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The Political Circus

Now that the great American Circus Show is over and the ballyhoo raised has vanished like the thin airy substance it was, it is becoming increasingly clear to an ever growing number of people that the elections are rapidly losing the significance they formerly had had in American life. Less and less do they come to reflect the genuine vital issues stirring the great masses of American people, less and less do they keep pace with the realities of American life. More and more do they resemble a puppet show enacted by wooden figures that are driven along by the sheer inertia of an historical momentum. It was manifest in the utter lack of great issues brought out and the apathetic attitude of the masses of voters who, though turning out in great numbers to punish the old administration, showed a plentiful lack of enthusiasm for the new one—a fact amply commented upon and strikingly contrasted with the spontaneous demonstrations of popular reactions to the outcome of the elections of years ago.

Not that this election is any worse in this respect than the other ones that took place after the war. Great issues do not arise every four years; the country cannot keep up the continuous turmoil of creative stirrings. Dull and insipid elections there were a-plenty and the ones of the after-war period were most characteristic in this respect. But these were reflections of years of "normalcy," of a comparatively smooth functioning of the economic machine, which contributed so much to the smugness and self-complacency of the average American. The elections were colorless and preoccupied with the trivialities of a politicians world because the average man feared and dreaded any deep issues which might disturb the even flow of the economic life, which might disclose some abysmal depths beneath the smooth surface of a specious prosperity.

It is in this very respect that the last election differed fundamentally from the previous ones. They differed in their background which should have brought out in its reflected political aspect great fundamental issues of the profoundest significance, touching upon the very nature of our social order, its drift and potentialities. A great crisis is sweeping the whole world, a crisis of unheard of

magnitude, sweep and intensity, a crisis which nearly prostrated the economic life of each and every civilized nation. A crisis which shattered to pieces the props and stilts that were raised assiduously in order to make our system appear as a life-like and workable order of things. And in wake of that a great confusion and perplexity has come over the ruling classes such as had never been witnessed during the past crises. Their bouyancy and cocksureness are gone, their faith in the expansive potentialities of the system is at the lowest historical ebb. A general feeling is permeating them that it is not an ordinary crisis that we are going through, just another turn of the cyclical wheel, but something much more ominous, something which they yet refuse to stare fully in the face but whose looming shadow they cannot help perceive with dismay and inner trembling. It is the shadow of the great hand writing their doom upon the wall, the signs of incipient agony of the whole system.

This was the background of this year's elections as distinguished from earlier ones. The ghastly background of an agonizing social order. A ruined agriculture, a paralyzed industry, ten millions of men facing the horror of unemployment for the third winter, others trembling at the brink of it. And how was all that reflected in the last election—the supreme act of a sovereign people expressing its will, as political writers like to put it? Was there a single issue brought out which gave expression to the fears, consternation, hopes, expectations of the millions of voters? An issue which would reflect to some extent, even in the distorted form of a political slogan, the great ferment pervading the large masses of the country?

During the last three years of successive shocks and tremors political campaigning was carried on the same level of petty preoccupations which characterized it in the sluggish years of stagnation. Factories closed, great banks defaulted, prices dropped to record lows, but political life was still fed upon the mean and paltry issues of a contriving and scheming world of bickering politicians. It was only two or three months before the elections that this self-contained world took official cognizance of the great catastrophe. Took cognizance in its own way, with the view of dramatizing it in a farcical form during the great circus show to be given all over the country. A forgotten phrase about the forgotten man was dragged out of the archives of past campaigns and by cleverly manipulating it, by varying it in a thematic development there was achieved the necessary camouflaging effect of a political facade reflecting the tragic realities of our time. A studied smile, a knowing wink, a clever phrase, a discreet under-emphasis in some places and a light gentlemanly flirt with a populist phraseology,—that was all the equipment of the leading figure of the show—the cultivated gentleman of overflowing popular sympathies who came to talk social realities to evicted farmers and starving workingmen. Not a single sincere phrase, not a single demand tackling those very social realities in earnest, not a single slogan which, fallacious as it might be, would reflect to some extent the workings of the popular mind, as the populist movement did a generation ago. A well arranged little game played by tiny diminutive figures upon the background of deepening gloom and lengthening shadows of an impending crash. A game played by all of the leading figures of this political show—from Roosevelt to Thomas—with the half suppressed smile of a Roman augur who knows too well the true worth of his incantations. Every one of them knows what Montagu Norman, the head of the greatest financial insti-

tution—the Bank of England—said openly a little time ago—that they are just as blind and helpless in the face of this crisis as savages are in the face of some elemental catastrophe. But every one of them believes that this knowledge will never reach the masses of people, that the game of mystification and fooling the people will go on indefinitely, that the sullen and grim silence of the crowds, strangely unresponsive to the usual tricks of the spell-binding politicians does not carry any disquieting implications. They hear occasional mumblings breaking the silence—reported sullen remarks of exasperated farmers about these being the last presidential elections—but they dismiss these with the heedlessness and frivolity of people who are too deeply rooted in the past to discern the significance of strange signs and forebodings. The brief historical span of a hundred and fifty years existence has given them claim to eternity.

This isn't the reaction of a single set of politicians or the singular failing of the last elections which will yet be remedied by a more intelligent campaigning in the future. It is the manifestation of an inevitable process of deterioration of our political institutions which places them more and more out of touch with the realities of life. A generation ago they still possessed some vitality to echo at least the popular grievances. Since then the discrepancy between their ostensibly popular nature and their utter divorce from the sufferings, aspirations and struggles of the masses of the people has widened immensely. More and more are they revealing their true nature: stiffened moulds of class domination, insulated with such painstaking care as to shut off the least sympathetic resonance to the violent vibrations of great popular commotions. A political anachronism, the rudimentary vestiges of an old vanished civilization, these institutions were never meant for the complexities of our life. Nor were they meant to give full expression to the popular will, they were never the pure embodiment of the democratic idea. The class interests of the rising bourgeoisie were the predominating ones in the fashioning and moulding of them. And from the very beginning they built so many scaffolds around the simple democratic idea as to make those institutions which arose on the basis of the latter but an elastic instrument of class rule. And the whole political history of the nineteenth century was the unfolding of the implicit functional idea of these institutions. Their class nature asserted itself in measure that the democratic spirit evaporated. One hundred and fifty years of continuous functioning in the interests of the ruling class have brought the process to completion. All there remained of their underlying democratic idea is their facade which also came to serve the definite purpose of camouflage. A hardened stiffened mould for the interests of the past, a mould whereby the dead hand of the past has its master grip upon the future—it will have to be smashed and broken in order that the latter may assert itself.

The reported sullen remarks of the exasperated middle-western farmers about the last presidential elections may be a somewhat unwarranted condensation of the historical tempo in a single prophecy, but there can be no doubt that it is a valid prophecy, pointing to the inevitable course the living future will be forced to take.

The Student and the Crisis

THOSE who had lost hope for the American student to display some independence of mind and action, a characteristic his European contemporary had exhibited for many years, were taken with some surprise at the recent student outbreaks. The student here was looked upon as one whom the social problem left undisturbed. His collegiate life enveloped most of his interests, and, except for some who were forced to work for support and a few scattered individuals, it enveloped his entire interest.

The first of these major outbreaks at Columbia University was therefore looked upon as an extraordinary event. Centering about the expulsion of the student editor of the college paper for his attack on various college evils, a strike in which 1500 participated, brought about his reinstatement. This event indicated of course an attitude differing from the traditional one. The students evidently realized that this expulsion was a breach of their right to free speech within their own press. The College of the City of New York next rode the wave of revolt, and a series of dramatic events occurred, free speech again being the issue. Inasmuch as the college authorities could not argue long with paying students, the results were more quickly and decisively made at Columbia than in a free institution like the City College, where students are easily intimidated by threats of suspensions, expulsion, etc.

We learned of student protests throughout the country, — Pittsburgh, Wisconsin, Southwestern, etc. — arising sporadically and spontaneously. They were not part of an *organized* movement directed against American educational institutions but were symptoms of deep underlying social forces of which our students were becoming painfully aware. And so if we should ask about these protests, "Are they isolated phenomena?" the answer is emphatically, "No!" But let us examine some of these underlying social forces that have caused such deep reverberations within student ranks.

We may recall just ten years ago that, in a situation similar to the one in the College of the City of New York, when Dr. Oakley Johnson was dismissed, the University of Pennsylvania expelled Scott Nearing. Recall the passive attitude. Scarcely a ripple was discerned. What great commotion then, beyond that of a football victory, ever resounded within the walls of an American University? Would a Student Anti-War Congress ever have been dreamt of? Then what change has occurred within the student body? Whence this radicalization? The change is two-fold,—economic and cultural.

Amid the comparative economic security in which the student continued his studies were tossed the germs of uncertainty of present and future position. He felt the tightening of his father's purse strings, the fewer coins slipping through, and very often was faced with the prospect of not returning to college at all. All that he had taken as a matter of course, he was now discovering to be very uncertain. But surely before this time there were students from poor homes, students in general whose fathers were customarily tight upon the gold bags, and few if any of these had become radicalized. True, but coupled with this intensification of their present struggle for sustenance, is a deep change within the social structure. Even those students for whom it had been a struggle to

continue their studies had, justly, a feeling of optimism. Did not a college education guarantee success in life? The expanding economic system demanded and absorbed all those trained in the liberal professions. And then, so suddenly as to surprise even our great economic leaders, the structure snapped. The possibility of further absorption stopped. The system started to cough up its overflow. Even those professions like engineering, whose possibilities were thought unlimited, the student found overcrowded. He was cut off from all his hopes for the future. He found himself in an economic maze, for which he was not prepared. His towering illusions were shattered.

Culturally, our student had also come up to a great wall. I have mentioned how his collegiate life had enveloped his entire interest. The English cultural patterns dominated the social life. These patterns, borrowed and imitated from English Universities, were decadent. They pretended to aristocracy. There were mouldy traditions about them. And they pleased the reigning reactionary financial oligarchy of the University. But slowly the infiltration of modern ideas, especially in the social sciences, brought about a cultural revolt. The growing breach fostered by the impact of these modern notions and the reactionary spirit of the administrations, became more pronounced as economic causes salted these wounds. Finally, when the college rulers became more and more mere instruments of class domination and muzzled whatever rebelliousness that exhibited itself among students, the outburst of student protest unleashed itself unexpectedly upon them. The financial rulers of the college drew back, stiffened their control, and stifled a great deal of independent thinking and research, especially in the domain of the social sciences.

Finally we must not omit a very decided indirect influence upon the student body, that of the inevitable radicalization of the proletarian masses. No matter how sheltered the student might have been, he could not possibly have escaped, seeing and feeling, the intensification of the class struggle, brought into sharp relief by the economic crisis. This in itself would have been sufficient, I believe, if we consider how much more sensitive the student is to injustices, to cause deep reverberations within the college walls.

And so we see that these sporadic and spontaneous outbreaks were not merely isolated phenomena, but manifestations of a general spirit of revolt. The ideals, traditions, hopes of the student were shattered. Moreover he found himself in a tragic position. His studies had prepared him for a profession which he could not practice. And thus, despite the propagandistic educational system that had made him apathetic to the struggles of the working masses, with its individualistic business ideology which had built up his smug complacency, and hindered him so much in his own revolt, he is now exhibiting a more healthy reaction than the much trumped-up European student's traditional one, whose turn to fascism has negated his earlier revolutionary inclinations.

This danger, the turn to fascism, is a serious one. It is obvious that the movement brought about by the above mentioned causes, is not a partisan movement. No special political philosophy has evolved it, but it sprang as a natural result of certain cultural and economic grievances of the student. To save it from the course which the European movement is following is the role of the radical parties and groups. And so the radical parties have grasped this opportunity to entrench themselves within the movement. Organizations such as the National Student League have *done much* in making the student socially con-

scious. Various radical social science clubs have sprung up in colleges. These should lead, be the vanguard, and hasten the natural growth of the movement.

I would not question the right of any group to propagate its ideas among the students. Although the Communists have stepped in at the opportune moment, I believe they are pursuing wrong tactics. They antagonize less radical students with their crude methods. Intolerant, sectarian, almost coercing students into their ranks by ruses that are usually obvious, they crush the very thing they want to nourish. Their methods of control, dictatorial and authoritarian, makes the reflective student recoil. The Communists are not leading their ideal masses, unthinking herds who respond to their every exhortation. They are dealing now with students who tend to question, even if only to a slight degree, that which is offered them by their leaders and teachers. They must have more initiative than is permitted within any Communist organization.

This emphasizes the need of an Anarchist movement among students, where the individual is permitted greater freedom, and respect for his integrity is inherent in its principles and ideals. The mere fact that the students have been rallying to the slogan of academic freedom, and will continue to rally to it in greater numbers in the future, shows the nature of the undercurrent that flows in the student movement, an undercurrent which I believe must inevitably turn the movement into an Anarchist Movement.

R. WINTERS

Whither the Libertarian Movement?

THE struggle of the two factions within the Anarchist movement—the Anarchist-Communist and the Anarchist-Individualist—is viewed by many a comrade as a mere family squabble fanned into the dimensions of a bitter feud by an over-zealous spirit of partisanship. One hears the opinion expressed that given a more tolerant attitude on both sides, a general formula could be found which would unite both wings in a mutual effort on the basis of Anarchist principles.

It is more of a pious wish than a well-grounded opinion, and it generally emanates from those whose approach to the movement is strongly colored by an over-dose of sentimental emotionalism. The differences between these two factions are not of the kind that can be composed by an ingenious formula, nor can the latter be brought together by a sudden change of heart. These differences are based upon diametrically opposite conceptions of the nature of the Anarchist Ideal, the nature of human individuality, of the actuating forces of the historical process. They will assert themselves with an ever increasing force in measure that the Anarchist movement will be drawn into the great social struggles of the near future. They will be felt in the programmatic concretizations of the Anarchist Ideal, in the tactical constructions with which the Anarchist movement is faced already in a country like Spain where it has become a great historical force. And they have already broken up the general line of the libertarian struggles in two polar directions; one, oriented upon an emerging form of

economic relationships; the other, clinging to a pattern of economic cooperation that is deeply rooted in the past and is still the most familiar one to the majority of mankind. One, giving an altogether new turn to the struggles for the expansion of human liberty; the other, continuing the old line of entrenchments built by the militant individual in the past—the encompassing line of property relationships within which the individual obtained a certain degree of freedom from the encroachments of the social herd. One is the direction of the Anarchist-Communist movement, the boldest champion of the future of humanity, the other, that of the Anarchist Individualist which still clings to the outlived institutions of the past.

The Anarchist-Communist views any form of property relationships as incompatible with true social progress and therefore doomed by the latter to total extinction. Whatever compromises the revolutionary forces of the near future will have to effect with the principles of property ownership, it will be but in the nature of a temporary expedient, of a limited historical usefulness. Communism is inevitable because the nature of human cooperation has been undergoing the most profound changes. It is becoming more and more of a subtly intergrated kind and the crude measurements of individual contributions conforms less and less to demands of elementary justice which must be incorporated in the structure of a new society. Some other principles will have to be laid at the basis of the latter, and that will be not the exact apportionment of economic values in accordance with individual contributions, but the principle recognizing the right of every individual to gratify his elementary needs—the recognition of the worth of the human individual as transcending his value as a producer.

The triumph of this Communist principle will necessitate a radical displacement of the center of gravity of the libertarian struggles. Instead of property as the entrenched group of a militant individuality, the latter will have to weave a protective and insulating system of rights which will be along a more vital axis of individual growth than the right to pre-empt, speculate, exploit, a system of rights based upon a socialized form of production and consumption and not upon a specious form of individual independence from the economic forces of humanity—an exploded middle-class fiction still swallowed innocently by many an Anarchist-Individualist.

This re-orientation of the general line of libertarian struggles is a difficult task and requires a long-range historical view, a scientific calculation of the organic processes of social life and steering clear of any mechanical schemes which would insure an automatic functioning of a libertarian system. It is these difficulties that frighten away many an Anarchist into the individualist camp which elevates the difficulties of libertarian Communism into the rank of intrinsic contradictions between Communism and individual liberty. Fright, a recoil from the future, the dulling of the historical imagination—this is what underlies the pathetic clinging of some Anarchists to the outlived forms of human cooperation such as are embodied in property relationships. Thence their “quest of the Holy Grail”—their search of a “pure” form of labor property unadulterated by the admixtures of monopoly and exploitation. And thence also their ceaseless attempts to devise some mechanical models embodying this etherealized principle of property—some nicely “calculated” social scheme which would solve automatically the vexing problem of the inter-relationships

between the individual and society. That the human individuality is not a definitely given quantity, that it is yet in the process of making, that the encroachments of society cannot be stopped by a system of contrived mechanical adjustments,—all that lies beyond the horizon of our “individualists.” They have discovered the secret of an automatically functioning libertarian society—labor property: the fulcrum of Absolute Justice, of Natural Harmony, a static equipoise, free from any dynamic dislocations. Labor property! That is the magic key that will open the gates of the Heavenly Kingdom; a little more calculation, a better system of accountancy—and our troubles will be over. And this is being peddled out as the last achievement of anarchist thought!

Labor property in the twentieth century! Labor property in a modern factory of the type described by Stuart Chase in his “Labor And Machines”—an almost completely automatized factory in which machines do almost all the work, with men reduced to mere overseers of the machines. And the rapidly revolutionizing agriculture with biological science shifting the climatical boundaries, modifying and controlling heredity, with mechanical science working its wonders in the field of cultivation. Who is to be the “labor property” owner in those highly intricate economic processes? The men who repair and watch the automatic machines—an insignificant, ever diminishing number? The highly skilled technical staff which designed this wonderful factory? The scientists who worked out the theoretical aspects of the problems on the basis of which these technical revolutions have been made? Should Dr. Lissenko and his staff, a Soviet scientist whose researches established the possibility of cultivating southern plants in the north, become a part owner of the agricultural production all over the world which is going to be shortly revolutionized as a sequence to his researches, or is it the biological scientists all over the world who contributed theoretically and practically towards the solution of this problem and who will obtain their labor share of ownership? Or must we include also the teachers from the lowest grade to the highest academic chair who train and develop the minds of those scientists, technicians, skilled workingmen? Must they also become part owners of an economic enterprise toward which they contributed so much? Is an advanced pedagogical method of any less economic value than an invention? In other words saying, can we exempt anyone who contributes in a general way towards the economic welfare of mankind from claiming “Labor Property” ownership rights in any economic enterprise of humanity. Can anyone lay his hands upon an integrated product of the labor of millions of men and declare it his own?

These are not questions of such an obtruse nature as to be outside the purview of the average man. Every intelligent man knows of the close web of inter-relationships which exist in the modern economic life, everyone knows of the increasing role of science in production,—and “labor-property rights” in the realm of pure science have not even been asserted by capitalist society.

Pure science is a communist affair and so is our economic life which is becoming more and more of an applied science. Every intelligent man sees it clearly and it is only the recoil from the future, the recoil from the gigantic task of liberalizing the new communist forms of social life that is forcing the individualist to ignore the patent economic sequences of the great economic revolution taking place before our eyes.

SENEX

An Anti-War Congress

I. A. C. Report

ON JUNE 28th, 1932, the I.A.M.B. (International Anti-Militaristic Bureau) received a letter from Felicien Challaye, in which on behalf of Romain Rolland he invited that organization to take part in the world-congress against war; he and Henri Barbusse having taken the initiative. In a manifesto enclosed, signed by Romain Rolland it was expressly stated that it was to be a congress "against war, whatever it might be, from wherever it comes, whoever they may be who may be threatened by it." On June 11th, the I.A.M.B. wrote Barbusse that before deciding to take part, the I.A.M.B. would like to know whether it would be given an opportunity to explain in a forty-five minute speech its point of view in regard to the economic direct action against war (strikes, boycotts, etc.).

Although the organization committee of the congress was in Paris, the Bolshevik press service, "Imprecorr" of July 5th, under the date *Berlin, July 6th*, carried without any signature the conditions and agenda of the congress, from which its true nature was readily seen and that only those persons who were willing to fight against *Imperialist* war were admitted.

In the press service No. 104 of the I. A. C. (International Anti-militaristic Commission), the I.A.M.B. therefore asked: Who was organizing this congress, who was making the conditions, and who had changed the character of it? This press service was sent to the committee in three languages, a copy for each member. A reply to these questions was received from Romain Rolland in the form of a personal letter in which his well-known "personal view" of the congress was given. A reply from Barbusse or an official reply from the committee was never received. Although the standpoint of Romain Rolland had the full sympathy of the I.A.M.B., yet the I.A.M.B. was so convinced that not his but the dogmatic bolshevist and red militarist views of Barbusse, or rather of the Third International, respectively of the Russian Government, would determine the character of the congress, that the Secretariat of the I.A.M.B. decided not to take part in it. The Secretariat of the I.A.A., being acquainted with all these facts made a decision to the same effect and both Internationals decided to set forth their point of view in a manifesto and Albert De Jong was instructed by both Internationals to attend the Congress as a reporter for the I.A.C.

On Saturday morning before the opening of the congress, comrade A. Muller Lehning, the secretary of the I.A.A. and also of the I.A.C., went to the congress with six other comrades, all provided with tickets of admission, with no other intention than that of handing out in a peaceful and orderly manner the manifesto of the two Internationals to the delegates. They had hardly entered when they were stopped and turned out of the hall by a group of Communists and without any warning the manifestos were torn from their hands before even one had been distributed. The chief object of their rage was Muller Lehning who was beaten on the head. The intervention of the secretary of the congress administration, Mr. Dehmut, put an end to the incident. The

distribution of the manifesto was forbidden. These were then freely distributed at the entrance while some delegates lent their help for the purpose in the hall.

Half an hour after this incident, Comrade De Jong applied to Mr. Dehmut for a press card as a representative of the I.A.C. There was an objection to this; in any case the congress management had to decide about it. "One could not, he said, refuse admittance to a reporter of the I.A.C. at a public congress against war where every reporter of the bourgeois press could enter without more ado." "That is something quite different," Mr. Dehmut replied. And in the evening he informed Comrade De Jong that the congress administration had decided not to admit him as a reporter of the I.A.C. on account of the fact that his comrades had attempted to distribute a manifesto without having asked permission to do so.

At the entrance of the building where the congress was held as well as at the entrance of the hall were men to preserve order clad for the most part in uniforms of Red Front soldiers and the German Iron Front. What a travesty on Anti-Militarism! Along the walls of the hall only Bolshevik reading matter, propaganda for Russia was to be seen or allowed. Attempts to have books there by Lehmann Rusbuldt, who was to hold an introduction to the congress, were frustrated by the committee's blunt refusal. In the administration one saw well known Communists who generally attend such congresses: Barbusse, Munzenberg, Gibardi, Dehmut and others. The congress delegates were informed in due time for which speaker they were to shout three times "Red Front" and sing the International. The slogan of the Congress was by no means "No More War" nor "Away with Militarism" but "Red Front" and "Long Live the Red Army." It was not a congress against war but for Red Militarism.

From Comrade De Jong's report of the congress (he finally gained admittance to the visitors hall to which a loud speaker had been connected and thanks to the hospitality of a number of delegates from Scandinavia among whom was a member of the I.A.M.B., was able to follow a part of the congress in their midst) we have: one Bolshevik speaker was followed by another continually making place for a Red Front demonstration. The fist was raised to the shoulder and afterwards raised three times, the bolshevik's salute. The congress dropped all masks, differing in this from the anti-Colonial congress where a certain appearance was still maintained and displayed openly its exclusively Bolshevik countenance. The whole congress was nothing but a purely Bolshevik manifestation. Moscow had the absolute monopoly; no opinion opposed to Moscow was tolerated. . . a synopsis of each speech was read by the congress administration beforehand . . . there was no question at this congress of an exchange of ideas; considering it well, it was no congress but an international Bolshevik meeting.

On Saturday, August 27th, in the afternoon about two o'clock, the congress was opened. Soon afterwards, Henri Barbusse, the principal speaker of the congress, addressed the delegates. He said, among other things, that the object of the congress was the creation of a United Front of all layers, tendencies, political parties against imperialist war; and the most diverse parties were represented, Social-Democrats, Communists, Pacifists, trade-unionists and independent dissenters, and Idealists; that it was a free and open congress. The congress must stand above parties and must not deteriorate into a political

battlefield. Discussion would not be squelched but will be deepened. Practical proposals must be made, a minimum program of action drawn up.

A practical proposal of a positive point of view was not however to be discovered in Barbusse's speech. He restricted himself to vague generalities about the terrors of war, the fiasco of the League of Nations, etc.

Madame Duchesne then read a letter from Romain Rolland who likewise pleaded for an United Front above parties and raised the slogan "War Against War." The differing tactics, he wrote, of the various parties must be properly considered, all real devotion must be united. Refusal to serve in the army can undermine militarism as much as an armed Revolution.

And then there followed what from Comrade De Jong's report reads like the ritual of the Roman Catholic church, or better yet, an international Bolshevik meeting. Those who were not Communists or of the Stalinist branch of Communism, like Molinier, a Trotskyist, were hooted down and were not allowed to speak. The monotony of the single Bolshevik note consistently played throughout the congress was brought to a pitch on the third day. Comrade De Jong reports:

There is something special to come. With the announcement, "Munzenberg is going to speak" all congress delegates are called back to the hall, all doors are closed. The president, the Italian Miglioli, introduces Munzenberg and sees that he gets an enormous ovation. Then in an almost exclusively Bolshevik spirit, Munzenberg declares that here is not a question of a Communist congress, but that the communists may express their opinion as a party of equal rights. He then proceeded to make a purely Bolshevik party speech. He attacked the governments, the League of Nations, Adler and the Second International, the Syndicalists, the Trotskyists, the Ghandi-ists, the Passive Resisters, and the absent pacifists (the honest pacifists are all taking part in the congress). In short, all who did not wholly accept the policy of the Third International. . . . Boycotts and general strikes against war are strange ideas. For us speaks only the conquest of one-sixth of the earth by the Soviet Union. Have the Spanish Syndicalists conquered anything? The pacifists? . . . Munzenberg finishes his speech with the refrain of the German text of the International. The congress is enraged. Some shake their heads disapprovingly. The majority, however, sing the Internationale, giving the Bolshevik salute to the battle cry "Red Front" three times.

After this purely Bolshevik party speech and demonstration, it is perhaps pertinent to remember the words of Barbusse in the July 17th number of his paper "Monde": "The congress shall unconditionally prevent any political debate which could bring parties in conflict with each other. It shall only study the fact of war and the practical methods of combating it." And in the July 30th number: "The congress against imperialist war is not a meeting where a party fight may take place. That would mean its end."

A manifesto was afterwards posted and an anti-war committee chosen. De Jong's report says: Anyone who dares to vote against anything is hooted down. . . . Barbusse pronounces the concluding words. He is of the opinion that the congress has brought clarity with regard to the methods to be used in combating war.

The Congress ended with a last Red Front demonstration.

GRANT LOWRY

Notes on Spain

THE importance of the revolutionary work now being carried on in Spain is usually minimized by the bourgeois press and even by many of our so-called radicals and revolutionists. Its importance does not lie merely in the numerical strength of the anarcho-syndicalist unions, which have undergone a remarkable growth since the overthrow of the monarchy, and whose membership is now over one million. Among the significant aspects of this recent development is the revolutionary training the workers are getting, the lessons they are learning. Although Spain is comparatively backward industrially, its workers and revolutionary leaders are developing an understanding of social realities, a solidarity, an insight into revolutionary tactics and, what is most important, they are preparing within the shell of the old society that mechanism, that organization, which will be able to take over and operate in a co-ordinated fashion the economic life of the country when the time for such action is propitious. They are not only preparing for the future in a very practical manner, but are making great headway in winning for themselves whatever economic security and liberty they can wrest from their exploiters at present. By means of strikes (e.g. the recent ones in El Ferrol, Barcelona, etc.) demonstrations, mass protests and concentrated activity they have won many "immediate demands" such as improved working conditions, greater organizational freedom, and have diminished persecution of workers and labor leaders.

The lessons of the class struggle which are rapidly educating the backward worker and peasant of Spain, are being supplemented by the integrating force and advanced revolutionary propaganda of the F.A.I. (The Iberian Anarchist Federation). From the latter organization springs most of the guidance and leadership of the militant workers and peasants. It is the vanguard of the Spanish Revolution. Its program, which proposes to co-ordinate organizations of producers (industrial unions, agricultural unions, etc.) with the organizations of consumers on a functional basis, is quickly becoming crystallized and definitely formulated. But obviously they cannot make "blue prints" of the coming revolution; there are many problems which cannot be foreseen and in such cases the course of action to be taken must arise from the specific situation. Although many minor mistakes have been made and will be made, the progress thus far observed is indeed a hopeful sign.

Because of the scarcity of real news on the Spanish situation, there are many people who doubt the strength (and some who doubt the very existence) of the powerful C.N.T. (the National Confederation of Labor, the anarcho-syndicalist federation of unions). The veracity of our statements can be corroborated by looking up the "New York Times" of Nov. 27th, 1932. In the second page of the editorial section there is an article on Spain in which the correspondent points out that in Barcelona, alone, the anarcho-syndicalist unions have a membership of two-hundred thousand (200,000)! In a pamphlet entitled "The Revolution in Spain" (1931, Leon Trotsky admits (page 25) that "The National Confederation of Labor indisputably embraces the most militant elements of the proletariat."

In the same pamphlet Trotsky says (page 26): "But at the same time we must have no illusions about the fate of anarcho-syndicalism as a doctrine and a revolutionary method. By the lack of a revolutionary program and an incomprehension of the role of the party, anarcho-syndicalism disarms the proletariat. The anarchists "deny" politics until it seizes them by the throat: then they prepare the ground for the politics of the enemy class. . . ." This misinterpretation (or perhaps misrepresentation) is contradicted not only by our own theory [We believe that the "party" should be a vanguard of militants who understand the intricate workings of our economic, social and political life, and not a group of ambitious politicians or a hierarchical dictatorship; we do not "deny" politics, but we also do not believe in entering the parliamentary game and playing it according to its own rules; we want to smash the bourgeois politics] but also by the realities of the development of the revolutionary struggle and particularly some recent occurrences belie Trotsky's own words. I am referring to the "reforms" which the Spanish Government has tried to put into effect since last spring. One of these "reforms" is now known as the famous "April 8th" law (or the Social Law). This law, of special importance to the C.N.T. was concerned with arbitration in labor disputes. It provided for a board of arbitration with representatives of the workers, the employers and the government. The arrangement would obviously put all control into the hands of the republican-socialist dictatorship. It was well known that the purpose of this law was to smash the C.N.T. The use of direct action in nullifying this legal trick is discussed in an article which appeared in the "Solidaridad Obrera," an anarcho-syndicalist daily. Lack of space prevents me from giving a thorough analysis of the situation. I shall therefore conclude these brief remarks with a few quotations from this article in "Solidaridad Obrera" of October 4, 1932.

"The protest movement initiated against the 'April 8th' law by the syndicates of the C.N.T. and even assisted by some of the members of organizations of a socio-political and reformist nature connected with the U.G.T. (trade unions affiliated with the Social-Democratic part) has confirmed once more the superiority of our fighting tactics over legalistic and parliamentary action. It is more than proved than under the veil of "The Defence of the Republic" they (the politicians) intend to play party politics in order to ingratiate themselves with the U.G.T. at the expense of our syndicalist organization. They intend to satisfy the ambitions of the Socialist ministers and above all to choke the Spanish proletariat and to stifle its movement. On the other hand it has been proved that the makers of the 'April 8th' law—approved without any discussion by the parliament—are preparing under and inoffensive looking surface a series of destructive measures prohibiting all future attempts at action, and chaining the confederated organizations to nefarious collaborationism.

"The Socialists, with the aid of the servant of the dictatorship, Largo Caballero, were able to profit from the moral weakness of the other political sectors and knew well how to play their role. Like good Jesuits, they placed a clever trick and did not disclose their mental reservations: they assisted in all sorts of artifices and frauds while imposing the treacherous law.

"It is clear that since their social-democratic organization is not of working class nature, but political, it would not be inconsistent for them to assist in this high-handed betrayal in order to defend their special interests.

"And the other political sectors which claim to defend the law have not even considered its significance and have subscribed to it in its entirety. The monstrosities of this law are so evident, its sophisms so transparent, that even many workers who are active in the socialist ranks and in the U.G.T. are protesting against this *coup de force* and against their own leaders. They recognize its aim, and are uniting their efforts with those of their brothers and have thus strengthened the movement which was begun by the C.N.T. . . .

"The movement had become quite widespread . . . and had been co-ordinated by the federated organization of the syndicates . . . The protest movement started in the local industrial and agricultural syndicates and was then taken up by the regional and general federations. Strikes were threatened and many great rallies and meetings took place. Everything was so well co-ordinated and planned that the government had to sit up and take notice. . . .

" . . . The government then changed the date of enforcement of this law from Sept. 1st to Sept. 15th.

"On the latter date there was a great popular ferment but the government was completely silent; it said nothing about the enforcement of the law. It did not declare the C.N.T. illegal! And why did it not declare illegal an organization that did not respect the 'April 8th' law? Because it understands that this law is not accepted by the proletariat; because the law goes against public opinion; because it knows that, in opposition to this law, there are many millions of workers who are in complete agreement with the fighting attitude of the C.N.T.; and the latter in its development, be it legal or illegal, is and will be a powerful weapon. And why so? Because the National Confederation of Labor is—not a centralized organism—but an active power, a coordinated organization of movements which is unified by virtue of the free initiative and free agreement of its affiliated units. It is they who have put into action the direct offensive the 'April 8th' law.

"Our object has been attained and in view of our triumph, there are those who will ask, 'Of what use would it have been, in this case to have had recourse to parliamentary action?' It would have been absolutely useless because direct action has been the most efficacious weapon used against the law. . . .

"The working-class laws enacted by parliaments represent nothing but the *legal sanction of social facts* which no governmental manifestation can avoid.

"The right to us revolutionary tactics (which was granted in the old constitution of '76 in its authorization of the right to strike, to form associations, etc.) was not legalized by the republican-socialists. It was supported by the reactionary elements who were obliged to concede to the working class those prerogatives which it demanded as its natural right. . . .

"Such a course of action is so logical and natural for the working class that even the most tyrannical and reactionary governments, not being able to suppress it, find it necessary to legalize it in order to maintain their prestige and diminishing authority. . . .

"There are some people who confuse direct action with armed revolt. . . . Governments naively believe that they are disarming us when they make laws against us. . . . They blindly hope, as governments usually do, that to imprison revolutionists is to stop the revolution. . . ."

We certainly have no illusions about the fate of anarcho-syndicalism.

S. MORRISON

Book Review

"1919"—by *John Dos Passos*.

IT is the great dearth of wide panoramic views of the turbulent life of the last two decades that induced some of our critics to declare John Dos Passos' latest novel, "1919," a great revolutionary epic of our times. The book lacks the quality of both. It gives too diffused a picture, too widely thrown out of focus by the highly impressionistic vision of the author to be able to reproduce epically the great sweep of American life at one of its most convulsive periods—the war and its aftermath. And there is very little in that novel of a truly revolutionary dynamics, of the latter's proportionate balancing of conscious revolutionary forces against the terrific momentum of elemental drift. A balancing which imparts a life-like rhythm to the panoramic unfolding of situations in a revolutionary novel. There can be no truly revolutionary novel without the proper balance of the future against the forces of the past. The future must be included as an integral part of the synoptic vision of the revolutionary artist and where that is lacking we have an intensified perception of the mad rhythm of the present, an intensified perception of an impending doom anticipated in the form of vague forebodings rather than clearly visualized characters and situations. Forebodings—which objectify themselves in the form of flat, two dimensional ghost-like beings projected upon the screen with the accelerated tempo of a rapidly unwound film.

And that is what "1919"—as well as the preceding novel, "the Forty-second Parallel"—attempts to express: the drifting purposeless nature of American life, the sway of dark elemental forces, on the background of which the living personalities shrink and shrivel into mere shadows. Human dust swirling and eddying in the maelstrom of American life, human shades driven like autumn leaves toward some unknown destiny; human lives thrown into the great hopper to be ground to the point of complete loss of will, sense of direction and conscious purpose of life. Sailors, intellectuals, artists, business men—all go through the same process of depersonalization, emerge out of that hopper as passive moulds of our own period, cannon fodder for some unknown historical forces. Even revolutionaries have the same impersonal character. They drift into the movement, are seized by some mighty wave and are tossed about as though they were possessed by the revolutionary spirit against their own bidding. Drift versus revolutionary mastery; flat silhouetting instead of a three dimensional perspective of living characters; disconnected episodes reeled off by some extraneous forces as against the dramatic continuity of innerly connected situations,—these are the characteristic features of the novel, which it shares with all other typical literary productions of the fellow-travellers in the revolutionary struggles. True revolutionary realism can come only as the refraction of life through the prism of a living, struggling personality, consciously orientated upon the future, integrating it as the necessary coordinate of its perceptual field. And it is exactly that orientation upon the future which is lacking in the typical fellow-traveller, who is carried away by the elemental force of the revolutionary movement but is blind to its conscious purposiveness. Thence the

flattening out of the present, the distorted vision, the lack of true dramaticism, the dwarfing of the personality, the bulging out of the background to the dimension of an overtowering fate. All of which are featured greatly in the works of the revolutionary fellow-traveller—John Dos Passos.

SENEX

Moving to a Goal

IT HAS already been stated that the publishers of the VANGUARD desire to build up an Anarchist-Communist federation. We will continue to indicate in an intelligent, militant, and revolutionary manner the necessity for a libertarian society as the only solution to the social problems. But our hopes for a federation through the continuation of this publication demands unceasing support from our comrades.

It is of great importance that we receive immediate co-operation. Our comrades, students and workers, should write us for bundle lots, and send us their individual subscriptions. Get in touch with us, so that we may move towards our goal.

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