in the present state of party weakness. Not so long as a small fraction of all American workers are organized. Not so long as 90 percent

Socialism and War

of the organized workers are willing, as in 1917, to die for their masters, or are sheep-like enough to be driven to the slaughter.

Then socialist opposition to war is an empty gesture? It need not be. James Oneal, writing in the *New Leader* on August 4, 1934, says: "We cannot mobilize a dozen cap pistols to-day against the giant war machine we may face, and it will be years before we can even hope to have large masses of the organized workers and farmers with us in resisting war, to say nothing of breaking it up when it comes." Comrade Oneal slightly underestimates the anti-war spirit among the workers and farmers. But assuming, for a moment, that his estimate of socialist weakness is correct, there must be a beginning in all things. If the workers and farmers are to be awakened to the realities of the covert and overt wars of capitalism, it can never be done by keeping still about them. There must be some one to tell them the truth. There must be some ready to organize the move against war even while the workers are still weak, so that the bare bones of the anti-war movement, at least, may be ready when the war-weary workers look for an escape from the death trap. It is the function of socialism to explain to them their dilemma, and to show them the way out of it.

5.

It is one of the dearest beliefs of the communists that wars create excellent opportunities for revolutions. In war, runs the argument, the workers in a defeated nation in their anger at being misled, may easily be induced to rise against their masters. They are armed, and hence in a position to seize power. Their rulers are weak, in a panic. Political and industrial life are dislocated. Revolution becomes easy. That is what happened in Russia. It is what will happen everywhere.

Even in a victorious country there may be so serious a dislocation of political power that the workers may hope for a successful revolution. Witness Italy in 1920. The myth runs that, had the workers not been misled by their own leaders they might have won power there, as in Russia.

With this attitude socialists have no sympathy. The logic

The American Socialist Quarterly

of this reasoning requires that the workers support war in the conviction that war leads to revolution. Yet even the communists shrink from this conclusion. They argue that wars bring on revolution, and in the same breath they oppose war. One is forced to conclude that they do not want revolution,—at least at such a price.

The fact is that even they perceive the fallaciousness of their argument, but lack the courage to abandon it. Defeat in war may lead to chaos, and chaos to revolt. But the revolt that comes out of chaos may lead as easily to fascist tyranny as to the workers' state. We are still in the chaos that the last war produced. The number of fascist and semi-fascist states that the war has produced is far greater than the number of workers' republics. In Russia, the one example of successful war-bred revolution, there was the special circumstance that there existed no powerful and tenacious middle-class to dispute the workers' rise to power.

The argument is a version of the old familiar theory, the worse, the better. If we accept it in relation to war we must accept it in general. Then we must seek not only war, but all other means to worsen rather than better the conditions of the workers. If we accept this theory, we must fight for wage reductions, for evil living conditions; we must try to bring on panics and depressions, so that the workers may be driven to revolt. What socialist—and what communist—is ready to endorse this position?

6.

Socialists must oppose war. They must oppose it before it comes and when it comes. There will be those who in the hour of need will fall silent. There will be others who will more or less sincerely repudiate an anti-war position, and with it socialism. This is inevitable. All the more important is it to make clear the socialist position **now**, so that no one may say later "I did not know it was so. I was deceived." Let those who are not opposed to war, or those who are afraid, know where the party stands, and let them now decide where they stand.

The White Collar Worker

HARRY W. LAIDLER

AS one studies the dry pages of the last Census on Occupations, the one fact that stands out above all others is that the white collar workers in the United States are constituting a factor of ever greater importance in the working life of the community.

According to the 1930 Census, nearly fifty million men and women, boys and girls ten years of age and over (48,829,920 to be exact), were gainfully employed in that year—two out of every five people living in the country at that time, and one out of every two who had reached the age of ten.

A little over twenty per cent of this vast army was employed on the agricultural front. Twenty years before, nearly one out of three gainfully employed were working in the rural districts; in 1870, over fifty per cent and in 1820, seventy per cent. But during the post war days a great migration had taken place from the country to the city, and the 1910 agricultural army of 12,400,000 had shrunk by 1930 to one of about 10,500,000, a net shrinkage of nearly two million.

Those employed in the manufacturing and mechanical industries had about held their own proportionately during these years. In 1910 they constituted 27.9 per cent of the gainfully employed; in 1920, 30.8 per cent, and in 1930, 28.9 per cent, an army of over 14,000,000.* Thus about one-half of the gainfully employed population was engaged in farming, in manufacture and in the mechanical industries in 1930 as compared with about two-thirds fifty years before.

The number of gainfully employed connected with mines

* It is difficult to tell just how many of these might be regarded as "horny handed sons of toil" whose type of employment precluded the wearing of a white shirt or white cuffs or a white collar, although the large majority were not of the white collar variety. This particular classification included many manufacturers, contractors and managers, as well as some thousands of white collar workers. Those employed at clerical work in the manufacturing and mechanical industries were, however, lumped together by themselves in a separate occupational group. The actual number of workers in the factories of the country decreased from 1920 to 1930 from 9,100,000 to 7,500,000 and of steam railroads from 2,013,000 to 1,511,000.

The American Socialist Quarterly

during these years decreased from 1,090,000 to 984,000, constituting in 1930 but 2.6 per cent of the total, while the number engaged in transportation and communication advanced from 2,665,000 to 3,843,000.

The most startling increases within this latter group were witnessed among the white collar telephone operators, (an increase from 100,000 to 250,000) and among the chauffeurs and truck drivers (from 45,000 to nearly 1,000,000).

In those years of increasing mass production, tens of thousands of workers were being dismissed from the factories giving place to the machine of iron and steel. Newcomers in industry were unable to gain admission into the factory, and they and the discharged factory workers were absorbed—many of them—in the distributive trades as high pressure salesmen and clerical workers of various types. As a result, we find that the number of those employed in clerical occupations grew from 1,718,000 in 1910 to 4,025,000 in 1930, while the percentage of clerks to the total gainfully employed increased from 4.5 per cent to 8 per cent. The number occupied in trade advanced from 3,633,000 to 6,081,000, from 9.5 per cent to 12.5 of the total; those in professional service, from 1,711,000 to 3,252,000 (from 4.5 per cent to 6.7) and those in domestic and personal service from three and three-quarter million to nearly five million.

"If the clerical workers are combined with those in trade and transportation," write Dr. Hurlin and Givens in *Recent Social Trends*, "it is found that this composite group has almost trebled in relative importance over the seventy year period. For every four workers apparently displaced by increasing industrial productivity since 1870, from two to three workers more than were then required now find employment in the marts of trade, on the routes of the commercial traveler, in the warehouses, shops, offices, counting houses and miscellaneous establishments of modern business devoted to the processes of distribution and the arts of financing and selling."

If one analyzes trends in different groups of white collar workers, some interesting facts are disclosed. From 1910 to

The White Collar Worker

1930 stockbrokers peddling their wares, jumped from 14,000 to 71,000; insurance agents from 88,000 to 257,000; real estate agents from an unknown quantity to 234,000; salesmen and saleswomen, over 100 per cent from 940,000 to 2,069,000; teachers, from 600,000 to 1,062,000; technical engineers, from 88,000 to 226,000; barbers, hairdressers and manicurists, from 200,000 to 375,000; bookkeepers, from less than a half million to nearly a million; clerks—except those in stores—from 720,000 to 2,000,000 and stenographers and typists, from 316,000 to 811,000. The aggregate public service group nearly doubled its numbers over 20 years, as compared with an increase of 34 per cent during this period of the total gainfully employed population.

The above figures indicate something of the remarkable increase in numerical importance of the white collar workers during the past generation. With the high schools of the country turning out ten times as many graduates as a generation ago, the vast majority of whom are trained to regard white collar occupations as more respectable and desirable than those of the trades; the volume of those striving to get a foothold in the non-manual occupations is bound steadily to grow.

What is the significance of this increase to the labor and socialist movement? In the coming struggle between the forces making for socialism and those seeking to retain the capitalist order, where are these millions likely to cast their lot?

Thus far they have shown little inclination to organize either on the industrial or the political fields. They have held themselves aloof from the industrial proletariat.

Many of them have been long of the opinion that their interests were separate and apart from those of their brothers who went to work in a flannel shirt and ate their lunch from a dinner pail. Their work was cleaner. They were closer to the employer. In many instances they were in confidential relations with him. They received a salary instead of a wage and usually obtained short vacations with pay. Some of them owned stocks in one or more of the country's utilities or great corporations. They were members of the great, respectable,

The White Collar Worker

conservative middle class of the nation, not of the working class, and might soon find themselves, if they kept in with the boss, in the ranks of the nation's ruling groups.

Economically, however, the interests of most of them were, and are, practically identical with the interests of the rest of the working class. They receive their income not as a result of property ownership, but as a result of their intellectual or manual contribution. Their salary is usually a small one, and they are constantly faced with the menace of insecurity and unemployment.

They cannot, it is true, all be lumped in the same salary class any more than can the skilled and unskilled, the organized and unorganized miner, construction worker and textile worker.*

The average member of the teaching profession in 1930 obtained around \$27 a week, teachers in rural districts \$18, and Negro rural teachers, less than \$8. Salaries of technicians and minor executives varied widely, the average manager of a chain store obtaining around \$35. One-third of all private practicing physicians secured less than \$2,500, though the highly paid doctor brought the average income of the general practitioners up to a little less than \$4000, and of the specialists and family doctor combined to about \$5300.

In general the white collar workers obtain during prosperous times just about enough to keep them going, while tens of thousands of store clerks secure hardly more than a starvation wage. During periods of depression their salaries are mercilessly slashed, while millions find themselves among the jobless.

During the last few years of hard times, the salaries of thousands of women clerical workers in New York City have fallen from 25 per cent to 40 per cent. Here is one advertisement appearing in the newspapers of New York City in the

* In general, the clerical staff in a factory is likely during good times to obtain a few more dollars a week than the factory hands, although a smaller wage than the organized worker. In 1927, for instance, the average member of the clerical force in the manufacturing industries obtained, considering unemployment, about \$26 a week, store clerks slightly more than \$24, factory hands, around \$23, and construction workers over \$31, with the well organized members of the building trades securing far higher returns.

The American Socialist Quarterly

beginning of 1933: "Wanted, Stenographer-Bookkeeper: This position in small office requires, capability, experience, and industry, easily worth \$30 a week or more. Now offering \$12-\$15 a week. No beginners." The average earnings of clerical workers approach the code minimum. Restaurants not long since were advertising for graduates of Harvard, Yale and Princeton to learn the restaurant business at a beginning salary of \$15 weekly.

In 1932 over one-third of the clerical workers were reported as out of work. A survey by Columbia University in 1933 showed over nine out of every ten architects without employment. The large majority of engineers in 1933 were jobless, and about two out of every three chemists. The situation among musicians, half of whom had been displaced in the moving picture industry by sound films, was a tragic one. The New York Emergency Work and Relief Bureau reported recently that about 40 per cent of those seeking jobs were "white collar" workers, including executives, technicians, statisticians, editors, efficiency experts, engineers and personnel managers. Tens of thousands of white collar women were stranded in the great cities.*

Under the N.R.A., many of the technicians are faring worse than are the manual workers. In one code qualified chemists have been put down for a minimum of \$14 weekly; in another, technical employees have been scheduled for 35 cents to 45 cents an hour. "The technicians," declares the *New Republic* (January 24, 1934), "now find themselves in many cases receiving about half the wages of skilled labor under the N.R.A. codes. No provisions have been made for them in the codes of many industries, the technicians being conveniently regarded as 'superintendents' or 'executives'. In many cases the men are receiving only the minimum wage provided for unskilled labor."

I recently spoke to a manager of a chain store who declared that he with others had been raised to the position of an "executive" under the N.R.A. code. He was paid a little

* See Corey, *Decline of Capitalism*, p. 249.

The American Socialist Quarterly

more than \$35 a week, and was told that, as an executive, his hours of work might be limitless. He was asked to do the work of the manager, the assistant manager and the porter. He was ordered to employ clerks whom he had to pay a minimum wage only half time, and the total wage bill, despite the minimum, was less than it had been prior to the N.R.A.

From every standpoint of economic interest and of logic, the white collar worker should be fighting on the side of a new social order, a socialist society. Abroad we have seen tens of thousands of these, discouraged and disheartened by economic and international conditions, swept off their feet by fascistic and nationalistic appeals, and become the backbone of the barbaric fascistic movement.

We in America must see that they are reached with the socialist message. We must show them their identity of interest with the rest of the working class and make it clear to them that, when we speak of workers, we include them as a vital part of the working class. We must make it clear to them that in fascism lies slavery and death; in socialism, freedom, security, and an abundant life. We must help them to organize on the industrial field. We must see that they join the Socialist Party. And in that effort, we must study the problems that each group of clerical and professional worker is confronted with. We must prepare literature which clearly and simply presents to them their economic and social status and the problems confronting them. We must make it plain to them that only through getting rid of the profit system can that problem be solved.

And, during the struggle for power and later, during the building of a new order, we must utilize to the full the talents which each group has to offer. Let us bring into our movement the workers in factories, in mines, on construction work, on the farms. Let us not neglect those in our stores and offices, in our schools and our research laboratories. On our effectively reaching all working class groups depends the success of socialism in America.

Book Reviews

WHAT MARX REALLY MEANT

By G. D. H. Cole. New York. Alfred A. Knopf. 309 pages. Price: \$2.00

This latest book by G. D. H. Cole is a refreshing and highly valuable interpretation of Marxism, especially so at this time when the whole socialist world is engaged in a searching criticism of its past principles, strategy, and tactics (save for those persons like Kautsky and his minor counterparts in all countries whose minds are ossified and cannot comprehend the meaning of even such events as the triumph of fascism in Germany and Austria).

Despite a hush-hush policy by old leaders and by most of the socialist press the socialist workers everywhere are today awakening to the fact that their once powerful movement has been sapped, weakened, and in several countries led to disaster by an abandonment of the revolutionary Marxism upon which it was founded. This abandonment is the more reprehensible in view of the fact that the old leaders continued to parrot Marxian phrases while in practice following a policy of flagrant reformism and class collaboration. It was gradualism, but of a reverse kind; not the gradualism by which the Fabians envisaged a slow but steady conquest of capitalism, as though they were stripping apart an onion, layer by layer, but, rather, a gradualism of retreat in revolutionary will, theoretical clarity, and organizational strength.

But today, in the ranks, there is a march to the left. False leaders, like false concepts and tactics, are being shoved aside. In Germany groups that brave the Hitler terror to carry on their underground work are making their "Neue Beginnen". It is the same in Austria. In France, Spain, and now in America, the socialist parties by substantial majorities have moved and are still moving leftward. The same events to which live socialists in all countries are responding have profoundly influenced Cole, and in this book he makes a helpful contribution

Book Reviews

toward a reorientation of socialist theory and practice.

No book in recent times is a better illustration than this that Marxism is a living and growing method of understanding and transforming a dynamic world. Correctly understood, Marxism is not a vast body of dogma, complete and unchanging. It is not a dogma at all but a **method** of studying, of comprehending as a whole, and of changing capitalist society into a socialist society, the seeds of which are created by capitalism itself but which revolutionists must tend. One of the fatal errors of the German Social Democratic leaders was that while they knew the words of Marx almost by heart they missed the vital essence of his philosophy. They made of Marxism a comforting prediction of an **inevitable** victory, a religion of socialism in the hereafter, an opiate that numbed and thwarted the struggles of the workers. Had they made of it a guide to action, a method for studying every social event and of applying the lesson to every new struggle, who can deny that a workers' and farmers' government would rule in Berlin today, and perhaps in all Europe?

In emphasizing Marxism as primarily a method, Cole is in close agreement with Sidney Hook, whose "Toward the Understanding of Karl Marx" is also a book which every socialist should read. He performs another useful service when he calls socialist attention away from the false hopes of capitalist democracy, gradual reforms, and coalition government, and back to one of the bedrock fundamentals of policy, namely, the Marxist theory of the state. The state in any capitalist society, Marx held, is essentially an agency of capitalist dictatorship and a democratic form does not alter its basic character. The existing state apparatus cannot be used by the workers but must be scrapped in favor of an entirely new state. In his criticism of the Gotha Program of the German socialists he wrote: "Between capitalist and communist (socialist) society lies a period of revolutionary transformation from the one to the other. To this also corresponds a political period of transition during which the state can be nothing else than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." It was at this point

The American Socialist Quarterly

where social democratic practice went farthest afield from the theory it professed. Says Cole, "Marx's conception of the state and of the transition is utterly plain and unequivocal. . . . Lenin, and not Kautsky, says what Marx said. Kautsky was only continuing to say what the German Social Democrats so angered Marx by saying in the Gotha Program of 1875." Cole believes this analysis to be equally valid today.

There are many other valuable features in this book which should be discussed if space permitted. But after all, the purpose of this review is to persuade every socialist to read the book himself, not to present Cole's views second-hand and condensed. To those not familiar with his previous works it might be said that though still a comparatively young man he has justly earned a reputation as one of the ablest and most prolific economists in England. He is one of the leaders of the Socialist League, the left wing of the British Labor Party.

Paul Porter.

WARHEIT UND DICHTUNG

"A History of Bolshevism" by Arthur Rosenberg. Oxford University Press. \$3.75. PPS. VIII—250 (with bibliography and index).

The constant aim of the Third International is the "Bolshevization" of the various national units of the Communist Party. They are never allowed to lose sight of this glorious if slightly mysterious objective. In instructions to party organizers and in international congresses comrades are exhorted and admonished to this end.

It has been a good phrase—although its results have not been all that might have been anticipated. While not precisely defined, it has been taken to mean an emphasis on all forms of "revolutionary" activity that would lead to successful overthrow of the capitalist state—using as an illustration the history of the Bolshevik party in Russia.

Until the appearance of Arthur Rosenberg's book, there was nothing in English (or for that matter in any other language) that pointed out what Bolshevism really was. Until

The American Socialist Quarterly

now there has been no adequate explanation of the theories and practices of Bolshevism—no separation of fact from myth. Of special pleading on both sides there has been aplenty—from Kautsky to Stalin. Besides the writings of the masters there has been as well a fascinating continuation of the Elsie Dinsmore series by intoxicated communists beating their heads against the pavement before the mausoleum in the Kremlin square. While this has added to the joy of political controversy it has not shed any light on one of the most interesting and important events in history—the rise of the Bolshevik party.

Now at last comes one who by position and training is perhaps more than anyone qualified to speak on the subject. Rosenberg, a German, is by training a historian. Anyone who read his "Birth of the German Republic" has recognized the brilliance of his analysis and the scientific detachment of his attitude. He was a member of the Communist Party of Germany and a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. He left the party in 1927 and has never joined any of the splinter parties since. His tone in this book (as well as in the earlier volume) is an example which all radical historians might well attempt to copy—a successful divorce of research from polemics.

It is literally impossible to do justice to the work in a review—every page is crammed with information and the deductions are well nigh impeccable. While it is true that he establishes the bankruptcy of the Third International as an international revolutionary force, he is no less regardful of the Second International and the Social Democratic Parties.

For the first time we have the myth of Bolshevism separated from the reality. Its philosophic roots are laid bare—and they go right back to Karl Marx—however, a Karl Marx with whom few Americans are conversant.

Rosenberg's analysis of the various stages of Marxism is the most valuable theoretical contribution of the book.

Here are two quotations that disclose very meagerly the author's thesis in this regard.

Book Reviews

"In the course of the nineteenth century Marxism had undergone two changes. The first was the organization of the workers for the purpose of completing the middle-class democratic revolution. At this stage in the development of Marxism the working class acted under the direction of a small group of professional revolutionaries sprung from the radical middle-class "intelligentsia". This was the Marx-Engels and Bolshevik type of revolution. In the next stage the working class had so far developed as to have a voice in their own organizations and to seek to improve their condition as a class within the middle-class and capitalistic organization of society. The revolutionary ideal faded into the background and, in countries in which a middle-class revolution was imminent, the working class followed in the footsteps of the middle class. This type of revolutionary movement is represented by the western European groups in the Second International and by the Mensheviks in Russia. A logical forecast of the further development of the proletarian movement leads to a third stage in which the working class consciously determines its own fate. It is no longer concerned with the improvement of its condition within middle-class society and seeks to attain to power through revolution. This revolution, however, is no longer the radical democratic revolution of the first stage; it is now a Socialist revolution with the object of substituting communal for private ownership of property. In such a revolution the workers would not merely execute the commands of their Party leaders but would act on their own independent initiative.

"This third stage is the realization of the Marxist ideal. It is the fulfilment of Marx's dream of a society freed from class distinctions. In order to render the attainment of this third stage possible an immense development of Capitalism must first take place, and those classes that stand between the middle class and the proletariat must also be destroyed. The disappearance of these plebian classes renders unnecessary the pursuit on the part of the proletariat of a policy of cooperation on a nationalist and democratic basis and leaves the tiny minority of capitalist exploiters face to face with the overwhelming majority of the exploited. Moreover, the attainment of this third stage necessitates the development of a very highly trained proletariat capable through intelligence and self-discipline of building up a new world for themselves."

"An organization can only be looked upon as revolutionary when it has for its avowed and sole object the accomplishment of the overthrow of the existing order within a measureable space of time. If judged by this—the only just—criterion, the groups composing the Second International were not revolutionary and their place is in the second category in the classification attempted in the previous chapter. They accepted the existence of the capitalist State and sought to im-

Book Reviews

prove the condition of the working class within its limits. In consequence they were forced into a position incompatible with their own beliefs. For the theories of Marx, which they had made their own, called for revolution. There were, indeed, two ways in which they could attempt to evade this contradiction between their professed beliefs and their actions. The first way was an open and sincere confession that Marx's theories must be altered to suit changed circumstances, and that Social Democracy, even possibly in alliance with middle-class opinion and abandoning an ideology dominated by its final aim, must seek to accomplish definite reforms. Those who believed in this course became known as Revisionists. (2a). The second way was that of continuing to accord the chief place in agitation and propaganda to the final aim, rejection of reforms, refusal to co-operate in the peaceful promotion of better conditions and to compromise with middle-class political parties and governments. At the same time there was to be no action of a revolutionary nature, and the small successes won for the working class by the "Reformist" Trade Unions were to be regarded secretly as matters for rejoicing. This course was adopted by the Radicals, who were in general the leaders of the Second International (2b)."

As examples of this classification Rosenberg cites—Marx, Engels, and Lenin for group 1, Bernstein for group 2a, the great leaders of the Second International before the war for group 2b, and Trotsky (before the revolution), Rosa Luxemburg and Gorter for group 3.

The book serves as well to shed light on Lenin's development and on the origin of many of the popular catch phrases of today—such as "Workers' Councils", "Dictatorship of the Proletariat", etc.

In a word, a knowledge of what is contained in this work is indispensable to anyone who would assume to speak on the subject of bolshevism and communism.

I have purposely refrained from dwelling on that part of the book which is critical of the Third International as constituted today. While agreeing in most part with it, I do not feel that it measures up in importance with the historical and theoretical sections. Besides, this portion has been more than amply emphasized in James Oneal's review in the *New Leader* for August 11, 1934.

David Felix.

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