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The Conquest of Democracy

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WOULD it be possible to find a concept of social relations, other than democracy, around which so much loose talk has been entwined? "America is nearing a socialist state instead of a democracy," warns a Yale professor. "Before we discard democracy, by which our nation has grown great and powerful," admonishes a famous liberal, "let us examine the alternatives—dictatorship and communism." It was not Thomas Jefferson but Mussolini who recently wrote, regarding his ideal form of government: "The principal aim of the new system is to protect the collective interests of the people against the excessive pressure of special interest."

Universally those who wish to institute or sustain a favored social system endow it with mystic significance by dedicating it to "the people". The next move is either to persuade them to accept it as their own by persistent propaganda; or, in more modern fashion, to tell them they love it and see that they do, at least by outward adoration.

In the United States, however, a peculiar series of early events contributed to an illusion from which it is difficult for any of us to escape. Native Americans of the old stock have been nurtured in the faith that an organic relation existed between the rights so boldly asserted in the Declaration of Independence and those so skilfully circumscribed in the Constitution. Newcomers to our shores, after hearing their children learn to sing sturdily (if erroneously) "Land where our fathers died," have on the whole become the most assiduous zealots of us all. Sired by Andrew Jackson and damned by Herbert Hoover (if one may be forgiven the pun for sake of the point) the former have given us free individualism

flowering from the spoils system. Largely here to escape the militarism and imperialism of their homelands, the immigrant pioneers cast in their lot with our Republican and Democratic Tammany Halls; they idolized Roosevelt the First, almost the greatest militarist and imperialist of all. Indubitably sincere but painfully gullible, they are often the poor fish caught by wholesale in the nets of political chicanery. Typically, theirs are perhaps the loudest voices proclaiming allegiance to "democracy".

Does this mean that our democratic tradition is all moonshine? Nothing of the sort. Rare is that American radical who, during a long sojourn abroad, does not feel a temptation to become a one hundred per cent superpatriot, so tyrannical is much of the world by contrast. But contrast is often an emotional deceiver. The vicious abuse of Upton Sinclair by his reactionary opponents in California may arouse resentment even in radicals, but it does not give him a sound economic program. No more does Europe's terroristic tendency, illuminating our comparative freedom of expression, bestow upon us a genuine democracy. For socialists, at any rate, the challenge is not to be freer than the worst, but to be really free.

Capitalistic parliaments may function through the slogans and symbols of democracy, but their democracy is bogus. Merely to cite the evidence would fill a dozen issues of the *Quarterly;* here one can be but hurried and admittedly superficial. The mere political mechanisms by which we are governed are of themselves a good place to start. We begin in every administration by electing a President whose candidacy is not even remotely of our choosing. Our people in the Seventeenth Amendment of 1913, attacked the fiction that United States senators represented the people while chosen by the state legislatures, by a change giving power to the voters; thereby, however, they only enlarged the fiction that the upper house had some special function other than a professionalized reaction, for we eliminated the last formal excuse for an upper house at all. We live not only under this delusion of representative government, however; we are ruled arbitrarily by the private crotchets of nine men in the Supreme

Court, as proved by the numerous crucial decisions taken five to four.

There is only the faintest relationship between the popular will and the "selection of representatives by democratic choice". If 51 per cent of the voters in New York State go Democratic (or if the largest number go that way irrespective of percentages) all 45 electoral votes count for the Democratic candidate for President; the rest of the voters are virtually disfranchised, being represented not at all. In Connecticut, thanks to a medieval apportionment system, the little town of Union, with a population of less than 200, has two representatives in the lower house of the General Assembly, while also represented by two are 165,000 Hartford citizens. Thus a resident of Union has, in effect, 825 votes to one for the voter living in Hartford. In Glastenbury, Vermont, the entire population is a single family of seven persons, one of whom is a state representative wielding as much voting power as another from a thickly populated town. Thus an attachment for the so-called democratic attributes of our political system leads to the very repudiation of democracy in practice.

Two of the country's greatest crises have been met by minority governments—those of Lincoln and Wilson. Each of these men, as candidates, ran on planks against war; each managed to get the people into war. Our state system, jealously guarded by the Democratic Party until broken down by a Democratic administration to the accompaniment of Republican protests, gives us today in the national House of Representatives a Democratic plurality of about 240; if exactly representative, the Democratic margin would be only 45. This phenomenon of "democracy" is found in most parliamentary bodies. In the British elections of 1931 the National coalition received about 14,500,000 votes and 493 seats in the House of Commons; the Labor Party almost 7,000,000 votes and a mere 46 seats. In fact, the staggering defeat of Labor that year was less due to a shift of popular sentiment than to a vast increase in the number of three-cornered contests. It took 29,000 votes to elect a National member and 144,000 for a Labor member.

But if this were all, that neat device of liberal democrats, proportional representation, would suffice to bring us true democracy. But it is not all. These revealing figures have been cited chiefly to show that even close to the surface of our national life we are not democratic; that our political institutions serve as much to flout democracy as to promote it. And if it be argued that in its birth this tendency was unwitting, proof exists in abundance that it has been preserved by the careful and deliberate manipulation of conservative forces that well knew what they were about. That is why the furor over primaries, the initiative, referendum and recall, and similar measures intended to place more power in the hands of the people, has long since died down under the disillusionments of actual practice. In fact, many times the primary has given a greater hold than otherwise to the scheming rugged individuals of political skullduggery. The general lack of interest in their political fortunes manifested by an overwhelming majority of Americans—only 60 per cent or so of whom vote as a rule even when eligible—must be explained by something besides laziness or indifference. To illustrate again from sources under my own observation, when two moderately important amendments were up in Connecticut for referendum in 1934, out of 556,000 votes for candidates only 55,000 were cast on one amendment and only 51,000 on the other. The truth is that the old days when every man considered himself a qualified expert on every question, are, by virtue of the complexities in present-day life, gone forever, and increasingly voters will register their wishes only on matters in which they have the keenest interest. That alone constitutes one valid reason why the arithmetic of democracy must be revised, and the old conceptions of majority-minority relations be given a thorough overhauling.

Fundamentally, however, democracy cannot be found in capitalist societies because under capitalism classes exist almost as definitely in so-called democratic countries as in those possessing more conspicuous hangovers from feudalism. The one basic reason for democracy's absence in American political life is the fact that under our form of government

it has been possible for men to exploit other men, and impossible for the victims to control their circumstances and throw off the yoke. To say that they can do so at any time they wish is to evade the issue.

Perhaps the worst sin of capitalistic government is the manner in which it allows the exercise of unfair power to mold public opinion through great wealth, until citizens are persuaded by falsehood that they do not need to rebel. Downright suppression of opinion is one thing; scarcely second to it is the continuous misrepresentation of facts and issues until the voters, stultified by lies and cheated by glib distortion come to be bound, as Voltaire so familiarly said, by the very chains that they revere.

Where the everyday economic activity which intimately affects our millions of workers is autocratically managed; where we have racial classes which have given a colored minority so desperate a status that they, too, have classes and social gradations of their own based on color instead of worth; where the courts reflect in their perpetual injustices and their legal bias the class nature of the capitalist state and where juries are played upon by hired psychologists as a pianist plays upon the keys; where the multitudinous cultural agencies that so largely dominate mass action are employed to bulwark the existing set-up and make it alluring,—in such a milieu, what chance has a true democracy? True democracy, since the workers are substantially all of "the people," must be a workers' democracy, frankly a class democracy too until its power has wrought out a classless civilization.

We may properly inquire what is, in the abstract, a genuine democracy of the workers? It must be, in my definition, a functioning state which carries out not merely by the consent of the governed, but with the systematized and positive authorization of the specially-interested elements, those policies which will bring the greatest technically-feasible economic and cultural opportunities to the masses. Opportunities—not necessarily advantages; what is desired by the workers, not necessarily what is deemed best for the workers. It must afford security from want and security from war. It must afford

security from militarism, which may be almost as bad as war and less socially defensible. It must afford freedom of choice, of movement, of organization, of expression—qualified by those restrictions which can be justified solely because they safeguard the eventual enjoyment of these workers' rights where otherwise they would be crushed out permanently through unscrupulous opposition.

There is, it must be said at once, a huge lot of superficial nonsense voiced about the constraint imposed upon democracy by revolutionary regimes. Rousseau ironically pointed out that even Englishmen were really free to choose only once in several years, on election day; nor can it be forgotten that in terms of social dynamics the power to choose, or to help influence a course of action, is vastly more important than the mere right to talk about it. We talk interminably, in our vaunted "democracies," but we do little more than those rustics, of whom Mark Twain complained, actually did about the weather. Our Chief Executive has always held a notoriously powerful position; the emergency Roosevelt dispensation is nothing more nor less than a delegated dictatorship. Nor is it of great democratic compensation, when suffering want in the midst of plenty, merely to be allowed to grumble at your lot. It has been said in various words a thousand times, with a certain amount of truth, that many a man, if not most, would rather be safe from the fear of hunger than the fear of contradiction. Yet those who cheerfully expect free spirits to be content with pabulum alone, might consider the robust assertion of Marx: "The proletariat regards its courage, self-confidence, independence, and sense of personal dignity as more necessary than its daily bread."

In any case, the facile assumptions are not the exclusive property of one side. If there is any validity whatsoever in the definition of democracy just put forward, it has not been remotely encompassed by the techniques of proletarian rule covered by that ambiguous phrase, "dictatorship of the proletariat". Marx may have used the phrase as almost synonymous, and perhaps entirely so, with "workers' democracy," either because he did not think his problem through, or, as

I believe, because his social experience had not been one which tended to clarify the difference. But a difference exists between the two which is in substance as great as the very words themselves.

Essentially, this difference may be summed up as the difference between restriction and expansion. The official communist view of the proletarian dictatorship is restrictive because it is, in practice, a dictatorship of one portion of the proletariat over the rest; because it is the dominance of a bureaucratic group within the Communist Party over the party as whole; because it is not alone rulership over all workers outside the party, but more than that, because it refuses to let even these class-conscious workers organize into new parties of opposition. It tends to stamp with the seal of orthodoxy a restrictive art and culture; and most crucially of all, perhaps, it tends to destroy individual initiative and taste.

It is not enough to compare the artistic and cultural achievements of the Soviet Union, for example, with those of the Czar's regime. It is not enough to show that artistic criteria exist in the U.S.S.R.; that marvelous musical and dramatic accomplishments have been made; or that such artists as Samokhvalov, Chaikov, and Motovilov have been producing significant works. The test must be whether the revolution has generated the cultural impetus that may be anticipated from a regime in revolutionary control for eighteen years in a country distinguished for its literature, music and histrionic genius. Arguments cannot yet be dogmatic on this point.

But even if the evidence should eventually show a clean bill of cultural health for the U.S.S.R., as I am inclined to think it may, it is a question of whether in countries already more definitely standardized to begin with, political regimentation may not easily mean artistic stagnancy. It is easy to deceive ourselves by a commonplace historical fallacy: this has happened, therefore, nothing better could have happened.

With assurance it may be said, at any rate, that in mechanical matters the greatest losses in responsible and enter-

prising workmanship, and particularly in responsible supervision, have been due to a harshness and standardization from above entirely unjustified save by deference to a theory of government which quite unnecessarily deifies regimentation.

Contrast to this the procedure of genuine workers' democracy. During the period of initial control, when consolidation of the workers' state is a primary concern, certain limitations on individual liberty—warranted because only so could democracy be saved for the workers as a whole—will be inevitable. The amount of restriction will depend upon the degree of violence used by the former privileged minority, their unwillingness to permit majority rule, and stupid allegiance to them on the part of workers. The first task of a workers' government will be the maintenance of its position against counter-revolutionaries. But the second task, not to be delayed, must be the widening of responsibility and enterprise, expanding the privilege of government, and not merely of subsistence, to the workers irrespective of their particular views on tactics. This, of course, may be unsafe; to embark on such a course will be terrifying to the omniscient ones in command. It is exceeded in danger, however, by the creation of a permanent body of moguls and mandarins, who know all, see all, and learn nothing.

In short, any so-called workers' state is a sham unless it gives an opportunity for sharing in policy-formation to all the individual and organized producers who desire to assert themselves. To be sure, if it is to remain a state and not to yield to chaos, it will have to follow a definite pattern of government; but it will not deny, beyond the brief stage of consolidation, the rights of expanding power and self-direction which are the primary justifications for its existence. It was not a Social Democratic critic of radicalism, or a middle class liberal, but Karl Marx who declared, in the *Communist Manifesto* itself: "In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletariat in general? The Communists do not constitute themselves a special party over and against other working-class parties. They have no interest separate and apart from the interests of the proletariat as a whole. They

erect no special principles by which to control the proletarian movement." Marx was dealing here with problems of work for the achievement of power; but it is inconceivable that he could have sanctioned a complete reversal of those standards when power is won, and when the excuses for divisionism are comparatively minimized.

Marx's adjective "Communist" notwithstanding, the current "Communist" Party in its tactics is un-Marxian as well as unwise, unfair, and untrue to the working class. Still more significant, however, is the necessity of working towards power in the mood of democratic principles. Obviously, workers' democracy is a condition, a dynamic procedure, something which must be won. It cannot be handed to the workers; it cannot be plucked even by them as figs from thistles; it will be the fruition of specific work by specific methods for specific objectives.

For that very reason, all the more essential is it that the democratic hope be stressed to the workers, rather than the incidental transitional dictatorship by which alone, short of a miracle, democracy may be kept alive in a revolutionary crisis. For the selfsame reason, all the more essential is it that the practice of democracy by co-operative effort among workers' and working farmers' movements be inaugurated as rapidly as feasible, so that the path to power may be trod in good faith and under the experienced impetus of democratic fellowship. A workers' rule achieved by undemocratic methods among the revolutionary workers themselves will never be anything more than a workers' government, which is by no means a workers' democracy, and which may conceivably become at last the most tyrannical and reactionary instrument imaginable. All the more essential is it, as well, that working-class parties should be training grounds for workers' democracy, whose members must learn that democracy is not so much a matter of fraternal demonstrations or even agreement on theoretical minutiae, as the day-by-day performance of party functions with loyalty, tolerance, and an approach to that proficiency to be demanded if the opportunity comes to transform rehearsal into realization. Those,

by the way, who insist that cognizance should be taken of the need for violent preparation if a future crisis is not to find the socialist movement minus its army with banners, might appropriately face the unromantic fact that their desires are infinitely simpler to fulfill than the persistent discipline of democratic competence referred to above.

The socialist cause has suffered unnecessary misconception in the past from its lack of emphasis on its profound release of individual initiative once it commences operation in a society freed from the glorified but uncreative profit economy. It can hardly be stated too often that the rewards of collectivism are to be found in the increase of individual satisfactions; that the transfer from autocratic industrial controls must inevitably demand of the individual more enterprise than required by the present system, both in the responsible performance of his task and in his relations with his fellows. Public misunderstanding of socialism through hostile agencies is no fault of socialists; but it may be doubted whether capitalist propaganda has contributed as heavily to the general identification of socialism with bureaucracy as have socialists themselves. Not only in the structure of the state, not only in the operation of industry, but in a thousand subtle psychological responses, will socialism liberate human personalities from bondage. We should shout this from the housetops, most of all at a time when growing disgruntlement with the New Deal's bureaucratic methods, unless we are watchful to differentiate, may focus suspicion upon all things popularly labelled "socialistic".

There is no need to blueprint the workers' democracy of a classless order; it will create its own mechanisms, which must be secondary to its central method. But we need not delude ourselves with a socialist millenialism and fancy that difficulties of a crucial character will not continuously arise, that workers' democracy will not have its disillusionments too, that a million million adjustments will not perpetually be required. It is heartening to remember, nevertheless, that the more society is integrated, the more daily life becomes self-disciplined and zestful, the more fear is supplanted by

warm and generous action, the more successfully may any civilization hope to abandon drift and plan its destiny.

The hallmark of a successful revolutionary state, of course, will be at once its ambition and its momentum. To those who worship at the shrine of dictatorship, workers' democracy must appear an incubus slowing up the vital speed of revolutionary progress. In the main, however, they are wrong; for it is a staggering burden that must be carried when it is necessary, in the name of revolution, to fight not only the expected enemy, but a host of sincere workers themselves whose recalcitrance is directed less against revolution than against revolutionists in Cossack's clothing. No small amount of Soviet see-sawing has been forced by the animus of workers needlessly coerced.

Socialists, assuredly, will do well to repudiate any concept of a workers' state less exacting than that of a workers' democracy. Our phrase, "the co-operative commonwealth," means precisely what it says and not a mere system of accounting. Our aim will be, if we are realists, Marxists, and creative party members, the conquest of democracy—a democracy whose limits shall be established by the workers themselves, and never by self-perpetuating potentates.

Socialists in the Trade Unions

JACK ALTMAN

THE time has long been ripe for the Socialist Party to abandon its neutrality in the American labor movement. In fact the creation of the National Labor Committee, and local committees in more than a hundred cities, marks a turning-point in the party's attitude on the trade union question. Some very satisfactory results, for both the unions and the party, can already be seen; and the future of both depends upon our success in this direction.

The party's traditional policy of neutrality in the trade union movement has been interpreted by persons in and outside of the party as a failure to take a stand on important issues. Our official explanations have been received with skepticism. And because we refused to press our point of view, reactionaries of all kinds succeeded in shackling the American movement with actions and policies we knew to be disastrous.

It must be clearly recognized that it was precisely this passivism, with the consequence of declining influence of the party in the labor movement, that was one of the principal reasons for the decline of socialism in this country. For the trade unions represent the greatest source of recruits to the party, and of strength and influence. Socialists must learn that it is their duty, as a definite tendency in the labor movement claiming the soundest foresight, to take a stand on all vital problems in the daily organizational activities and political interests of the workers. Through effective participation we can lead the labor movement and strengthen it. And until the Socialist Party succeeds in developing among trade union members an understanding of the class relationship in capitalist society, persuading them that it is not enough to pursue a policy of begging concessions, there will not be a fertile field for socialism.

Contrary to estimates of the Communist Party and of

many pseudo-communist liberals, the American Federation of Labor, which is virtually the only organized trade union movement in this country, has not dwindled away. If we make allowances for the fact that large sections of its members are in part or in whole unemployed, we must realize that its membership probably greatly exceeds that indicated by the *per capita* tax that is paid to the A. F. of L. Executive Council. It may well exceed five million. This is indeed gratifying when we realize that it is at least a million over the high-water mark of four million members, attained in 1920.

The existing capitalist crisis has been working profound changes in the psychology of the American working class. No longer does the average worker think of buying himself a stake in some capitalist enterprise, and of graduating into the master class. Today he is more concerned with the problem of earning bread and paying last month's rent. He is becoming increasingly aware of the insecurity of his lot under capitalism.

To be sure he does not always draw working class or socialist conclusions from the new lot that has befallen him. Larger and larger sections of these workers will seek membership in working class organizations. The trade unions offer at once the most elementary and the broadest appeal to them. However, the labor movement has until now been too deficient in leadership, in vision and in inspiration to make the necessary appeal. Its policies have been short-sighted. The failure of the labor movement to utilize its opportunities, its failure to realize its responsibilities in the present crisis, makes it necessary for socialists to adopt a clear and vigorous trade union policy.

Socialists must not adopt the fatalist attitude that workers will and must join the trade unions in order to protect themselves. The alarming growth of company unions is ample testimony to the contrary. The discontent of the workers may be drained into many other channels. Witness the growth of Father Coughlin's Union for Social Justice, and the tremendous popular support of demagogues like Huey Long.

Only if the labor movement takes a correct stand based on the immediate as well as the historic interests of the workers on all major economic and social problems, can we hope for its advancement. Only through such correct understanding can we hope for clear action on the part of the labor movement. The Socialist Party must first clarify its position on labor organization. It must then work vigorously together with and through its allies in the labor movement, the militant, progressive and radical workers, in its effort to influence the labor movement as a whole.

The membership of the A. F. of L. has fluctuated with the fall and rise of the economic curve. The period between 1920 and the stock market crash in 1929 was the first period of economic advance during which the labor movement, instead of witnessing growth, actually recorded a decline in membership. It was at this time that the policy of class collaboration of the A. F. of L. was perfected. The A. F. of L., both in theory and practice, depended on the capitalist class and its government for concessions and support. The building trades, with their narrow craft outlook and ultra nationalistic policies, dominated the A. F. of L.

With the coming of the depression, we had every right to look forward to a new activity on the part of the workers. American workers who had been accustomed to a standard of living considerably above that of the European workers would not wait until this standard was reduced to the Chinese level before fighting back to protect themselves. Had the labor movement been actuated by forward-looking policies, and had it had proper leadership there is no doubt that the offensive of the workers to stave off a worsening of their condition would have been much more extensive.

The establishment of the N R.A. brought an influx of members to the unions. Of great significance is the type of workers who have been drawn into the A. F. of L. For the first time in many years large numbers of workers in the basic industries have been recruited. Automobile, steel, rubber, aluminum, electric equipment, public utilities and textile workers flocked to the trade union movement. Unions like

the United Mine Workers, the Railroad Brotherhoods and the Needle Trades rehabilitated themselves and extended their control over their industries as never before. Despite this general growth, the purely craft unions have managed either barely to hold their own or have continued to decline in membership.

In the industries where the leaders depended almost entirely on the N.R.A. to establish themselves they have made little or no headway. In some cases where the workers flocked to the unions, under the same illusions as those held by the A. F. of L. leadership, no progress has been made. Many unions at the present moment are in a process of decline, as for example, the organizations in the auto and steel industries. In those unions where the labor movement seriously threatened action or acted when there was need, as for example the I. L. G. W. U. and the U. M. W. A., the unions have made substantial gains.

It is time that socialists everywhere realized that the N.R.A is an attempt on the part of the government to restore capitalism to health and power. All pretensions to friendship for labor on the part of the administration are intended to win popular support, and in particular the support of labor, for this program of capitalist restoration.

Under section 7A the right of workers to organize was formalized, but the right to organize into trade unions had already been won by workers after many years of struggle. In the steel industry, in the manufacture of automobiles and many other branches of production, labor had not, before 1933, succeeded to any degree in breaking down the traditional capitalist resistance to unionism and collective bargaining. Many workers in badly organized trades imagined that Section 7A provided a new charter for labor. President Green of the A. F. of L. so described it. Many thought that, with government backing, labor would now make great strides toward organization. They imagined that the government, through the codes and the licensing power, would compel even the most reactionary employers to recognize the unions.

At first many workers, including the leadership of the

A. F. of L., took Section 7A literally to mean a government license to organize and to strike, if need be. This, no doubt, was a big factor in stimulating the movement of the unorganized workers into the trade unions.

As socialists we must understand these events and must attempt to impart to the rest of the labor movement the idea that the owners of the basic industries of this country will never allow real labor organization if they can prevent it. While we know that there must be a sufficient preparatory basis for every strike if it is to be successful, it is well that we observe that in the period prior to the recent great influx of workers into the A. F. of L. there was practically no strike movement. There was a subsequent decline in organization. A period of organizational growth is usually the accompaniment of a tremendous strike movement on the part of the workers. While there is no mathematical formulation of the relation of the one to the other we must see that a relation does exist and be guided accordingly.

The future of the American labor movement is very closely tied up with winning the millions of unorganized workers particularly in the mass production industries. Once these workers become part of the organized labor movement its official policies will tend to swing away from those of the past. With the unskilled workers in the ranks, the smallest concessions won from the capitalists, particularly in this era of declining capitalist economy, will be won only through militant class struggle on the part of the workers.

The future of the trade union movement of this country is bound up with the present A. F. of L., despite its backwardness and its reactionary policies. The experience of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, the I.W.W. and the Communist Party venture, the T.U.U.L., which is now in the process of being liquidated, prove that dual unionism is fatal to the trade union movement. These movements failed, not because their leaders were inadequate. They failed because their basic approach was wrong.

To the extent that these trade unions are influenced and strengthened and made more and more the organizations

of the working class, to that extent, is a fertile field for the socialist movement created. The party and its individual members in the trade unions must always advance a vigorous policy of organizing the unorganized industries and trades. Emphasis should be laid on the basic industries.

We must support all policies that strengthen the trade unions so as better to equip the labor movement. Amalgamation of the craft unions and allied trade unions must again be brought to the fore-front of the labor movement, as for example, in the railroad, building and the needle trades.

We must work for closer cooperation among the craft unions, as well as of allied trade unions in the direction of these aims. For example, we should seek joint action, joint union agreements, joint strike activity and free interchange of membership with the aim of eventual amalgamation.

While we realize the difficulty of merging the established craft unions into industrial unions we should, as socialists, on all issues of controversy in the A. F. of L. over this question, at all times uncompromisingly support the industrial form of organization. For the basic industries and trades as yet unorganized we should take an uncompromising stand for industrial unionism. Our attitude should be against the craft union form of organization wherever it creates division among workers.

The formation of federal trades councils in such industries as automobiles, rubber, aluminum, radio, must quickly make way for international unions of the workers of these industries. Socialists must not only support the workers' industrial unions, but socialist members in these industries through their activities must aim to become the leaders in the movement.

The existence of over 1700 federal locals directly affiliated with the A. F. of L. creates a new situation. In the case of the automobile workers, there are a large number of local unions, enough to warrant a national organization. The same is true of the lumber and saw-mill workers, cement workers, flour and cereal workers, the electrical equipment industry, cleaners and dyers, office workers, chemical workers, cannery and agricultural workers.

While it is true that these workers are affiliated nationally with the A. F. of L. directly, it is too much to expect them, unaided, to develop the necessary leadership from their own ranks to organize their industry. The workers in the federal locals can only be given a real appreciation of the national character of their industrial problems if they are part of a national union, planning and working along national lines. The executive council of the A. F. of L. is not equipped to handle the manifold detailed problems that the federal unions in many industries offer, nor is it desirable that it handle them.

Where possible, in the case of closely allied trades and industries, there is much to be gained in organizing these federal locals into one international union. A departmental structure can be established within the international so as to take care of different problems that may arise. For example, it might accomplish the best results if the agricultural and canning workers were included in one union because of the close interdependence of the industries. The numerous branches of the chemical industry might form one union except where this industry is an adjunct of another industry, as in the manufacture of paper, rayon and dyes.

On the other hand, consideration should be given the problem of attaching many of the existing federal unions to international unions with which they have a logical affinity and direct economic association. For example, federal unions in the neckwear industry should be affiliated with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, perhaps as a department, instead of being organized as separate locals. As parts of a much stronger international, isolated shops in the neckwear branch of the industry could be adequately handled. Paper box and paper novelty workers might affiliate on the same basis with the Pulp, Sulphite, and Paper Mill Workers Union.

Whether radio or electric appliance workers should be affiliated with the Electrical Workers Union as a department, or whether they should maintain a separate union, it is clear that there is enough in common between these sections of electrical manufacturing industry to call for some form of

national organization. While a hard and fast rule, cannot be laid down, once the general policy for national unification of the labor movement is established, the rest becomes a matter of adjustment and expediency.

If the old unions are to be strengthened and the new unions built up, the traditional policy of class collaboration of the A. F. of L. must be scrapped. This does not mean that the trade unions should call strikes on the least provocation, without rhyme or reason. The trade union tactics of the I.W.W. cannot be adopted by the socialist movement. The fight for, and the defense of, the economic interests of the workers is the chief consideration of the American labor movement. The policy of the A. F. of L. must be determined by the question, "Can the worker live under a given set of conditions and wages?" rather than by the question, "Can the boss make a profit and at the same time grant increased wages and improved working conditions?"

Socialists should become advocates of a vigorous, though realistic, strike policy for the A. F. of L. In industries of a national character we should advocate national rather than local and sectional action, and strikes along industrial lines in preference to the worn out craft lines. Industries and trades that are closely dependent on each other, should work out common plans of action. We must seek the natural allies in a given industry and create the greatest possible degree of unity of action. The lack of working class solidarity in the response of the various international unions to the call for a conference of unions on the eve of the recent textile strike was disgraceful. Of the 109 international unions only three unions affiliated with the needle trades considered giving support to the national textile strike. Socialists must become a force striving to make workers realize that a strike of these proportions must affect the workers everywhere.

Socialists must oppose compromises on matters of principle,—a favorite pastime of the majority of union leaders today. The pitfalls of arbitration must be exposed and we must at all times try to establish direct negotiations with the employers. We must make it clear to the workers that a

signed agreement is a better end to a strike than an "investigation" after the men have returned to work.

The workers must be made to feel that the unions are their own, that they exist to defend their interests, and that the union expects them to participate in its everyday affairs. This policy must not be confused with that of the Communist Party "rank and file" groups, which aim to discredit trade union leadership as such, on principle. While we realize that leadership is needed in every organization, we hold that the leadership of the trade union movement must be held accountable to its membership for its actions and its policies. We must advocate those organizational reforms which will bring the unions closer to the workers. Regular meetings of local and union committees should be encouraged. The shop or job steward system should be systematically advanced. Under the guidance of the union, the shop committee system should be coordinated. Long terms for paid officials should be discouraged. Democratic control in strike policy and strike settlement should be demanded. We must oppose "red-baiting" in all its forms, and uphold the right of the expression of minority opinion.

Socialists must uncompromisingly oppose "business unionism". We must fight every method by which individuals enrich themselves at the expense of, or through the aid of, the labor movement. We must steadfastly oppose the practices of paid officers in the labor movement who gain an additional income from business ventures connected with the industry, or from so-called "legitimate" enterprises such as insurance, labor banking, advertising, or labor journalism. The employment of union leaders as advisers to the bosses must come to an end.

An uncompromising war against racketeering and graft must be carried on. Socialists are in duty bound not only to work for the removal of all officers guilty of this crime but, wherever possible, for their expulsion from the union.

Socialists must expose the shallowness of the political policy of the A. F. of L., "reward your friends and punish your enemies", because it makes the labor movement the

appendage of existing capitalist political machines. We must point out that labor has more to gain by building its own party than by begging favors from the capitalist politicians. Even if such a party is at first not successful, its mere existence will gain more results for the workers.

The formation of a labor party in alliance with the farmers will be an important step in the development of a powerful labor movement. Once the trade union movement enters into independent political action it will sever the bonds that tie the majority of trade union leaders to the corrupt old parties. This will necessarily reflect itself in a more militant policy on the part of a leadership no longer able to depend on favors from politicians.

A break with the old parties will offer socialists a fertile field for propaganda. Socialists entering a labor party movement of this sort will maintain their socialist identity. Such a movement must have the trade unions for its mass base.

It is too early to say whether the A. F. of L. will help to launch a labor party or whether it will be sponsored by some of the large internationals. It would be highly desirable for the A. F. of L. to inaugurate the move and to call other working class organizations to join it. Such a party may appear first as a state and sectional movement. Whatever influence the Socialist Party has in the trade unions must be brought to bear in this direction. The development of a real labor party sentiment will aid socialists in promoting their trade union program.

Trade unions often welcome the increased activity of socialists. It is, however, not enough for socialists to supply organizers, publicity directors, picket line leaders and money collectors for strikes, if after the strike is over the union is no better off for having had the help of the socialist movement. Help of this sort to the labor movement must be continued and extended, but our object must be to influence trade unions to reflect the more militant policy and leadership for which we stand.

We must be able more easily to recruit members from the trade unions and the industrial workers. We must in-

sist that every eligible party member join a union. Unemployed professionals and students should be encouraged to enter industry in order to make themselves eligible to join a trade union, and thus establish contact with workers.

Party members who are members or officials of trade unions must realize that the party is judged by their policies and action. It hurts the Socialist Party when party leaders in the trade unions in their everyday activity are indistinguishable from the conservative leaders. It does not speak well for socialist unionists that the move for industrial unionism at the last convention of the A. F. of L. came from men like John L. Lewis instead of from outstanding socialists who represented substantial international unions. The party feels that socialists in their everyday activities should so conduct themselves as to advance progressive ideas in the labor movement. Socialists should not support policies as trade unionists that they oppose as socialists.

Application of the general policy here outlined to the specific situation in any given union must be worked out in each case. What is needed is a healthy and alert movement alive to the new and always changing problems confronting labor. Socialists can become the leaders of a movement influencing thousands of enlightened workers who, without accepting socialism, can become vigorous fighters for a radical trade union program.

The program here outlined does not appeal to socialists alone. There are workers who will work with socialists for these ends, and who will, through such cooperation, develop a better understanding of the socialist movement. Socialists in the unions should ally themselves with all progressive elements that are willing to work along the lines here indicated.

If we are to become a factor in the labor movement it will be necessary to take a stand on such important events as the acceptance by the A. F. of L. of the Steel Labor Relations Board and of the Automobile Labor Relations Board as a substitute for militant labor action. We shall have to take issue with trade union leaders, when, for example, they

send workers back to work because the President of the United States requests it as in the case of the textile strike. We must oppose a pronouncement like that of President Green when he denounced the recent longshoremen's strike on the charge that it was aimed against the government. We must respond to such threats as the one recently made by Michael Tighe of the Amalgamated Steel Workers Union to expel a large section of the union because it demanded action in organizing the industry. We must declare ourselves on all legislation that will affect the labor movement, such as the Wagner bill to establish a National Labor Relations Board, the N.R.A., the so-called social security program and so forth.

To develop this type of trade union policy the party needs an active and vital labor committee. The trade union work of the party is the concern not of trade unionists alone but of the entire party. Every locality where the party has a branch should have a labor committee. It is a mistake to center party effort on the state and city federations of labor. They are of secondary importance. More emphasis should be laid on the development of labor committees in the national and international unions which determine the policy of the A. F. of L. Of the 25,305 votes allotted at the San Francisco convention of the A. F. of L., 24,906 were cast by national and international unions. The rest were allotted to state federations and central bodies.

Local committees will work under the direction of the National Labor Committee. They will cut through city and state lines. It will be the duty of the National Labor Committee to coordinate the work of the socialist committees in the unions with the work of the various city and state bodies.

To the extent the party makes the policies here outlined effective in every day affairs of the working class the strength and the influence of the party will grow.

The National Labor Committee of the party should devise ways of popularizing the labor activities of our comrades in order to keep all party members informed and so that all may learn from the experiences of each.

Socialists and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

THEODOR DAN
(Translated by Al Meyer)

I.

CLASS dictatorship refers to a state of society in which a given class, utilizing the machinery of the state for the protection of its fundamental interests, dominates all of public life, both materially and spiritually, fashioning it to its will. The power of such a class lies not in its political form but in its economy, which is determined by the stage of development of its productive forces.

Nevertheless, the ruling class constantly strives to change the political form of the state in order to make it the most suitable instrument possible, under given historical conditions, for strengthening and consolidating its power. Under varying circumstances, and at different times in history the dictatorship of a class can express itself in different political forms. For instance, the constitutional monarchies of England and Belgium, as well as the democratic republics of France, the United States or Switzerland, are the political forms of the domination of the capitalist bourgeoisie.

But more specifically, class dictatorship connotes definite political forms which, historically, have come into existence from the extraordinary sharpening of the class struggle in the course of revolutions and counter-revolutions. These political forms invest in an insignificant minority—even eventually in a single person—an unlimited power, which by its very nature, violent and terroristic, is exercised not only over society at large but over the class to which this minority is socially bound, the fundamental interest of which it purports to defend. And it is precisely in this sense, in these days of bolshevism and fascism, that the expression class dictatorship is most frequently used.

The confusion in terminology, because of the broad meaning of the concept "class dictatorship", has given rise to the opinion on the part of certain comrades (Friedrich Adler, for example) that it would be advantageous to use the expression "dictatorship of the proletariat" only in the sense of the bolshevik dictatorship, and to renounce its use in the sense in which it was used originally.

To do so, however, would but inevitably provoke new misunderstandings. For the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is indissolubly bound up with a number of ideas that are extremely important

for a comprehension of the dynamics of the proletarian revolution and, consequently, with the policy of socialist parties. Especially is this important since the revisionist controversy at the beginning of the century. A disavowal of the dictatorship of the proletariat is tantamount to an avowal of the concept of the automatic transition of democratic society into socialism and to a negation of the revolutionary role of force in the future course of the class struggle. Revisionism also fostered the belief that national and democratic institutions are above the interests of particular classes ; that modern democracy is, historically, a victory of the working class, which utilizes it to solidify its position in the womb of capitalist society ; and that democracy is to be the political form of its class rule. But the fact remains that democratic policy does not mitigate the contradictions of classes within capitalist society, nor does it eliminate the necessity for extra-parliamentary methods. Present-day experience clearly demonstrates this. For at the very moment when democracy will threaten to become a weapon of the working class to destroy the foundations of the capitalist system, rather than a mere instrument of reform within capitalism, the ruling class will repudiate democracy and proclaim violence as the order of the day. There is no reason to believe that the bourgeoisie will fail to use every one of its material and spiritual resources if, under the rules of democracy, the working class should obtain a parliamentary majority and political power.

It is precisely to combat these illusory, reformist conceptions of the dynamics of the social revolution that the idea of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" must be maintained. And that is why the program of the Russian Social Democratic Party written by Plekhanov and unanimously adopted, while the party was still united, at the London congress of the party in 1903, employed the concept in its original meaning. By specifically using the expression the "dictatorship of the proletariat", the party guarded itself from the attempts of the revisionists to discredit the idea by interpreting it in the Jacobin sense of a terrorist dictatorship of a minority.

Its program further defined, exactly, what was meant by the expression. Affirming, "The social revolution of the proletariat will abolish the division of society into classes and thereby liberate all oppressed humanity, in that it will prepare the way for the end of all types of exploitation of one part of society by another," the program declared, "The 'dictatorship of the proletariat'—that is, the establishment of a political power of the proletariat adequate to overcome any possible resistance of the exploiting class—will be the necessary step in this social revolution."

Today the program of the Russian Social Democratic Party still rests on the basis of such a dictatorship of the proletariat, and

on this point it is in absolute agreement with the view-point of Marx and Engels. Without doubt, Marx and Engels, in their early years, regarded the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in a Jacobin light; that is, as a capture of power by a proletarian minority aware of its revolutionary mission and relying upon a formless social upheaval on the part of the proletarian masses. But as early as 1845-6 (*Die Deutsche Ideologie*) Marx and Engels were distinctly conscious that a historically-valid social revolution of the proletariat presupposes a high development of capitalism and a proletariat mature socially, politically, and culturally. And thus it was, even then, that they regarded the Jacobin character of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as evidence of the lack of the historical maturity of the social factors, and of the proletariat itself, for the accomplishment of a socialist revolution.

On the eve of the revolution of 1848, therefore, Marx wrote in his polemic against Heinzen (*Die Moralisierende Kritik*) that even if the proletariat in this revolution succeeded in destroying the political rule of the bourgeoisie, its victory could only *be a moment in the bourgeois revolution itself.* Furthermore, Marx insisted, he would favor the victory of the bourgeoisie, for he regarded the situation comparable to that in France in 1794. And this, he argued, must always be the case until the material conditions develop that will make imperative the abolition of the capitalist method of production and the final overthrow of the political domination of the bourgeoisie.

In the subsequent development of their doctrine * Marx and Engels rejected, in every way, the remaining vestiges of the Jacobin tradition, and in 1895 Engels formulated their definitive views upon the social revolution of the proletariat in his introduction to the *Class Struggles in France.*

"The time of *coups d'etat,* of revolutions made by small class-conscious minorities at the head of unenlightened masses, has passed. When it is a question of a complete transformation of a social organization, the masses themselves must be in it and must understand what is involved and why they must intervene". "That is what fifty years of history has taught us," Engels declared. And in this preface Engels repeatedly brands as illusory Marx and his early Jacobin ideas. To present now the views of the young Marx as "true" Marxism is a distortion of the real doctrine of the author of *Das Kapital.*

Unlike those revolutions which usher in a new class of exploiters and in which the working class plays merely the role of an elementary physical force, the proletarian revolution, having as its

* *"The Communist Manifesto", "Class Struggles in France", "The 18th Brumaire," "The Civil War in France."*

goal the abolition of all classes and of exploitation itself, can only be a revolution in which the proletariat appears as its conscious creator. The proletariat does not set itself up against the majority of the people but it becomes the center of the hopes and aspirations of the working masses for whom capitalist domination has become unbearable, and who see in the proletariat their liberator.

Thus the socialist revolution does not suppress democracy. On the contrary, it is possible only on a democratic basis. The *Communist Manifesto* emphasizes the conquest of political democracy and of universal suffrage as the first task and the first step in a proletarian revolution. Marx recognized the proletarian character of the Paris Commune ; for it had as a foundation an unlimited democracy, all the prerogatives of power being given to it by universal suffrage. The insistance upon political democracy, and especially the democratic republic, is found as an uninterrupted guide-line through all the statements by Marx and Engels on social revolution and the "dictatorship of the proletariat", the latter being considered a period of transition between the overthrow of the political rule of the capitalist bourgeoisie and the final establishment of a socialist, planned economy and a classless society. Martov is therefore entirely right when in his essay, *Marx and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat,* he defines the "dictatorship of the proletariat" according to Marx as "The concentration in the state of a force capable of imposing, despite the resistance of an economically powerful minority, the conscious will of the majority."

Similarly, Rosa Luxemburg is right when in her criticism of bolshevik terrorism * she insists that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" implies the manner in which democracy is employed and not its suppression," and that "this dictatorship ought to be the function of a class and not of a small minority acting in the name of the class."

If a proletarian dictatorship is to overcome the resistance of an economically-powerful minority, it is self-evident that it must use against this minority not only all the ordinary means of state authority (police, the courts and in case of civil war, arms), which this minority today uses against the working class majority, but also extraordinary means, as for example the denial to this seditious minority for a longer or shorter period of certain civil rights, including the right to vote. The necessity of such extraordinary measures is always a symptom of the danger with which the proletarian revolution is confronted.

Martov further states that the disfranchisement of the bourgeoisie, of all the people living on incomes, of all those who exploit labor and even of all those who practice a liberal profession, is not in itself

* Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution.*

anti-democratic: in Belgium and in France democracy does not cease to exist because these countries refuse the right of suffrage to women. But the state is fundamentally anti-democratic when "the principles of democracy are suppressed in the relations of those citizens who find themselves at the core of the social stratum which is declared to be the source of the state's power."

Thus at the moment democracy is taken away from the proletariat itself, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the Marxian sense ceases to be a dictatorship of a class, executing the will of the majority of the workers within the framework of a political democracy. Such a dictatorship degenerates into a Jacobin dictatorship of an "active minority" (Trotsky), which not only seeks to impose its will violently upon the overthrown ruling classes, but also upon its own class; and it indicates not only the historic immaturity of social conditions but also of the working class itself.

This "conscious minority" strives to triumph through violence arising out of this immaturity. As its dictatorship succeeds in forcibly systematizing violence in the extreme form of terror, it becomes a terrorist dictatorship more and more remote from the class from which it sprang and over which it set itself. In the end it evolves into an elect and privileged class.

Marx and Engels never attributed a creative role to violence for the establishment of new social relationships. They only accepted it as a midwife to facilitate the birth of those new relationships which have already become ripe in the womb of an old society. They didn't even consider the Jacobin dictatorship in France as an effort of bourgeois democracy to overstep the bounds historically assigned to it; on the contrary, they considered it as a vestige of the feudal order which had survived and was going to die, a vestige which was blocking the free development of the revolution. It is therefore in a strictly Marxist spirit that Martov defined the role of proletarian violence in the resolution he drew up in April 1922, which was adopted by the congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party as the foundation of its policy. With its goal the social liberation of all the exploited and oppressed, the "dictatorship of the proletariat", Martov wrote, is directed solely against the parasitical social groups that exploit the masses by virtue of their control of that great monopoly, the means of production. It is the violence organized by the state against this minority in the measure that it strives to resist the social revolution. The degree and the nature of this violence is determined entirely by the force and the energy of the resistance. Never, according to its very nature, can this class dictatorship of the proletariat be directed against other strata of the working masses, whose active and voluntary collaboration is necessary in the process of the transformation of the economic forms, by the proletariat, in

line with the further development of productive forces. To these social strata belong the non-proletarian producers of the city and farm, some intellectual workers, and the technical personnel of our well-developed modern industries.

Because the socialist "dictatorship of the proletariat" is based upon the interests of the overwhelming majority of working masses and upon the growing recognition by these masses of their real interests, the socialist "dictatorship of the proletariat" consists not in violently imposing the will of the proletariat over the majority of the people, but in having the will of this majority organically recognized by the proletariat, which acts as the revolutionary vanguard of the masses.

Consequently the difference between modern socialism and communism is not the affirmation or the denial of the idea of the "dictatorship of the proletariat". The problem, in countries where capitalism is well advanced, is whether or not the terrorist, Jacobin dictatorship by a revolutionary minority of the working class,—contrary to Marxist doctrine,—can become in the period of transition the expression of the power of this class and the instrument of its social liberation.

In the case of Russia this basic problem becomes complicated by an additional problem: whether under the specific conditions in Russia such a Jacobin dictatorship,—contrary to Marxist doctrine, let us repeat,—is in a position to overcome the immaturity of the social conditions and of the proletariat itself by means of terror, and thus "build socialism" in a backward country where all historic presuppositions for a proletarian revolution are still lacking. These premises were clearly formulated by Marx and Engels in their controversy with all the other tendencies of socialist and proletarian thought as far back as 1845 (*Die Deutsche Ideologie*).

II.

Bolshevism was born at the beginning of this century in the bosom of the Russian Social Democratic Party, as one of the tendencies that arose in the discussion of questions concerning the organization of the party. Its principles merely reflected the real conditions of the illegal revolutionary work in czarist Russia. These conditions called for the formation of groups of determined individuals, chiefly intellectuals from the bourgeoisie or the middle and lower nobility, for whom the revolution became a profession. Only a small number of advanced workers were able to become part of these intellectual groups. Here, moreover, they were completely out of the picture. The overwhelming majority of the working class itself, deprived of all political education and of all possibility of organization, was socially and culturally limited by the conditions that prevailed in the impoverished and barbarous Russian villages. The whole force

of the workers' movement, which was impetuously blazing a trail for the proletariat, was spent in the illegal cells of the professional revolutionists. The working-class masses took an active part in this movement, but only as an elementary physical force which struggled heroically for the immediate demands of the time, and which more and more began to defy the aristocracy and the entire czarist regime. All this it did without being in a position correctly to analyze the historic situation or the possibilities and final aims of the revolution which it was ushering in and of which it was the driving force.

In 1902 Lenin gave voice to this state of affairs in his famous pamphlet, *What is to be Done?,* in which he formulated the theory according to which the working class movement, limited to its own strength, could never get beyond a trade union consciousness and the idea of a struggle for the improvement of its position within the framework of the capitalist mode of production. Class-consciousness, he insisted, can only be instilled into the working class movement from without by people who have arrived theoretically at the idea of the inevitability of socialism; that is to say, by the socialist intelligentzia.

The creators and the guardians of this socialist consciousness, the advocates of a revolutionary socialist policy, were thus the professional revolutionists and not the working class itself *en masse.* This theory, which so evidently contradicts the doctrine of Marx, has become the foundation of the whole bolshevik doctrine (Leninism), especially in its bearing on organization. The controversy over Article 1 of the by-laws at the congress of 1903 arose over this very point. It ended in the split of our party into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, after which Lenin, as opposed to Martov, wished to reserve membership in the party to professional revolutionists. Lenin formulated the aphorism that the task of the party was "secretly to organize groups more or less limited to revolutionary leaders, and to draw into the movement the greatest possible number of the masses."

But this very theory compels them on every occasion to "purify" the "hesitant elements" within the ranks of the professional revolutionists themselves, and "to assure the predominance of the most class-conscious over the less class-conscious"; and also to establish over the whole organization the dictatorial power of the "superconscious" leader, for the maximum of class-consciousness (among the leaders) must be combined with an "unquestioning obedience" (on the part of the led). That is precisely what was meant by "the iron discipline of the proletariat" as opposed to "the opportunism in organization" of the intellectuals. This fundamental principle of party control "from above" still holds true today in all the bolshevik parties. The whole organization of the bolshevik state has been built

according to this so-called principle of "democratic centralism".

Although in the opinion of Engels "the time for revolutions, made by small class-conscious minorities at the head of unenlightened masses", was over for the more advanced countries as early as the end of the nineteenth century, it had not yet passed for backward countries like Russia even in the first quarter of the twentieth century. At the very origin of bolshevism Paul Axelrod, Martov, and Rosa Luxemburg showed that in essence, Lenin's ideas of organization were based on his Jacobin conceptions of revolutionary development and of dictatorship. Lenin himself was forced to admit this when, in his pamphlet, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward,* he answered his critics: "A Jacobin devoted to the working class—that is precisely the social democratic revolutionist". (That was what the bolsheviks called themselves at that time!) Like the young Marx, moreover, Lenin understood that a Jacobin dictatorship of the proletariat "can only be a moment in the bourgeois revolution itself". His rallying cry was not, therefore, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" but "dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasants". This dictatorship, according to him, had one sole purpose: the most radical completion of the bourgeois revolution. Not only did he reject any idea of broadening this dictatorship in the direction of socialism, but he fought against conceptions like "workers' dictatorship" and "permanent revolution" (Parvus and Trotsky), which seemed to him to evoke, by their very nature, the idea of the automatic transition from a bourgeois revolution to a socialist revolution in Russia.

Lenin persisted in this attitude during the war. It was only little by little that the utopianism, liberated by the all-powerful dictatorship, together with the pressing need to centralize economic life (which in the cities was almost completely destroyed by the revolutionary and anarchistic convulsions; and in the country by the sabotage of the entrepreneurs, the small business men, the employers, the professional men; and by the civil war and the war of intervention), led him to inscribe on the banners of the dictatorship the word "communist" and to qualify the revolution itself as "socialist". But even then the justification for this substitution was not the correlation of class forces in Russia, but the hope for a speedy world social revolution. And it was only after realization that the world-wide revolution was being delayed too long, that the dictatorship, bound by its spiritual traditions, found itself forced after the death of Lenin to proclaim the slogan of "the building of socialism in a single country". As once Leninism displaced Marxism, so today Stalinism is displacing Leninism.

It is sufficient to read attentively the recent *History of the Russian Revolution* by Trotsky to note how the bolshevik dictatorship from its very beginning assumed a Jacobin character; like-

wise how Lenin was forced to carry out his plans behind the back of the soviets for which he publicly demanded "all power", behind the back of the party which he declared incarnated the proletarian spirit of the class struggle, and even behind the back of the Central Committee of which he was the head. And finally one notices how the plot of the "class-conscious minority" depended upon the "uprising of the ignorant masses" in order to lead the revolution in the direction that the "professional revolutionists" wanted it to proceed.

Trotsky sees in this only the problems of revolutionary technique, only the "art of insurrection". In reality his book even proves that this technique is determined by the social, political and cultural behavior of those forces upon which the bolsheviks depended; forces which not only determined the Jacobinism of the bolshevik dictatorship but also its subsequent trials and tribulations. For it was a question, above all, of the *soldiers*—that is to say the *sons of the peasants* militaristically organized and armed,—and it was only by adapting itself to them and depending upon them that this "active proletarian minority" was able to accomplish its audacious plans. From the very inception of the dictatorship, the petty-bourgeois peasantry appeared as the decisive force in the Russian revolution and it left its imprint on the course of events.

There is no doubt that the Jacobin dictatorship of bolshevism has achieved a feat not less important than its French prototype. With a remarkable vigor it wiped out all vestiges of the czaristic feudal order and completed the agrarian revolution. In the civil war, it defeated the force of the restoration and the white counter-revolution, resisted the imperialistic intervention, and freed the nationalities, at the very time when it was re-establishing the unity of the state, which was threatening to distintegrate. Forced by the resistance of the peasants, the general strike of the workers of Petrograd in 1921 and the revolt of Kronstadt, the dictatorship threw overboard the utopian ideas of "war-time communism", and inaugurated the New Economic Policy that made possible the re-establishment of the productive forces of the country, almost wiped out by the civil and the external war, by the intervention and the blockade, and by the devastation of the revolution as well as the utopian experiments. The state enterprises were transformed into enterprises based upon the capitalistic principles of exploitation for profit. The freedom of bourgeois economy was given back not only to the peasant "exploiters" and to trade, but also in part to industrial production. Today, in the period of the "general line", upon which the dictatorship was forced to proceed when the dominance of the bourgeois elements, especially in villages, became too dangerous, the dictatorship has been forced to let up on its terrific and senseless tempo and use of extreme violence, and has been forced to undertake the solution of the his-

torically-necessary problems of the industrialization of the country and the technical problems of its backward rural economy.

The great historic conquests of the revolution under the leadership of the bolshevik dictatorship are not denied by our party.* On the contrary, we hold up these victories to all those who say that the bolshevik dictatorship is a counter-revolution or who put it on the same level with fascism. But at the same time we insist that these victories, and with them industrial state capitalism and agricultural collectivization, all fundamentally operate within the framework of a bourgeois revolution, and that inversely, the bolshevik dictatorship is checked each time it strives to extend the revolution beyond its framework. This check is not the result of an economic automatism —non-existent—in social evolution. Its cause is the resistance of lively social forces, above all the peasantry, which, in Russia, forms the fundamental bourgeois class and which is constantly producing the bourgeois social relationships and conditions.

The problem of the revolution—as well as that of counter-revolution—is not purely economic. It is above all the problem of the class struggle. That is what all those who blindly hate bolshevism must admit, and likewise those who admire it. And with this in mind it becomes immediately clear that the more the dictatorship tries to go beyond its historic tasks, the more it becomes a direct menace to the cause of the revolution, to the working class, and to socialism, which it claims to champion. In view of the relationship of the social forces in Russia, the bolshevik dictatorship of the "class-conscious minority" was a historically-inevitable step on the road to the Russian revolution. Every rule works both ways and so social evolution operates in the reverse; it is dialectic. Everything has a bright and dark side; what is beneficial today becomes a plague tomorrow, and the life force of today becomes tomorrow a dead weight that stifles every living thing and impedes social evolution. The bolshevik dictatorship eradicated the czarist order down to its very roots, and put down the civil war and the counter-revolution. But already in the course of this historically-necessary and (from a revolutionary point of view) fruitful work, it destroyed, step-by-step, all appearances of liberty not only for the overthrown exploiting classes but also for the masses of workers, to whom the revolution was to have given precisely this liberty. The political parties of the working class were stifled; the unions, free organs of the proletarian struggle, were transformed into an organization, bureaucratic and obligatory.

All this was done in the interest of state production. The soviets, whose superiority over parliaments consists, according to their protagonists, in their expression of "the masses' will of today and not of yesterday", have been replaced by a "soviet power"; that is to say,

* The Russian Social Democratic Party.

an unlimited power which is connected only remotely and historically with the soviets but which is, in reality, completely independent of the soviets and even in its relations with them occupies a dominant position. And what is worse, the civil war and the war of intervention caused the rise of bureaucratic organization of the police and army, strongly centralized in all of its ramifications, whose interests differ more and more from the interests of the working masses. It constitutes a "set-up" which is erected above the masses and which no longer imposes its will on them by propaganda, as was the case at the dawn of the revolution, but by state coercion and bloody terror.

Since the extinction of the old order, which was the historic task under Russian conditions of the Jacobin dictatorship, and since with the initiation of the New Economic Policy the dictatorship passed on to the positive work of construction, it has progressively degenerated. The necessity and the historic justification of a dictatorial power has disappeared. The dictatorship, however, remained and the means of coercion concentrated in its hands gave it the power of maintaining a state which had historically outlived its purpose. Because of this fact alone, the carrying out of the positive tasks were impeded by needless expenses, unforeseen and ever-mounting, which made these tasks more difficult. Stupid expenditures, resulting from the unlimited power of a bureaucracy free from all public control, had repercussions in the whole economic and political life of Russia. It provoked the growing discontent of the masses, which had made the revolution and which saw themselves now frustrated by it. The resistance of the masses forced the dictatorship —still in the interest of its preservation—to liquidate the N. E. P. and to have recourse to a policy of open violence according to the so-called "general line". But this about-face only strengthened the resistance of the masses. In spite of the undeniable success of industrial construction, the dictatorship did not succeed in entirely realizing the Five-Year Plan. And its violent completion caused the misery and hunger of the years of "war-time communism" to reappear. At this moment the indications are numerous that this stage of the bolshevik dictatorship is likewise drawing to an end. The exploitation of the collectives themselves, imposed upon the peasantry, becomes the rallying point of its resistance; discontent takes hold of the starved working masses, who are in their overwhelming majority closely confined to their villages. Just as in 1922, a profound uneasiness is again perceptible within the army and the navy; and up in the very top ranks of the dictatorship the internal struggle rages again. These masses of hungry and desperate peasants and workers without any organization, prisoners of the terror, are incapable of a new revolution. So much the more is it necessary to fear lest their passive discontent become the foundation upon which a Bonapartist *coup d'etat* will resolvé the contradictions of the Jacobin dictatorship which has outlived its usefullness. And

it has already often happened in history. In the measure that a Jacobin dictatorship fulfills its revolutionary tasks its very existence is an invitation to counter-revolution.

III.

The bolshevik dictatorship is not a socialist dictatorship of the working class; it is, however, a revolutionary dictatorship degenerating, more and more, into a dictatorship of a new privileged stratum. These considerations determine the position of our party, the Russian Social Democratic Party, with reference to it,—our party which is and which must remain a socialist working-class party.

Such a party as ours must, even in the revolution, preserve its specific program and can neither permit the working-class movement to be absorbed by the general movement of a bourgeois revolution, nor can it capitulate before a Jacobin dictatorship. We have supported and we still support this dictatorship wherever it appears as the mainstay of revolutionary tasks. We have defended and we still defend its real conquests in the revolution, whether in the field of economics, of culture, of national autonomy. We have fought and still fight all varieties of counter-revolution; at the moment of its greatest peril, during the civil war, we even decided to mobilize our adherents and to incorporate them into the ranks of the red army. We have defended and still defend the Russian revolution against all attempts of coercion of the capitalist bourgeoisie, direct or indirect, by armed intervention, by commercial blockades, or by the refusal of recognition of this revolutionary government. From the very first days of the October revolution, we have expressed our willingness to form direct alliance even with the revolution in its bolshevik form. For so long—and Martov insisted upon this point in his last writing—as the socialist proletariat could retain the possibility of preserving its own character and be able to act and to have influence upon the revolution to free it from utopianism and from reactionary tendencies, that is to say, as long as democracy was the foundation of this alliance within, at least, the overwhelming peasant and proletarian majority, which had accomplished the revolution, the dictatorship would by degrees abandon its Jacobin tendencies.

In the measure that the dictatorship degenerated the struggle to prevent the counter-revolution was considered the most important feature in the policy of the party. The only effective way of preventing the counter-revolution is, naturally, the reconciliation of the great masses with the revolution which they made but from which they have turned away because of the operation of the dictatorial policy. The peasant problem appears, from this point of view, to be fundamental. The peasant in Russia, like the peasant all over the world, is a petty bourgeois who wishes above all the economic liberty

of the petty bourgeois. In order that he may not come to expect this liberty from the victory of a counter-revolution, he must obtain it from the revolution, from the working class in whose name the revolution was fought. Since it is now being given the decisive role, the Russian peasantry will win this liberty sooner or later. This liberty does not presuppose the abandonment of state-controlled industries; it presupposes above all things the abandonment of the stupid tempo of industrialization, which is imposed only because of the instinct of preservation within the dictatorship, and which can only be based upon the pillage of the peasantry. Nor does this imply the general return to the petty exploitation of the individual; it demands, however, the abandonment of collectivization by force, the guarantee of the right of each peasant individually to cultivate his field, the transformation of the obligatory *kolhoz* (collective farm) into a free peasant cooperative, in the midst of which the peasant will be able, in Russia as in the entire world, to work according to so-called bourgeois principles. In order, however, that the proletariat may be able to lend its support in reconciling the peasantry to the revolution and in re-establishing the alliance between the peasant and the proletariat, and in order that it may become not only the ally but also the political guide of the peasantry, the proletariat itself must be reconciled with the revolution. Not only must its material position be raised to a level that corresponds to the hopes it had in the revolution but, what is more, its political liberty, stifled by oppression and terror, must be restored.

The liberty of workers' organizations is not only necessary to safeguard the victories and interests of the proletariat in the bourgeois society which is now being born of the revolution, but also it becomes the prerequisite for the re-establishment of its revolutionary alliance with the peasantry. The replacement of the terrorist dictatorship by a democratic state which guarantees political rights, in order that the government be subjected to public control and be the servant rather than absolute master of society, becomes the historically-necessary prerequisite to *safeguard the revolution and to prevent the threatening counter-revolution.*

Under the conditions described, the Russian Social Democratic Party cannot expect a voluntary about-face on the part of the dictators, or a violent overthrow of the dictatorship. Considering the plight of the masses that we have described, such an overthrow would become not the beginning of a democratic organization of the state but the point of departure for the worst counter-revolution, even though this counter-revolution would at the beginning disguise itself under the cover of a quasi-democratic role, as was the case during the civil war. That is why the Russian Social Democratic Party is the irreconcilable enemy, not only of all terrorist plots and attempts, but

also of all tactics based on the preparation, encouragement, or exploitation of the revolt. The organization of all the class-conscious elements of the proletariat, communists included, with the view of compelling the government, born of the revolution, to change its policy in the direction already indicated, is for our party the only means for the democratization of the regime and the consequent disappearance of the Jacobin dictatorship which has served its purpose.

But what is the socialist view of the Russian revolution? Bourgeois revolutions take place at certain times and under different circumstances, each in a different manner, though they have the same content. They bring to the foreground different social forces, they produce different results and they present different possibilities. The course and the outcome of the Russian revolution could not help being influenced by the circumstance that this revolution broke out at the dividing line of two social epochs. When capitalism in the most advanced countries was creaking in all its joints; when its bankruptcy paved the way toward a state and collective economy; when the bourgeoisie threw overboard all its ideals, and was sinking spiritually; when the proletariat became the only truly revolutionary class, the world situation made it inevitable that the ideology of the Russian revolutionary movement should be infused, at its birth, with socialism. For the same reason, as soon as the great industries were introduced in Russia, the workers became the principal revolutionary force. It is the world situation which made it inevitable, as Martov wrote in his work already quoted, that the bourgeois revolution in Russia was accomplished as a revolution of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasants and, what is more, that it was led by a proletarian party, and was greatly influenced by the utopianism of a backward proletariat. Thus it was that these world conditions determined, to a great extent, the economic and social results of the mighty revolutionary upheaval.

On one condition these results might have become the premises for an accelerated evolution of backward Russia towards socialism, but only on one condition: that socialism prevail in the great battle between socialism and capitalism, in the more advanced countries. And inversely, all the premises of a state and collective economy in Russia will have to pass through a retrogressive evolution, if capitalism succeeds in conquering the working classes in the more advanced countries and re-establishes its iron rule.

Nothing is more fatal than to lull the working class with the story of the "miracle of the Orient", to raise the hope that the victory of socialism in backward Russia would assure its victory in the more advanced Occident. It is not Russian socialism which can save the working class from defeat in the more advanced countries. On the contrary, it is only by the success of its own struggle that the working class can save the Russian revolution and itself from the dangers of

a counter-revolution. And it is only the victory of socialism in the Occident which can also assure an accelerated socialized evolution in Russia. The degeneracy of the bolshevik dictatorship which we have described diminishes, however, the chances of this proletarian victory, not only because it provokes the anti-revolutionary danger but also because it encourages the division of the international proletariat, while its unity and the concentration of all its forces against the common enemy,—the capitalist bourgeoisie,—are the necessary conditions of its victory, of the triumph of universal socialism.

That is why the Russian Social Democratic Party considers its struggle for the welfare of the Russian revolution as both its national and its international duty to the proletariat. Whatever the fate of the Russian revolution may be in the near future, the Russian Social Democracy carries on its fight with the firm conviction that the final victory is reserved for itself and that the Russian working class will also place itself under the banner of the international socialist democracy and will lead the struggle for its liberation. For, as concerns the Russian workers' movement, Marx was right and not Lenin.

A WORD ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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The Negro's Stake in Socialism

MARGARET I. LAMONT

THE Socialist Party program in respect to the Negro is brief and simple on its positive side. The platform of the party in campaigns usually calls for full economic, political and educational rights for the Negro, enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, and anti-lynching legislation. The party is not militant and aggressive in its policy in regard to Negroes, partly because it is not now militant or aggressive as a party, and partly because the line laid down by Debs on the race issue has not been altered. When Debs was asked whether the Socialist Party would make a special appeal to the Negro and would have a special program for him, the great leader replied that the Socialist Party would act in the interests of all workers, white and black alike, and that a particularized appeal to Negroes would not, therefore, be in keeping with party principles. As a result of the development of this noble, but perhaps inadequate, party line, the main emphasis of socialists in practical activity among Negroes has been upon a somewhat passive insistence that trade union discrimination against them be removed. It is only recently that the struggle against trade union discrimination has taken on a more active, militant aspect.

Ernest Doerfler, in the "American Socialist Quarterly", expressed the current militant viewpoint on the question:

"The Socialist Party must therefore take the lead in agitating for industrial unions into which the Negro will be freely admitted. Craft unionism with its trade autonomy and isolation will necessarily keep the Negroes separated in occupational groups into which they have been forced by economic circumstances. It is the task of industrial unions to unite the workers and align them solidly against the master class. Political freedom can only come for the Negro when he has achieved industrial equality through the industrial unions. Socialists must by dint of hard educational work and

example convince the American labor movement that the struggle between white and black workers is suicidal, and that in resisting the economic and social growth of the Negro the unions obstruct their own interests." It has often been pointed out that in trade unions where socialists have had influence, such as the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union, there has been a more sincere and receptive policy toward Negroes than is true in the field of organized labor in general. In new unions in which socialists have played a part, such as the Building Service Employees Union, Negroes have been admitted without question and given responsibility. This also holds true on the agricultural front, in the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, which, like the communist-controlled Share-croppers' Union of Alabama, is organizing white and Negro workers together in the face of grave terror.

Thus the record of socialist activity in the trade unions in respect to racial discrimination can be considered modestly creditable. It must be recognized, however, that many individual socialists in the American Federation of Labor have remained passive or criminally indifferent in the face of open or veiled discrimination against Negroes. Such passivity or indifference cannot be pardoned or justified. Furthermore, in view of the extent and acute nature of discrimination in the A. F. of L., the militant socialist must raise the question of whether the party's agitation on this issue has been adequate to the situation. An honest answer must be in the negative.

What, exactly, is the situation in the unions in regard to Negroes? A study prepared under the direction of Labor Research gives the following information:

"There are at least 26 national unions, including the railway brotherhoods, who by their constitutions or rituals exclude Negroes from membership. Other unions exclude Negroes in practice. Still others, which claim they do not discriminate against Negroes, restrict them to Jim Crow locals and discriminate against them in the distribution of jobs and union offices. Many indirect but equally vicious methods are used by the labor bureaucrats to exclude Negroes. The Plumbers and

Steamfitters Union, for instance, excludes Negroes by means of the license law, forcing all applicants to pass a municipal examination before an examining board which often grants no licenses to Negroes. In other cases . . . (there are) such restrictive conditions for Negro membership that the black worker is discouraged from the start. Where the Negro is permitted to join the union he is Jim-Crowed into separate locals or 'auxiliary' locals and discriminated against on all sides by the white labor leaders, as in the case of the International Longshoremen's Association. . . . So consciously and persistently have the white officials turned the Negro away from the unions that the total Negro membership in all A. F. of L. unions is not more than 55,000 and probably less than 50,000." Spero and Harris, in the "Black Worker", have told in more detail about indirect discrimination against Negroes, not only by license requirements for plumbers, but for locomotive firemen, as in Georgia, and for barbers in many states. The hard conditions laid down for Negro membership in some unions, such as the motion picture operators' union, "show both race prejudice and the desire of white unionists to confine Negro competition within certain limits." The constitution of the International Brotherhood of Blacksmiths, Drop Forgers and Helpers contains restrictions upon the right of Negro helpers to transfer to anything except "another auxiliary local composed of colored members", upon their promotion to the positions of blacksmiths or helper apprentices, upon their admission to shops where white helpers are employed, and upon their right to have their own representatives. Race consciousness is so accentuated by these measures that "the union finds it difficult to organize Negroes when strikes, industrial expansion, or the lowering of old skill requirements by technological changes make their employment possible and their organization, even though difficult, a matter of the union's self-protection." It is clear that the policy of racial discrimination in the unions has serious long-run disadvantages not only for the Negroes who suffer directly and bitterly from it, but for white labor which consents to exclusion and restriction on racial lines.

It will be recalled that the total Negro population of the country is about 12,000,000, and the number of Negroes employed in the basic industries in normal times is estimated at more than 2,000,000. The small number of Negroes in the trade unions is at once a reflection of discrimination in racial terms, and of discrimination by the craft aristocracy against unskilled labor in general. In the "Black Worker" we read: "If the spirit of 'job control', 'craft pride', and fear of competition of the newcomers caused the exclusion of white labor from the trade unions, should one expect it to operate differently where Negro workers are concerned? . . . In the first place the Negro has been almost entirely engaged in the unskilled and agricultural occupations. The workers in these occupations, irrespective of race, receive scant attention from craft unionism. Because it is employed in so-called unorganizable occupations, the major proportion of Negro labor, like the white, is . . . excluded. In the second place, the Negro was customarily believed to be unfitted by racial temperament for skilled mechanical work. . . . By refusing to accept apprentices from a class of workers which social tradition has stamped as inferior, or by withholding membership in the union from reputed craftsmen of this class, the union accomplishes two things simultaneously. It protects its good name. It eliminates a whole class of future competitors. While race prejudice is a very fundamental fact in the exclusion of the Negro, the desire to restrict competition so as to safeguard job monopoly and to control wages is inextricably interwoven with it."

It is significant to note that in many of the discussions, bitter, emotional, and shot through with superstition and misconception concerning the Negro's physical and mental capacities, which have raged over the floor in union meetings and conventions, the objections to admitting Negroes to full membership in the unions have frequently reduced themselves to open fear of establishing social equality between Negroes and whites.

In the decade before 1900, the American Federation of Labor took a firm position against admitting unions that dis-

criminated against Negroes. But in 1900 President Gompers himself stated publicly that it was impossible to maintain this position any longer. An almost mortal blow was dealt the effort of certain elements within the trade-unions to forge solidarity of black and white workers. The A. F. of L., desperately trying to gather up its tattered garment of tolerance, evolved the policy of granting Federal charters, directly to colored workers; according to Article 12, Section 6, of the constitution, "Separate charters may be issued to central labor unions, local unions or federated labor unions, composed exclusively of colored workers where in the judgment of the Executive Council it appears advisable". This method of chartering local and federal labor unions had previously been used for the organization of white workers who were not eligible for craft unions, or where the number of workers was small. However, the white men organized in this way were almost invariably absorbed later by one of the sovereign craft unions. The Negro workers organized under Federal charters have almost invariably remained separate, and have thus found themselves in a relatively weak and ambiguous position in respect to bargaining power in the winning of demands from employers. This has been shown, for instance, in the case of the Negro Freight Handlers' Union and the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, which have labored under all the handicaps of isolation and weakness, due largely to lack of a clear relationship with and support from the main body of organized labor. Abram Harris comments on this aspect of the situation: ". . . the economic protection of these bodies must, in the nature of the circumstances, rest with the unions to whose racial proscription they owe their existence."

The American Federation of Labor has refused, time and time again, to be budged from its attitude of smugness and professed belief in accomplishment in regard to the organization of Negro workers. Even during the critical period of post-war migration of large numbers of southern Negroes into northern industry, the American Federation of Labor was not aware of or would not accept the challenge to break through the barriers of discrimination. The record of the

A. F. of L. on this issue is not encouraging to contemplate. The socialist who scans this record can have few good words to say for it. What, then, can the socialist offer the Negro who considers the party, observes the A. F. of L. and asks the socialist about the party's position on the Negro in the organized labor movement? The words of a Crosswaith, who tries to convince Negro labor how supremely fair two or three unions have been to the black worker, are not convincing. The statements of militant socialists on the race question are often sound as far as they go, but they frequently dangle in a vacuum, disassociated from the struggle for racial rights outside the organized labor movement. It is not enough to say that the Negro worker will get as much theoretical and practical attention from the party as the white worker, neither more nor less. This is unrealistic in view of the fact that the Negro worker is subject to a double exploitation, because of his economic weakness and because of his race. This truism needs to be emphasized in view of the tendency of some socialists to minimize the importance of the struggle for political and social rights for the Negro. Even Doerfler's statement that "Political freedom can only come for the Negro when he has achieved industrial equality through the industrial unions" carries the implication that there is not much use in fighting for Negro social and political rights before the industrial fight is won. It would be equally absurd to over-estimate the gains that can be made in terms of political and racial rights for the Negro within the framework of capitalism. It is probable that the concessions wrung from capitalism on the legal and political side, especially from southern capitalism, will be small; yet it is necessary to demand and fight for those concessions. Such meagre rights as an exploited racial minority may gain under capitalism will slowly add to the strength and confidence of the exploited group; while the denial of basic rights, brought into sharper relief by struggle, will increase the sense of solidarity within the particular group and with other exploited groups. A militant socialist will make no reservations about standing for full political, legal, and social, as well as economic rights for the Negro here and now, although he will also say

clearly that these fundamental human rights will not and cannot be achieved, except to an insignificant degree, under the present economic system.

While he participates in the struggle for the rights of the Negro before the law and under the constitution, seeing an inch painfully gained here and there, the militant socialist is also involved in the essential job of educating white workers to overcome their unreasoning, bourgeois-fostered prejudices against the Negro; he is trying to build up the trust of Negro and white workers in each other through common action in meetings, demonstrations, strikes, where the results of solidarity will be unmistakable even to politically naive workers. Within and outside of the A. F. of L. the militant socialist calls for the industrial organization of the unorganized workers, of the unskilled whose ranks include millions of Negroes, not only in the basic industries, but in agriculture and domestic service. In newly organized fields, militant socialists will press for the admission to the A. F. of L. of Negro workers on absolutely equal terms with white workers. If this cannot immediately be achieved, then the newly organized workers, Negro and white, should retain an independent, unaffiliated status until such time as the A. F. of L. will come to terms. In the meantime an unrelenting pressure would be brought to bear upon the leadership of organized labor for admission. This is the position that must be taken as the realistic stand between the communist dual union pitfall,—"the organization of special trade unions for the Negro masses",—and the dangerously slow method of fighting discrimination inside the A. F. of L. while leaving the Negro workers outside untouched and unorganized. This last alternative carries the constant menace of disintegration of the Negro labor movement, and the loss of organized Negro labor opinion in times of crisis. The dual union policy of the Communist Party as it affected the Negro worker was formulated in the 1928 resolution of the Communist International on the Negro question, with directives for waging, at the same time, a "merciless struggle against the A. F. of L. bureaucracy . . . The creation of separate Negro unions should in no way weaken the struggle in the

old unions for the admission of Negroes on equal terms. . . ." This policy was unrealistic because it obviously cut the Negro unions off from any vital connection with the main body of organized labor in the United States. The directives were to wage a struggle on two separate fronts, and it was not clear how the communists were to be able to build up a trade union movement paralleling the A. F. of L. and at the same time build up sufficient strength within the A. F. of L. to attack reactionary leadership on various issues including race discrimination. The general lack of clarity in the communist trade union line at that time was reflected in the trade union policy with regard to Negro workers. Recently that line has been modified; the dual union policy is slowly being liquidated. It remains to be seen how this change will affect the communist position on the organization of Negro workers. It is almost certain that it will have a favorable effect upon the possibilities of a united front against racial discrimination.

Inside the American Federation of Labor the militant socialist, Negro or white, will bring constant pressure to bear upon the rank and file and through them upon the leadership of the union to which he belongs, for the removal of direct and indirect discrimination against Negroes, for the revision of those union constitutions which embody discrimination, for the withholding or revoking of charters from unions and union locals which practice discrimination against Negro workers. Along with this effort, fundamental education in the necessity for solidarity between white and Negro workers must be carried on, subtly and ingeniously in some unions, boldly in others. There must be no compromise on the part of militant socialists in the field of organized labor with regard to racial discrimination. To compromise on this issue is to betray millions of workers whose wills and energies and mass economic power must be fused to create a militant, inclusive labor movement.

The fight for industrial unionism, pressed ceaselessly wherever socialists have a voice in the ranks of organized labor, has the logic of events, of economic circumstances, of technological development on its side. It is in industrial

unionism that the chief hope of the Negro worker lies. When the jealously guarded sanctity of special crafts disappears, most of the false notions about lack of capacity in the Negro for skilled or semi-skilled work will also vanish. In the industrial union it becomes plain to the worker far more quickly than in the craft union that he has everything to gain by taking his stand with fellow workers of all races and of all degrees of skill, against the common enemy. It does not take long for this conviction of the need for solidarity to wipe out any antagonism that a white worker may have felt toward a Negro or a Mexican as a possible competitor for a job.

As we have indicated before, the Negro comrade in the Socialist Party will expect, and will have a right to expect, more in a program of militant action than union activity. It is not pleasant to have to say that socialists have often failed to press vigorously their demands for civil, legal, political and social rights for the Negro. Unfortunately it is true that they have not always been first upon the scene when these rights have been denied or violated. In many cases the failure of socialists to act quickly and decisively has been due to lack of apparatus through which to function, to weak organization in various localities, especially in the south, and to lack of money. However, this weakness can only partially excuse delay and timidity in participating in action to wrest such rights as may be had from a hostile capitalist legal, political and social machine. Socialists **must** fight for the rights of Negroes, Mexicans, Japanese, Jews and other minorities in any localities or situations where people of these racial groups are subjected to special discriminations. The struggle for rights withheld on grounds of race must go on as part and parcel of the struggle for the basic rights of all workers. Socialists must take an active and militant place in the campaign against lynching, against Jim-Crowing in its innumerable forms, against the flagrant discrimination in education, in the giving out of relief, and in the courts, and against depriving Negroes of the vote. They must be alert to recognize a situation that menaces the Negro, and give assistance and direction before it is too late. Where organizational apparatus through which

to function is lacking, it must be built up. Even a skeleton organization in the right place at the right time, even one miliant socialist in the right place at the right time, is better than none at all. Socialists must be constantly awake to the fact that the allegiance of Negroes in the future will be granted to that political group which shows itself most able to keep faith with the Negro workers in the rigorous conflicts of their day-to-day living.

The primary task of socialists, Negro and white alike, is to prepare the workers to take power and to use it once they have it. A militant Socialist Party calls the Negro to work toward this objective, in free and democratic comradeship within the party, in implacable opposition to the system of capitalist exploitation and oppression. With the main emphasis, in theory and in action, upon creating a revolutionary working-class, the racial issue will take its correct place in that process as a vital subsidiary question. The communist formulation of the question often appears to make activity among the Negroes an end-in-itself. When this happens, as the result of misdirected strategy, it carries the danger of exposing the Negro to increasingly bitter reactionary attacks. When the socialist is in the midst of a situation involving the racial issue, he will try to handle it in such a way that Negroes are not made the unwilling spearheads of revolution against a frontal attack by the forces of chauvinism and reaction. This determination to avoid serious strategical mistakes need not, however, blind the socialist to the valuable positive lessons he can learn from communist alertness in analyzing situations involving the racial issue, and from communist energy and doggedness in exposing racial discrimination and injustice wherever it lifts its head.

Militant socialists and communists must and can work out united front agreements and actions in situations where the race issue is part of the total complex, as in other situations where a divided working class will play into the hands of capitalism in its guise of rising fascism. In the south, where the radical movement, socialist as well as communist, is being driven partly underground, the united front is not only desir-

able but imperative. This does not mean a blanket united front which would publicly commit one party to positions taken by the other. It does not mean a general united front agreement depriving either party of the right to criticize the other. Such an agreement would not be possible at present. The socialists will, of course, retain their right to criticize the communist formulation of the Negro question in terms of a national minority with a definite territorial base; they will continue to point out that valid objections based on practical economic realities can be made to the theory of self-determination in the black belt, and that to set up self-determination as an immediate demand in daily struggle is a dubious policy; they will undoubtedly differ from the communists on many points of strategy. United fronts in the south will be particular agreements to cope with sharply defined situations where the economic factors are clear. The agreement between the Alabama Share Croppers' Union and the Arkansas Tenant Farmers' Union is a case in point.

Socialists who are earnestly trying to forge a realistic left-wing position on any question will find that it is not fruitful to attempt to demolish by invective and cheap sarcasm the positions reached by other left-wing groups. In judging the soundness of a militant socialist program in terms of the needs and rights of the Negro workers of the country, we shall get nowhere by dismissing with contempt the communist program for the Negro, nor by closing socialist discussion with deceptively simple formulas. If we must have a brief formula when elaboration is not possible, we shall say to the Negro comrade what we say to the white comrade: Your stake in socialism is your right to take the revolutionary road to security and justice under a workers' government in a system and society which you yourselves will build and control.

"Pie in the Sky"

A Study of Current Utopian Notions.

DAVID P. BERENBERG

AS capitalism sinks deeper into chaos we pass into a phase of utopianism. A generation nurtured on the capitalist assumptions does not easily surrender the belief that, somehow, the main body of the capitalist structure can be saved, if only this or that change is made to enable the economic machine to work again; or if only some scheme dear to its inventor and its disciples is adopted, which promises, if not heaven on earth, at least an earthly paradise, without in the least disturbing the pseudo-sacred assumptions of private property and of a class hierarchy.

There are utopias of many sorts. There is Dr. Townsend's fantastic dream of giving everyone over the age of sixty-five a monthly pension of two hundred dollars. Plans like this, and like Upton Sinclair's moribund "Epic", arise from economic ignorance and a fumbling desire to "do good". There is also the utopia that arises from a cynical understanding of the wide-spread distress and restlessness of these days, and that seeks to capitalize either for personal advancement, or for more sinister ends, the altogether natural desire for a change, for any change. Among these we may count the "Share the Wealth" plan, by means of which Huey Long hopes to rise to power.

There are personal utopias, class utopias, religious utopias (e. g. the communist-revivalist cult of Father Divine), utopias that visualize salvation by monetary inflation, and those that would destroy all money. All have this in common: that they are based on a misconception of historic and economic processes; that (in so far as they are not cynical frauds) they are the fruit of wishful thinking, with little or no reference to reality.

All utopias are based on the assumption that human

society may be re-molded at will. All that is needed to end poverty is a plan—and either the democratic will to execute the plan, or a dictator to impose it upon the masses. The complicated interaction of human factors, the binding effect of tradition and custom, the inner contradictions of the economic system which the utopians are trying to save, which, in fact, produce the evils of which they complain,—all these are swept aside with a grand gesture. It is so easy, and so popular, to assume for man the omnipotence of gods. Man can do anything to which he sets his mind.

Therein lies the fascination of modern utopianism. The old idols are broken. It is, perhaps, premature to say that the man of wealth will never again be set up as arbiter in human affairs. For the moment he is a discredited figure. To vast masses the legend of equality of opportunity, or even the lure of personal wealth, is less than the equally remote dream of economic security. If, in the midst of this disillusionment, a man appears with a program so simple that a child can understand it, if he speaks with sturdy confidence in himself and his plan, if he voices his faith that nothing is impossible—such a man will, and does, get a following. His following may grow great enough to carry him to power.

That he must inevitably reap failure, that his failure must mean, not only the destruction of high hopes, but ruin, hunger and even death for those who have trusted him, that failure strengthens the hands of the enemies of mankind and enables them to tighten the bonds of human slavery—will never deter the utopian. Nor will such considerations affect the masses who follow him. There is not, in America at least, enough understanding of history or of politics to restrain them. There is no middle ground between a servile acceptance of the *status quo*, and vaguely revolutionary, messianic utopianism.

"Epic"

Among the utopias recently advanced is Upton Sinclair's program to "End Poverty in California". It is moribund. The defeat of Sinclair's attempt to become governor of California probably means the defeat of the "Epic" plan as well.

It has been shouldered aside by later, more vigorous claims to popular approval.

"Epic" proposes to set up state boards or commissions, which are to turn over to the unemployed the unused factories and farms. Provision is made for housing, feeding and caring for the workers, presumably until the ventures become self-supporting. A distribution system providing for the exchange of products is set up; in addition scrip is to be issued to the workers, redeemable in goods. Alongside of this "work-relief" program "Epic" provides for an elaborate system of pensions for those over sixty, for the blind and the disabled, and for widows with dependents. The money for this, and for the purchase of disused farms and factories, is to be raised by the sale of bonds, and by steeply graduated income and inheritance taxes, by taxes on public utilities, by stock transfer taxes, and taxes on land held out of use. Small ranchers and home owners are to be exempted from taxation.

The idea took hold like wildfire. It is nothing new; it is, in fact, only a re-casting of Louis Blanc's ideas of the National Workshops, which had so brief and tragic a career in Paris in the spring of 1848. The hundreds of thousands who were without work in California in the summer and fall of 1934 had never heard of Louis Blanc or of the National Workshops. To them this program seemed not only wholly desirable but altogether reasonable.

That the business interests of California rose in arms, and smote down this threat to their money-bags; that, in so doing, they used force and fraud on a scale until then unknown anywhere in America is also understandable . "Epic" represents a real attack on their wealth and prestige. Unfortunately it does not follow that if adopted it would have "ended poverty in California". In fact, it is a foregone conclusion that it would have failed. It would have ended in chaos.

It would, had it been tried in earnest, have set up an economic system paralleling the existing one, competing with it, and yet parasitic upon it. It would have flooded the already glutted market with goods at prices lower than those possible in the competing industries. These industries would have

crashed, throwing other thousands out of employment. The system of taxation, essential to the establishment of the pension system, and important in the acquisition of the disused lands and factories, would have broken down, not because capital would have fled from California, but for the better reason that it would have been deprived of all income.

At this point it may be argued that such an outcome is desirable; that, in fact, it was desired by Sinclair and the "Epic" backers. They deny it. They assert that the plan is advanced in good faith; that it will really end poverty. Their record for naiveté and for economic illiteracy makes their denial credible. It does not make the plan more workable.

To those who may still believe that, altogether apart from Sinclair's intentions, the ruin that would follow the inauguration of the plan is desirable, since it would end the domination of capital, it must be pointed out that the worse is not the better. Socialism has less chance in a condition of chaos, not more. In such ruin as would follow the break-down of the "Epic" plan, it is far more likely that a new predatory economy would arise, that land and factories would fall, at cheap prices, into the hands of new adventurers, and that the workers would be enslaved at starvation wages. Such a failure would leave the workers disillusioned, deeply disappointed, without vision or leadership. No such vigorous step as true socialization would be possible. People who have been told that a new economy is being built that will save them from the break-down of the old, cannot be told, when the new also collapses, that, after all, it was not expected that the new succeed. They cannot be told that the new plan was advanced as a cloak for the socialization of all wealth. Some self-styled socialists did argue in some such fashion, to rationalize their defection to the "Epic" movement. People who have been misled in such fashion, have been known to turn and rend the misleaders.

Far better in such a situation is to do as the true socialists of California did. They exposed the "Epic" plan for the fraud it was, and advanced in its place, openly and without guile, the program of socialization.

Townsend

During the Sinclair campaign, Dr. Townsend's plan came into prominence. It attracted attention because it was favored by Governor Merriam, the reactionary opponent of Sinclair, as a counter to "Epic". It has since spread so widely that Congress lives in fear lest it be compelled to voice an opinion on it. It is said that if the plan comes up on the floor of the House, the House of Representatives, at least, will not dare to defeat it.

There is reason for the great popularity of the Townsend plan. It provides for every man and woman over 65 a monthly pension of $200. The money must be spent within the month, so that "new" purchasing power may be created. At the end of the month the pension money loses its purchasing power. The initial cost of the pension is to be provided by a tax of ten per cent on the income of all people below pension age. All recipients of pensions must give up whatever jobs they may hold, to make room for younger workers. The increased purchases of the pensioned elders are to create a vastly increased demand for goods and services, and this, in turn is to start the wheels of industry moving in earnest. So the depression is to be ended, the young are to have the opportunities for which they have been yearning, the aged are to have a life of reasonable ease and comfort, and the millenium will be with us. And all, of course, without interfering with private property or the profit system.

To call the plan naive is to praise it unduly. It leaves all reality out of consideration. If it were carried into effect, it would demand an initial outlay of two billion dollars. Even if the entire two billion were spent within the month, the effect would be negligible. The purchasing power now in the hands of younger men would be transferred to the older men, and that is all. If some industries benefited by the purchases of the pensioners (and this is conceivable, since the tastes of older people are not the same as those of younger men and women) others would lose because of the contracted purchasing power of the younger groups. No *new* purchasing

power would be created, because the plan creates no new commodities, and no new value.

The Townsend plan, like so many others that depend on tinkering with money, is rooted in the popular fallacy that money can be created by an act of the will, and that, having been created, it is equivalent to value. This is nonsense, and has been demonstrated to be nonsense a thousand times. But it does not die.

Purchasing power, the will-o'-the-wisp of the money-necromancers, cannot be created by an act of Congress. Legislative enactment can at most transfer it. The assumption that underlies the Townsend Plan, that purchasing power is not being used by those who have it, is true, not of the vast masses whom he would tax, but of a few powerful individuals whom his tax will not affect. The millions are spending all they have as it is, and would spend twice or three times as much if they had it. The few capitalists who really have large wealth—a company of two or three hundred thousand in a population of one hundred and twenty million — have a monopoly on the potential purchasing power of the masses, which in their hands, however, becomes, not purchasing power, but potential future investment.

Dr. Townsend has had his fling at "socialists and communists". He is not, he says, in favor of any Marxian solution of our economic problems. The truth is, of course, that he knows nothing of socialist theory. If he did, he would realize that the true devourer of purchasing power is the man who takes surplus value at various stages in the productive process. There is only one source of "profits", and that is the labor of the producer. The greater the amount of labor's product that is diverted from wages to profits, the less purchasing power will exist. There, if Dr. Townsend had the sense to see it, is the crux of the matter.

In the meantime, the Townsend movement grows. It appeals to all economic illiterates over 50. The idea of an old-age pension is perennially alluring. A non-contributory pension is doubly so. There is attached to this plan a sentimental aura—the young are to take care of the old. Why not?

And every socialist will echo the question: "Why not?" But not in the name of the Townsend Plan. Only as part of a whole program of socialization is any old-age pension plan feasible.

"Share the Wealth"

Not all utopias are sincerely conceived and advanced in good faith. There are plenty of Greeks bearing gifts in the world of politics. When a Huey Long sets out to become dictator of a state, and perhaps of a nation, it matters little to him if in the process of winning support and building a machine, he promises the sun in heaven to his followers. Lesser predecessors of Huey Long have been content to promise small things,—a ton of coal, food in time of need, a friendly word to the judge should the occasion arise. Huey Long differs from the common, garden variety of ward politicians only in that he realizes that such picayune promises have no appeal today. These are the days of broad, glittering slogans, of sentiments dripping with nobility, and of material promises, some of which can be fulfilled, if need be, at the expense of some one other than of him who makes them.

The examples set by Hitler and Mussolini unquestionably affect Huey Long. They, like him, promised, especially to groups formerly ignored, definite material advantage coupled with medieval trappings and an attractive mysticism. Whether or not he is as ambitious as they are—there is conflicting evidence on this point—he has learned from them not only the trick of riding rough-shod over opposition, but how to spread a net for the unwary.

The immediate problem of Huey Long as dictator concerns chiefly the state of Louisiana. Recently, however, Senator Long has launched the "Share the Wealth" movement, and has met with astonishing success. "Share the Wealth" clubs are to be found everywhere. They are said to include millions of members, and to be growing.

The movement has an excellent name. It has a skilled and unscrupulous leader. There is plenty of money back of it. It appeals to many to whom "Epic" seems too radical and

who are too young to be moved by Dr. Townsend. It it potentially more dangerous than either.

Insofar as any program can be discerned in the "Share the Wealth" movement, it advocates a limitation of private fortunes to four million dollars. It offers to everyone a home worth $5,000, and an income of $2,500 a year. It is silent on the subject of how these ends are to be attained. Nothing better betrays the demagogue in Long than this. Many poverty-stricken Americans are ready to accept an even more stringent limitation of fortunes. At the same time, it leaves untouched the rights of private property. Four million dollars is a lot of money. Any man may still hope to get rich.

His innocent followers can be counted on not to see how easily such a limitation, if enacted, may be avoided. It would be possible, for example, for a rich man to give to each of his relatives a million, as today great corporations are technically owned by dummy directors. Long's dupes can be relied on not to understand that even with such a limitation of wealth, the basis of modern society remains the exploitation of labor.

Long speaks primarily to an agricultural constituency. None of his followers has a million, or hopes to have one. None, therefore, stands to lose anything. His movement gives them a chance to blow off steam and to feel proudly revolutionary. That Huey Long is using them for the establishment of his personal dictatorship, they simply will not believe.

The danger in this utopia does not lie in the possibility that it may be tried, and end in failure. It lies rather in the greater possibility that it will never be tried; that its sponsor has no intention of enacting it, if and when he achieves power. "Share the Wealth" is a phrase, a slogan like Hitler's, "Abolish Interest-Slavery", meant for popular consumption.

To assume that the northern and western masses are too skeptical to be taken in is to credit them with more political sense than they possess. There is a charm in the very idea. If the Roosevelt utopia fails, as it must, Huey Long may reap his harvest.

In power, he will make a great show of bullying men of great wealth, no matter what corrupt bargains he may con-

clude with them behind closed doors. He will concentrate into his own hands the power to tax, to appoint officials, to spend the public money. He is a master of political pageantry, and he will outdo Hitler and Mussolini in circuses to keep the mob amused. He may even cause Congress—a puppet for him, should he really attain power—to pass the "Share the Wealth" law. Its enforcement will be with him; his friends will not suffer.

But his enemies, and all who dare to believe that their opinions must be heard in political life, had better beware. The recent history of Louisiana is a forecast of their fate. And when the masses realize in the end that they have sold their freedom for a few vague promises, it will be too late. Robbed of their freedom to speak, robbed of the press, the right of assemblage, they will be compelled to submit, until the accumulation of subterraneous resentment culminates in a revolutionary move to blast the dictator from power.

Father Coughlin

Perhaps Father Coughlin should not be mentioned among the utopians. His panacea is inflation, frankly to create purchasing power and a redistribution of wealth. His illusions are those of Bryan, of Senator Thomas, of the Free-Silver movement, of Greenbackers, and of all who confuse money with value. In spite of the tragic history of German inflation; in spite of the weight of all historic evidence, they dare to risk the lives of populations, not on untried theories, but on theories that have failed again and again.

The persistence of the inflation madness in American political life is evidence of the ancient struggle between debtor and creditor in our economic life. The strange thing about it is that working-men, who will lose most from inflation, are perennially deceived by its lures.

The real danger in Father Coughlin's publicity campaign is that it creates division in the working class, that it alienates the workers from their own movement, that it raises false hopes of rapid improvement. It may be, too, that Coughlin, like Huey Long, harbors personal ambitions. In the meantime

he, his ambitions and his movement, are being used to befuddle the workers, for the one thing the masters of society fear is a united working class.

Social Credit

Playing with money is, as has been pointed out repeatedly, one of the favorite amusements of the utopians. When it is tied up, as it is by A. R. Orage and his disciple, Major Clifford Hugh Douglas, with economic nationalism, and a mystical concept of the state as an entity apart from, and above, the individuals who compose it, it becomes indistinguishable from fascism. Fascism is, in fact, one of the most sinister of all utopias.

Social credit, as the term is used by Orage, Douglas and their followers, amounts to an abandonment of gold as the standard for money, and the issuance of "credit" based on "goods, plant, labor and skill". This credit is to be free to "the owner of the things on which it is based, or, collectively, to the community." * Thus money is to have value only in the country in which it is issued. Normal export and import of goods is to cease. The international exchange of goods not produced in a given country (as e. g. tea, coffee, rubber) is to be controlled by the state.

This, if it means anything at all, means that the owner of capital is not to be disturbed, and that the exploitation of labor is to go on as before. The entire burden of blame for the depression is loaded on to "gold", to "bankers' credit." and to "internationalism". This would be amusingly naive if it were not so alarmingly similar to Hitler's fulminations. Orage's explanation of the world's plight is almost identical with Hitler's. The affinity between the two points of view becomes even more apparent in the light of Orage's querulous complaint that Hitler has let him down. In "The Evening Citizen" (Ottawa) on November 25, 1933, he writes that Hitler "under pressure from the landowners and international financiers, has explicitly renounced his intention of breaking up

* *"Social-Credit Dictatorship of the Consumers"*, Herbert Bruce Brougham. *Scribner's, Oct.* 1934, *pp.* 240-241.

the great estates, and appears to have abandoned the project of a new national money system."

Brougham, in the article in Scribner's already quoted, states, under the heading "Political Objective", that his social credit plan and "economic nationalism" will be brought about by the state. "The sovereign power in all countries . . . will be constrained to command the technical masters of finance and business to get the wanted goods produced at full capacity of industry." He makes the promises, made familiar by technocracy, with which this utopia has close affinity, of plenty for all, because the limitless productive capacity of the machine, released from the wicked gold credit system, will take care of us all.

This, even if Messrs. Douglas, Orage, Brougham *et al* do not say so, is fascism. Assuming their sincerity, one can only conclude that they know nothing of history. The concept of the state as a separate entity is naive. They ought to know that the state is the creation of the class that has economic power. They ought to read in the history of Germany and Italy the fate of their theories. It ought to be apparent to them that, if the masters of industry do permit the establishment of "social credit" and of "economic nationalism" it will be because they see in these measures an escape from their difficulties. In so doing they will not give up one iota of their power. On the contrary, they will use the centralized dictatorship so created finally to enslave the helpless workers.

I have, for the moment, assumed the innocence of the backers of "Social Credit". It is a bold assumption in the light of their literature, and in the light of recent history. It is safer to assume that they know what they are doing, and that they are acting as a cover for the fascist movement in America. The sinister fact that Father Coughlin has "espoused social credit" strengthens this suspicion. Left to its naive originators with their barbarous phraseology, the idea would make no headway. In the hands of the skilled demagogue Coughlin it has all the elements of plausibility and simplicity that renders a stupid thought dangerous.

Distributism

Comic relief in utopias is furnished by the "Distributists". This scheme provides for each citizen at the age of twenty-one a "credit" of forty dollars. He receives "United States Purchasing Certificates" and five dollars in "cash". He must spend the entire forty dollars within the month; he then receives a new "credit". Thus $480 annually must be spent by each citizen. I now quote from a leaflet called "Distributism", issued by the sponsors of the movement:

"Each individual is required to provide his own Distribution insofar as possible. This is accomplished by means of employers deducting the amount of the monthly Distribution from the pay checks of their employees and forwarding that amount regularly to the Distributy to cover the amounts drawn out by means of the United States Purchasing Certificates. *The reader will note that this plan in no way alters the amount of pay received by the employee. It simply guarantees that a certain amount will circulate.*" (Italics mine.)

The naiveté of the word "alters" is charming. The whole idea, which reads rather like the product of a crank's mind than like a serious proposal, is based on the same erroneous hypothesis that underlies the Townsend Plan, that people don't spend enough. Let everybody spend at least $40 per month, and industry will recover! The author of this plan is right in one thing: distributism will not "alter" the amount of pay received by the worker; it will certainly not alter it upward.

I have omitted a very important provision of "Distributism". Anyone who fails to provide his own "Distribution" will, after six months, be required to perform "useful public service". In other words, the unemployed, the poor, the needy are to become public slaves.

Roosevelt

The greatest fraud among all the utopias is the "New Deal". Based on no philosophy, it is the apotheosis of opportunism. It snatched at Professor Warren's gold theories; it has sought to save society by reckless spending; it promised

to capital a new prosperity, to labor a paradise of collective bargaining and of union recognition; it pandered to the farmers' desire for higher prices. It has reaped failure, and pretends that failure is success. It has now completely surrendered to the bankers, the "money-changers" whom it was going to drive from the White House. Having promised all things to all men, and having failed to make good in even one significant case, it must now do the only thing that any government can do, save one that is committed to socialism. It must surrender to the real power in capitalist society. It has so surrendered. The counter-attack of capital is under way, and Roosevelt, to whom office is apparently dearer than the "New Deal", can read the handwriting on the wall. The N.R.A., stripped of the licensing clause, with Section 7A declared illegal, is a sad joke. Wages are falling. Prices are rising. Unemployment is growing.

To socialists there is nothing unexpected in Roosevelt's failure. We predicted it. We explained that it was inevitable, and why. It was utopian to believe that the leopard can change his spots. It was utopian to imagine that capital could, or would, regulate itself. If Roosevelt believed it, he was a fool. If he did not believe it—he was a demagogue.

"Pie in the Sky"

Whether this utopia or that, or none of them, finally kindles the public imagination no one can tell. The record of these utopias is a sad story of human despair and credulity; a bitter story of cynicism and rapacity. "Pie in the sky" is an old dream. Only when the workers understand that there is no "pie in the sky", only when they rely on themselves and take leadership into their own hands will the shining lure of vain dreams lose its charm.

Socialism, not utopia, is the hope of the worker.

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