

Independent
Socialist
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No. 1

INTRODUCTION TO

INDEPENDENT SOCIALISM

Edited
by
HAL
DRAPER

SECOND EDITION

**INDEPENDENT
SOCIALIST
PRESS**

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TO
THE NEW GENERATION
OF SOCIALISTS

**INDEPENDENT
SOCIALIST
PRESS**

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Foreword

The present book is a collection of articles from the annual "pamphlet issues" of *Labor Action*, the weekly published by the Independent Socialist League.

The Independent Socialist League was one of the most significant of the socialist groups that have arisen in this country, primarily because of the distinctive ideas which it contributed to the remolding of socialist policy and thinking during and after the Second World War.

It was founded in 1940 with the name Workers Party, in the course of a split with the Trotskyist group, the Socialist Workers Party. This split followed a lively political dispute precipitated by the outbreak of the war and the role of Russia in the war lineup at the side of Hitler Germany. The Majority of the SWP followed Trotsky in advocating support, albeit critical support, to the Russian attack on Finland and Poland as well as "defense of the Soviet Union" after the war started. We rejected this policy, not in order to support the opposite side, but in the name of revolutionary opposition to both of the imperialist camps involved in the world struggle. "*Neither Washington nor Moscow!*" was a concise summary of this approach, and the term "Third Camp" was widely used to describe it.

The political character of the ISL quickly broadened from this war position to a wide reinterpretation of the meaning of revolutionary socialism for our day. Reacting sharply against the bureaucratic concepts of both official Stalinism and official Trotskyism, it swung to a deep-going emphasis on the integration of socialism and democracy in all aspects of politics. What was distinctive, however, was that this was accompanied by equally sharp opposition to the American Establishment, to American imperialism, to capitalism and its political representatives here.

What resulted was a unique combination

of revolutionary opposition to both capitalism and Communism. It has been the pattern that would-be advocates of democratic socialism, pushing themselves in revulsion away from the image of pseudo-"socialism" projected by Moscow's totalitarianism, have tended to push themselves over to political accommodation with bourgeois society or some wing of it; while those who wished to break with the powers-that-be and "disaffiliate" from the status quo tended to nurture illusions about the Russian alternative to that system which they knew. Hatred of Stalinism has commonly led to reformist conciliation with capitalism; hatred of capitalism has often led to sympathy for Stalinism, as the enemy of our enemy.

It was the great contribution of the ISL that it broke this pattern and worked out a new socialist synthesis to replace it. There have not been very many distinctly different syntheses of socialist thought in the course of its history—the most important are the Marxian, the Fabian-Revisionist, and the anarcho-syndicalist—and each has had to be re-synthesized in adaptation to a changing world. Leninism was one such re-synthesis of Marxian socialism for a period. With the destruction of the Russian Revolution and its gains by the Stalin-led counterrevolution, a new political and social force entered on the world scene. This is what we came to call "bureaucratic collectivism," the new totalitarian system built by this counterrevolution.

It is a force that is as anti-capitalist as it is anti-socialist. This is a key. The world social conflict is no longer a duel between capitalism and socialism; it has become a triangular struggle. It is this triangle of forces, contending for mastery in the world, which is the source of the new and unprecedented ideological crisis of socialism today.

This crisis is in the first place a crisis in the very meaning of socialism. What was needed was a socialist analysis

which planted a firm, fixed point—at the third vertex of the triangle, so to speak—from which to carry on uncompromisingly the working-class struggle against both of the rival exploitive systems contending for domination. This is the viewpoint the ISL worked out in the course of its eighteen and a half years of existence; and this is, in short, the heart of its "Independent Socialism." It formulated a *revolutionary democratic socialism* for our time.

The political heritage of the ISL is contained primarily in its press—its weekly *Labor Action* and its theoretical journal *The New International*—both published continuously from 1940 to 1958, when the ISL entered by agreement into the Socialist Party and ended its independent work. In a series of Clippingbooks we plan to make this political heritage available for socialist educational use. With the exception of the present volume, each volume will be devoted to selected articles on a single subject.

The Clippingbook format is literally a book of clippings photographically reproduced. Its esthetic defects, as compared with letterpress printing, are only too obvious, but this format alone makes possible the production of a small edition at low cost.

Subsequent Clippingbooks will be selected from the entire body of Independent Socialist literature. This first volume is selected only from the nine "pamphlet issues" published annually as special numbers of *Labor Action* from 1950 on. From its inception through the war period and beyond, *Labor Action* was mainly an agitational paper designed for mass distribution; but by the time I became its editor in 1949, it was already changing. For the rest of its existence it was, in effect, a political educational magazine in tabloid format. In line with this change, one issue each year, in May, was turned over entirely to educational material on a given question. (A list of these pamphlet-issues will be found below.) All were issued while I was editor with the exception of the last, which was edited by Gordon Haskell.

Most of the articles which follow are given complete; some have been slightly

pruned, mainly to fit space; a few are excerpted from longer articles. There are naturally a considerable number of topical references, written with the events of the day or immediate period in mind. I have not wished to edit these references out even if that had been possible, for the exposition gains from the concreteness of its application. The reader, however, is asked to bear this topicality in mind; the year of publication is given at the head of each article.

This series of Independent Socialist Clippingbooks is being issued above all to provide a source of educational material in revolutionary democratic socialism for a new generation, out of the experience and thought of an older one. If it serves that purpose the labor will have been rewarded.

HAL DRAPER

Note to the Second Edition

In the present edition, some chapters have been omitted and others more or less abridged, in order to reduce the size of the book and thereby the price. While economics has been the main consideration, we have tried to limit omissions to two types: material whose content is essentially covered in other chapters, even if from another angle; and material which has "aged" more than others, because of topicality. One result is a greater concentration on the most basic issues of modern politics, without that topical analysis of current struggle movements which can only be handled by current publications. But as we enter the Seventies, it is clearer than ever that no effective revolutionary movement can be built without a solid Marxist grounding in the basic political issues of our era. And that is, as before, the theme of this collection.

H.D.

1

THE SOCIALIST IDEA: A CONCISE SUMMARY

The ideas of socialism are under attack from various sides. The Republican Party's main charge against the Fair Deal is that the Democrats are leading America "down the road to socialism." Austerity in Britain and all the economic difficulties of the British Labor Party government are blamed on "socialism." And finally, the totalitarian slave state in Russia and all its evils are pointed to as the fruits "of socialism."

In the face of this concentrated political and ideological attack, the Independent Socialist League proudly states that its chief aim is to spread the ideas of SOCIALISM among the workers and people generally. But because this word is being abused to describe and damn such completely different ideologies, programs and policies as are presided over by Truman, Attlee and Stalin, it is now more necessary than ever for those who call themselves socialists to state clearly what they mean by "socialism."

All organizations which have called themselves "socialist" for the past hundred years have shared one idea. This was that capitalism cannot by its very nature provide plenty, security and peace to the peoples of the world, and that it must be replaced by a system of society in which the basic industries are owned and controlled by the workers and the common people through their government. It was this idea that Karl Marx expressed in the "Communist Manifesto" of 1848 when he wrote that the Manifesto's program could be summed up in a single sentence: "Abolition of private property."

The experience of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and of the social-democratic movements of Europe has taught Independent Socialists that another side of the socialist idea must be stressed equally with that of the abolition of private property in the means of production. This is the idea of *workers' control of production*, of complete economic, political and social democracy as necessary characteristics of any socialist society.

The Marxian socialists always stressed the role of the workers in establishing socialism. To them socialism was not just a fine ideal

that was to come about because many enlightened people wanted it. They knew that the workers, organized and trained by modern industry, were the only social class capable of leading the fight to abolish capitalism and usher in the new socialist society.

This idea is more important today than ever. The failure of the workers in the past thirty years to come to power in any country and to reorganize it along socialist lines is due primarily to the subversion and demoralization of the working-class movements by the social-democrats and the Stalinists.

These two movements operated in different ways and for different ends. The rightist social-democrats demoralized the workers' movements by leading them to subordinate their own interests to those of the "liberal" capitalists. To them "socialism" was something to be talked about in peaceful May Day rallies. But in every decisive situation they blunted the struggles of the workers. And through their bureaucratic control of the labor movements of Europe, they turned them into docile movements of social reform.

The Stalinists, far more bureaucratic than the social-demo-

crats in their organizational methods, taught the workers to rely on the Russian government for their liberation rather than on their own organized strength and everywhere subordinated the struggles of the workers to the interests of the totalitarian Russian state.

The Independent Socialists insist that socialism can only be a product of a working-class movement which relies on its own strength. A democratic society can only be established by a working class which is itself democratically organized. It can only be established by a working class which, in the course of its own economic and political struggles, comes to UNDERSTAND its historic mission to reorganize society along socialist lines.

Side by side with the private ownership of the means of production, the capitalist class has established a political state which is organized for the main purpose of safeguarding and maintaining the rule of capital over the economic and social life of the nation. This state power, whether it be organized in the form of parliamentary government (as in the United States and Western Europe) or of fascist dictatorship, is the chief prop of the capitalist order.

The workers cannot, therefore, hope to establish socialism by gradually reforming capitalism through the election of "friends of labor" to office. For socialism to be established the workers must understand that only a new form of government, organized along new principles, can serve their purposes.

The experience of the Russian Revolution and of the temporary and half-completed workers' revolutions in other countries teaches that the political form best adapted to a workers' government is

insufficient critique

that of local, regional and national councils elected democratically on an occupational basis. Through such councils the productive members of society can effectively and democratically organize all sides of social life. They can plan for production and distribution, for public health, schooling and such military forces as they may require to protect themselves from attack by capitalist or Stalinist classes inside or outside their own borders.

The Independent Socialists do not attempt to prescribe to the workers the exact institutions and methods through which they should organize a socialist society. They insist only on two cardinal principles and seek to educate and fight for them within the labor movement and in society generally. They are for complete democracy and they believe that the emancipation of society from the rule of capitalist owners and Stalinist bureaucrats can only be achieved by a working class which is conscious of its goal and organized, independently of all other classes in society to achieve it.

In addition to this insistence on the need for democracy and consciousness in the working class as

a necessary precondition for socialism, the Independent Socialists stress the international character of the socialist idea.

We are internationalists because we believe in the brotherhood of the common people of all lands. That is, we believe that whatever differences of language and historical tradition and culture may separate them, all human beings have similar basic needs and hence similar desires.

But over and beyond this DESIRE for world brotherhood, the Independent Socialists insist that modern society cannot solve its economic and social problems until the whole world is reorganized and united under socialism.

The most striking contemporary demonstration of the impossibility of restricting socialism to a single country is the condition of society in Great Britain today. It is true that Great Britain has not been organized on socialist lines. But the attempt to establish a form of nationalization of some of the major industries in Britain has by itself brought no real long-term solution to the economic plight of the British people. Their economy is dependent on world economy, and the same would be true even

if the workers had taken power and expropriated the capitalists completely. The same would be true of any working class which attempted to build socialism in one country.

Thus, for the Independent Socialists, internationalism is both an ideal and a necessity. They support the struggles of all workers everywhere against their capitalist and Stalinist masters, and the struggles for national liberation of all colonial and oppressed peoples. They urge the workers of all lands to join hands in their fight against their masters, and insist that a socialist society in which the exploitation and oppression of man by man has been abolished once and for all can only be achieved on an international basis.

To Independent Socialists, then, the following are prerequisites for the establishment of a socialist society: Abolition of the private ownership of the basic means of production; collective ownership under complete democracy in both the economy and in government; leadership of society by a conscious working class; internationalism.

SAM FELIKS

1952

2

FROM ROOSEVELT'S NEW DEAL
TO THE WAR DEAL

It may be difficult to remember that the American economy ever fell to the bottom of the most severe and protracted depression in the history of capitalism, during the 1930s. The depression decade has almost been pushed into the backyard of history away from the loud and sustained paeans of adulations about the fabulous production of the 1950s. No wonder: it can hardly be pointed to as a strong argument in praise of American capitalism, especially since this was the last decade of a peacetime economy. The performance was scarcely impressive.

"The Promise of American Life" has not been fulfilled. Herbert Croly had warned the American people before World War I about the fatalistic expectation that "the familiar benefits will continue to accumulate automatically." But the 1920s seemed to damp the criticism, of all but the radicals, that prosperity under capitalism could not go on forever. The "irresponsible optimism" of that day reached its height just before the stock-market crash of 1929; every man was to become a capitalist through widespread ownership of stocks and shares in the prosperity, now that depressions were eliminated. But the height to which that prosperity soared only mirrored the depth and despair of the next decade.

Present-day Fair-Dealism rests upon the emergence and the program, the aspirations if not the accomplishments, of the Roosevelt New Deal. The New Deal was thrust upon the American people at a time when the wheels of the American economy seemed to be grinding to a complete halt. It offered a program and plan of action inconceivable (perhaps even to this day) to the Hoover mentality. Liberalism, seemingly on the brink of bankruptcy, found a new vehicle for its social reform in the New Deal. It was an era in which even defenders of capitalism and its theories came to question its practices and attempted to reform its injustices.

The New Deal has often been called a revolution. Certainly, if one were to read some of Roosevelt's attacks upon the "money changers" and the monopolists, the idea might occur that fundamental changes were being proposed, if not being secretly carried out. Important evils of the American economy were singled out and attacked, but not dealt with in a fundamental way. The far from revolutionary rationale of the New Deal has been stated as follows:

The New Deal recognized that the American economy had slowed down and that the forces within it were no longer in equilibrium. Opportunities for capitalist enterprise had contracted; the population had ceased expanding; there were few new great industrial fields to be opened up; overseas markets had been shut off by high tariff walls or were already being closely worked by rival imperialist nations. Business control had shifted from industrial capitalism to finance capitalism. The spread between the capacity to produce and the ability to consume was constantly widening. The world market for American agricultural goods had largely disappeared. Not only had new jobs for white-collar and professional workers practically become non-existent, but there was a surplus rather than a dearth of industrial labor as well. Class lines were being drawn more clearly; the danger of class hostilities was no longer remote but already in evidence.

The New Deal program proceeded on the assumption that it was necessary to restrain class antagonisms, if not permanently at least until a recovery could be worked out. It was the often-stated idea of seeking a balance in the economy: private property was to continue but it was to stop exploiting labor and the producers of raw materials; agriculture, despite a declining market, was to increase its income and labor was to be assured employment and at least a means of subsistence.

Such a reform program could be given a serious trial only in a country which had a large accumulation of wealth to draw upon and a vast reserve of natural resources.

The success or failure of the New Deal depended on the achievement of the program to hold down class antagonisms. If the New Deal was unable to solve the economic crisis and bring an end to widespread unemployment, then the class conflict would break out later on. But the Roosevelt administration never had to face this eventuality; the outbreak of war in 1939 did more to solve the crisis in American capitalism than six years of New Deal planning. The war rewound the mainspring of U. S. economy, and to this day the war economy has been the basis for continued "prosperity."

It has been sometimes stated that the New Deal was never meant to be anything more than a *pro tem* solution to the problems of the depression and the inequalities of American life. The New Deal provided several reforms, corrected a number of abuses, attacked monopoly, and above all gave labor the right to organize. These are admitted to be only first steps to a wider social program

leading to what most liberals would call the "mixed economy."

But, as will be pointed out later on, the New Deal had no program to move beyond its *pro tem* solutions, and the reforms it made and inequities it corrected often raised so many problems and inequities as they endeavored to solve. And although labor was given the right to organize in Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 and later in the Wagner Act of 1935, the actual organization drives succeeded because of labor's own power in the strikes and sit-downs. This was the period when the great upsurge of the CIO took place!

The New Deal may be characterized as more of a political deal than an economic one in the sense that it was more concerned with creating a political balance than solving fundamental economic and social problems. The New Dealers did not survey the economic and social scene, correcting abuses and injustices wherever they occurred, but rather moved into those areas where there were large pressure groups effectively organized and articulate. It courted the political allegiance of strategically located economic interests, in order to maintain its political power at all. It came to represent a great many things to rather diverse interests. This conciliatory policy accounts for many of the zigzags in New Deal policy, for example on the question of monopoly. And in those areas where it did claim to take great steps forward, as in agriculture, from the standpoint of social justice it was a failure.

The earliest proclaimed objective of the New Deal was to find a solution to unemployment; and on this much of its success or failure has to be judged. It is one thing to attack the "money changers" as the cause of the depression, but quite another to provide employment and security after claiming to have routed them. The list of New Deal measures for immediate relief and for eventual reform is long and not unimpressive,

especially on paper. The highlights fall on the social-security program, the wage-and-hour law, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the insurance and loan provisions for small home owners and saving accounts, and the elimination of some of the more corrupt practices of investment bankers and utilities corporations. These are some of the laws and programs that give the New Deal its liberal and reform character.

In these respects, American capitalism, under the impulsion of a crisis in which the ruling class lost its self-confidence and working-class radical discontent mounted, hurriedly caught up with types of social-reform measures which were already much better known in the older capitalisms of Europe. In this sense, the New Deal period has been called the "social-democratic phase" of U. S. capitalism; the suggested analogy (only a partial analogy, of course) is illuminating.

But the search is long, hard and fruitless if one tries to find those elements in this program of American liberalism which were capable of dealing with the depression. Some of the more glaring abuses were mitigated, but still others were created.

The major attack against the depression during the eight years before the War Deal came on five fronts: (1) the National Industrial Recovery Act; (2) the Agricultural Adjustment Act and Soil Conservation program; (3) the National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act; (4) the attack on monopolies through the Temporary National Economic Commission; and (5) the various relief and work projects like the Works Progress Administration and the Public Works Administration.

While perhaps nobody starved during this period, the important fact is that at the end of the 1930s there were still almost 10 million unemployed and many more underemployed. The New Deal shifted from program to program in the hope it could push the right button to end the depression. Industrial production even passed the level of 1929, and the United States entered into the War Deal with many economists predicting that the figure of 10 million unemployed would become the minimum for the economy.

In the case of agriculture, the New Deal worked in the interests of the agricultural landlords and the commercial farmers almost entirely. And not all agricultural interests were equally benefited; favored were the producers of corn, tobacco, wheat and cotton, while meat and dairy producers and the unorganized growers of vegetables received relatively little support. Landlords having mortgage debts were assisted but not the tenant farmers with chattel debts. It did next to nothing, and what it did never really extended beyond the experimental stage, for the sharecroppers of the South and the subsistence farmers all over the country. And for the two million agricultural laborers nothing was done; they were left to the vigilante committees.

The main idea behind the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 and the later Soil Conservation Act was to raise the prices of certain agricultural commodities through the curtailment of production.

Although farm income was increased in the aggregate, it worked to the predominant benefit of the landlords and the commercial farmers. The benefits of the government payments for crop reduction created greater inequalities in the distribution of farm income. The picture of the typical American farm family, living in self-sustained plenty, was fast becoming a myth along with the typical rags-to-riches story. Thousands of small farms were saved through the extension of mortgage credit preventing a debacle resulting from the depression and the main AAA policies.

Under the AAA, the worst abuses occurred in the cotton districts. In order to reduce costs, farm machinery was more widely employed, and where there was a reduction in crops it came off the land used by the tenant farmer and sharecropper. The result was to turn thousands of the poorest farm families onto the road as jalopy Joads or into the cities to go on relief.

Later New Deal attempts, through Rural Rehabilitation and the Farm Security Act, to mitigate these tragedies were limited and only partially successful. While the New Deal proclaimed the reduction of unemployment as one of its major goals, its agricultural program was one that turned the poorest farmers and farm laborers off the land, adding to the millions of unemployed. According to the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy, farm tenancy increased from 25 per cent of all farmers in 1880 to 42 per cent in 1935. The attempt through the Farm Security Administration to organize small family-sized subsistence farms was an anachronism out of another age, which was attacked by the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. The alternative of organizing farm cooperatives was attacked by the big farm interests and the idea was quietly dropped in New Deal councils.

But the great anachronism of the AAA and the social failure of the New Deal's reform of capitalism was the reduction of crops and the slaughtering of livestock in the midst of poverty. While millions all over the world were actually starving and millions in the U. S. living on subsistence levels or below, the New Deal was busily engaged in various schemes to further reduce production because it could not be sold at a profit. But as the years

of the New Deal progressed, the surpluses further accumulated even under scarcity production, and crops were still further restricted. For example, in 1939 wheat production was to be cut 50 per cent under 1938 production, and in cotton the total acreage planted was only about half of the normal amount. Henry Wallace, the secretary of agriculture, proclaimed the building of the ever-normal granary. This was characteristic of the New Deal: a full granary but a poverty-stricken people.

With respect to business, the New Deal worked closely with those interests that were connected with foreign trade and investment. It wrote reciprocal trade agreements; financed the rebuilding of the merchant marine; endeavored to protect the financial interests of the American investor in those places where default of interest and attempted repudiation of loans were taking place, as in Mexico. Specifically the State Department adopted an aggressive policy in the Far East for protecting the future right of American capital to exploit this underdeveloped area.

The New Deal forces had a special relationship with the consumer-goods industry. The program of the New Deal to raise prices and to increase labor's purchasing power through minimum-wage laws was precisely the thing to give immediate benefits to industries such as food-processing, clothing and tobacco. Due to the growth of monopoly capitalism, important sections of the American economy were highly controlled in prices, production and investment policy. During the depression these capital-goods industries, such as steel, cement and motor vehicles, experienced a relatively slight decrease in prices and a large drop in production, while in the more competitive consumer-goods industries the reverse occurred. The New Deal business policies of raising prices and restricting production, it can be seen, were more liable to aid the consumer-goods sector.

The NRA of 1933 was not intended to be a temporary stop-gap device but a bold administrative improvement to bring the country back to prosperity. Many of the features of the NRA codes and the entire conception of the act smacked thoroughly of fascist corporate-state ideas. The NRA, when enacted, followed the proposals of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce in setting up industry-wide boards to prevent "cut-throat" competition, regulate production and establish minimum hours and wages. To accomplish this the government suspended the anti-trust laws so that business was able to do in public what it had always done or tried to do in secret.

Faced with the growing demand for and the possibility of enactment of a 30-hour law, business agreed to Section 7a giving labor "the right to organize and bargain collectively." This stimulated unions where they were already strong. But the "right to organize" became more illusory than real under the NRA since it lacked any power of enforcement by law or through the action of either the industry-wide code, the NRA administrator General Hugh Johnson or President Roosevelt.

In part, the NRA became in practice a means for open cartelization of American industry with government support through the "codes of fair competition." In actual operation the codes became the means for the domination of the biggest units within the industry. Prices were being raised at a much faster rate than wages and the country was on the inflationary spurt deemed so desirable by the president. Organized, not to mention unorganized, labor had next to no voice in the formulation or administration of the codes. Many forget that the biggest advance in labor organization in this period was in company unions, and bona-fide unionization was largely won despite the opposition of companies,

company police, vigilante committees and the hamstringing activities of the National Labor Board.

As advantageous as the NRA may appear to be to business, late in 1933 business groups and the Republican Party began a running fight with the NRA, demanding that the government retire from the field of "regulation" and leave the operation of industrial affairs to private business. The program the leading capitalists wanted included all the provisions of the NRA but excluded any reference to labor's right to organize for collective bargaining or the control of monopoly prices.

The controversy over the NRA reached a head with the initial reports of the National Recovery Review Board headed by the famous lawyer, Clarence Darrow. It accused the NRA of fostering monopoly and oppressing small industrialists; it charged the administration of certain codes by monopoly interests, and stated that consumer prices were at the mercy of monopoly control. In a supplementary report, the Review Board came to this conclusion:

"The choice is between monopoly sustained by government, which is clearly the trend in the NRA, and a planned economy, which demands socialized ownership and control, since only by collective ownership can the inevitable conflict of separately owned units for the market be eliminated in favor of planned production. There is no hope for the small businessman or for complete recovery in America in enforced restriction upon production for the purpose of maintaining higher prices. The hope for the American people, including the small businessman, not to be overwhelmed by their own abundance lies in the planned use of America's resources following socialization. To give the sanction of government to sustain profits is not a planned economy, but a regimented organization for exploitation."

Needless to say, the National Recovery Review Board never met again. Its findings were in sharp conflict not only with the specific emphasis of the New Deal at that time (1934) when it was furthering monopoly, but also in the later "trust-busting" period. It formulated the beginning of a program capable of bringing complete recovery to America. At the time the NRA was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1935, it was already falling apart due to internal conflict, and there was no serious attempt to have it re-enacted in another form, as was done with the AAA and other legislation invalidated by the court.

Under Section 7a of the NRA, workers in many of the mass-production industries, such as auto and rubber, decided to test their newly won right to organize for collective bargaining, and they were even responsive to the inept organizational drives of the AFL. The AFL, organized in craft unions, was incapable of organizing the mass-production industries where the workers were predominantly semi-skilled. Strikes broke out all over the country: the San Francisco general strike, the Toledo Electric Auto-Lite strike, Minneapolis teamsters, Weirton Steel, and many others.

The right to organize under Section 7a was a right that had only to be fought out on the picket line in order to be won. The AFL expressed disillusionment because it expected the government to do the organizing for it, and it feared that mass strikes would lead to the growth of radical influence in the newly formed unions. The strikes during the NRA period of the New Deal demonstrated that the organization drive still had to contend with company police, local police, National Guard troops, labor spies. In the San Francisco general strike in 1934, General Hugh Johnson of the NRA flew out to Frisco where he opposed the strike, called the strikers "rats" and invited vigilantes to raid the headquarters of radical political groups. The

NRA's National Labor Board more often than not served to delay organization through lengthy mediation hearings, and many strikes were called in defiance of the NLB.

When the NIRA was declared unconstitutional in 1935, Senator Wagner salvaged Section 7a, and the National Labor Relations Act was passed in July 1935. It established the right to organize for collective bargaining and in addition listed a series of unfair labor practices for which employers could be enjoined: restraining or coercing workers in their plans to organize, discriminating against workers for trade-union activity or in favor of company unions.

It was in this period that the great organizing drives took place in auto, steel, rubber, glass and textiles. The UAW began the struggle against General Motors using the tactics of the "quickie" and sit-down strike; in February 1937, GM capitulated. A few weeks later, after another sit-down strike, Chrysler followed suit. The unionization of the two giants of the auto industry (Ford did not sign up until 1940) followed the impressive demonstration of labor's power as opposed to the run-around they received in 1934 at the hands of the Auto Labor Board, from which they received nothing.

The organization of the mass-production industries could only have been possible once the militant CIO was outside of AFL ranks following the split at the 1935 convention. To have depended upon the government's initiative would have been fatal, and in reality government help was virtually non-existent. Although the NLRB was established in 1935, it was not until April 1937 that the Supreme Court validated important sections of the law, and decisions on other important sections came from the court in 1938. Therefore the most important part of the drive that spearheaded the formation of the CIO took place when the machinery of the NLRB was tied down by impending Supreme Court decisions. The NLRB served as a psychological impetus, but it was labor's own power that did the job.

The New Deal in various ways offered advantages to many groups. The farmers and banks came into the New Deal with preferred claim. Through their powerful organizations they were able to utilize the legislation benefiting them. Industry also was able to seize upon the NRA for purposes of monopolization and price-fixing through the Chambers of Commerce, NAM and the thousands of trade councils. But labor had first to organize and fight before it was able to get something out of the NLRB and the Wage and Hour Law.

But whatever labor was able to extract from the New Deal, by its own militancy or by the pressure of the times, the New Deal policy has to be judged primarily on the basis of how it achieved its main objective—putting the economy back on its feet. The "recession" of 1937 already showed the New Dealers that they had failed. By 1938 Roosevelt turned in another direction with a call for trust-busting. The Temporary National Economic Committee, which was to investigate monopoly, was the result; it set itself to prove that the depression could really be blamed on the concentration of industry with its rigid fixed prices and its violation of the free market.

Broadus Michell, in his *Depression Decade*, points to the contradiction which this involved for the New Deal approach. The New Deal could not evolve a program capable of going to the roots of the depression, for such a solution would have meant attacking the fundamental institution of capitalism—private property. Writing of the TNEC, this last gasp of the New Deal before "Dr. Win-the-War" took over, he says:

"A guess would be that the 'recession' beginning in the autumn of 1937 had disillusioned the president and his advisers with former New Deal [economic] inter-

ventionist policies, and persuaded them that another crusade, however contradictory to the old one, was indicated. The president himself, and several leading participants, such as Henderson, who had been intimately involved in government encouragement of business combination, confessed no embarrassment in now damning what they had helped produce. . . .

" . . . the [TNEC] committee might have concluded that the choice for the future was between concentration of economic power in private hands or in public hands. . . . But the committee was unprepared for this recommendation. Loyal to the president's purpose 'to preserve the system of private enterprise for profit,' the committee proposed that where private initiative was degenerative, government should reinvigorate it. The committee seemed

unconscious of the touching quality of a faith in private enterprise that required government inducement. . . .

" . . . To the whole equivocal episode of the Temporary National Economic Committee may be appended President Roosevelt's doubtful but dogged commendation: 'It is a program whose basic thesis is not that the system of free private enterprise has failed in this generation, but that it has not yet been tried.'"

While—in 1941!—Roosevelt could defend capitalism only with the claim that it had "not yet been tried," his descendants in the Fair Deal today boast of its achievements. What they are boasting of are the "miracles" of capitalist production when it is mobilized for war, for this is capitalism at its "best." It was the war which solved the problems of the New Deal, as it is the war economy which shores up capitalism under the Fair Deal.

HAL DRAPER

1952

3

THE TRUMAN ERA: WHAT WAS THE FAIR DEAL?

In the course of the 20-year-long development from the heyday of the New Deal to today's Fair Deal (with the War Deal as interlude), there has been a significant change in the attitude of the leaders of the labor movement and liberal opinion.

There was a time in the 1930s when the liberal-labor leaders looked on the New Deal as the harbinger of a new social order, of basic transformations in society which would transfer power from the "Vested Interests" to the "People." It gave them the dynamic feeling of participating in a movement which was Going Somewhere, which could reshape the world we live in, which had a positive progressive mission. They were not merely "preserving" Our Way of Life or fighting a rearguard defense against "reaction." Roosevelt's bugles, they thought, were pealing for them to build, to create, to transform, to revolutionize. They felt alive and vibrant, On The March.

At the time they felt they could be scornful of the "dogmatic" socialists who told them that they were on the march into a blind alley. It was a great illusion. Today what remains of the ties which bind labor-liberals to the Fair Deal? The tie is still strong, but it is a different one. Where the New Deal began by battling the Premise of the Future, its continuator the Fair Deal is now simply . . . the lesser evil. In comparison with the reactionary forces further to the right, it is not something to fight for; it is something to console oneself with. It is not a Banner in the Good Fight for a world of social justice; it is a wavering line of retreat.

What brought about this great change in the political psychology of the New Deal-Fair Dealers themselves? It was not brought about by the shift from Roosevelt to Truman; it was initiated by Roosevelt himself, when he announced the replacement of Dr. New Deal by Dr. Win-the-War. Is it to be explained merely as a "betrayal" by faithless leaders—that easy substitute for understanding what is happening in the world? Or is it necessary for the labor-liberals to re-examine their views on what the New Deal and Fair Deal represented in the first place?

It is not the primary aim of these pages to summarize the detailed record of that "betrayal," if such

it was—that is, of the steps in the change that has come over Fair-Dealism. In early 1948 Harry Truman's credit with labor and liberals had already been well-nigh exhausted. He had brought back the most hated of anti-labor weapons, and had used it to break three great

strikes; he had, not long before, appealed to Congress for a law a good deal more vicious than the Taft-Hartley Act, a law to draft strikers into the army; his record of positive accomplishment was not impressive. Expecting his defeat anyway, important sections of the labor movement were ready to break away.

As we all remember, taking advantage of the fact that Tom Dewey was the only alternative to him before the people, Truman gained a new lease on life with a splurge of militant Fair-Dealish speeches, dusting off the old appeal. It accomplished the miraculous upset and his return to the White House. "Labor did it!" he told the press; and labor, newly impressed with its own strength and social weight, expected that *now*, at least, its interests would be recognized, if only in gratitude perhaps.

Therefore the record since 1948 is doubly damning. Who can labor or liberalism point to with enthusiasm? What have they gotten? Not even the civil-rights legislation the promise of which half-reconciled them to Truman in 1948—after they had forgotten that Truman personally had opposed even the plank-promises in the Democratic platform. They still have the Taft-Hartley Act! they got more strikebreaking, as the railroad workers know; they are tarred with the festering corruption and bad odor of the administration; they have to fight against Truman-appointed war mobilization agencies infested with dollar-a-year big businessmen, of whom the now resigned C. E. Wilson was only the most prominent; they have the Korean war; they have the rapprochement with Franco fascism, the change of line on butcher Chiang Kai-shek, the betrayal of Tunisia; they have the "subversive list" and the government-initiated witchhunt, with its pall of fear blanketing the land.

But after you have gone through the concrete record of the Truman administration—as we do from week to week in the regular issues of LABOR ACTION—you will still not have exorcized the soul of the Fair Deal mystique, the role it plays in the thinking of the labor-liberals. It is not to be argued away merely by itemizing the misdeeds, delinquencies, sins, villainies, hypocrisies, outrages and abuses of the Truman regime—no matter how impressive the total may be. Our labor-liberals are not really blind to these, however they may close their eyes. They have gnashed their teeth, before now; they have cursed under their breath; under sufficient provocation, they have deplored aloud.

For they have a theory about the Fair Deal. It is this theory we have to talk about.

The theory is a simple one: *The Fair Deal, with all its "faults," is fundamentally liberalism-in-government. With all its derelictions and inconsistencies (which we know well but do not like to talk about, in order not to give aid and comfort to its enemies), it is the job of us liberals to push it to be "true to itself," to stiffen its backbone, etc. The Fair Deal is "for the people," or at any rate wants to be, as against the "the reactionaries," who are concerned exclusively with Private Interest, Vested Interest and Special Interest.*

Now this is a very simple theory to hold. Cling to it with sufficient determination (*where are you if you abandon it?*) and almost anything the Fair Deal administration may actually do can be viewed with sympathetic understanding, if not equanimity. The Fair Deal does these deplorable things because we, the liberals, have not pushed hard enough; "the reactionaries" were too strong; the wrong people got to the president's ear; we have got to support the president twice as hard in order to buck him up to resist the forces of evil. . . .

Before discussing this directly, there are two things which have to be said about this *type* of theory.

(1) Precisely because it is engineered so that no concrete experience can shake it, it is fundamentally a *dogma*. By definition, a theory which is not capable of

being submitted to the test of facts and practice is a *dogma*. But this sounds absurd at first blush: it is these labor-liberals who pride themselves on being "practical" —"practical politicians" especially—and not "dogmatists" like the socialists. But there is no paradox in reality. There are few dogmas which are held so rigidly as the dogmas of the "practical" men, who consider themselves to be practical because they are unaware of the theories which do clutter up their thinking. They are merely unable to be critical of the theories which they hold.

(2) Like all other dogmas, it springs not from the generalization of experience (this is what unites theory and practice), but from a *need* which lies outside the line of thought and action which the victims fondly consider to be their basis. In this respect it is of the same *type* as the fundamental dogma of pro-Stalinism. (Don't jump, dear liberal reader—retain the open mind of which you are so justly proud!)

The dogma of the Stalinist fellow-traveler, in its more intelligent version, is this: *Russia, with all its "faults," is fundamentally socialism-in-power. It does deplorable things, not all of which we can defend. But for all its derelictions and inconsistencies, which unwhistorical-minded people love to harp on and which do indeed make us uncomfortable, it has done the important thing: abolished capitalism. This makes it fundamentally progressive, whatever distortions have been imposed upon it by the reactionary capitalists who press upon it from all sides. It is the job of us genuine progressives to push it to be "true to itself." Everything bad about it (which we know well but do not talk about, in order not to give aid and comfort to its enemies) is due to the pressure of reaction around it. The more reaction (Western capitalism) presses it, the more bad things it does; therefore we must defend it twice as hard, in order to make it possible for the basic good in it to flower. . . .*

This dogma also, as is well known, makes its possessors immune to mere muckraking about the unpleasant features of the Russian regime—which is why three-quarters of all anti-Stalinist "exposé" material, while necessary and useful, is so much steam up the spout. It is irrelevant to, and does not touch the underlying need.

That need is for a social goal to live by. For the pro-Stalinist, who cannot be sold back on the capitalism he has rejected and which is the system he knows through his own experiences (not exposés), to wrench himself free of the Stalinist myth is to drop into a void. There is many an ex-Stalinist who can be seen in this zombie state: you can recognize them, the eyes are glazed, politically speaking. This is because they do not see any "realistic" alternative to the twin evils of capitalism and Stalinism.

There is the liberal analogue. Where are you if you abandon your faith in the Fair Deal? Where do you go from there? A backward worker (or for that matter some AFL leader) may register his disgust by voting for the Outs—which translates as the Republicans. For the responsible spokesmen of (say) the CIO or Americans for Democratic Action there is no thinkable alternative in relapsing to mere political passivity. What remains is a wrench—the formation by labor of its own independent party!

But all this is not yet a substitute for discussing the dogma itself. What makes the Fair Deal represent "liberalism-in-government" for its well-intentioned supporters?

There are three things which make the Fair Deal the representative of liberalism, in the eyes of liberals. Let us take the simplest first. It is not the most important. Above all, it could not possibly do the job by itself. But it certainly has to be mentioned.

Some people—who, no doubt through no fault of their

own, have remained entirely ignorant of Marxism—~~think~~ that the socialist attitude toward capitalist politicians is based on denouncing them as lying demagogues, hypocritical betrayers of the people and general dishonest no-good scoundrels. This is not so. It is merely a frequently observable fact.

Even as a fact this tends to diminish in importance the higher up one goes in the echelons of the capitalist politicians, up to and including the Statesmen.

But this is far from EXCLUDING hypocritical demagoguery as a component of capitalist statemanship! On the contrary it is a continuing necessity for the most serious and respectable representatives of the species.

This will be news only to the most naive. Fundamentally it is a necessity, not because of regrettable character defects on the part of the individuals—who are as likely as not to be fine upstanding citizens, husbands and fathers with all the homely virtues—but because the inherent task of a capitalist government is to reconcile the irreconcilable: the antagonistic interests of a ruling class and the needs and interests of an economically exploited class.

This suggestion of the underlying explanation need not be accepted by the liberal, who however must recognize the fact. To go no further, it is recognized to be true of Franklin D. Roosevelt (himself) by his dry-eyed worshippers. It is even transformed into a kind of boast: *that clever old fox, master politician of the day as well as great idealist, who alone could hold his disparate coalition together with his consummate maneuvers.* . . . Does anyone really imagine this feat was accompanied by scrupulous honesty, especially in public speeches and promises? It is only on the seventh day of the week that Fair Deal philosophers denounce "Bolshevism" for believing in "the end justifies the means."

But this does not get us too far. Why do *these* politicians and *this* administration utilize liberal demagoguery, whereas others address their demagoguery to other quarters? It is also superficial to answer merely by referring to the needs of power politics and electoral coalitions. There is something much more real, however much the social demagoguery serves to puff it up.

Let us approach this much more important consideration from the viewpoint of the liberals themselves. These commonly reserve the epithet "troglodyte" and its variations for reactionaries like Senator Taft. They denounce the corresponding policies as "suicidal," "hangovers of the 19th century," "outworn," "unenlightened," "primitive," "archaic relic of the past"—any reader of the liberal journals can get up his own thesaurus. They are quite right, but what does this mean? What does it mean, besides, in view of the fact that "the reactionaries" are also accused (also quite rightly) of putting Property Interests above the Interests of the People?

What it means, given a moment's thought, is that "the reactionaries" are charged with not properly understanding the means to effectuate their own best interests. The liberals have something there and they justifiably use it for all it is worth. If a greedy capitalist profiteer, fighting price controls, he is jeopardizing the economy, inviting inflation, etc., and therefore endangering his own ability to continue to make profits from a longer range point of view. (Reactionary C. E. Wilson had to explain this to his fellow profiteers who denounced him for being sucked in by the Fair Deal.) If a labor-baiting employer infuriates the trade unions, he is warned (not without justice) that he is only driving labor to greater militancy and desperation. If a reactionary congressman votes against the Marshall Plan, he is asked how else the United States can maintain its premier position in the world and, above all, defend itself against the Russian threat. We need not pile up examples, which go through the roster of all liberal issues.

It works too, because it is true. It is behind the acute observation made by Washington columnist Peter Edson last June (our emphasis):

"One of the surprising things is what happens to rock-ribbed Republican business bigshots who come to town [Washington] to take top government defense jobs.

"They are immediately thrown up against tough international or domestic problems. Scarcities, foreign supply and demand, trade balances, dollar shortages are involved. All seem to call for economic controls.

"It is traditional that all businessmen hate government interference with the normal practices of the free-enterprise system. Yet what happens, nine times out of ten or even oftener, is that the business executives temporarily turned bureaucrats come up with the same answers that the economic planners and the New Dealers would propose."

As long ago as 1928, before the question became more acute, liberal Senator Wagner told the New York AFL:

"What is the effect of the injunction? I am still looking at it from the point of view of the employer. Its effect is just to postpone the formation of an adequate labor organization. It is keeping the labor movement in its fighting period; it is preventing the labor movement from coming to full maturity and assuming the tasks and responsibilities for which it is pre-eminently fitted." [That is, it prevents them from being housebroken.]

Wagner was a Fair Dealer before its time. The argument really swung weight when the CIO's struggles exploded in the 1930s in the midst of real labor discontent. It became well-nigh a New Deal platitude. It is not a demagogic argument merely thought up to persuade recalcitrant employers to be friendly to labor. It represents the considered school of thought of those who try to look at the interests of the system from a wider and longer-range viewpoint than that of the individual profit-seeker.

Never more than today does this approach come into play: Jim Crow is denounced because it loses American power its friends in the world. This doesn't convince hardened white-supremacists but it brings new active support from elements who yesterday talked cozily about relying on education and evolution.

The argument has its limits. It is a possible policy of wiser heads, for one thing, only if capitalism can still afford it—and American capitalism, the wealthiest in the world, certainly can. It has less effect—much less effect!—on those whose eyes are daily fixed on the diurnal grind of profit-making, the capitalists proper themselves, than it has on the men, less directly involved, who seek to govern the destinies of capitalism from the captain's bridge in Washington, where the vision even of the near-sighted is given a wider vista. It has a greater impact on governmental figures whose personal background and personal fortunes are less directly connected with individual capitalist enterprises; the prime example is FDR, the "country gentleman in the White House," who was thereby eminently fitted to take the wider view of the needs of the system as a whole, even against the short-sightedness of the economic royalists themselves.

Capitalism by its very nature blinds the individual capitalist to the over-all pattern; that is precisely why the class as a whole needs an "executive committee" very badly. This is especially true of America, which, despite the overweening power which history has thrust upon it, suffers from a capitalist class which in many respects is almost as politically backward as is its working class.

Behind the liberal charge of "troglodyte" against the reactionaries, then, is an important truth—one which points to the basis for the existence of conflicting factions within the framework of the same capitalist interests.

The liberal might ask himself: When a "reactionary," unenlightened and primitive, becomes enlightened and

sophisticated with regard to his own interests, what does he begin to look like? A *Fair Dealer*? We will not yet answer that. "His own interests," however, are still those of Property versus the People, to use the liberal formula.

The third consideration is really a special case of what we have already discussed. It is the tendency (of liberals) to identify liberalism with state regulation and intervention in economy. In few countries is this as much true as in the United States.

In the United States, it was the liberals (as well as the socialists) who first demanded increased state regulation to eliminate the abuses of uncontrolled private ownership of industry. This marked a change in the very nature of liberalism, which previously had been associated with the very opposite notion, *laissez-faire* and the freedom of the individual from control by the state power. But as business grew bigger and coagulated in powerful monopolistic combines, this horse-and-buggy-liberalism had to go. The interests of the people demanded protection from the depredations of big business, and the liberals had to realize that the economic oligarchy could be countered only by the organized power of society as a whole. This was the socialist idea also—but the socialist added that in the long run the state could successfully control the economy in the interests of the people only if it became a state freed from capitalist control, itself. But through the united struggles of the labor movement as well as some great liberal allies, the grosser abuses of monopoly were reined in and curbed, though sometimes merely forced into subtler forms. Victories were won.

But this relation between state regulation and progressive reform was characteristic of one era. Today, more and more like its European similars, American capitalism needs state controls, on itself *and on the people*, for quite different reasons which we have already indicated. Most prominently, it has a cataclysmic war to prepare for. Its own life is at stake.

Today, it is far from true that state regulation and control are per se progressive. Today these tend to turn more and more into the bureaucratization, militarization and (eventually) totalitarianization of capitalism.

Yet—partly still fighting yesterday's battle, partly disoriented themselves by the spectacle of "unreconstructed" elements of the capitalist class who shortsightedly fight "controls" in the name of a mythical "free enterprise"—liberals still tend to look upon the state-interventionist features of the Fair Deal as being earnest and tokens of its liberal heritage.

It is time to give the floor to an objection.

—“Is this, then, all that Fair-Dealism means to you? Don't you grant at all, at least as an important component of Fair-Dealism, the sincere desire of Fair Deal liberals to win real reforms for the people—equitable price control, health insurance, higher wages, abolition of Jim Crow, etc.? Don't you grant that by and large the Fair Deal is pro-labor whereas the reactionaries are anti-labor? In other words, don't you grant that Fair Deal liberals can be for the typical Fair Deal measures for their own sake, and not merely as devices to preserve capitalism?”

Of course, we grant that, unreservedly. If that were *not true*, a discussion such as this, concerned as it is with the supporters of the Fair Deal, would be entirely pointless! For one very important thing we have not yet mentioned is that there are all kinds of liberals and various kinds of Fair Dealers.

One cannot throw into the same bag, under the same label, Fair Dealer William O. Douglas, who blasts Fair Dealer Truman's witchhunt apparatus and laws, with Fair Dealer Paul Douglas, who votes for concentration

camps in the McCarran Act. One cannot lump the Fair Dealers of the CIO leadership, who denounce Fair Dealer Acheson on Franco, Tunisia and a number of other questions, with the Fair Dealers of the *New Leader*, who try to make a policy of anti-Communism. One cannot even lump Fair Deal Senator Kerr with Fair Dealer Mrs. Roosevelt.

Individuals and groupings within the disparate Fair Deal coalition lean in different directions. This will have to suffice to leave the door wide open on the question, since we cannot call the whole role.

But what we have described is the COMMON DENOMINATOR of the Fair Deal, that which gives it its political physiognomy as a going concern as distinct from the overlapping term liberalism; and by the same token, that which determines its nature AS A GOVERNMENTAL REGIME IN THE SEATS OF POWER.

And since we have to distinguish, let us make a very important distinction: the distinction between *the* Fair Dealers who actually wield the state power and Fair Dealers who consider themselves such because they support the former. There is a big difference.

The latter have the privilege of giving freer rein to their genuinely liberal sentiments. The former have the responsibility of steering the course of the world's most powerful imperialism within the framework of a capitalist war economy.

Fair Dealer No. 1, President Truman, is by no means much (if any) beyond the common denominator; but let us put the connection between Fair-Dealism and government responsibility in its most favorable light:

Any government which sets out to "make capitalism work" (Fair Deal style or any other) runs up against the overwhelming fact that, in this system based on the private ownership of the economy and its operation for profit, it is the capitalist owners of the productive machinery who, when the chips are down, determine whether to produce or not and who hold the commanding heights of power over the economic life of the country.

Any government which, in advance, draws the line of encroaching on this fortress of their power also announces in advance that on any vital issue it must and will retreat. Retreat means that it must confine itself to the policies, the weapons, which are compatible with the basic capitalist interests of the country.

But the overweening social needs remain, and they must still be solved somehow or other. If the progressive means are denied to you, the reactionary ones must be used, with whatever reluctance and heartburning. The retreat is made only more *palatable* to discomfited liberals in that it is "their" administration which is leading it; it only ties their hands and gags their mouths.

Inflation *must* be fought, if the society itself is to survive; if the means of fighting it which will put the burden on the rich are denied to you, then you have to use those means which put a disproportionate burden on the lesser privileged. You want, perhaps, wage controls *and* price controls; but if price controls are torn to tatters, partly in Congress and partly in the everyday operation of business, would it not be worse for the economy "as a whole" if wages are also allowed to "run wild"? You want to stop Stalinism, and you want a democratic foreign policy to stop it; but if this is barred by the commanding heights, is it not the next best thing to use all available means to do so—i.e., an undemocratic foreign policy, an imperialist policy, an atom-bomb diplomacy?

Here we come to the Great Divide, on each side of which the waters of liberalism run into different seas.

On the one side are the liberals and Fair Dealers (with or without quotation marks as desired), "practical" realists all, who follow the Truman-institutional-governmental-official Fair Deal down the line.

On the other side are the liberals, Fair Deal well-

wishers with whatever degree of enthusiasm, who are willing to take their stand on this simple minimum:

If the Property Interests (capitalism, or whatever one wishes to call it) stand in the way of the needs of the people, and insofar as it does, we do not retreat. We dare to infringe on the sacred rights of property to whatever needful extent. We dare to exercise the power of democracy to break the resistance of the privileged-class obstructionists. If the monopolists will not play, put "their" plants and factories to work without them. That means nationalization (not a fake or temporary "seizure" to stall a strike.) We dare to carry through a program of economic progress and a democratic foreign policy regardless of the vested interests of capital.

The liberal who stops short of socialism presumably believes this is possible within the framework of capitalist property relations—some kind of reformed capitalism perhaps. We will argue this some other week. All we pro-

pose to begin with, to the Fair Deal liberal who claims that he means business, is: *Follow this course through wherever it may lead—and do not apologize for, white-wash, or keep silent about those in power who do in fact shuffle their deal in accordance with the rules of the capitalist game, handing out the marked cards to those who are ordained to get royal flushes and to those who have to be content with busts.*

For our part, this must mean a *socialist* democracy, as it must mean the organization and mobilization of the working class from below against their capitalist rulers. If that is for tomorrow, then for today it must mean the organization of the labor (and liberal) forces in their own independent political party dedicated to a genuine Fair Deal, not Truman's. To any liberal who thinks this is a "dogmatic" opinion, we confidently propose: **Fight and speak out along these lines, and we will be the same variety of "Fair Dealers" also.**

GORDON HASKELL

1952

4

FROM THE FAIR DEAL TO THE ERA OF MCCARTHYISM

Every spokesman and follower of the Fair Deal says and believes that one of its chief claims to the support of the American people and one of its most important objectives is its defense of, and efforts to extend, democratic rights. This is also one of the central aims of democratic socialism. What, then, separates and distinguishes the socialists, and specifically the Independent Socialist League, from the liberal Fair Dealers when it comes to the question of democratic rights?

It would be wrong to question the personal sincerity of the Fair Dealers when they say that they are for democratic rights. The important fact to bear in mind, however, is that this is just one of their objectives, and it is not the one which has top priority.

Whenever it comes in conflict with their determination to mobilize America and the rest of the world for the military struggle against Stalinism, democratic rights must take a back seat. And in the domestic struggle against the Stalinist party and its front organizations, the Fair Deal administration has shown that it has no real confidence in its ability to defeat the Stalinists by democratic means.

True, it is goaded and pushed by the most reactionary

forces in our society to take frequent measures about which many Fair Dealers themselves feel uneasy. But the natural tendencies of the developing Permanent War Economy are so bureaucratic and anti-democratic in general that it is often difficult to tell at which point the Fair Dealers are yielding to pressure, and at which they are reserves the initiators of the attack on democratic rights.

When the Smith Act, which makes the advocacy of political ideas a crime in itself, was passed during the Roosevelt administration, it was condemned by the whole labor movement and most liberal organizations. It was first applied, however, not to the Stalinists but to the leaders of the teamsters' union in Minneapolis and of the Socialist Workers Party. The real reason for its application at that particular time was not that these were threatened overthrow of the government, but rather that their influence among the Minneapolis teamsters was a thorn in the side of the national head of the union, Dan Tobin, who was and is a loyal Democratic henchman.

The man directly responsible for the prosecution and eventual conviction of eighteen leaders of this political organization and union was Attorney General Francis Biddle, who is the present national chairman of Americans for Democratic Action. Although he now says that he too thinks the Smith Act is bad legislation, Biddle and his former boss, Roosevelt, were more concerned with the smooth operation of the war economy and of the Democratic Party than with the democratic rights which are clearly subverted by this law.

Senator McCarthy has become a symbol of the most reactionary attack on civil liberties in the country. He represents and is supported by the elements in America who have always sought to push us toward a police state as rapidly as possible: the American Legion, the Ku Klux Klan, the Hearst press, and the militantly reactionary businessmen of the National Association of Manufacturers and such organizations as the Committee for Constitutional Government.

The Fair Dealers oppose McCarthy and the whole pack of dirty tricks which are known as "McCarthyism."

And well they might! For McCarthy has threatened *their* administration with his irresponsible wholesale accusations that it is infiltrated from top to bottom by a horde of "Communists." He and his supporters have an utter disregard for facts when they make their "charges." The truth of the matter is that to them the Fair Deal itself is not much different from some form of "socialism" or "communism."

Of course, socialists join with the Fair Dealers in fighting McCarthyism as the most virulent and extreme menace to our civil liberties. But we cannot escape the fact that the Fair Deal administration's actions in this field have contributed mightily to create the general political atmosphere which makes it possible for McCarthyism to flourish.

In 1948 Truman issued an executive order which was supposed to serve only one purpose: to eliminate "subversives" from government employment. The order directed the attorney general to draw up a list of "subversive" organizations. Then all government workers were to be screened by the FBI for the purpose of determining whether they had belonged to or been "sympathetically associated" with any of the organizations on the attorney general's list. Every worker on whom the FBI gets "derogatory information" is investigated intensively, and the information thus gathered is given to a "loyalty board" in the department for which he works.

Space is lacking to discuss at this point whether or not an American citizen has the right to work for the government if he favors a different social system. The fact is that not one of the organizations placed on the "subversive list" was informed that it was going to be included, no hearings were held, and from 1948 to the present it has been impossible to get a statement from the attorney general as to *why* any organization is on the list, and what it should or can do to get off it.

When a government worker is called up before a "loyalty board" he has no opportunity to question the FBI agents or their informants on the "facts" they have given the board against him. He need not have done anything illegal to be fired from his job and blacklisted for all government work. "Guilt by association" is the most common rule of "evidence" on which these boards act.

Although this Fair Deal presidential order was supposed to relate solely to government employment, the "subversive list" was published far and wide and has become the most common basis on which men and women are fired from jobs in both public and private employment all over the country. Even labor unions have published it in their papers as a basis for expelling members or removing officers. Organizations listed have found it increasingly difficult to hire halls for meetings, and many individuals have become fearful of contributing money to such organizations, or even of subscribing to their publications.

There can be no question about it. The government's "loyalty" program has been a major contribution to the attack on democratic rights in the country. The wide-scale snooping of the FBI which is made necessary by this program has served to intimidate large numbers of people.

A whole atmosphere has been created in which McCarthyism finds it easy to thrive.

There has also been a general attack on academic freedom in the country, and the Fair Dealers have played a far from noble role in it. Although abstractly they agree that democratic education requires freedom for teachers and students, they have so little confidence in the ability of people to judge things for themselves when they have access to all arguments and facts about an issue, that *most* of them have plumped for the idea that Stalinists must be prevented from holding teaching jobs, regardless of other qualifications.

It is true that Stalinist teachers are quite likely to try to influence their students to their own way of thinking. The same holds true for liberals and reactionaries. But a belief in democratic education is based on the idea that if students have access to *all* points of view, they are put in a position to think and judge for themselves. Further, experience has shown that the moment we permit political opinions to be a basis for firing teachers, an atmosphere of fear and intimidation begins to blanket the schools in which only the bravest dare express unpopular or dissident ideas.

What is the basic reason for the Fair Deal's failure in the whole realm of democratic rights? How is it that after twenty years of administrations all of which have pronounced themselves in favor of the fullest civil liberties and equal rights for all citizens, our civil liberties are under a more concerted and dangerous attack than they have been since the early '20s, and full equality remains a goal for the distant future?

The basic reason is that the Fair Deal stands not only for democracy. Its chief function is to prop up and maintain the economic system of capitalism. True, its preferred method of doing this at home is through liberal reforms. But on a world scale, it is engaged in a *defensive* struggle in which it seeks to save a collapsing capitalist system from the militant assault of Stalinism.

This struggle has to be fundamentally defensive, because capitalism has nothing further to offer the peoples of the rest of the world. Brutal, barbaric, totalitarian Stalinism can still attract millions to its banner because its ideology is anti-capitalist. It is for this reason that Stalinism can ride the wave of the Asian revolt against imperialism and feudal reaction, while the United States seeks to prop up the hated reactionary regimes.

To say that capitalism is socially on the defensive on a world scale does not mean that at some point the vast economic power and resources of the United States are not capable of going over to a *military* offensive. In fact, American strategy in the cold war is based on the idea that a sufficient degree of military power is capable of tipping the political scales in favor of capitalism. This idea, combined with the need of American capitalism to find some outlet for its expansive force, makes the Permanent War Economy the specific form which capitalism takes in our time.

But the permanent war economy is incompatible with democracy. That is, its *tendency* is toward greater rather than less restrictions in all spheres of life; toward more government controls; toward less freedom for the labor movement; toward more regimentation in education. There is simply no escaping this tendency, and all the liberal speeches in the world will not change it.

Beyond that, although the Fair Dealers claim to have great confidence in the innate superiority of capitalism over Stalinism, their fear of Stalinism as a social force in the United States itself belies their claim. They know that Stalinism is a social movement which feeds on the

inequalities, injustices, and continuing social failures of capitalism. They are not themselves capable of attacking these failures at their roots, for to do so would be to attack the basis of the system which they defend.

Increasingly they tend to accept the "easy way" of defeating Stalinism . . . the way of police measures. But these necessarily extend themselves beyond the boundaries to socialists, liberals and other critics or opponents of capitalism, and as time goes on, even to the more liberal wing of the Fair Dealers themselves. In fact, they have a way of undermining the whole structure of democracy which the Fair Dealers are supposed to defend.

There is a basic contradiction between democratic

rights and the Permanent War Economy, between democracy and the defense of a world system which has outlived itself.

Democratic socialists are not subject to this contradiction. They are not bound by the necessity of defending a social system of inequality and exploitation which is collapsing all over the world. For them there is no conflict between the means of democracy, and their goal which is to establish a fully democratic society. In fact, they are utterly convinced that the socialist society which they seek to establish can only be achieved by the struggle for the most thoroughgoing democracy.

GORDON HASKELL

1953

5 THE CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY IN TODAY'S WORLD

"The fight for democracy and the fight for socialism are inseparable. There can be no lasting and genuine democracy without socialism and there can be no socialism without democracy."

—From The ISL Program in Brief.

At this stage in history it is hardly necessary to demonstrate the relationship between prosperity, high employment and democracy in its capitalist form. Only the blindest American provincial can believe that Mussolini and Hitler were the product of a specific Italian or German incapacity for democratic rule. They were, rather, the living historical demonstration of the Marxist view that in the face of capitalist economic collapse democracy will be scrapped UNLESS a social force arises which is capable of overcoming the crisis by extending democracy into the economic relations of society.

Nazism made its bid to overcome the crisis of European capitalism by placing the whole continent in the grip of German totalitarian rule. The disease which gave rise to Hitlerism has been suppressed for a time, but it remains as deadly as ever.

Today, it is Stalinism rather than Hitlerism which looms as the chief threat to democracy in the world. At any rate, that is the picture which is painted for us by the ideologists of capitalism.

But Stalinism is no more the product of the brains and wills of a few evil men than was Nazism. It, too, is a social force which rises to solve the crisis of world capitalism by totalitarian means in the absence of an effective social force which can overcome it democratically.

world reside in the military strength and imperialist ambitions of the Russian ruling class? Only victims of the American propaganda machine really believe that.

Put the question thus: if capitalism in Europe and Asia could provide long-term prosperity, full employment and a rising standard of living for the masses, would Russian Stalinism really be a serious threat to the rest of the world?

Stalinism's threat grows because it seems to offer the exploited and disillusioned masses everywhere an alternative to an economic system which is in historic collapse. It differs from Nazism chiefly in that its solution is to abolish capitalism and replace it with a planned economy ruled by a new class of state bureaucrats, while Nazism superimposed government controls on the old capitalist system. And it is precisely this anti-capitalist feature which appeals to the masses, while the iron fist of the new rulers is concealed from view under a cloak of democratic and socialist slogans.

Thus, throughout the world, the crisis of capitalism goes hand in hand with the crisis of democracy.

This fact has led both conscious capitalist propagandists and well-meaning liberals to conclude that capitalism is essential to democracy. Actually, it has become its deadly enemy.

Even in America, with the feverish flush of an armament boom on its cheeks, democracy is ailing. While the direct representatives of our mighty corporations hold the government in their grip and guide the destinies of the nation, the labor movement looks ahead uneasily.

Civil liberties are under a general, if insidious assault. The arts, the sciences, the great institutions of learning retreat from their proud tradition of independence after a feeble struggle. A forthright and intrepid defense of civil liberties in their full implication is considered "old-

fashioned," a product of cultural or political lag. Under our noses a political police has grown up whose function is hardly questioned by anyone but the most unreconstructed of liberals, the socialists, and for their own narrow purposes, the Stalinists.

And over all hangs the dread of war, or the almost equal dread of another depression. Although the threat of war is attributed solely to the existence of Stalinism, and the danger of depression is denied by government officials, professors by the dozen, and liberal ideologists

by the score, it cannot be exorcized. Even with prosperity, democracy is in a precarious enough state both here and abroad. But if it should collapse . . . we would like to see the gods which would be offered by capitalism's most ardent defenders on its survival in that event.

It is on the basis of this background that we say: "There can be no lasting and genuine democracy without socialism." *Socialism is the extension of democracy into all sectors of social life.*

JULIUS FALK

1953

6

THE THREAT TO CIVIL LIBERTIES UNDER THE WITCHHUNT

POLITICAL democracy and capitalism were never synonymous. The rights of the individual for which early capitalism fought were mainly rights for *itself*. The assumption of the intelligence and rationality of man and his inalienable right to act according to the dictates of his own conscience was the basic philosophy of the theorists of political liberalism; but these concepts were never broadly applied voluntarily by the bourgeoisie.

The democratic rights acquired by the mass of people under capitalism had to be won from the ruling class, frequently after years of bitter struggle and sacrifice.

The Marxist's dispute with liberalism has not been so much over its abstract democratic values as over its confidence in the ability of capitalist society to guarantee and safeguard the rights of the individual. The inability of a society based on increasing economic inequality to preserve, let alone extend, individual liberties has proved to be not "Marxist cant" but the ugly reality of the bourgeois world.

In America, the citadel of world capitalism, the fundamental values of political liberalism, freedom of speech, press and conscience are becoming increasingly weakened in real content.

America's economic titans have notoriously been men with social understanding of very modest proportions, and its political leaders and statesmen significantly lacking in political education. A quick glance at the chief executive, his advisors and Congress should suffice. It is a paradox, indeed, that the most powerful capitalist nation in the world is led by a bourgeois

which is more politically bumbling, inept and crude than its European counterparts. The peculiar arrogance and crudeness of this class bears a direct relationship to the excesses of the post-war reaction. But it would be self-deception to see this reaction as primarily due to the backward social psychology of the ruling class.

Within the American capitalist class there are many conflicting cross-currents; conflicts arise from sectional differences, power interests, ideological antagonisms, economic loyalties, etc. On the question of civil liberties these differences are no less real.

The mentality and approach of McCarthy cannot be identified with the techniques of Truman. But important as these differences are, they are not nearly as profound and irreconcilable as they and their supporters would lead one to believe. One of the great hoaxes of our decade is the manner in which the "liberal" wing of capitalism, the Fair Deal wing, with the assistance of what remains of the liberal press, has passed itself off as the defender of the best in American democratic traditions.

It is conveniently forgotten that it was the Truman administration which provided the soil in which the McCarthys could breed. The loyalty oaths, the purges, the advice to individuals to keep a sharp eye on their neighbor and report misdeeds, the Smith Act, etc., were among the dubious accomplishments of the New and Fair Deal administrations. These sanctimonious unliberal "liberals" of the Fair Deal are less extreme and less militant in their witchhunts than the McCarthyites but they are no less responsible for the ever-widening shadow which is now obscuring hard-won democratic rights.

The Fair-Dealers are themselves somewhat frightened—and sometimes victimized—by the reaction which they have set in motion, but that is no reason to believe that if they remained in the Washington saddle they either could or would restore the civil liberties which they have been so instrumental in partially liquidating. Not for all his forceful and pious campaign

promises would a Stevenson administration effectively cope with the instinctive reaction of the capitalist class to the threat of Stalinism and the needs of its Permanent War Economy. Perhaps such an administration would have provided some setbacks for the now rampant extremist McCarthyites, but it would have neither the incentive nor the ability to stem the not-so-creeping tide of reaction in America.

The drive toward a permanent, enforced conformity is the political reflex of a Permanent War Economy. The American ruling class is a frightened class. It does not understand Stalinism; it cannot successfully combat it politically. But it is practical enough to react to Stalinism in a "practical" manner: through a purge system, the organization of a vast governmental apparatus, enormous military appropriations, subsidies and profitable contract awards to private war industry.

A by-product of this policy is a tenuous and artificial economic prosperity, but its essential aim is military. In this vast political, economic and military preoccupation with defense, millions of workers, students and intellectuals are either directly or indirectly involved. Scientific research has increasingly become a military affair, students are potential scientists and technicians working on government projects, and from the bulk of the population are recruited the military forces and the workers in war industries.

is an effort to make their position more secure the leading government bureaucrats and the all-powerful economic interests can only regard non-conformism among the population as a threat to the status quo. The labor movement is looked upon with increasing suspicion and the Taft-Hartley Law is an attempt to ensure the war economy against disruptive class strife.

The academic world bears watching, and McCarthy and Velde compete for honors as to who can best intimidate the faculty and student body. Ex-radicals, no matter how they humiliate themselves, cannot expiate their youthful transgressions to the satisfaction of loyalty boards and congressional committees. Artists and intellectuals who may enjoy some popularity have both their artistic talents and private political activities reviewed by committees of Know-Nothings. A new and more stringent loyalty program is devised by the "liberal" Republican administration which is greeted with accolades by McCarthy, Jenner, Taft and Velde. FBI men assume the unofficial role of political police.

These are a few of the political tactics of the war economy. But these methods take on a momentum of their own; the life of the entire nation is affected. Prejudices are revived and new ones created.

The most disturbing elements of the present conspiracy against civil liberties can be seen in those factors which contrast with, rather than parallel, the reaction which set in during and immediately following the First World War. The reaction of the earlier period was in a real sense of an hysterical nature. Newspapers were suppressed, non-conformists jailed en masse, political parties driven underground. The authorities in their enthusiasm knew no bounds, they were not inhibited by the constitutional rights of their victims or other legal considerations. Patriotic organizations were inspired to take it upon themselves to raid political offices, break strikes, beat and even murder individuals, and violently disperse peaceable political rallies, knowing full well that they enjoyed a form of government immunity.

The hysteria lasted for over five years but its life span was limited and it served no useful economic or political function for the bourgeoisie by the early 1920s. The war was long over, the world revolutionary movement was at an ebb, the American socialist movement had shrunk to relatively small size, the labor movement

was quiescent and the capitalist class felt confident and economically secure in its growing peacetime prosperity. The hysteria, then, was in its degree an aberration of American political life.

The current drive against civil liberties is more ominous, not because it is more violent or more hysterical. The violence was greater in the earlier period and the hysteria more pronounced. Today, however, there is no reason to believe that our "vanishing civil liberties" will be returned by a swing of the pendulum. Basically, the reaction today is in no sense a political aberration. It is slowly being incorporated into the American "Way of Life."

The needs of the war economy, the dynamism of Stalinism, the cold war are all related phenomena providing the stimulus for the current reaction, and none of these factors are of a transitory nature. Much of the legal basis for compulsory conformity has already been established by the three branches of government; and the pernicious doctrine of guilt by association, though without any legal foundation, has been given the virtual status of law through common usage.

The passivity and resignation with which the current reaction is received is no less alarming than the reaction itself. During the Wilson and Harding administrations the hysteria met with a solid wall of resistance from socialists, liberals and the organized labor movement. Today, this resistance is not to be found on any comparable scale. Even if the Stalinists were the only victims of our thought control experts—which is not the case—it would provide no justification for the failure of liberals to defend their own principles.

It would be unfair, perhaps, to abuse the liberal world too much for its "failure of nerve," for it is obviously more than that—it is failure of conviction. The traditional values of liberalism are gradually being abandoned by their one-time exponents.

The conflict between Russian and American imperialism brings to the fore the inherent contradiction in the political philosophy of men who are theoretically devoted to both freedom of thought and "free enterprise." But freedom of thought and capitalist free enterprise are proving to be mutually exclusive freedoms. Faced with this dilemma and trembling before Stalinism, which they do not understand any better than their more conservative brethren, they are sacrificing their democratic principles for the sake of the cold war.

The extent to which socialists must take up the defense of liberal values, and the degree to which they have been abandoned by liberals and sold out by ex-radicals, is a telling reminder of the backward movement of political life in America. The labor organizations, too, particularly their leaderships, must accept their portion of responsibility for the failure to stem the reactionary tide. Labor has done little on an organized, integrated campaign level to combat McCarthyism, though it is victimized by it, and it remains politically tied to Fair Dealers whose administration initiated the offensive against democracy.

In this situation socialists have a dual responsibility: they must demonstrate how the fight for the truly liberal values is inseparable from the fight against capitalism; for socialism; and, second, in a more concrete manner they must emphasize the validity of democratic values which are being called into question by liberals and negated by politicians.

The virtual illegalization of the Communist Party is a case in point. The liberal world has done little to protest it, but has given its tacit and frequently explicit approval, while the most reactionary elements in Congress find "heavy" intellectual support in the small men of the intellectual world, often former radicals.

Their attempts to prove that the Communist Party is not a party but merely a menacing "conspiracy" consists of dangerous half-truths. The Stalinist movement in this country is, of course, a tool of Russian imperialism, but its membership is voluntary, it is not coerced in joining the party and it does so out of its belief in its ideology and objectives. This membership is just as entitled to its political life as Sidney Hook is entitled to write specious rationalizations for the Smith Act.

It must be understood that an established principle of socialists is the right of all people to organize into political parties of their own choosing, including parties dedicated to the spreading of reactionary capitalist and Stalinist ideas.

Independent Socialists are for full freedom for expression of OPINION, within the framework of the clear-and-present-danger doctrine, and this has a meaning only when it is a question of opinion which we (or anyone else) believe to be harmful, reactionary, false or what-have-you. The genuine democrat is for this as a freedom for all, and not just as a "privilege" for himself, his friends or for opinions which are sufficiently close to his to be considered "tolerable." This we view not only as a guide to civil liberties under capitalism, but also as a guide to civil liberties under the socialist democracy for which we fight.

In the academic world socialists must be no less vigilant in defending the rights of students and faculty. The drive against academic freedom is stifling intel-

lectual life on the campus. The arguments for dismissing Communist Party teachers as such are no more valid than the arguments for suppressing the Communist Party.

There can be only one consideration for determining the rights of an individual to teach: his competence in his field and in his teaching of his subject. Should a Stalinist teacher of math decide to spend his semester extolling the virtues of Russian science, then his competence should be called into question. But by the same token the bourgeois-minded professor who turns his class into a tendentious tirade against radicalism is subject to questioning on the grounds of incompetence and not because of his political views. The same would apply to the socialist or any other instructor. The same applies to any Catholic teacher who indoctrinates with the pope's views on science and society.

These attacks on the Communist Party and the Stalinist teacher and student are used as a springboard for the invasion of all liberties of all present and former non-conformists. Liberals may find this abhorrent and extreme, particularly when they themselves are made to prove their innocence of something-or-other before an investigating committee, but they do not understand that a capitalist nation preparing for a total war which is a life-and-death struggle cannot brook real and potential criticism and opposition, and in its drive to attain national conformity will exhibit no squeamishness over whom it victimizes.

HAL DRAPER

1950

7
**THE SOCIALIST VIEW:
DEMOCRACY IS A WEAPON**

*Now 'tis the spring, and weeds are shallow-rooted;
Suffer them now, and they'll o'ergrow the garden,
And choke the herbs for want of husbandry.*

—Henry VI (Part 2)

Fear is the hallmark of totalitarianism. Fear is also the weapon of totalitarianism, even more than its slave camps and executioners which come in only as the last resort. Fear of being different from the official pattern, fear of standing out from the ruck, fear of being suspected of thinking dangerous thoughts, fear of being suspected of associating with people who are suspected of thinking dangerous thoughts. . . .

Such fear is growing like weeds in the United States today. The roots of democratic feeling are deep in the country; they have been nourished by our frontier past,

by the lack of any feudal tradition such as existed in Europe, by the fact that the country itself arose out of a mass revolutionary struggle. But these traditions are fast being overgrown and choked.

The "typical American" is supposed to be the shirt-sleeved commoner who is as ready to speak his mind to a plumbottom tycoon as to his crony around the cracker barrel. There's a good deal to that stereotype—but just try to keep it in mind when you read of the "evidence" against "subversives" and "security risks" that is gathered by the FBI! *Was your aunt's second cousin a member of an organization on the attorney general's subversive list? Did you sign a petition to put a radical on the ballot in 1936?*

Fear! Not of being sent to a slave camp or a prison—no sir, this is still America! As yet just fear of losing a job, fear of being avoided by your friends, fear of bad publicity, fear of losing clients. . . .

This was not started by the Truman administration's subversive list. After the First World War there was less democracy in this country than before it. The Fair Deal has intensified the trend in this post-war world. It has done it in its own way—not by passing repressive laws, but by bureaucratic state administrative decree operating through the Department of "Justice" and its FBI, through its loyalty boards, through its Army and Navy intelligence gumshoes in the factories.

Compared with what it has done, Senator McCarthy's omnibus charges are a mere comedy. McCarthy's attacks have raised such a storm of indignation in liberal-labor circles because they are directed against the Fair Deal administration — the same administration which has shown the way to charges based on guilt-by-association and punishment for dangerous thoughts.

The capitalist government of the United States, in the name of the "defense of democracy against communism," is conducting the most insidious cold war against civil liberties and democracy that we have ever seen here.

In the face of this cold war, the liberal spokesmen and labor leaders have beat a full retreat. If there is one thing that has distinguished liberalism at its best, it has been its firmness in taking a determined stand in defense of all forms of freedom for the expression of ideas. Today its leaders (Americans for Democratic Action, for instance) are distinguishing themselves by keeping their mouths shut on what is happening here.

It is not that democracy is any less dear to their hearts than before. They are in a quandary. In the first place, this cold war against civil liberties is being conducted by the "liberal" Fair Deal whereas they are used to meeting such attacks from the reactionary right wing of capitalism. In the second place, they are political supporters of this Fair Deal administration, and—one must be "practical." In the third place, *something* has to be done to guard against Stalinist infiltration—they're agents of a foreign power, aren't they? Besides, sometimes it is necessary to fight an enemy with his own weapons . . .

This is the heart of the matter. The cold war against the Russian totalitarianism is at the heart of the cold war against democracy here. The fight against Stalinism is given as both the aim and the justification for giving up the outer bastions of democratic rights in this country.

Isn't there something to this "practical" argument? After all, we mustn't be whole-hog perfectionists!

There is a great deal to it—more than its liberal practitioners realize! Behind it is the concept, the admission, that while democracy is a very good thing, it cannot effectively defend us against Stalinism. Democracy can't get things done, said the fascist propagandists—you need a Leader, Authority, Discipline, *Gleichschaltung*, by which they meant a Dictator. Are the destinies of a state to be left in the hands of a fickle mob, torn by opinions, swayed by demagogues, paralyzed by endless discussions, weakened by dissension? When we need a strong hand, we can't afford the luxury of democratic trappings . . .

With this we Independent Socialists violently disagree. Democracy is a weapon stronger than planes and tanks, yes, stronger than the A-bomb. It is real democracy we are talking about, complete democracy, not merely the formal political democracy of capitalist parliamentarism—the real democracy which comes only when the people can really feel that they are defending a country which is all theirs.

Today this country is "ours"—the people's—only in a very limited sense. Its factories and shops, in which we spend the greater part of our waking hours, are not ours: in them we are the subjects of an autocratic despot, the boss, whose dictatorship is tempered only by the power of the trade unions. He owns; he has the power to give

us the means to live or to deprive us of it; we have only the choice of working for him or starving. We have no say in our economic lives.

In the war the people were told they had to shoulder a gun in order to avoid conquest by a worse enemy than their own capitalists. They did so, because they saw no third alternative. But what happens when people work and fight, not to avoid something worse, but because they are fired by the fact that they are defending *themselves and their own*? We saw it in America in the Revolutionary War when a handful of straggling colonies defeated the greatest power of its day. We saw it in revolutionary Russia when a nation whose army had collapsed turned back the interventionist troops of Europe and America, inspired by the revolution they had just made and were defending.

Democracy is a weapon not only because it inspires its defenders but because it disintegrates its enemy's forces. Americans look at the way the masses of East Europe tolerate the despotism of Stalinism and evolve theories about "totalitarian man" and the desire for the Father-Tyrant. There is a clearer reason nearer home. These masses were drawn to Stalinism by its anti-capitalist demagoguery in the first place because they have had their bellyful of the system they have known and hated. They find out the truth about Stalinism too, soon enough, under the latter's rule; they find out that it too means oppression, poverty and class rule—but is that enough to turn them back fired with enthusiasm for the system they have hated for a much longer time? The result is confusion, even hope that Stalinism may reform its worst features (as our own liberals hope this for capitalism), passivity and retreat from political thought, for those who do not have the guts to fight when others bow the head.

The dynamite under the Stalinist system—which is shaken by its own contradictions, the most spectacular of which is Titoism—could be touched off only by the offering of an alternative to both exploitive systems which could set the oppressed masses in motion. Capitalism cannot do this. It can do this even less today than yesterday, now that it is adopting more and more the visage of its enemy (which the apologists call "fighting the enemy with his own weapons"). As the capitalist West strips for action by shedding its democratic "luxuries," the hold of Stalinism over its own people is reinforced. Further sacrifices are thereupon demanded in the West. This is not a vicious circle. It is a spiral—down—down to the new barbarism threatened by the atomic war between the world rivals.

There is another admission hidden in the Fair Deal's cold war against liberty. It is the admission that the capitalists and their government have no confidence in the attractive power of their own system and their own declining democracy. Consider the enormous confession contained in the theory of "once a Communist, always a Communist" which is in effect written into the law which set up the Marshall Plan and which is the operating principle of much of the government's witchhunt (the main exceptions made in the latter are ex-CPers who are obliging enough to spill their guts before the FBI or a judge). A man who has even associated with Stalinism is tagged a "poor security risk"—he has opened himself to taint by the enemy, and to be on the safe side we must assume he is in fact tainted.

What lack of confidence in the attractive power of U. S. democracy! The men in Washington talk about selling the glories of free-enterprise capitalism to Europe, but they cannot really even convince themselves. An operation so extensive as the government purge and FBI witchhunt cannot be based on the existence of one or two men who are so misguided as to prefer hell to heaven. It can be justified only on the basis of the existence of the danger on a mass scale.

This lack of confidence in the ability of the U. S.

system to keep its own citizens' loyalty is indeed justified, but not because of the superiority of Stalinism. It is the crying evils of capitalism which give Stalinism its victims. They cannot be eliminated without eliminating capitalism. The capitalists naturally prefer to eliminate democratic rights.

This is why democracy is a weapon but not a weapon which the capitalist system can use against the Russian enemy. The edge cuts *its* hand too. It is the weapon of the democratic socialist alternative to both systems.

Under capitalism, real democracy was never possible, not while the men of money also owned the press, the radio, the meeting halls, and controlled the schools and governments through their economic power. ~~Today it is not simply a matter of wanting something better than the incomplete democracy of capitalist politics.~~ It is a question of the fate of the most elementary democratic rights. These cannot be preserved except by going forward and beyond them, to the full economic and political democracy of a social system in which the people own their own livelihood for the first time.

For capitalism today, democratic processes are a nuisance, an impediment, an obstacle to its needs. For socialism, democracy is a *necessity*.

It is an *economic* necessity, first of all, because it is false to believe that a really planned economy can be blueprinted by ukase from above, by bureaucrats (no matter how smart or how much statistics are at their disposal) whose plans and goals cannot be checked by give-and-take from below. In totalitarian Russia, for example, this cannot take place: a mistake is a state crime, and a harassed factory manager cannot tell a government minister that his plan is unrealizable, a mistake. He must demonstrate that he can fulfill the Plan, even if the machinery he produces breaks down. Initiative from below is insubordination, responsibility is a danger, decisions can be a life-and-death matter: it is better to do what one is told.

Democracy is a *political* necessity for socialism. With-

out it, the private capitalist owners may be eliminated, but their place will be taken by a new ruling class, the state bureaucrats who own the means of production because they own and control the state which is the only legal owner.

Democracy is a cultural necessity for socialism. For the end goal of socialism is not merely abundance, security, peace and freedom. These, precious as they are and great goals of man that they are, are themselves only means to an end. The end of socialism is not merely the remaking of the social system and of the world—it is the remaking of man himself.

Today and during all our yesterdays of class society, man has been an animal sharing with all other animals one common need: the necessity of spending the greatest portion of his days and thought and energy on the job of filling his stomach so that he might be able to live to work another day. Man still works to eat and eats in order to work in an endless chain. Directly and indirectly, and not only during the hours of direct labor, we still live on the animal level for all our refrigerators and science and autos and television.

In a socialist world of plenty, man is at long last freed of the dominance of economics, the tyranny of economics. He will for the first time be free to develop the full potentialities and capacities of the human individual, and see the full flowering of man's spirit.

This is the *only* goal worth fighting for today. It is the real freedom.



HAL DRAPER

1953

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SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY: WHAT TO LEARN FROM STALINISM

WHETHER we can learn from history is doomed to repeat it. We Independent Socialists of today have only two advantages over the great socialist leaders and thinkers of the past: we stand on their shoulders, and we have lived longer. In our generation the colossal event which has tested all socialists' ideas—shattering some and affecting all—has been the rise of a completely new social phenomenon, Stalinism.

What our Independent Socialist movement has learned from the rise of Stalinism would take much more than this page to present. We select only five of the most important lessons here. They are basic to "our kind of socialism," that is, to a genuinely socialist *readaptation* of Marxist policy for our era—not a "revisionism," not a mere "reaffirmation," not a parroting of biblical formulas, but a *readaptation* such as Marxism itself demands if its spirit is to be observed.

Most of the real lessons to be learned naturally cluster around the question of socialism and democracy. But the first is prior to it.

(1) There is a REACTIONARY social alternative to the system of capitalism in the world today.

To the socialist generations before us, anti-capitalism and the fight for socialism meant the same thing, or at least were part of the same process. Anything which struck a blow against capitalism was a blow for socialism, in its consequences. For socialism was the next social system scheduled by history, and, whatever pulled the capitalist order down, socialism would replace it because there was nothing else.

This is not true in the modern world. There never was, indeed, any principle of Marxism which predestined that decrepit social orders could be succeeded only by progressive heirs. There were only pseudo-Marxist formulas which made a principle of history out of the pattern of capitalism's own development out of its feudal predecessor. The world has known societies which crumbled into retrogressive throwbacks of civilization itself. Which is the pattern that is "scheduled" by history will be decided not by moods of either despair or blind faith in some mechanical schema, but it will be decided only by the struggle in society itself.

This struggle for the world is not the *duel* described in the *Communist Manifesto* of a century ago—bourgeoisie versus proletariat. It is a three-cornered battle for power, in which both basic classes of the capitalist system face a new contender, the ruling class of the new type of exploiting system which we prefer to call, "bureaucratic collectivism" but which is better known as simply Stalinism.

This triangle of forces is not a mere freak of history. It is the outcome of two facts: the old system of world capitalism is indeed crumbling and disintegrating, as was foretold, but the only class which can bring a new world of progress and plenty to birth, the working class which incubated under capitalism, has not yet reached out for its birthright. But the forces which inexorably pull the old system apart cannot wait for the working class to catch up with its tasks: as the socialist proletariat hangs back, while the old social order dissolves here and there, weakens there and here, to that extent the new social force of Stalinist bureaucratic-statism steps in to take over. Out of the most reactionary elements of the decaying world, an even more hideous ersatz exploiter grows. Stalinism is the punishment visited upon the workers for as yet failing to overthrow capitalism themselves.

Stalinism steps in, not to hold capitalism together, for it grows where that can no longer be done, but to hold *society* together in the only way exploiters know how in a world that is falling apart at the seams—by brute force and tyranny. It seeks power by appealing to the anti-capitalist aspirations and needs of the masses. It gains in power where the people know that they can no longer stand the old system of exploitation which they know on their own backs and in their own bellies, and where they are not presented with a progressive alternative that challenges both the old and the new masters.

With regard to the fight for democracy, what is the importance of understanding that there is a reactionary alternative to capitalism in the modern world? What is the importance of understanding that anti-capitalism is not enough?

If, to previous socialist generations, the socialism that was to replace capitalism would also naturally be democratic, to us the socialism that replaces the old

system *must* be democratic—or it is not socialism, as we shall see in Lesson 2. If to them democracy was the expected and desired companion of socialism, to us it is a *condition* for socialism.

In no other era than this does the fight for democracy rise to such a pinnacle of importance for the forces of progress. No other movement in the history of the world is so driven to place the democratic goal so close to everything it strives for.

But also, more than it has ever been, this driving need for democracy is directed against both systems of domination, capitalist and Stalinist.

Today, in the capitalist-Stalinist struggle, not only the latter but also the capitalist powers turn increasingly toward bureaucratization and militarization to save themselves against the threatening rival. There is no other fight, except the fight for socialist democracy, which so unites the struggle against both systems, which so sums up the tasks of progress.

(2) Nationalization of industry is not equivalent to socialism.

Stalinism presents us with a society in which all the means of production and distribution are "nationalized," or better, "statified," and which is yet the antithesis of socialism. This is the aspect of Stalinism which has been the source of its ability to spread confusion, bewilderment and disorientation in the ranks of the socialists themselves.

But this Stalinist-nationalized economy is not a socialized economy, it is not the property of the people. The question we have learned to ask is simply this: Yes, the state owns everything, but who "owns" the state?

It is a question which only has to be asked to cut through to the heart of the nature of Stalinism. The working class is not by its nature, and never can be, an owning class like previous ruling classes. It can "take over" the economy only in one way: collectively, through its own institutions. It can exercise economic power only through its political power. The expression of this proletarian political power can be given in two words: workers' democracy.

Stalinism has fused the economic and political power by the very fact that the political organ, the state, is also the economic owner. It has fused this power in the hands of those who hold this power, those who exercise the totalitarian control over this state: the new ruling bureaucracy, which becomes the new ruling class.

The victorious working class also will fuse the economic and political power in its own hands, by exercising its own control over its own state. But the working people, as the great majority of the population, can control its state only in one way—through its democratic institutions.

Nationalization of the economy under a state which is the "property" of a new minority class of overlords is Stalinism. Socialization of the economy under a state which is the democratic expression of the majority of the people is socialism.

The socialist revolution in Russia was made by overthrowing the bourgeoisie. The Stalinist counter-revolution had to be made by destroying the workers' democracy.

Stalinism itself cannot be understood without understanding the new lessons of the relation between socialism and democracy.

(3) Democracy is an ECONOMIC essential for socialism, not merely a desirable "moral value."

Let us make plain immediately that we agree entirely with the view that democracy is to be desired and defended because it is a vital moral value for humanity. But if that were its claim for the allegiance of the people, the case for it would go hard. People who are hungry, people who are ill-housed and ill-clothed, are difficult to interest in moral values, much as this fact disgusts professors of ethics with the "stupidity" of the human race, especially after a good meal.

The socialist striving for democracy has a more solid base than that. It is Stalinism more than anything else that has made that clear to us.

For the Stalinist economy's mortal contradiction is not the same as that of capitalism. It is a different system. It is immune to the specific capitalist form of crisis, as were the pre-capitalist systems. A crisis associated with "overproduction," a crisis of glut in the midst of poverty and want, unemployment because of an over-abundance of goods, such as the U. S. saw in the '30s, is unthinkable for it. In replacing capitalism, it has truly abolished the capitalist source of crisis and the capitalist type of crisis, as the Stalinists boast. But like every exploiting society it does so only in order to develop its own specific forms of crisis.

The crisis of the Stalinist economy is chronic. In eliminating capitalism it has also eliminated that which regulates and orders the capitalist system; the market and its laws. In the unplanned and economically anarchic system of capitalism, it is this "blind" behind-the-scenes regulator of the economy which keeps it working, which acts as its impersonal "planner."

There is only one thing which can replace the operation of the market in a system of state-owned economy: conscious planning. Without a system of planning which can keep together the jigsaw-puzzle of the modern tremendously complex society, there can be only chaos.

The Stalinist state has an economic plan. Like everything else in this totalitarian structure, it is a plan devised, imposed and enforced from above, bureaucratically. But no bureaucratic commission can itself plan such a labyrinth of social processes. Such a plan must be constantly checked from below, corrected from below; it must depend on initiative and responsibility below; it must be self-correcting through the give-and-take of democratic planning between the lower and upper echelons on every level.

This is what is impossible under Stalinism. This is the basic reason for the fantastic botches, snarls, snags, wastes, and snafus which are angrily denounced in every issue of the Stalinist press. Under the system of totalitarian terror, no factory manager can afford to take responsibility for decisions, when mistakes are evidences of "sabotage." No continuity can exist when personnel vanish and appear regularly in accordance with the chronic purge which is the very mode of life of Stalinism.

The fatal contradiction of Stalinist economy is the basic contradiction between planning and totalitarianism. It must plan and it cannot plan. Like the contradictions of capitalism, this galloping disease which eats away at its vitals is not guaranteed to be fatal in any given number of years. The regime continually fights against the disease of bureaucratism—by more bureaucratic controls. It still keeps up vast production by fantastic expenditures of human labor power, enslaved or virtually enslaved. It loots and robs its dependent satellites more brutally than most capitalisms, as far as it can.

For a planned economy, democracy is an economic necessity. That means: democracy is not merely a political good but an economic necessity for socialism.

We have only one doubt about those ideologists who

tout the virtues of democracy on moral grounds. We have seen too many men who, sincerely convinced as they may be about their moral ideals, are willing to cast them aside when faced with an inextricable dilemma. When mere "moral ideals" clash, or seem to clash, with economic and social reality, it is not usually the reality which comes off second best. For us socialists, democracy is not a valuable adjunct to, or dressing on, the society for which we fight: it is an integral element of its economic system, as profit-making and cut-throat rivalry is an integral element of capitalism.

(4) Under Stalinism, the fight for democracy IS the fight for socialism.

The victory of Stalinism over a people does not mean the end of the socialist struggle. It means only its re-appearance in a new form.

Every evidence shows that in the Stalinist-dominated states, the mass of working people do not yearn to return to the old system of capitalism, much as they hate their new bureaucratic exploiters. Rather, the very demagoguery of the Stalinists, which speaks of the plants and factories as "the property of the people," leads them to demand that this demagoguery be made reality.

What the masses of the peoples of the USSR aspire to is the democratization of the regime, their democratic control over the state - which - owns - everything. And in such a state, this aspiration to democratic control of the economy IS—exactly equals—is identical with—the aspiration for socialism.



The fight for socialism cannot be downed, by Stalinism or any other reaction. It can be abolished only by the blowing up of civilization. The nature of Stalinism is such that, for the first time in the history

of the world, the fight for democracy is not merely "bound up with" or "a part of" the fight for socialism: the fight for democracy is the fight for socialism, wherever Stalinism holds sway.

(5) Democracy means a social program or it means nothing.

The advances made by Stalinism in the modern world should be a staggering portent for those philosophers who think that ideals have a power of their own, just as virtue is its own reward. Here we see the most dynamically appealing movement in the world which is also the most totalitarian and tyrannous force in the world. Yet masses flock to its banners!

"Cannot the American democratic ideal be made just as dynamic, just as appealing?" anxiously ask the most sincere ideologists of capitalism, including its liberals. "How can this murderous system be so attractive?" They make myths about its propaganda machine, its "brain-washing techniques."

The truth is that Stalinism's appeal is that of a social program—anti-capitalism—while American capitalism flutters the rags of its democracy in vain because it can give it no meaningful social content. The fight for democracy is a power, but only if it englobes a social goal.

For us socialists the fight for democracy is no abstraction, divorced from the real struggle of classes and interests. The concrete fight for democracy today is a fight for a new social order, it is a fight against both capitalism and Stalinism, it is a banner on which is written: "The socialist alternative to capitalism, the democratic alternative to Stalinism."

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DEMOCRACY AND REVOLUTION:
THE MARXIST APPROACH

IS THE modern socialist movement a "conspiracy"? Does socialist revolution imply the aim of conquest of power by a small minority of skilled insurrectionists who would seize the advantage in some kind of crisis and impose some improvised junta?

This is in effect the picture which the government witchhunters paint of *Marxist socialism*, in the course of their crusade against the Stalinists, though the latter have long ago abandoned both socialism and Marxism.

This picture is a complete falsehood.

Revolutionary socialists are distinguished from reformist social-democrats not because they "advocate force and violence," which they do not, but because they see the solution of the social crisis in the fundamental reorganization of society and not in the false and non-existent "evolutionary flow of capitalism into socialism."

This subject is not a new one for the socialist movement. It is as old as the movement itself. The scientific socialism of Marx and Engels consists not only in their critical examination of the economic nature of capitalism and the forecast of its inevitable decay, decline and disintegration (which is taking place before our eyes in the capitalist world today), but in the necessity of a fundamental reorganization of society upon a democratic socialist basis.

The revolutionary program of Marx and Engels, while it had a world basis and orientation, could be applied in country after country only on the basis of the specific national conditions, traditions, and consciousness of the masses.

In its formative years, the Marxian socialist organizations were outstanding in the struggle for democracy. The European continent was in the throes of revolutionary upheaval. Capitalism had encroached on the feudal order and had become economically dominant; yet in one country after another, absolutist-feudal political conditions remained. The free and unfettered development of capitalism was impossible without the destruction of these absolutist-feudal remains and the capitalism of the 18th and 19th century was a revolutionary force. It sought the violent

destruction of all barriers to capitalist development.

Marx and Engels did not invent these bourgeois revolutions and movements. They found them at hand. But they did urge the working classes to participate in them and where necessary to force a reluctant and cowardly bourgeoisie to carry to a conclusion the revolutionary struggle in its own capitalist interests. To Marx and Engels the victory of the new capitalism over the old regime was indispensable to the victory of socialism, since socialism was an impossibility unless and until society had developed along modern lines, with mass production based on an immense industrial system capable of producing goods in vast quantities and raising the world standard of existence beyond all dreams.

All of this was impossible without the rise and extension of democracy, which would permit the free interplay of class forces and the contest of ideas. Marx and Engels were aware that capitalism needed this kind of democracy, if only at the beginning, in order to develop its particular society. Therefore the struggle for democracy was at the forefront of the socialist struggle in the 19th century.

The revolutionary socialist criticism of bourgeois democracy is not that it is democratic, but that it is not democratic enough, that the class nature of capitalism, and most particularly capitalism in degeneration with its extra-legal movements of semi-fascist and fascist totalitarianism, endangers democracy. The revolutionary socialist warns that under capitalism, democracy is considered a luxury, or a privilege handed down by the dominant economic ruling class, to be infringed upon or abolished whenever the society finds

itself in difficulty or endangered by its inhabitants.

The revolutionary socialist warns that capitalism "permits" or "allows" democracy only so long as it does not endanger the class privileges of the bourgeoisie. Thus, democracy under capitalism, its extension or abrogation, its intensity or diminution, is dependent not upon something inherent in the nature of capitalism, but upon the prosperity or crisis of the given capitalist state, the power of its working classes, or its labor movement, and the strength of its democratic traditions.

Where democratic traditions are weak, where the labor movement is ineffectual, where the economic difficulties are oppressive and the people restive, the ruling class seeks to maintain its rule by constitutional violations and police powers. It was always thus, that under capitalism, those who violate constitutional principles and practice, democracy and democratic process, are first and above all the bourgeoisie, its state and its judiciary.

That is the lesson of modern history. It was true of Europe of the past 75 years; it was and is true in the United States.

In this country, even the rise of a trade-union movement, let alone the socialist movement, was accompanied by the unrestricted violence of American capitalism; assisted by the federal government, the police arm of the several states, the judiciary, and mercenary private armies and thugs. The partial defeat of all these forces came finally during the crisis of the '30s, but only because of the rise of a powerful industrial labor movement, the fear of the revolutionary consequences of the poverty and suffering during the economic crisis, and the unremitting democratic struggle of the labor movement and American socialism.

Modern scientific socialism came into being in struggle against utopian socialism and the petty-bourgeois socialism of the Blanquists, who thought the new and free society could be established by a coup d'etat of a small group of understanding men, who would then introduce socialism from above. These believed the socialist movement had to be a secret, conspiratorial movement. Other social rebels believed individual terrorism could alone bring about the end of an evil social order.

Against these advocates of a new society, Marx and Engels not only marshaled all their great ideas but their supporters and organizations. They pointed out for the first time that the socialist movement could not be a clandestine, conspiratorial movement, because it depended on the intervention and participation of the great masses in the struggle for socialism. It had to be a free, conscious movement. Its ideas had to be expressed openly in the

wide arena of social struggle and to be pitted against the ideas of the bourgeoisie in a contest over support of the people as a whole and the working class in particular.

Marx and Engels put the struggle for democracy in the forefront of their banner, not because they saw it as a mere tactic in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, but because democracy is the essence of socialism, because socialism means the fullest development of democracy, and because without democracy, there is no socialism. In addition, Marx and Engels knew that you could not establish socialism without the support of the overwhelming majority of the people.

That is why revolutionary socialists are not "advocates" of violence, and why they say that where democratic process is guaranteed, where the socialist movement has the opportunity to function freely and to contest with the bourgeoisie for the support of the people, the advocacy of the "violent overthrow of the government" is a vain and insane pursuit.

The Marxian socialist is not a terrorist, a saboteur, a man with a penchant for violence. He is a man who seeks a truly revolutionary change in society, a fundamental reorganization of society on a socialist basis, which will bring an end of economic exploitation and oppression, to destructive competition which leads to crises and war and violence, which are a hallmark of capitalism.

The right to social revolution is a social inheritance. It was not invented by socialists, Marxian or otherwise. The capitalist bourgeoisie has employed social revolution far more than any socialist movement. Capitalism came to power in England, France, Italy and Germany through revolution and war. Capitalism came to the United States through one revolution and a subsequent civil war. And capitalism has ruled through the decades not only by democratic methods, but by violence whenever and wherever necessary, by dictatorship, political or military, and by force, open and concealed.

The program of revolutionary socialists is a varied one. The premises of the socialist struggle, as a democratic mass struggle for socialism, hold true under conditions of democracy. But from the time of Marx and Engels onward, this program has varied from country to country, depending on national conditions.

Where absolutist conditions prevailed, where military rule, semi-dictatorship or dictatorship obtained, and now where totalitarianism is in power, no socialist—and for that matter, no bourgeois democrat—can or will guarantee that his struggle will only confine itself to a democratic contest. It is obvious where such a contest is impossible, where there is no free speech, assembly, organization, no right to parliamentary activity and franchise, every movement for freedom can and must seek other avenues of struggle.

Where another set of conditions obtain,

however, where there is the opportunity for the free development of the movement, where it is possible to carry on the socialist struggle under conditions of democracy, then the position of socialism is likewise clear: it utilizes these conditions for a democratic struggle for socialism.

In looking back over the history of the socialist movements, it is noteworthy how Marx and Engels hailed every advance of democracy, no matter how small, because it gave the socialist party an opportunity to carry out its socialist program of struggle in the open. Marx and Engels were anything but afraid of democracy. As Engels wrote:

"We, the 'revolutionists,' thrive better by the use of constitutional means than by unconstitutional and revolutionary methods. The parties of law and order, as they term themselves, are being destroyed by the constitutional implements which they themselves have fashioned."

What Engels was saying was merely this: It is better and easier for the socialist party to function openly and freely. That where constitutional guarantees exist, and the objective conditions are favorable, the socialist movement can win and defeat capitalism. Both Marx and Engels looked forward to conditions in which the socialist movement could engage in the painstaking "work of propaganda and parliamentary activity."

Obviously, they did not seek parliamentary work as the beginning or end of the socialist struggle, but only as one of its means. They were neither professional parliamentarians or cretins to whom the parliament was the end road of personal success. But they understood that socialists "can never expect to secure a lasting victory unless beforehand they win over to their side the great masses of the people. . . ."

But if they did not hesitate to state their preference as to the kind of struggle they desired, neither did they hesitate to warn the movement and the people against the anti-democratic nature of capitalism and its ruling classes.

When Marx and Engels spoke of the transitional regime of the workers as a "dictatorship of the proletariat" they meant that in contrast to the dictatorship of a minority, the bourgeoisie, the rule of the socialist working class would be the rule of the majority. It did not mean, as the bourgeois critics imply and as Stalinism practises, the rule by one individual, a clique or a new bureaucracy and the abrogation of democracy. On the contrary, in this phrase of Marx and Engels—used a few times in their voluminous writings—it meant the broadest democracy known to mankind.

When the Independent Socialist League seeks the recreation of a revolutionary socialist movement in America, such a socialist democracy is its goal. Directed toward that goal, of course, are a whole series of programmatic ideas which it believes can more easily and swiftly produce a mass movement of socialism in America. In the forefront of its political strategy is its propaganda and struggle for a mass labor party, representing the interests of all the people, society as a whole, against the narrow interests of American capitalism. Such a party would not only mark a tremendous advance for the people, but would signify an enormous victory for democracy.

What Marxian socialism brought to the people's struggle, which before had been distorted by conspiratorial and utopian notions, was the realization that a revolutionary transformation of the system depended upon the struggle of the working class itself—not of a sect, a self-appointed leadership, an armed cabal or top-level well-wishers and messiahs. Until the class moves forward, in the democratic ferment of its own development, there is no substitute. Even in victory, the workers can take over the wealth of society only as a class, that is, through its own democratic institutions. It is precisely revolutionary Marxism which sweeps away all ideas of replacing the class action of the proletariat with the putsch of a minority usurping its name and authority.



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SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY
IN A SOCIALIST SOCIETY

THE future of democracy in the world depends on this: Can mankind learn to extend democracy into control of economic life?

That is the basic idea of socialism.

Under capitalist democracy, the people are allowed a say-so in decisions of the government, while the main control over people's lives is exercised not by the government but by the economic autocrats who own the wealth of the country and the main means of livelihood. By the same token, these capitalist rulers of industry and wealth, who hold the commanding heights of our society, also have the power to run the basic operations of the government itself and in the long run determine the direction of its important decisions.

Under capitalism, what is called democracy has a split personality. In the world today, when the system runs into enormous difficulties, the separated compartments—political democracy and economic autocracy—are at war with each other. Those who hold the money power, and the people who are its victims, go in opposite directions to solve the split. The people need more democratic control over everything—and the economic masters want more control for themselves, over everything too.

For eight hours a day (more or less) our people live under the economic autocracy of the capitalist private owners, not under the "kind of democracy" which is given by the right to vote different supporters of the capitalist system into governmental office.

• Either our world will bring together these two "kinds of democracy" or totalitarianism will abolish both. In the world today, democracy is indivisible.

We propose that the people take over, in their own name, the ownership and control of the wealth of their country, its industry, its machines, its mines and mills, the economic machinery which is necessary for the people's livelihood.

This will not guarantee democracy. It will do only one thing: make complete democracy possible for the first time.

There is something else which guarantees democracy—one thing and one only. In every age and every country there has always been one way only by which the people's rights are secured. This, therefore, we look on as a foundation of socialist democracy.

This guarantee is: the active participation by the masses in political life, by their rank-and-file movement from below. All capitalist democracy is geared to minimize this; fascism and Stalinism are geared to abolish it completely. The heart of socialist democracy is to raise this to a level impossible under today's society.

In a country like the U. S., the voting mass enter upon the stage of politics like "spear-bearers" in an

opera: during some scene in the third act, they come on to listen to politicians' promises and deliberately demagogic platforms, and then to cast their votes for candidates chosen by political machines which are not under their control but which are the creatures of the moneybags, in a society where politics is a big business like everything else. Then for the rest of the time they become objects again, not subjects; passive applauders, hissers or tomato-throwers from the gallery, not actors on the stage.

The fascist and Stalinist "solution" is to effectively abolish even the right to vote. The Stalinists in particular, whose ideology in general is a tortured caricature of the idea of socialism, pour scorn on "voting democracy," "formal democracy," "capitalist democracy" "parliamentary democracy," etc. in order only to justify their suppression of all democratic rights. They seek to discredit capitalist democracy because of its elements of democracy, not because its democratic forms are limited and negated by private-profit control of the sectors of life that its democracy doesn't touch.

Socialism goes in the precisely opposite direction.

At its heart is an idea which distinguishes it not only from Stalinism and fascism but also from the capitalist democrats—yes, even from the capitalist liberals.

All of these tendencies, in their own ways, are afraid of the self-mobilized action of the masses when they get going. They are afraid when the people take their fate into their own hands, rear up and take the stage themselves, get into motion from below.

The totalitarian reacts with the whip and the club.

The liberal "deplores," cautions, restrains, tries to argue them into relying on leaders above, promises "something will be done" if only they the people cease to make scenes and behave rambunctiously, advises them not to "antagonize" the powers that be by such scandalous conduct; out of the depths of his timid wisdom, applauds their demonstration, perhaps, only to announce that now they must retire from the scene to let their fate be settled by properly constituted authority," etc.

The conservative democrat has both methods in his arsenal, leaning on the liberal if things get tough enough, and on the whip-wielders when he can get away with it.

The socialist sees the only secure foundation for democratic control in such active self-movement of the people when they come on the stage as actors themselves.

"Active democracy"—this is the guarantee. The people will never gain back their world by merely "relying" on well-intentioned leaders—not even if those leaders are well-intentioned socialist democrats—not even if those leaders are independent Socialists like ourselves, or like

anyone better than ourselves. They will never be handed their just deserts from above; they must take back their world themselves.

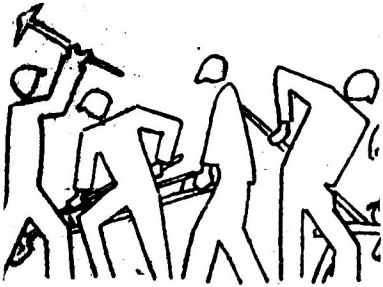
That is what Gene Debs meant when he said that we do not come before the people as a Moses to lead them to a promised land; for if we can lead them anywhere, so can their disguised enemies. We propose a fundamentally different kind of leadership, based upon an installed consciousness that they must depend only on the real, organized, wielded power of their own rank-and-file organizations, which will seek out their own leaders in the course of movement and struggle.

This is the link between the fight for socialism and the organization of a victorious socialist democracy.

Political organization from below institutionalized, to bring the masses into a constant, close, active role of participation in politics—this is the key thought of the

socialist approach to the workers' government of the next stage in human history.

We approach this idea with no belief that it is either necessary or desirable to prepare a blueprint for forms of government institutions which will "guarantee" democracy. It is with good



reason that most socialists have steered clear of such blueprints. In general, the blueprints that have been suggested (like the utopian setup in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*) are tinged with the outlook of all-wise leaders who will cram the action of the people into a mold.

One thing which is characteristic of capitalist democracies—and which is a reflection of the "split" between political forms of democracy, on the one hand, and the capitalist fact of economic dictatorship, on the other—is the typical "division of labor" in the society between the professional politicians and others. Just as the political democratic forms are for only one sector of life under capitalism, so it is conceived as negating its own "specialists."

In a society which is democratic through and through, the idea of a specialist group of "professional politicians" is a contradiction. When Lenin wrote of the aim "every cook a statesman," what he meant was that every worker must have the opportunity of playing a constant role in political life.

This is why socialists' thinking turns to the task of basing democratic control on permanent rank-and-file committees of the working people, as the basic political units of active democracy.

No one "invented" this idea. History has shown that every time the masses of people get into motion from below, spontaneously they tend to form out of their ranks precisely such revolutionary-committee forms of self-leadership. It happened in the American Revolution, with its Committees of Correspondence; in the English Cromwellian revolution with its committees of soldiers' deputies; in the French Revolution, with its Jacobin clubs; in the Russian Revolution, with its "soviets"; in the 1918 German revolution that overthrew the kaiser, with its workers' councils. It is a suggestion (not a blueprint) for a socialist form of government which has been put before our thinking by the people themselves, and not by any socialist theoreticians or system-framers.

It is an idea for a fundamentally different form of representative democracy a thousand times more democratic than the capitalistically-limited governments we know today, even the best of them.

It would mean that the people vote for their men, their policies, their hopes and demands not merely at intervals, as residents in an arbitrary area, but in constant association in their places of work and activity—as workers in a plant committee, as housewives or professionals, with the right of immediate recall of representatives through every section of the setup.

We do not believe that an American socialist democracy will look like any of the precedent attempts at such rank-and-file democracy, in their particular forms. It is the underlying starting-point which is the same: how to formulate governmental institutions of democracy

in terms of permanent stand-by control from below, and not merely in terms of the formal right to vote.

It is possible that in this country a socialist democracy may retain many or even all of the particular forms of government institutions that now serve capitalism. It is possible that these may be merely modified in the direction of allowing greater mass participation, along lines of thinking already pioneered by various reformers—recall provisions, democratized Supreme Court setup, etc. We do not believe it useful for socialists to fix a program or a blueprint on this point; the people will decide when they get into motion. It is useful only to suggest lines of thinking which point in the democratic direction we want to go.

As a matter of fact, it is not in the field of governmental forms that the main problem lies. It is a question of fusing political democracy with economic democracy. Preoccupation merely with schemes of government forms, however ingenious, is an indication that the problem is still seen exclusively in terms of the old political democracy. That, as a matter of fact, is one reason why the idea of rank-and-file workers' committees in the plants as the political unit already combines the tasks of both political and economic democracy, for it tends to make the "worker" and the "voter" one. But socialism does not think only in terms of a central state which owns everything.

Socialism is not equivalent to "nationalization." It is hospitable to all ideas of replacing private ownership of the commanding heights of the economy with SOCIAL OWNERSHIP.

Ownership by cooperatives is a form of social ownership as against capitalist ownership. Ownership by local communities is a form of social ownership. Ownership by free collectives is a form of social ownership. The socialist is entirely open to consideration of non-state or non-national forms of social ownership in sectors of economic life, within the framework of a planned and rationally conducted economy.

A "mixed economy" in this sense is old stuff for socialists, though many liberals speak of it today as if it were a brand-new discovery of theirs—assuming they are not talking, as some of them do, of a "mixed economy" as merely some impossible compromise between capitalism and socialism.

If it is true, as some prophets croak, that the people cannot take over the economy from its present dictators without making totalitarianism inevitable, then it is not the idea of socialism which falls before the argument. It is the very possibility of democracy which is called into question.

If a state "owns everything," they say, then it becomes "all-powerful," and, as the parrot-phrase goes nowadays, "absolute power corrupts. . . ."

What these people are really doubting is the capacity of the masses of people to exercise effective democratic control over their government. It is because they despair of this, and nothing else, that they think up schemes for atomizing political power so that no one can get too much of it at a time. It is because they have lost all faith in the democratic capacity of the people that they even revive hopes in the doomed system of capitalism, or, if they cannot bring themselves to do this, rig up schemes for decentralized utopias.

But such schemes do not meet the real problem in the world. Society will be planned, and it remains to decide—by whom? By rulers over the people, new or old, or by the working people themselves?

Without exception, every argument that "socialism inevitably leads to greater centralization of power, and therefore to totalitarianism" regardless of the good intentions of the socialists, is an argument of despair with democracy, and not merely a reason for objecting to socialism. If these prophets are right, if democratic control from below is impossible, not even their schemes will save them or the people of the world.



But they are wrong. That the people can win out will be proved not only by debate and theories but, in the last analysis, by the struggle for democracy itself. Those who abandon the struggle are already helping to decide it in the negative, to bear out their croaks of doom. Those who fight to push the frontiers of democratic control further and deeper, not as a rearguard of the past but as a vanguard of a new world, will find themselves fighting for a socialist society.

MAX SHACHTMAN

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THE STALINIST SOCIAL SYSTEM: BUREAUCRATIC COLLECTIVISM

It is impossible to discuss any important political problem of our time, let alone take a part in resolving it, without a clear understanding of what Stalinism really signifies.

It is just as impossible to get such an understanding from the writings and speeches of capitalists, their statesmen, politicians, hangers-on, apologists, or any other beneficiaries of their rule. They are quite capable of describing the notorious vices of Stalinism. Its true social significance, however, escapes them, and so also therefore does the simple secret of combating it effectively.

For the very first task to perform is to ascertain the relations between capitalism and Stalinism, and that is precisely what they are prevented from doing by their own social interests and prejudices.

You can write it down as an iron law of politics today: Whoever does not know what are the real relationships between the social system of capitalism and the social system of Stalinism, may be ever so intelligent in fields like physics or art or investment banking or logistics, but in the most important field of politics today he is an ignoramus.

And whoever knows something about these relationships, but refuses to make them the rock foundation on which to base and build his political ideas and actions, may be ever so fine a family man, so tender a poet, so graceful a writer and so eloquent an orator, but in this field of politics he is either a convinced muddlehead, a phrase-drunk emotionalist or a plain demagogue.

The first thing to grasp about Stalinism is that world capitalism is at the end of its rope. It shows all the classical signs of decay and disintegration in addition to those special signs which are its own distinctive contribution.

With the hugest productive machine ever imagined for the creation of social wealth, it has nevertheless instilled in the entire population over which it holds sway a profound and amply warranted sense of insecurity. Everybody realizes that whatever economic prosperity there is, or seems to be, is based upon the unparalleled economic destruction produced by the wars of today or by the organized economic waste of the periods of war preparations. The very preparation for war requires that a crushing economic burden be kept upon the shoulders of society, above all on those shoulders least able to carry the burden. Yet practically everybody realizes that if world capitalism were to disarm on Monday (assuming the possibility of such a utopia), or even to reduce its armaments drastically, it would be done for on Tuesday.

An even worse showing is made by capitalism in the actual wars themselves. When it was going through its rising phase, wars had a distinctly positive meaning for capitalism. Now, its wars are economically pointless, politically pointless; they do not solve a single important problem and they cannot solve any.

The Second World War showed that ten times more clearly than did the First World War. The war in Korea only underscored the same point. The war of French imperialism in Indochina is the latest underscoring of the point. Capitalism, in general and in its national-state form, cannot have any encouraging perspective in war; and yet it cannot avoid preparing for them and precipitating them.

The growth and expansion which younger capitalism experienced in the rise of its imperialist power has not only come to an end but is actually going through a reversed process. A hundred years ago and even fifty years ago, world capitalism was adding tremendous new natural resources and vast hordes of new slaves to its domain in the conquest of countries in the so-called colonial world. It fattened and fattened on these grisly conquests. The tide is running the other way now.

The old imperialist world of capitalism is shrinking and it will never again be expanded—never. One part of it has fallen under the dominion of Stalinism. Another part of it has won its way to political independence and the end of its colonial status. The remaining part is in a state of permanent warfare against the old imperialist powers which drains them heavily without the old compensations of colonial rule. The capitalist world has shrunk and its prospects have shrunk even more.

All this is reflected both in the thinking of the capitalist class and that of the working classes. In the former, there is a pronounced and even catastrophic decline of the old self-confidence. In the United States, one political or intellectual leader after another now repeats, as if it were an incontestable truth, that they face a "fight for survival"; and not a soul has yet been found to reject that ominous formula.

Drowning men fight for survival; dangerously diseased and weakened men fight for survival; imminently bankrupt firms fight for survival. So it is with social systems. The phrase is the panic-stricken, desperate outcry of a social order on the brink of disaster, and it is not by chance that it is so widely and unquestioningly accepted.

And if that is the unwittingly revealed state of mind of the ruling classes of the United States, where capitalism still has some appearance of strength and good health, it requires no great effort to judge the state of mind of the ruling classes in the older, frankly decrepit countries of capitalism which could not exist for five minutes without the financial and military upshoring provided by Washington.

In the working classes, there is a corresponding and much more conscious loss of confidence in capitalism and capitalist imperialism. With the exception of the United States, there is not a single popular movement anywhere in the world that proclaims its allegiance to capitalism or imperialism. The most that capitalism is general—and its last bastion, the United States, in particular—can expect from the masses nowadays is not support but irritated tolerance, as a lesser evil compared with the otherwise universal anger, disillusionment, bitterness, hostility and open warfare directed against it on every continent of the globe.

To say that capitalism is at the end of its rope is only another way of saying that it is more and more incapable of solving the important problems of society, especially as these problems reach the stage of acute crisis. It is well to emphasize here: when we speak of

capitalism solving a social problem it should be self-evident that we mean solving the problem on a capitalist basis. Capitalism was never able to solve a social problem on any other basis. But the point is that where it was able to solve such problems on that basis in the past, it is less and less capable of solving them, even on that basis today.

It is precisely such a decay of capitalism that was not only foreseen by the founders of modern socialism but was regarded by them as the precondition and the eve of the socialist reorganization of society by the working-class movement. They did not and could not foretell all the forms and manifestations of this inevitable disintegration of capitalism, and they did not try to; but they did indicate the main lines along which it would develop, and in doing so they amply forewarned and forearmed us.

The first great world-wide crisis of capitalism broke out toward the end of the First World War. The masses throughout Europe rebelled against the futile imperialist slaughter and their fists hammered at every wall of European capitalism. The wall fell only in Russia, and only in Russia did the socialist working class take power and start to lay the foundations of a new, rational, brotherly social order. In the rest of Europe the walls of capitalism held, mainly due to the sturdy and criminal support which the besieged ruling classes received from the conservative Social-Democratic Party leaderships. They saved capitalism; they prevented the working class from carrying out its great revolutionary mission in good time. In addition, the victorious Russian Revolution was allowed to suffocate to death for lack of the oxygen of the revolution in the advanced Western countries which was indispensable to its life and growth.

The effect which the victorious lifting of the revolutionary siege in the West had upon the Russian Revolution, in dooming it to isolation and therefore to death, was not the one which was generally expected. And it is right here that we are able to take a second big step toward an understanding of Stalinism.

It was assumed by everybody—not only by the Bolsheviks of those days but by all their critics and enemies—that if the socialist Soviet regime were to fall (for one reason or another), it would be replaced by a capitalist regime. Whether it would be a democratic capitalism or a despotic-militarist capitalism was widely argued; but that only a capitalist regime would succeed to a fallen Soviet regime was agreed upon by everybody.

Everybody turned out to be wrong. The socialist Soviet state was undermined and destroyed, root and branch; but it was not replaced by capitalism. What had happened?

That which was assumed by everybody implied—took for granted without more penetrating thought—the existence of a viable capitalist class inside Russia which could replace the Russian working class at the head of the nation and which could proceed to a solution of the nation's problems on a capitalist basis; or it implied, at least, the existence of a capitalist class outside of Russia strong enough, single-willed enough and otherwise sufficiently able, to take the place of the Russian proletariat. The assumption was an abstraction; in real life it proved false and disorienting.

It turned out that inside of Russia there simply was no capitalist class in existence and outside of Russia a Russian capitalist class existed only as a joke. It turned out that inside of Russia there were only capitalist middle-class elements in town and country, strong enough to exact concessions from the Soviet state, strong enough to harass and threaten it, strong enough to be of tremendous help in finally destroying it, but

by no means strong enough to take power in the country.

Outside of Russia, it turned out that the foreign capitalist classes, which had at one time unsuccessfully tried by force and arms and corruption to overturn the young Soviet government, could never thereafter manage to get together enough unity of purpose among themselves, unity of military effort, and freedom from working-class and liberal opposition and restraints in their own countries, to try to impose their own capitalist rule over Russia. (In fact, as we saw in 1941, even when Hitlerite Germany made such an attempt, not against a Soviet regime but against a Stalinist regime in Russia, the rest of the capitalist world not only did not come to his aid but helped decisively, as a Russian ally, to fight him off. And as we see today, even with its powerful financial lash, the United States is unable to overcome the mutual antagonisms in the capitalist world to the point where it can be effectively united against the Stalinists.)

The capitalist solution to the social problems of Russia was thereby rendered practically impossible, despite the theory which assumed its inevitability.

With that, the sector of world society known as Russia stood before an apparently insoluble dilemma.

The united efforts of the world proletariat would have been more than enough to solve the social problems of Russia on a socialist basis; indeed, the united efforts of the proletariat of a few advanced countries of Europe would have sufficed for that; Lenin used to go so far as to say, compactly, that "Russia plus Germany equals socialism." But since Germany and Western Europe in general were prevented from becoming the industrially-advanced "plus," the Russian proletariat was left to its own resources. And they were not enough to provide a socialist solution.

The result was at first a sort of chaotic stagnation in Russia. Capitalism could not be restored; but neither could socialism be established. By stagnation we mean the condition where Russia could not go forward to socialism nor yet backward to capitalism. By chaos we mean the consequent dissatisfaction, resentment, uncertainty, helplessness of all the traditional classes, the repeated but unavailing efforts of each to impose its historic program upon the other.

Such a situation is unendurable to society, especially in modern times when the simplest aspects of life are so intricately and extensively dependent upon the most complex aspects, and all of them are inescapably and often decisively influenced by state policy. When a social crisis develops, it must be resolved by radical means, in one sense or another, by one social force or another.

And where such a social force does not exist, society does not long break the vacuum: it brings into being the social force that is capable of ending the social crisis in its own way.

The social force that brought the crisis of the Russian Revolution to an end (even though, in the very course of doing so, it sowed the seeds of another crisis of a different type) was the new Stalinist bureaucracy which has ruled Russia for about a quarter of a century.

If the crisis in Russia had to be summed up in a single word, the best one that could probably be found would be: modernization. Russia could not be modernized on a capitalist basis and in a capitalist way for the good and simple reason that there was no capitalist class in existence to do that job. The reason why it could not be modernized in a socialist way and on a socialist basis has already been indicated—the enforced isolation of the revolution.

Russia was modernized nevertheless, and built into the second power in the world today, without going back to capitalism or going ahead to socialism. The new Stalinist

bureaucracy developed into a new ruling class and the social regime it established became a new society of class exploitation and oppression.

Out of what has the new ruling class come? Out of remnants and segments of older classes: bureaucrats who had risen out of the working class or out of the peasantry without rising (or being able to rise) into the capitalist class; technical and professional personnel whose privileged position is imperiled by a revolutionary and therefore equalitarian working class but which at the same time cannot be assured by the capitalist class or its contemporary property relations. They constitute a distinctive ruling class in every important sense of the term.

They have a common mode of life that distinguishes them from the working classes; they constitute a basic element in the Stalinist mode of production, that is, they organize and maintain the process of production; they determine, as Marx would put it, the conditions of production; they are, as a distinctive social grouping, the first and the principal beneficiaries of the process of production since their social position enables them to determine the distribution of the surplus product with far fewer restraints than the ruling class suffers under capitalism; they are the exclusive owners of the full machinery of the state, which exists solely for the purpose of preserving their monopolistic social power; and since the state, under Stalinism, owns all the means of production and distribution, the Stalinist ruling class, by virtue of its exclusive possession of this state power, enjoys a general and super-concentrated social power over the population such as no ruling class has ever known in the last thousand years.

Socialists have always thought in terms of the working class establishing its own state power in order to centralize all the main means of production and exchange into its hands. They still think so and rightly. But they think of this centralization not for the sake of centralization, this nationalization not for the sake of nationalization, but because it puts into the hands of the new democratic regime the vast and mighty economic instrument which is indispensable to carrying out the task of fusing political democracy with economic democracy into the new concept of social democracy. The performance of that task is the next great step in mankind's progress to emancipation.

But where all the economic power is centralized in the hands of the state, and the state is monopolized by a despotic, self-perpetuating minority, it therewith acquires an unprecedented power of oppression and exploitation. This new ruler has no private property in the sense of the capitalist, the feudal lord or the slaveowner. His "private property" exists in a new form—the state. He owns it collectively, along with the other privileged members of his social grouping. But because it places in his hands all the economic as well as the political power in the country, at one and the same time, and because he is forced to direct this power against the masses, against their interests, and against their aspirations—otherwise his privileges would not last a minute—we have, not socialism and not even a "socialist type" of state, but, as we call it, totalitarian or bureaucratic collectivism, a regime of modern barbarism, modern slavery, permanent police terror and super-exploitation, the regime of the permanent denial of all democratic rights and institutions to the masses, a regime in which all political and economic rights are openly and exclusively in the hands of the ruling class, which is the distinctive hallmark of Stalinism.

This new social force reduced a great nation—and more than one nation—to slavery; its destruction and waste of productive forces, of the precious creative forces of society, have been colossal and not one whit less than capitalism in its worst abominations; it rep-

resents a social order which is in a state of permanent crisis; and, as the most relentless, conscious, consistent, thoroughgoing represser of the working class and revolutionary movements, it constitutes the mightiest and most effective forces for reaction in the world today.

All this is true and true twice over. But it should not blind us to the fact that Stalinism rose to solve a social crisis, in its own way, which other existing social forces could not or would not solve in the way that is appropriate to them.

This basic interpretation of its character is corroborated by the development of Stalinism outside of Russia. The *cause* was the isolation of the Russian Revolution; the *effect* was the victory of Stalinism. But effect in turn becomes a cause, and this has certainly been the case with Stalinism.

Its victory has weakened world capitalism; but at the same time it has brought such demoralization and disorientation and paralysis into the working-class movement all over the world as to weaken and undermine its socialist struggle against capitalism.

The power of Stalinism has consequently been extended beyond anything that anyone may have dreamed twenty-five years ago. And wherever this has happened, the tell-tale relationship between capitalism and Stalinism has been revealed again and underlined again.

Most revealing and emphatic in recent times has been the development in China.

There are now all sorts of confusionists, romanticists and even theoreticians who argue that the Chinese Stalinists are not really Stalinists, that they really did carry out a sort of socialist and democratic revolution, and that in any case they are developing away from "typical Stalinism" and toward genuine socialism. The truth is that the Chinese Stalinists are, if anything, the most chemically pure example of the basic social type, and not at all a welcome deviation from it.

Mao, Chou and Co. did not even pretend to be a proletarian socialist party, as Stalin & Co. did. Mao's movement did not even arise out of the industrial—that is, the proletarian—centers of China. The working class never played any role, either in Mao's party or in Mao's military exploits against Chiang Kai-shek's regime. While the Stalinists were making their successful march southward to complete victory over China, there was not a single industrial center where the working class rose in revolution to "supplement" Mao's triumph.

The Chinese Stalinists—unlike the Russian or, let us say, the Czech Stalinists—at no time really based themselves on working-class organizations, and the "trade unions" they now have are as worthy of that name as are the speed-up machines that go by that name in Russia or the late Hitlerite Labor Front. The Stalinists won their domination of China without the working class of that country, against that working class and behind its back. A fine "socialist" revolution! A fine socialism that will lead to!

As for the other point of the confusionists, who are little more than independent apologists for Stalinism, they forget that if the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy rose as the police-oppressor of the nation because of the economic backwardness of the country (as they say, and rightly), how can they expect the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy to develop as anything but a trebly-brutal police-oppressor of a nation that suffers from twenty times the economic backwardness of Russia?

Let us leave that aside now, for the important matter here is that the Stalinists did triumph in China and, thereby opened up a new page of cardinal importance in world politics.

A proletarian socialist movement did not exist in China, except in the form of tiny, unimportant groups (whose existence the Stalinists have been cutting down

with the same animal savagery displayed by the GPU) which were not in a position to provide a democratic and socialist solution to the problems of China.

The bourgeoisie? Both the Chinese and the international bourgeoisie proved incapable of solving the Chinese problems on a capitalist or imperialist basis. They supported the arch-corrupt, arch-impotent regime of Chiang Kai-shek. What other regime was there for them to support or even to encourage? (People who refuse to learn that capitalism and capitalist imperialism are in their death agony are still looking for another alternative to Chiang whom the Chinese or at least the American bourgeoisie can support. They will for sure wear themselves to death without finding one.)

The Stalinists triumphed in China not because the Russian army intervened to put them in power, and not because Chiang was "betrayed" by Roosevelt, Truman, Acheson, Marshall or anyone else, but because they filled the vacuum created by the inability of capitalism to solve the protracted crisis in China and the absence of a working-class movement armed with a socialist program for solving the crisis.

It should be clearer now why the professional supporters of capitalism are incapable of analyzing and understanding Stalinism. Such an understanding implies a thoroughgoing indictment of capitalism which is unacceptable to those who are wedded economically or intellectually to this moribund social order.

Such an understanding implies that the fight against Stalinism is not a fight against socialism in any sense of the word, since Stalinism is one of the cruelest punishments that could be visited upon a people that has failed to fight for socialism.

Such an understanding implies that precisely because Stalinism has expanded its power over the world the fight against it must be redoubled; but that the fight against it cannot be conducted in alliance with—let alone in support of—the very capitalist order whose decay produces it.

It implies that the fight against Stalinism can be effective and consonant with the interests of progressing mankind only if it is at the same time a fight against capitalism.

It is only in this sense that both the durability and the nature of Stalinism will eventually receive its final determination. And in this sense—it is the only fundamental one—the race is not between capitalism and Stalinism, as seems so overwhelmingly to be the case at the moment. If it is understood that Stalinism has risen because of the failure of socialism to replace the dying capitalist order, the real race is for the society that is to succeed capitalism: the fall into a new barbarism which Stalinism stands for, or the rise to socialist freedom.

In hundreds of ways, obscure to the superficial eye, unseen by the panic-stricken and the fatalistically resigned, but evident to those who always seek to probe beneath the surface of events, the idea of independence from capitalism as well as from Stalinism and of struggle against both, asserts itself among the toiling masses, those actual bearers of democracy and socialism.

To make this idea the conscious, directly-expressed and deliberately-acted-upon program of the masses, is the only worthwhile task of socialism and the advanced section of the labor movement today.

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THE NATURE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTIES

What kind of organization and movement is the Communist Party?

We know that in the countries where Stalinism is in power, it is the "state party," the ruling institution of the regime, the instrument through which the bureaucracy holds together the reins of totalitarian power. But what is the Communist Party in countries where capitalism still rules and it is in opposition?

The CP, particularly in the latter countries, is widely looked on as a "working-class party," even by many anti-Stalinists, even though they may attack it as a workers' party with a wrong, or excessively "leftist," or suicidal policy. There have been radical movements that have even viewed it as a fundamentally reformist, pro-capitalist party, because of the various services that it has performed in certain periods for capitalist governments when these governments were allied with Russia.

In our view, both of these opposite opinions are not only wide of the mark but miss the essence of the distinctly new character of the Stalinist movement.

It is true that the CPs have, in the course of their function as auxiliary agencies of the Russian foreign office, done their all to support capitalist regimes where this service has jibed with conjunctural interests of Moscow. But class instinct, plus experience has taught every bourgeois that the support of the Stalinist parties can be hired but not bought outright. The Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries are for lease, but not for sale.

So long as a given capitalist regime is the ally of Russia, the Stalinists are leased for service to that regime. They then appear to act as true patriots. They vie with the bourgeois parties in nationalism and chauvinism. They catch up with and outstrip the reactionary labor leaders in urging workers to accept the most onerous conditions of labor with docility. In general, they acted in that abominable manner which distinguished them from ordinary scoundrels in the U. S. and Britain during the period of the "Grand Alliance" in World War II.

But this lend-leased servant is unreliable in two respects from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie. In the first place, in the very course of pretending to serve, he infiltrates and undermines the institutions of the bourgeoisie. And in the second place, the terms of the lease are not under the control of the bourgeoisie and can be altered or destroyed unilaterally by the Russian state, that is, by the real employers and owner of the Stalinist parties.

To the revolutionary socialist, the triumph of Stalinism means primarily and above all the crushing of the working class, the crushing of all proletarian and revolutionary movements, the triumph of a new totalitarian despotism. To us, accordingly, every increase in the strength of the Stalinists in the working-class movement means another step toward that triumph which is a catastrophe for the movement.

The standpoint of the bourgeois is necessarily different. The triumph of Stalinism means primarily and above all the crushing of the bourgeoisie and all its social power. That is *his* standpoint! That is why he can and does, with genuine concern and sincerity, regard Stalinism as the "same thing," at bottom, as Bolshevism, as the proletarian revolution, as socialism. From *his* standpoint, it makes no difference whatsoever whether he is expropriated by the authentic socialist revolution in Russia under Bolshevik leadership, which brought the working class to power—or he is expropriated by the reactionary Stalinist bureaucracy in Poland, Rumania and Czechoslovakia which has brought the working class into a totalitarian prison.

To the working class, there is all the difference in the world between the two; to the bourgeoisie, there is none. That is why the bourgeoisie expresses a deep and honest class feeling when it characterizes Stalinism as "left" in substantially the same way that it once characterized the Bolshevik Revolution and its partisans. From its class standpoint, the designation is understandable, it makes good sense. Likewise understandable is the political attitude which corresponds to this designation.

But that designation (and what is far more important, the political attitude that corresponds to it) does not make good sense from the class standpoint of the proletariat. It is totally false from the standpoint of the ~~fight~~ fight for its immediate and its historical interests—the fight for socialism. In this fight, Stalinism is no less the enemy of the working class than capitalism and the bourgeoisie.

The Stalinists very cleverly exploit the attacks made upon them by the bourgeoisie to enlist the support of those workers and revolutionists who, while opposed in general to Stalinism, are not less hostile toward the bourgeoisie. But it is an absurdity, where it is not suicidal, to react to every bourgeois attack or criticism of the Stalinists by rallying automatically to their support. Trotsky writes somewhere that any imbecile could become a revolutionary genius if proletarian policy required nothing more than learning what the bourgeoisie wants or does, and then simply doing the opposite. This very well applies, in the matter of the policy to follow toward Stalinism, to more than one anti-bourgeois imbecile (just as it applies, in the matter of the policy

to follow toward the bourgeoisie, to more than one anti-Stalinist imbecile).

The first task, then, of all militants in the proletarian movement who understand the end of combatting Stalinism, is to rid themselves of all traces of the conception that Stalinism, in some way, in some degree, represents a "left wing." It is not a proletarian or socialist conception, despite the respectable (and fatal) status it enjoys in the proletarian and socialist movement. It is a bourgeois conception, well-suited to the bourgeoisie, its standpoint and its interests, but utterly disorienting the working class.

We will not have advanced far enough, however, if, in abandoning the notion that Stalinism is in any sense an authentic part of the left wing of the working class, we adopt the notion that it belongs in the right wing.

The right wing of the labor movement, classically and contemporaneously, is its conservative wing, its reformist wing. It is that section of the working-class movement that stands closest to bourgeois democracy, that practises economic and political collaboration with the bourgeoisie, that confines itself to modest (increasingly modest) reforms of capitalism. That being the fundamental feature of the right wing, it should be clear that Stalinism is fundamentally different from any of the reformist currents and bureaucracies we know of in the labor movement.

None of the old designations—"right," "left," "centrist"—applies to Stalinism. Stalinism is a phenomenon *sui generis*, unique and without precedent in the working class. The fact that it is supported by tens of thousands of workers who are passionately devoted to the cause of socialism, who are ready to fight for it to their dying breath, is besides the point entirely. This fact is of importance *only* with regard to the forms of the agitation and propaganda work to be conducted among them. It does not decide the character of Stalinism itself. That is determined by the real program and the real leadership of the Stalinist movement, and not by the sentiments of those it dupes.

What, then, is Stalinism? Our formula is not very compact, but it will have to stand until a more elegant one can be found:

Stalinism is a reactionary, totalitarian, anti-bourgeois and anti-proletarian current IN the labor movement but not OF the labor movement. It is the unforeseen but nonetheless real product of that advanced stage of the decay of capitalism in which the socialist proletariat itself has as yet failed to carry out the reconstruction of society on rational foundations. It is the social punishment inflicted on the bourgeoisie for living beyond its historical time and on the proletariat for not living up to its historical task. It is the new barbarism which the great Marxist teachers saw as the only possible alternative to socialism.

Stalinism is a current IN but not OF the working class and its movement, we repeat. The importance of the distinction is far-reaching. It demands emphasis not in spite of the prejudices and dogmas about Stalinism that exist in the revolutionary movement, but precisely because they exist. It underlines the unbridgability of the gulf between Stalinism and ALL sections of the labor movement. And by "ALL sections" is simply meant, without diplomacy or equivocation, all of them—from the left wing to the right wing.

Stalinism is not a working-class movement with a wrong, or even very bad, policy. It is alien to the working-class movement. Fundamentally (and that means: apart from the subjective intentions or hopes of so many Stalinist dupes) it represents the interests of a different class—the bureaucratic ruling class of the Russian Empire.

The Communist Parties first came into being as a quite different type of movement, in the upsurge of revolutionary struggle that followed the end of the First World War, especially under the impact of the Russian Revolution. In its early revolutionary years, the Communist International was the sole rallying center for all the workers who wished to have done with the timid, compromising and anti-revolutionary role of the "pink" social-democrats, who had discredited themselves by chauvinist support to their warring imperialist governments.

But in step with the Stalinist counter-revolution in Russia, which destroyed the conquests of the revolution, so also there took place a gutting of the Communist Parties which transformed them into agencies of the Russian counter-revolution.

The Communist Parties became, not left-socialist parties representing the interests of the working class in their countries, but totalitarianized tools of the reactionary social class climbing to power in Russia.

Their policies uniformly became erratic, subject to rapid oscillation between apparently contradictory positions. But they were not at all inexplicable. Each turn in policy was dictated by the momentary needs of the Stalinist regime in Moscow, above all by the needs of its foreign policy.

Nowhere was this made clearer than in Germany, where the Communist Party's hands were tied by its Stalinist policy in the face of the extermination of the organized working class by Hitlerism.

In the years before Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, the Stalinist regime feared its diplomatic isolation in world politics. It witnessed a growing rapprochement among the capitalist powers that had been at war in 1914-18 and it dreaded an attempt by them to settle their mutual antagonisms at the expense of Russia.

It assigned to the docile Stalinized Communist Parties of every country the task of manipulating the working-class, pushing it into blind-alley struggles, not to achieve the genuine aims of the proletariat but merely to disrupt those of the capitalist enemies of Russia.

This was the notorious "Third Period" of Stalinism.

Its official ideology divided all the world of politics into two simple camps: the Communists, on the one side, and fascists on the other. Whoever and whatever opposed the CP was "fascist": social-fascists, left-social-fascists, trade-union fascists, Hitler-fascists, democratic-fascists. It was the duty of the Communist Parties uncompromisingly to lead the masses against every variety of "fascism" in this final period of struggle for the inevitable overthrow of capitalism and defeat of capitalist war.

But all its radical verbiage was a political façade decorating its real aims.

In Germany, conservative bourgeois regimes alternated in power, with the support or tolerance of the Social-Democratic Party, the majority party of the German working-class. With the crisis of 1929, the Nazi party began to grow in mass proportions. The stronger it grew, feeding upon the hopelessness and misery of the German middle classes, the more the Social-Democracy clung to its moderate bourgeois allies as the "lesser evil." And the more Social-Democracy took responsibility for the regime, the stronger grew the Nazi party, capitalizing upon the resentment of the non-proletarian masses against the main party of the working class.

The Communist Party increased in strength but far more slowly than the Nazis, whose vote increased by the millions and whose electoral representation rose to first rank until normal parliamentary life became utterly impossible and unstable governments died like a suc-

cession of May flies. The Nazis, whose program called openly for the setting up of a totalitarian state and the extermination of all workers' organizations, were on the threshold of power, power which they succeeded in grasping in 1933.

The danger imperatively called for a unified program of defense of the existence of the labor movement, and for the preparation of serious struggle for the defense of democracy. But the Communist Party viewed the scene with political equanimity.

The Social-Democrats were fascists, their official line told them. In fact, they were worse than the Nazis, just as a concealed enemy is worse than an open one. The CP convinced its supporters that the socialists were the main enemy and consoled them with the thought that a Hitler victory would destroy Social-Democracy and thus wipe out the main barrier to "proletarian" victory. It repudiated and rejected the road of united-front struggle with the socialist party against fascism.

This was madness from the standpoint of the working class but totally comprehensible from the Stalinist view.

Social-Democracy, like all reformist socialist parties of its day, hoped and prayed that capitalism would get back on its feet. Economic recovery would cut the ground from under Nazism and restore the conditions of normal day-to-day eking-out of gradual improvements whose sum total some day might be socialism. But German economic recovery, they estimated along with moderate bourgeois parties, was possible only if the victorious powers of World War I would grant prostrated Germany a far-reaching program of economic and political concessions. They hoped to reach just such an agreement with the Western powers.

But it was just such an alliance which the Stalinists were eager to disrupt. Social-Democracy had to be destroyed. Better a Hitler who might turn against the West. When he came to power, the CP prepared no resistance. After Hitler's victory, Stalin gingerly proffered the hand of agreement but Hitler then rebuffed it.

The "Third Period," of course, was duly executed in the United States too. The CP excoriated the New Deal "fascism" of Roosevelt, which was eternally preparing for war against Russia. It denounced the AFL as company-owned-fascism and organized its own tiny "revolutionary" unions to carry on the uncompromising struggle against 57 varieties of American "fascism."

But this was all dumped in 1935.

By that time, France, first among the Western powers, was becoming alarmed by the growing power of resurgent German imperialism, and Russia sought to reach an understanding with it. The Franco-Soviet pact of mutual military assistance against German attack was signed and Stalin announced that he "understood and approved" France's need for rearmament. No Communist Party required any less subtle hint.

The period of People's Front was fabricated. The "social-fascists" of yesterday were now transformed into great guardians of peace and democracy. The world was divided now into the camp of Peace-loving Powers allied with Russia, plus Peacelovers who favored such an alliance, and Nazi warmongers who opposed it.

Communist Parties which yesterday voted with scorn against any and all military budgets of "imperialism" now demanded with fanatical zeal that everyone grant military credits to the Peace-lovers. The answer to world problems was the "collective security" of all Peace-loving Powers (allied with Russia, of course) against Germany. And inside every nation, Communists were to join in a "People's Front" with those whom they had denounced as fascists the day before.

In the United States Roosevelt, yesterday a fascist,

became the great leader of the Popular Front, and now his critics became "fascists." Yesterday, all for the "revolution"; now, as in France and Spain in 1936-7, where socialist workers rose in mass demonstrations or even civil war, the Communist Parties were zealous in suppressing them.

The socialist revolution must not be allowed to interfere with the "People's Front" of agreement with capitalists (even with fascists if possible) nor to irritate the Western capitalist allies of Russia. And the People's Front for "democracy" was so popular that thousands of Stalinist-influenced liberals overlooked the Moscow Trials which entrenched totalitarianism in Russia.

But the world of Peace-lovers, kind democrats and well-intentioned anti-fascists was shocked by the next turn of Stalinist policy. It was the announcement of the Hitler-Stalin Pact.

Faced by a now-powerful Germany, rearming and menacing, France and England tried to stave off attack by appeasement. At Munich, Czechoslovakia was turned over to German imperialism. For the Stalinists, this marked the end of collective security and People's Front. If the Western allies intended to make a deal with Hitler, Stalin would beat them to it.

In 1939, while CPs everywhere were still lyricizing the People's Front against fascism, Russia and Germany reached an agreement for the partition of Poland between them. Molotov, for the Stalinists, explained that now, "fascism is a matter of taste." The Stalinist Parties all fell in line.

It mattered not that they had just been appealing for a world-wide front of democratic powers against Germany. Russia and Germany were now friends; the war against Germany was denounced as an imperialist war for the benefit of capitalists; England and France were excoriated as warmongers for rejecting Hitler's early peace maneuvers that accompanied his shattering military victories. Months before, the workers had been instructed to restrain themselves lest they antagonize the bourgeois friends of Russia, but now was the time for "militant" strikes and demonstrations under the watchword of "Down with the imperialist war!"

But not for long. In 1941, Germany invaded Russia. The Stalinists abruptly found themselves in the camp of the warmongers. Warmongers? Not at all. It was time for a new turn.

Miraculously, the war of the Allied powers became transformed from a reactionary imperialist adventure into a great people's war for liberation at precisely that second when the armies of Hitler Germany crossed into Russian territory. Everything else soon followed.

The CPs became the most chauvinist of all fake patriots. They demanded that all unions pledge not to strike for any reason at any time. They called for the restoration of piecework in industries where it had been abolished only after years of union struggle. They expelled workers from unions under their control for not working fast enough.

They denounced the "March on Washington" movement for Negro rights as a disruption of national unity. They advised colonial peoples, subjects of Russia's allies, to abandon their struggle for national independence. And thus they persisted until the war came to an end.

With the defeat of Germany and Japan, the former allies parceled out control of the world among themselves, but their mutual antagonisms were irreconcilable. The cold war between the former allies began. Who is to dominate the world, capitalism or Stalinism? That was the issue that divided them and which could

not be bridged. To a man, Stalinist parties, the world over fitted their new line to the new needs of Russian policy.

Not one turn in Communist Party policy can be explained as an attempt to carry out a pro-working-class program. Every turn, on the other hand, has been clearly motivated by one unchanging objective: to serve the needs of the reactionary ruling class that holds power in Russia.

The world Communist Parties have functioned as agents of Russian foreign policy because they are the movements of the class that holds power in Russia. But they are not simply agents of Russian Stalinism.

Communist Party leaders and bureaucrats in each country pursue the Russian line not merely because they are eager to strengthen Russian Stalinism. By advancing the interests of the ruling class which has its seat in the Kremlin, they hope to further their own pretensions to becoming a ruling class in the Stalinist image.

The Stalinist social system is no longer confined to Russia. Within the Stalinist empire and within the

Stalinist world, native CP groups strive to further their own aspirations along Stalinist lines, to rule and exploit the masses of their own nation with the same methods and with the same social system as proved so effective in Russia. These impulses toward national-Stalinism are irrepressible.

In Yugoslavia, the national Communist Party was driven to break with Russia and declare its independence of Russian Stalinism while maintaining its own dictatorial regime, basically totalitarian and Stalinist in the most scientific sense of the term. In the East European satellites, where such dreams of independence have never been crowned with success, they can be kept in check by the Russian masters only by intermittent purges within the Stalinist movement itself, mixed with concessions.

Stalinism is a world-wide movement to overthrow the capitalist system by replacing it with a new social system of exploitation, replacing the old ruling capitalist class with a new totalitarian bureaucracy. Socialism and Stalinism are mortal enemies.

HAL DRAPER

1954

13 STALINIST IMPERIALISM AND THE COLD WAR CRISIS

There is a paradox—only an apparent one—in the development of Stalinist imperialism.

Stalinism arose out of the counter-revolution in Russia under the slogan of building "socialism in one country" as against the perspective of "world revolution" represented by the Bolshevik left wing under Trotsky. An historic internal struggle took place within the party under these different banners, in which, as everybody knows, the Stalinist wing won out. To the Stalinists, the theory of "socialism in one country" which they put forward meant: Let's keep our eyes fixed on our problems at home; let's not worry about extending our influence or winning support abroad; that is a will o' the wisp; we want only to build our economic and social strength within our own borders and to hell with conditions outside of it. And (as Stalin put it later): We don't want an inch of anyone else's territory but let the capitalist countries keep their snout out of our Soviet garden. . . .

The fierce drive of Stalinist expansionism that blossomed especially after the Second World War seemed like a sharp reversal of this home-bound ideology. To many of the latter-day "Russian experts" (the numbers of whom also blossomed after the war) this new policy seemed like the adoption by Stalin of the Trotskyist "world-revolutionary" perspective.

For were they not militantly pressing their power beyond their own borders? Weren't they doing what Trotsky had demanded, only in their own way and so much more effectively? So it was said not only by the "authoritative" bourgeois commentators but even by the disoriented "official-Trotskyists" of the Fourth International, who have drifted in the direction of pro-Stalinism.

But the new post-war Stalinist imperialist expansionism was not a break with, but a logical development and continuation out of, the theory of "socialism in one country"; and by the same token it was still the antithesis of a working-class revolutionary policy.

For that famous dispute of the Stalin-Trotsky struggle was never really based on the mostly-academic question of whether it was actually possible to "build socialism" within the borders of a single country (and

a backward one at that). This was mainly the ideological form that the clash took between the social forces of the counter-revolution and the movement which stood for the liberating ideas of the 1917 revolution.

Behind it was a tendency much easier to understand: it represented the turn-away of Stalinism from internationalism to a Russian national-chauvinist outlook. Russia-First, they said, and the usefulness of the Communist Parties and pro-Soviet sympathizers abroad was to be gauged by the extent to which their activities contributed to strengthening Russia; for since this Russia was "socialist," strengthening Russia meant strengthening this "socialism." Thus the interests of the world's workers were to be subordinated to the national interests of the "one country" where socialism was being "built."

It is this conception which is the fundamental link between the early Stalinism of the counter-revolution and the Stalinist imperialism of the present day. We have seen in the course of our generation two related truths exemplified: that in trying to build something called "socialism" on the ruins of workers' democracy and all democracy, the Stalinists in actuality built a new system of exploitation which is the enemy of socialism; and in trying to build "socialism" on a national-chauvinist basis, they likewise built a new exploitive system which today has all the features of a virulent imperialism.

In its internal aspects, the crushing of democracy in order to build "socialism in one country" led to a process of bureaucratization which has flowered in totalitarianism. In its external aspects, the national-chauvinist ideology of the Stalinists led to imperialism, and this reactionary regime was strong enough to assert itself as a competitor for world power.

"Imperialism" . . . There is a point here which has to be cleared up for many people. For the new oppressive and exploitive class society which developed in Stalinist Russia is not based on a capitalist form of exploitation, as another part of this issue explains. Well then, isn't it true that modern imperialism is an outgrowth of the drives of capitalism? Wasn't it Lenin who defined imperialism as a stage of capitalism? Isn't one of the fundamental drives of modern imperialism, for example, the need of capitalist economies to export their surplus capital; and where do you see this as an economic basis of what we call Russian imperialism?

If it were not for the widespread character of this "deduction" from a formal acquaintance with Marxist writings on imperialism, it would not even be worthwhile mentioning. For it is a useless play on words. For people who need quotations, the same Lenin who spoke of imperialism as a stage of capitalism also time and again referred (like all other educated people) to the imperialism of the pre-capitalist societies, the Roman empire for instance. Capitalism is not the only social system which has given birth to its peculiar form of imperialism; on the contrary, there was such a thing as imperialism based on the ancient slave-states, as well as the type of imperialism which developed under feudalism. Lenin was analyzing the specific imperialism of the then-dominant social system, capitalism, and laying bare how it generated its own need to mobilize the nation-state for the conquest and domination and exploitation of peoples abroad.

The imperialism of Stalinist Russia is not the capitalist imperialism which Lenin brilliantly analyzed in a famous work; but that is simply saying that Stalinist Russia is not capitalist, and that we already know.

But in many cases, when objection is made to even using the term "imperialism" in connection with Stalinism (by Fritz Sternberg, for example, and others), there is more than word-juggling or ignorance behind it. There is

a political idea involved which suggests to them their otherwise-sterile play on words. They are often willing to speak of Russian "expansionism," but "imperialism" no. The thought that is often behind this fine distinction is the following: Moscow may indeed be following an expansionist-adventurist policy, deplorably, and this is a bad thing; but this policy which is being followed by the men in the Kremlin is simply a POLICY of bad or rule-taken men, and is not rooted in the "Soviet" social system; it is not inherent in the economy, which must be considered "progressive" because it is not capitalist; it is simply a more-or-less accidental excrescence of the system, or a very temporary and dispensable stage of it, or the fortuitous result of Stalin the man's personal predilections, etc. It is only under capitalism that imperialism is ROOTED in the social system as such; under Stalinism it is something that wiser rulers will dispense with, especially if capitalism ceases to threaten the country. . . .

This notion of such an important difference between capitalist imperialism on the one hand and of Russian imperialism on the other is a notable stock-in-trade of Stalinoids the world over, but not only of Stalinoids! All of the powerful "neutralist" currents of Europe and Asia — anti-Stalinist elements included — are shot through with it, including even the Bevanites of England. It represents a very dangerous illusion about Stalinism even among many of its would-be opponents, who succumb to its lies.

Well then, how is Stalinist imperialism rooted in its exploitive social system?

First of all, there is an important though simple generalization to be made about the connection between imperialism and a social system, any social system. It is true, as we said, that each class society (ancient slavery, feudalism, capitalism) has had its specific drives to imperialism; but there is obviously something common to all of these imperialisms too, with regard to societal origin.

That which is common to the root of all imperialism, in spite of vast differences in the social system, is this: The ruling class is driven by inexorable necessity to foreign conquest, exploitation and looting in one form or another in order to make up for the inevitable deficiencies of its social system itself, rent-through as that system is by its gangrenous contradictions; the exploiters of the society are pushed in this direction as a matter of life-and-death for their system because of their inability to create a harmonious economy capable of satisfying the needs of the people and, most especially, capable of solving the fatal diseases which arise out of the system of exploitation itself. For every class society generates its own self-poisons, which, as they accumulate, threaten to bring down the whole economic structure, unless a transfusion of fresh blood is obtained; and it is in the cards that a ruling class will be impelled to seek this new supply of economic blood in the squeezing of wider and wider circles of people, first inside its own borders (where the process is perhaps easiest or the victims at least more accessible) and then outside.

Now, designedly this presents very generally the economic root of imperialism in all class societies which have been known, but it is enough to raise the basic question about the roots of Stalinist imperialism.

Only those can see Stalinist imperialism as merely a regrettable excrescence, which is not inherent in the system, which is unrelated, who also see in the Stalinist system itself the basis for (at least an eventual) harmonious and progressive development of the forces of production and social relations; that is, who see no inherent deficiencies and contradictions which imperialism has to compensate for; that is, who look on the Stalinist system as being genuinely on the road to socialism in some real

sense; that is, in short, who regard the Stalinist system as genuinely socialist in nature, even if still peppered with defects.

This view of Stalinist imperialism as a dispensable policy of bad men in the Kremlin is tied up with a basic illusion about the whole nature of the Stalinist economy: *Since the economy is state-owned and planned, there are no limits to its possible increase in productive level. . . . Since it is not rent by the contradictions of capitalism which Karl Marx expounded in Capital, there is no inherent bar to the attainment of such a level of wealth that plenty-for-all becomes possible at last. . . . Since here is a society, whatever its other distasteful features, which is not held back from economic advance by [capitalist-type] crises, it is possible for increasing productiveness to lead to the abolition of the bureaucratic dictatorship which was necessary for a time in order to attain this wonderful aim; the bureaucratic distortions of this "socialism" will be able to disappear, etc. . . .* Such is the illusion.

It is bound up with the rosy view that this Stalinist regime will be—indeed, must be—reformed from above, democratized from above, if only the present rulers are not kept scared to death by outside opponents. This is the basis for the pro-Stalinism of a man like Isaac Deutscher, on the theoretical side, and of anti-Stalinists like Aneurin Bevan, on the less-than-theoretical side.

This whole structure very largely depends on the overwhelming demonstration that this Stalinist system is not beset by the contradictions that bedevil capitalism—and sure enough that is true, just as capitalism is not being strangled by the poisons which put the Roman Empire to death. The contradictions of Stalinism are of its own kind.

At bottom what the Stalinist illusion ignores is the fundamental contradiction peculiar to a completely staffed economy under the rule of an uncontrolled bureaucratic master class: the contradiction between (1) the absolute need of the economy to be PLANNED, since in a staffed economy only the Plan can perform the role in the society which under capitalism is the function of the market and market relations; and (2) the impossibility of workably planning a modern complex society from the top down under conditions of bureaucratic totalitarianism.

It is this contradiction between Planning and Totalitarianism which is the most basic factor in making for chaos and anarchy in the Russian economy, enormous inherent wastes and inefficiencies, which are in part compensated for by the gigantic expenditure of human labor in the slave camps as well as in the mercilessly driven factories—and which was also in part compensated for by the wholesale looting of the conquered territories of East Europe after the war, a looting which still goes on in forms of exploitation subtler than open rapine.

This opens a much broader subject than the limited topic of this article.* but enough has been said to indicate the line of analysis which we propose for one's thinking on this matter. When one asks the question, "What are the roots of imperialism in the Stalinist social system?" one is really asking the question: "What

*For a valuable insight into the "mechanics" of the contradiction between planning and totalitarianism in the Stalinist world, see "The Contradiction of Stalinist 'Planned' Economy: A Case Study" in LABOR ACTION for June 1, 1953. (The case is that of Czechoslovakia.) For descriptive material bearing on the same subject, see Zavalani's book *How Strong Is Russia?* and the article on Russian business management in *Fortune* for February 1953.

are the inherent contradictions of Stalinist bureaucratic collectivism which lead to its downfall?"

In a more immediate way, then, the motive drives of Stalinist imperialism stem from the need of this fiercely exploitive system, which drives its own workers like cattle, to plug the gaping holes in its economic and social armor.

Of course, certain drives it shares with its rival imperialisms on the capitalist side: the impulsion to corner raw materials, especially raw materials for war industry; the usual imperialist need to grab "buffer" lands and military-strategic points of vantage; the need to grab territories if only to prevent others from grabbing them first, to use against oneself. All these come into play once an imperialist tug-of-war is under way, and in turn they intensify and sharpen the struggle.

One other drive is held in common in a sense: the Russian rulers' inherent inability to indefinitely continue to live in coexistence with a system where, in any way at all, a free labor movement exists just across a border. This is a permanent political danger to them. It cannot go on forever. As long as free labor exists in the world, there is a dynamite fuse extending from the outside to inside the Iron Curtain. But an analogous need exists also for the capitalist world: to get rid of this rival upstart system, which, in its own way, is a living threat to capitalism; which shows a whole social world living without capitalism—contrary to the professors who have conclusively proved time and again that capitalism is so rooted in human nature that even the pre-Neanderthal ape-ancestors of man lived under capitalism. . . .

But of the drives more particular to the Stalinist system itself, the basic one is the need to exploit more and more labor on an ever-widening scale. The needs of this system have driven its ruling class into methods and forms of exploitation of the workers at home which are matched in brutality and violence by few pages in the history even of capitalism; and this same ravenous need drives it to the exploitation of peoples abroad. Just as within its own state, the ruling bureaucracy sucks its class privileges and revenue out of the surplus labor which it extracts from its slaves and semi-slaves, so also it needs more human laborers to milk; the more workers controlled, the more the surplus labor extracted, and the greater the wealth available both for the ruling class and for the state-girding-for-war.

Moreover, precisely because it is not a capitalist-type exploiting system, it has available a method of foreign exploitation which is excluded for capitalist imperialism: *direct looting of goods and products*. This phenomenon took place on a very large scale for a whole period in all the lands overrun by the Russian army after the Second World War: whole factories and their machinery were dismantled and moved bodily to Russia, etc. This would not make economic sense for the capitalist economies of the West, the U. S. for example, whose chronic problem under normal circumstances is a surplus of production which gluts the market if not disposable through the purchasing power of the masses. The chronic problem of capitalism is not how to get production up, but what to do with the products if it gets too high up!—and Stalinist bureaucratic collectivism suffers from no such embarrassment. Therefore, its capacity for direct looting and robbery of production wholesale.

Thirdly, it is worth mentioning also that, in a social system which dispenses bureaucratic privileges as the reward for its ruling class and aspirants thereto, imperialism creates a wider base for bureaucratic posts, an extension of the numerical basis of the "atoms" of the ruling class through the bureaucratic structures in far-flung stations of an empire.

And so this Stalinist world confronts its rival in the world, capitalism, not merely as a contender in an imperialist struggle but as a contender in a struggle of rival systems over which, if either, shall exploit the earth.

This is a distinctive feature of the present-day war crisis and its cold war which is decisively new, as compared with the First and Second World Wars which were fought primarily between imperialist rivals within the capitalist camp. An analogous situation has not obtained since the days long ago when the armies of Napoleon, born out of the Great French (bourgeois) Revolution swept over Europe in combat with a feudal continent. But two great differences exist today as against that historic conjuncture:

(1) In those days one of the camps objectively represented the interests of a new and rising class, the bourgeoisie, which was then progressive, standing for the needs of society as a whole to throw off the shackles of serfdom in favor of the social system which was destined to raise the productive forces to the level required for further progress, for the development of the technological forces that could finally provide plenty for all and lay the economic groundwork for the classless socialist society.

This has now been done. The economic prerequisites for socialism exist.

Modern industry has reached the point where it is entirely feasible to put an end to all systems based on enforced scarcity, where man can produce an abundance of goods if industry is run for use and not for profit. The Stalinist tyranny is not a progressive alternative to the moribund system of capitalism, but a neo-barbaric relapse which feeds on the decay of capitalism as long as the working class has not unleashed its own forces to abolish it in favor of a real workers' democracy.

(2) In those days when the rising bourgeoisie stood arrayed against the old order, there was not yet any other social class fully developed which offered a force for effective social leadership as against the two locked in conflict. Today the working class offers the social alternative, the third corner of the triangle of forces that the picture presents. It has the need and the power to build its own world, and it faces only intensified oppression and misery from the continuation of either the Stalinist or capitalist orders.

In this struggle of the two war blocs today, we socialists are enemies of both camps of exploiters and imperialists. That is the basic fact about our "Third Camp" policy.

In a previous special pamphlet-issue on Socialism and War, we have analyzed in some detail the bases of our opposition to capitalist war and its policies today. But our opposition to capitalism does not drive us into support of the monstrous alternative represented by Stalinist totalitarianism or into illusions about it. That way lies no exit, no hope, no livable future.

Stalinism must be crushed! But it is an integral part of our indictment of capitalism that this CANNOT be done by the capitalist world in any progressive way or with any progressive consequences. The Western bloc can possibly defeat the Russian power in a military Armageddon. If indeed victory and defeat will retain any meaning in World War III even for the imperialists, but this can be done only at the expense of the downside of a militarized, bureaucratized capitalism itself representing the same type of tyranny of which Moscow represents the acme today.

This degenerate capitalism of our world today is the

very ground on which Stalinism feeds. If Stalinism is a dynamic force in much of the world, it is because—and only insofar as—it can take advantage of the justified hatred which millions feel for the system which has exploited them so long, and which they refuse to support against a demagogic Stalinist appeal which at least seems to offer something different.

As long as, and in proportion that, the enemies of Stalinism base themselves on support of the capitalist alternative, Stalinism is bound to grow strong and stronger.

Wherever Stalinism can pose as primarily the enemy of capitalism (which it is in truth, in its own interests), and not as an equal and even more deadly enemy of the working class and the masses who aspire to freedom, it can ride the revolutionary energies that capitalism's crimes have unleashed in the world. This is the "secret" of its strength and its dynamic appeal.

This is why it still can count on the active or apathetic support of millions in France and Italy and other West European countries; on millions among the colonial masses of Asia; on strategic points of support in U. S. imperialism's backyard, Latin America. This is why the Western capitalist statesmen are at the end of their rope in Indochina, where they are fighting in the name of French colonialism against a Stalinist-controlled Vietminh which is able to clothe itself in the garb of a national-liberation movement. This is why Korea was a trap for thousands of American dead.

Being anti-capitalist in reality, in the sense that it stands for a rival system of oppression and exploitation, Stalinism can hope to and seek to use a disoriented working class wherever it finds one, as its battering-ram against the old system. Where the U. S. can find only the most discredited of reactionaries and tyrants to be its semi-reliable allies—a butcher like Chiang Kai-shek or Syngman Rhee, fascists like Hitler's friend Franco or the neo-Nazis who flood the administration of its pet German, Chancellor Adenauer—the Stalinists are not tied to the old discredited classes and cliques in the countries of the Near or Far East, or in Europe. They can stage the act of offering a fundamental social transformation to throw out the landlords who oppress the peasant masses, whereas the U. S., bound by its capitalist status-quo ideology, cannot even find a demagogic word to say.

No one who stands for, or who is suspected of standing for, the retention of mastery by the capitalist imperialism—even if he apologetically explains that he supports the capitalist bloc only because it is a "lesser evil"—can hope to stem the expansionist dynamic of Stalinism.

That is why we look to the gathering of the forces of the "Third Camp"—those who wish to fight in the name of an independent struggle against both camps of exploiters—as the only road to defeat both war and Stalinism, both the old and the new imperialism.

But that works the other way too. Wherever it is Stalinism that has established itself as the master, where it has already overthrown capitalism and had time to show its own hand, its own cloven foot, there the revolt against the bureaucratic-collectivist despotism grows fast. But the masses who turn against Stalinist power in disillusionment do not want to go back; they want to go forward. The most dramatic proof of this was given in the great June 1953 revolt of the East German workers, in their heroic first assault against the Eastern conqueror. No pro-West or pro-U. S. or even pro-Adenauer slogans appeared among them; that on the one hand; and on the other, the representatives of the Western camp in Berlin showed themselves as leery of the aroused workers in revolt as the Stalinist masters.

Within the Stalinist empire, where it has consolidated itself, disaffection grows. Only a primitive stage was represented by "Titoism," where a satellite regime turned national-Stalinist—that is, rebelled against Moscow domination as foreign oppression while retaining the forms and social content of the same system, totalitarian bureaucratic collectivism. "Titoism" in various forms shook the Russian empire, and we naturally cheer it on to do so; but it is not this nationalist (anti-Moscow) form of the same system which represents the future for us.

The next stage of the revolt within the Stalinist empire is augured by the masses' aspiration for freedom against their new bureaucratic magistrates who have replaced the capitalists as rulers, the revolt prefigured by the East German rising.

It is the revolt of the workers in the name of a democratic government which will overthrow the Stalinist horror. Revolt for democracy under Stalinism—what does it mean? In a completely statified society, where the means of production are already in the hands of the state (while the state is in the hands of a tyrannical bureaucratic class), the road to genuine socialism lies in winning the state power for the democratic rule.

of the people. In this kind of society, democracy is not merely a political form (as it is under capitalism at the best); it is the sole instrument whereby the workers can really build their own society, and convert the statified economy from the preserve of a privileged class to the foundations of socialism. Democracy is a revolutionary goal.

Capitalism cannot unleash the revolutionary energies of the people behind the Iron Curtain any more than it can do so with the colonial masses of Asia. That will take a struggle which offers an anti-capitalist alternative to these people who have had their bellyful of both the old system and the new tyranny, and this is a struggle which can blow the Stalinist power up from within.

This is the "secret weapon" which can defeat Stalinism without plunging the world into a world slaughter to a bitter atomic end, to the greater glory of capitalism.

This is the political weapon which the Stalinists fear. It can be swung into action only by a consistent and fearless democratic foreign policy which has broken with the limitations imposed by capitalist class interests and alliances.

SAM TAYLOR

1957

14

REFORM OR REVOLUTION IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE?

A totalitarian or despotic society is one in the midst of a deep-seated social crisis. Totalitarianism is needed when it is impossible to rule with the consent of the people.

While such a regime presents a picture of monolithic unity, beneath the surface are the severest conflicts and suppressed class struggles. Or else what is the need for repression?

But to rule in this manner is extremely expensive in the social sense. It necessitates a tremendous bureaucratic apparatus which is at best a drain upon the economy; it is an expensive way to run the affairs of the society and in the case of Stalinism which also runs the economy, it has proved to involve fantastic waste and inefficiency.

While Nazi totalitarianism grew up on the basis of a decaying capitalism, the Stalinist bureaucracy grew out of the degeneration of the Russian revolution. It was the manifestation of the degeneration as well as one of the contributing causes of the degeneration. Given the

isolation of the Russian Revolution after the failure of the socialist revolutions in any one of the advanced industrial nations in Western Europe, and the social exhaustion of Russia itself after the long years of the civil war, the stage was set for the victory of the Stalinist bureaucracy under the slogan of "building socialism in one country."

But to industrialize Russia, given the narrow economic base which was the heritage of the Russian working class, would have been difficult on a capitalist basis. To attempt to do it in this Russia on a socialist basis was impossible. Once the hothouse rate of industrialization was decided upon, it was inevitable that extreme measures of repression were

needed in order to squeeze the surplus production out of the working class and the peasantry and to put it into building industry.

The frenzied attempt to industrialize meant suppression of the living standards of the Russian people. And to suppress the economic well-being of the people meant that the Stalinist bureaucracy has to suppress their right to protest or to advocate a different policy.

The political consequences of this policy are well documented and acknowledged. They were verified by the highest authority in Khrushchev's revelations at the 20th Party Congress. Russia is a totalitarian society based on collective property where all democratic rights have been suppressed. "It was governed by the methods of an oriental despotism rather than of a modern civilized society," now admit the editors of the magazine *Monthly Review*.

If the cause of the bureaucracy's rule is to be found in the economic backwardness and general scarcity, and exacerbated by the drive to accumulate the means of production, then what happens once the Russian economy rises to a higher level? What is the social "justification" of the bureaucracy once there is the basis for a more equitable or equalitarian distribution of the still scarce, although more plentiful, consumption goods?

Now that Russia has passed through the first stages of industrialization, to the point where it is the second most powerful industrial nation, should not the bureaucratic privileges and social differences which grew out of the less industrialized society now prove to be superfluous and even a barrier to further economic advancement?

Considering the existence of the Stalinist bureaucracy in this way, a whole school of thought has arisen, best typified by Isaac Deutscher, which proclaims that "de-Stalinization has become a social necessity." But they also maintain more than this: they maintain that the bureaucracy itself recognizes the conflict between the old Stalinist method of rule and the actual and potential needs of the Russian economy, and that the bureaucracy itself is capable of "an astonishingly intense reformist initiative" and of abolishing the Stalinist political superstructure. This means introducing socialist democracy if it is to have any meaning at all.

It is not a question whether the sociological generalizations about the relationship of industrialization and social progress are true. For the most part they are, but one does not automatically follow from the other.

At issue is the dynamic of the unrest and "reforms." Those, like Deutscher, who are for "reform from above" see the dynamic in the bureaucracy: Khrushchev understands the contradiction in Stalinism and he is trying to dismantle the Stalinist system itself. But the actions of the Stalinist bureaucracy in re-

ality, are the reactions to the pressures from below, from the Russian and satellite peoples and even from the ranks of the lower sections of the bureaucracy. Khrushchev is reacting to the rising discontent — East Berlin, Vorkuta, Tiflis, Poznan, Hungary and the student unrest in Russia itself—in an attempt to head it off by a series of "reforms," while at the same time preserving the Stalinist totalitarian system.

The question is not whether the Stalinist bureaucracy can curb some of the excesses of Stalin's despotic rule, for there is no theoretical or practical reason why it cannot, and to a certain extent it has done so. It is not even a question of whether a ruling class, even a totalitarian one, can give up some of its privileges in order to preserve the bases of its own rule. Nor is it merely a question of whether certain "reforms" can be introduced. The Titoist bureaucracy in Yugoslavia has gone a long way toward demonstrating that many "reforms" can be introduced.

At issue is whether the Stalinist ruling bureaucracy, whether or not it is designated a ruling class, can dismantle its own rule and introduce democracy in the real sense of free speech, free press, the right to form political organizations of the people's own choosing such as political parties and free trade unions.

If genuine democracy is not achieved, or at least a significant and real start made toward achieving it, then there can be no question but that the essentials of the old system remain. Here again the Tito example is instructive since almost everyone agrees that there are indeed differences between the Yugoslav and Russian regimes.

In Yugoslavia there were no bloody and extensive purge trials such as the Moscow trials of the 1930s, no bloody forced collectivization of agriculture, no increasingly draconic labor laws, no slave-labor camps on the scale of the Russian camps. And yet the social system of the two countries is the same—bureaucratic collectivism—and the political regimes are totalitarian.

A few years ago in radical and socialist circles it was fashionable to point to the "liberalization" and "reforms" of the Tito regime as Tito took steps or made gestures toward removing or modifying many of the most objectionable features of the regime in the course of the life-and-death struggle with Russia. It was an attempt to win mass support as against Moscow's pressure and to stabilize the bureaucracy's rule. But on the decisive and all-important criterion of political democracy—the right to political dissent—no concessions were made.

No oppositional political parties could be formed and no oppositional voice was permitted in the party and the bureaucracy continues to rule supreme. If there was any question of this, then the arrest and imprisonment of Milovan Djilas for merely writing an article (which did not

even appear in Yugoslavia but only in a foreign magazine) should have settled it.

This then is the limit of "reforms" or "liberalization" under a Stalinist regime: nothing will be permitted which challenges the political, and therefore social, rule of the totalitarian bureaucracy.

By Stalinism is meant a *social system*, and not merely particular characteristics and "aberrations" embodied by Stalin as an individual. Khrushchev, in his now famous speech, pointed to all the particular excesses of Stalin's personal dictatorial rule, even over the bureaucracy itself, which the bureaucracy as a whole found to be a deterrent to its rule and to the personal security of the bureaucrats themselves. Titoism is the living example that many of the excesses can be eliminated without changing the nature of the social system.

The specific characteristic of this bureaucracy as differentiated from the fascist bureaucracy is that its rule is based on state (nationalized) property. In a society where the means of production are nationalized, that group which has political power (which "owns" the state) has social power, and this determines the social relations. Under Stalinism, this group is the bureaucracy and not the working class. Its social power, the means whereby it continues to occupy its position of privilege and power, rests upon its monopoly of political power. Anything which shifts political power from the hands of the bureaucracy to the people, i.e., introduces democracy, undermines the social power and existence of the bureaucracy as the ruling group.

Democracy is a life-and-death issue for the Stalinist bureaucracy. The iron law of this bureaucracy is that its rule depends on the absence of democracy. Therefore any real democratic reform does not mean merely a political change but involves socio-economic changes; so that the establishment of political democracy in Russia, far from being merely a desirable but dispensable embellishment to "socialism," actually means a basic shift in social power from the bureaucracy to the working class—that is, a social revolution.

If those who speak freely about "democratization" and "reforms" in Russia do not understand this fundamental fact, it is not lost on the Stalinist bureaucracy. Within several weeks after the 20th Congress, the Russian press began to denounce the "rotten elements" who were going outside of the bounds of constructive criticism. An editorial in *Pravda* on July 6 attempted to put the lid down on the discussion which followed the downgrading of Stalin: "As for our country, the Communist Party has been and will be the only master of the minds, and thoughts, the spokesman, leader and organizer of the people in their entire struggle for communism."

Another voice which spoke out in support of the Deutscherite theory of "reform from above" was the *Monthly Review*. But the Sweezyites, who are firm

ideological Stalinists and never pretended to believe in the basic need for democracy under socialism, caution their readers not to go overboard:

"... at this stage of the game we would be wrong to expect more from de-Stalinization than the abolition or rectification of methods which were most obviously in conflict with the present needs and attitudes of the Soviet people. We may expect an end of arbitrary police rule, but certainly not an end of the secret police. We may expect an end to the frame-up, but not an end to the conception of political crime. We may expect an end to the deliberate falsification of history, but not an end to the party-line interpretation of history. The Stalin cult is dead, but not the Lenin cult. Above all, there is no ground for expecting an abandonment of the one-party state or any abdication of its monopoly of leadership by the Communist Party. . . . All this may sound disappointing to people who have been reading the news out of Moscow as indicating the *beginning* of a sweeping democratization. *But the truth is that there have never been any solid grounds for such extravagant expectations.* The Soviet dictatorship is cleaning house, not abolishing itself." (Italics added.)

If there is no solid ground for believing that even the beginning of a sweeping democratization is taking place, then what happens to the entire Deutscher theory with which *Monthly Review* expresses such complete agreement? For their part they see democratization occurring as a "slow process" during which time the "Soviet public will rise far above the highest capitalist level in both knowledge and culture, and when that time comes genuine socialist democracy will become not only possible but inevitable."

What is seen here is the combination of a reformist ideology with pro-Stalinism. Isaac Deutscher expresses this reformist conception of social change: "Only when the gap in the political consciousness of the Soviet masses and of the Soviet intelligentsia has been eliminated can de-Stalinization be brought to that ultimate conclusion to which Stalin's epigones can hardly carry it."

The factor holding back the expression of democracy is not the murderous hand of the Stalinist bureaucracy but the lack of knowledge, culture and political consciousness on the part of the people. The bureaucracy is merely the caretaker of the "socialist" social system until the people are mature enough (in the bureaucracy's and its apologists' opinion) to assume control of their own destiny.

The question whether it is possible to have "reform" from above handed down by the bureaucracy, or whether it is necessary to have "revolution" from below, is not one that need be considered merely in the abstract. This question has a long history in the socialist movement for, in general, it divided those who believed that socialism could be handed down to the working class by a series of legislative

reforms without the active participation of the working class—that is, without a working-class political party winning power—from those who believed that socialism could be achieved only through a thoroughgoing transformation carried through by the working class itself, after a basic change in class power.

The difference is not between those who want to go fast as against those who want to go slow. In the last analysis it became a difference in the goal, although it was not seen at the time.

The dispute was not decided in advance and in the abstract. The verification came in the course of action. During the First World War the test was the support of one's own ruling class in the slaughter.

The test of reform or revolution in respect to Stalinism also can only be decided in practice. And here the test is the Hungarian Revolution. Pro-Stalinists have therefore proceeded to slander the fight of the Hungarian people for freedom, and decried it as going "too far."

The Hungarian people were demanding the complete democratization of the Stalinist regime, something which the Deutscherite "reformers" are also for, presumably. But in practice the "reform from above" advocates are not for the same goal — the thorough democratization of the regime. For events showed that this goal demanded revolutionary means.

MAX MARTIN

1957

15

THE WORKING CLASS AND THE MYTH OF TOTALITARIAN INVINCIBILITY

The Hungarian Revolution, temporarily defeated by Russian military force, has nonetheless already accomplished outstanding wonders and recorded magnificent victories, and that by virtue of its occurrence alone.

It has dealt shattering blows to Stalinist barbarism as a world system, erecting a mighty barrier to Russian and international Stalinist aspirations to global domination.

It has produced important ideological repercussions, indeed a veritable revolution in the realm of ideas, which has begun to reflect itself materially among all social classes and forces, and which in the future will do so on an even vaster scale.

First and foremost, the struggle of the Hungarian people for democracy and socialism has virtually destroyed the myth of Russian and totalitarian invincibility.

The significance of this result can best be comprehended by contrasting the appearance of Stalinism today with the picture it presented some ten years ago.

Russia was completing its construction of a new empire in Eastern Europe then, doing so at a time when the old empires were going under. A Russian grab for all of Europe seemed possible and, in the eyes of some, likely. Mass Communist Parties grew in Western Europe; the hold of Stalinist ideology on millions of workers seemed secure. Likewise, the complete triumph of Stalinism over the Asian masses appeared a distinct possibility.

Capitalism on a world scale showed itself to be on the decline and the working-class struggle for socialist democracy seemed impotent, while Stalinism grew in power and influence.

In these circumstances, gloom about the future of democracy and socialism was widespread. Stalinism appeared to be stable and permanent. Many people came to believe that history held "1984" in store for humanity.

But the workers of Csepel, the students of Budapest University, the intellectuals of the Petofi Circle, the whole oppressed Hungarian nation, has risen to put an end to all that.

The poisonous myth of Stalinist invincibility has during the past period wreaked havoc in the socialist and labor movements, causing many to desert the struggle for socialism. The mass socialist and labor parties of Western Europe have lined themselves up behind capitalist imperialism, in good part, on the basis of the rationale that only NATO and the H-bomb could prevent the triumph of the Stalinist danger to humanity. In this country, the unions support Washington's bipartisan reactionary foreign policy and do not counterpose to it the alternative of a genuinely democratic and progressive international program.

But now, since Hungary, an independent working-class line becomes possible.

Behind the pessimist myth lay this thought: *The people living under Stalinism can do nothing to liberate themselves; totalitarianism is internally indestructible. Under its brutal sway no opposition can manifest itself*

and no organization for its overthrow can take place. Above all, the working-class fight for socialist emancipation is precluded. Moreover, the Stalinist monolith has a dynamism whose onslaught cannot be resisted by the peoples not yet its captives. Only the military might of the West can prevent the enslavement of the world, and it alone retains the possibility of promising eventual liberation for the peoples already under the heel of Stalinism.

One intellectual expression of these moods was to be found in Hannah Arendt's theories of totalitarianism. In Arendt's view, the rise of totalitarianism puts an end to the divisions of society into antagonistic social classes with their clashing social interests. The motor forces for social change and development present in non-totalitarian society disappear, as the class structure of society is replaced by an atomized, structureless, declassed, irrationally manipulated mass of people. This mass, the theory runs, is composed of innumerable fragments incapable of social cohesion and therefore completely unable to revolt.

For Arendt, modern totalitarianism has outmoded the classical Marxist analysis of social and political structure. One's economic position or one's relationship to others in the process of production loses most or all relevance to one's role in society. Thus there can be no common interest based on class position, nor any consciousness of that common interest, leading to solidarity and cohesion, nor can there be rational political goals as the end of group action. Society is composed of a ruling élite and an amorphous mass of individuals; the mass is either in a state of mystique-dominated conformity or in a state of aimless depression.

After Hungary, it is hard to remember that Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was much admired some five years ago; that her theories were regarded as the latest word in sociological sagacity, much superior to the outdated class analysis of Marxism still retained by a few "socialist dreamers."

For the Hungarian Revolution, like the October Days in Poland, conformed not to the discoveries of Arendt but precisely to the Marxist and socialist analysis of Stalinism.

On October 21 and 22 student groups met in Budapest and adopted a political program expressing their demands on the regime: not mobs of isolated individuals, but cohesive assemblages of persons belonging to a social group, and conscious of their common needs.

They called for an end to restrictions on their intellectual and academic life, and simultaneously developed a program in the interests of the entire nation, in keeping with their status as students and intellectuals: withdrawal of Russian troops, for free elections, for the right to strike, for revision of the workers' production norms, for revision of compulsory collective farm collections, etc.

They organized demonstrations for the next day, sending delegations to the factories to achieve unity with the workers. The workers of Csepel went on the offensive; they proceeded to the army barracks, came to an agreement with the soldiers, and obtained arms from them.

Everywhere there was disciplined cohesive action; organization sprang up; programs were formulated in terms of class interest and expressed the rational political goals of the different classes and groups and of the nation as a whole.

The very institutions created by the totalitarian society and regime, which, according to the dim view of those who regard Stalinism as the "wave of the future," will more or less eternally manipulate the "irrational mass," became the arenas in which the revolution was organized and prepared for—including the ruling Communist Party itself. It was proved that behind the totali-

tarian façade, beneath the monolithic veneer, social conflict and class struggle go on, expressing themselves in whatever structures and organizations exist.

Moreover, once the revolution was successful—as it was during the tragically few days from October 28 to November 4 in Hungary—social and political life flowered again. Class, social group, party, faction; all of the old divisions and organizations in society, whose elimination totalitarianism was supposed to have accomplished long ago, reappeared, vigorous and flourishing. The old Social-Democratic Party was reorganized; likewise the peasant parties, and many others. Mass meetings were held, newspapers founded, debate and discussion took place.

Social and political life reassured itself, proving that it had existed all the time; obscured by the totalitarian structure of the state and society perhaps, but existing nevertheless; for the totalitarian Stalinist society is a class society—different from other class societies, of course, from capitalism for example—but sharing with other class societies that which is common to all exploitive, class-based systems of social production and organization.

One thing which is common is the crucial fact that the conditions of existence for the masses in an exploitive, disharmonious, class-ridden society cause the oppressed to struggle against those very conditions of existence, and create the means whereby such struggle can occur. And in our day the inevitable tendency of such struggle is toward the creation of that harmonious society in which all classes, class distinctions, class division and the exploitation of man by man will disappear: socialism.

But if the Hungarian Revolution has struck shattering blows at the myth of totalitarian invincibility and confirmed the Marxist analysis of Stalinism as a class society in general, it has also demonstrated once again the socialist view of the key role of the working class in the struggle against all oppression and as the bearer of the socialist emancipation of society. The Hungarian workers have made clear that they, and they alone, can lead all of the oppressed in the fight to establish socialist democracy, and that it is in reality possible for them to do so.

The socialist assessment of the role of the workers, it must be borne in mind, bases itself not on some "religious worship" of workers, nor on the idea that working people as individuals contain some inherent superior virtues lacked by others, as both ignorant and malicious critics of Marxism "explain," but on the objective facts of working-class life:

In modern society, whether capitalist or bureaucratic-collectivist, they are the chief victims of class oppression. The circumstances in which they live force them to combat this oppression. They constitute a basic urban class in societies where cities are the centers of social and political life and power; the very process of capitalist or bureaucratic-collectivist production organizes them in the factories, producing social cohesion and solidarity among them. As a result of the modern production process huge masses of workers can be mobilized quickly; their role in production enables them to paralyze society at will, and also to take command of society at will. In the advanced industrialized nations which dominate the world they represent the clear and overwhelming majority of the population; and finally, the realization of their aspirations does not require the establishment of a new ruling class and a new tyranny, but on the contrary, is directed toward the abolition of all class oppression and all tyranny.

The students of Budapest who began the Hungarian Revolution knew this, as their action in reaching out for contact and unity with the working people, the young workers in particular, conclusively showed. As

a result of the systematic selection imposed by the regime itself, the students were overwhelmingly working-class in parentage, themselves. They realized — with what exact degree of theoretical clarity it is not of course possible to know—that while they might formulate the revolution's program and might even initiate the actual uprising, the working men and women would have to provide the bulk of the combat forces, and act as the main organizer and leader of the struggle.

Their expectations were not disappointed: the response of the workers proved them and the theories of scientific socialism right.

In Poland the workers, armed and in possession of the factories, won Gomulka his victory, administered a defeat to the Natolin pro-Russian faction of the Communist Party, and convinced the Russians not to intervene. In Hungary, the working masses, organized in their class organizations, the newly formed Workers' Councils, accounted for the bulk of the actual military struggle in the streets, in the October 24-28 period which was ended by the withdrawal of Russian troops from Budapest and the capitulation of Nagy to the revolution, and also during the week following the November 4 reintervention of the Russian army.

To back up the actual military operations, the workers in Budapest declared a general strike, and were followed in this by the workers in all other industrial centers of the country. Their strike action paralyzed all social life in the country, proved that the Kadar regime could not last for a single moment without the presence of Russian tanks, and, before the second Russian attack, made the revolution master of Hungary. And even after the Russians had reimposed their military rule in the middle of November, the workers continued the general strike for weeks and weeks, in a tremendous display of heroism, solidarity and determination to fight against the anti-working-class dictatorship which Stalinism is.

As in all revolutions in modern times, the workers created councils as their organs of struggle during the revolution. In "Red" Csepel, near Budapest; in Miskolc, heart of the mining region of Borsod; in Debreczen, Szeged, Győr, Magyaróvár; in every industrial center of Hungary, Workers Councils were organized. These bodies, under the democratic control of the workers themselves, rooted in the sites of working-class life—the points of production — at once became the leaders of military struggle and of social life, in cooperation with the other organized revolutionary forces.

They organized the demonstrations against the regime and fought against the Russian troops in the early part of the revolution and led the resistance to the reimposition of Russian military rule later on. They, together with the representatives of the students, soldiers and new political parties, maintained order in the cities, and carried out all necessary social functions.

They arranged for contact with the peasantry, and the feeding of the city populations. They organized and conducted production in the factories on the days and in the places where the decision was to work, and prevented it where and when the decision was to strike. In so doing, they demonstrated the socialist view that the workers, and they alone, are the class essential for the production of the necessities of life, and that the "services" of ruling classes can be dispensed with.

Both in deed and in word—the latter in the form of the countless manifestos, proclamations and programs adopted and published or broadcast by the various Workers Councils, Revolutionary Committees, etc.—they explicitly announced their intention of seeing to it that these class organs of the working people not only organized the revolution against Stalinism but remained on afterwards, both as instruments of workers' control in the factories and as organs of working-class leadership in the democratic rule by the people which would result from the revolution.

The Hungarian Revolution proved that socialist freedom, not "1984," is the wave of the future.

HAL DRAPER

1957

16

THE POLISH PATTERN: THE 'GOMULKA WAY' IN EAST EUROPE

In Hungary the fight was clearly, in the eyes of the world, a struggle between the united Hungarian people in revolution versus the Stalinist totalitarian power resting on Russian tanks. But in Poland the nature of the contending forces and the question of who is on which side have been far more obscured in the common view.

In and right after October 1956 the popular acceptance was that the Polish revolution was headed by Wladislaw Gomulka, whose democratic bona-fides were naturally guaranteed by the fact that he had suffered in jail from Stalin's hangmen for his "Titoist" deviations. Unlike the rash Hungarians, however, the prudent Poles led by the wise Gomulka knew how to get around the threat of Russian tanks and butchery. Gomulka did not try to fight the Russians head-on, thus giving them an excuse to unleash their massacre; no,

he was too smart. Restraining the too adventurist elements among the people, he extracted concessions from the Russians but did not push them too hard; freedom was going to be gained gradually, piece by piece, with the Russians having to yield step by step because at no point was the wily Gomulka going to give them a handle for armed intervention. The Poles were going to get by skillful tactics what the Hungarians had failed to get by force. This was the "Gomulka way" to win liberation while avoiding a blood-bath.

By the spring of 1957, if not before, it is already clear that something has gone wrong with this clever "Gomulka way."

The Gomulka regime is not advancing freedom, not even millimeter by millimeter, but rather repressing the revolutionary democratic elements more and more boldly and openly.

Press liberties are being removed rapidly, and the intellectual life of the country is moving in the direction of re-totalitarianization. The turbulent youth and students, who played such an important part in the October upheaval, are being put back in the straight-jacket of a state-controlled youth organization.

The revolutionary democratic left is being denounced as "revisionist" and dangerous, if not outright restorationist, and reactionary. Stalinist leaders are being brought forward instead of scrapped (like Deputy Premier Zenon Nowak) or reimposed (like the former trade-union bureaucrat Klosiewicz, who once more gets a state job). Left-wing editors of the party and popular press have been arbitrarily fired, like Matwin of *Trybuna Ludu* or Korotynski of *Zycie Warszawy*. The Workers Council system, which was a prime hope of the proletarian socialist supporters of the revolution in the factories, is prevented from expanding and from becoming a new organizer of the workers' social power at the point of production. Gomulka is making his peace not only with the Polish Stalinists but also with the Russian rulers, most dramatically indicated by his approval of the hated Kadar regime in Hungary.

The revolutionary democratic left wing is beginning to talk about "cold Kadarization." It begins to look as if the "Gomulka way" is the way to put down a revolution without Russian tanks, rather than a clever way to make a revolution without sacrifice.

But this too, while true, does not adequately summarize the nature of the Gomulka experience.

A basic problem of the revolution in East Europe is the interrelation between the two revolutions that compose it: the national revolution against Russian domination, and the social revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy, including the native Stalinist bureaucracy.

The Hungarian Revolution was both; this fact gave it an undivided dynamism.

The fact that one could be separated from the other had first been shown in practice by the Tito-Moscow break in 1948. "Titoism" was and is *national-Stalinism*: the aspiration for national independence from Russian rule on the part of, and under the control of, native rulers on the basis of the same social system (bureaucratic collectivism) and the same political regime (totalitarianism) as exists in Russia itself. The satellite fuhrers of East Europe are branch agents of the Kremlin; Tito went into business for himself.

But for the masses, national freedom from Russian rule was ardently desired not only because the people detested Russian bosses alone; they wanted to get rid of all tyrants; it was clear that the Russian tyrants had to be thrown off first; this in itself was worth cheering. This raises the question of disposing of native

despots too, but does not take care of it. It is enough that it raises it.

That is why the national revolution tends to awaken the social revolution even if they are not intertwined to begin with.

In Yugoslavia, the break with Moscow had come solely from above, as a result of the latter's overly crude pressure on the Tito regime; the Yugoslav people learned of the break with as much surprise as the rest of the world. They cheered, but as onlookers, not as participants or actors. Under these circumstances, the national element was kept most distinct from the social. Even so, the break with Moscow forced the Tito regime to begin a series of real social concessions at home (especially to the peasant mass, in the form of decollectivization and lowered economic pressure) and of demagogic pretenses at "democratization" which never went outside the framework of totalitarian politics.

The Polish Revolution was fundamentally different. It did not flow from a break with Moscow on the regime level, but from a mass struggle from below against the regime, which in turn forced a partial break with Moscow. In this way the Polish Revolution was a continuation of the process which had started in the great June days in East Germany and Czechoslovakia; and not a continuation of the Tito pattern.

The Polish Revolution broke out as a social revolution. A social revolution in any of the East European satellites must also, and automatically, be a national revolution against the Russian power which props up the satellite regimes; but while a social revolution here must be a national revolution, the contrary is not true.

This is the background for a short formulation of what happened in Poland: A decisive section of the Stalinist bureaucracy went over to *national-Stalinism* in order to head off the *social* revolution, under the impact of the mass uprising from below.

The face of the social revolution was first thrust forward in the great uprising in Poznan of June 1956. It was all the more portentous in that it started in the factories, spearheaded by the steel workers, after which it was joined in by the whole population.

It was by no means an attempt at revolution; on the contrary, it began as a demonstration for higher wages. Still without becoming an attempt at revolution, it naturally developed into a violent struggle against the state power and its organs, particularly the secret police and party.

For it is of the very nature of Stalinism (bureaucratic collectivism) that any uninhibited mass movement from below has no other enemy to oppose than the omnipotent state itself. That is why under this system there is much less distance between quiescence or apparent quiescence on the one hand, and turbulent revolutionary struggle on the other, or why events tend to lead from one to another so rapidly and surely. It is an overhead cost, and fatal defect, of totalitarianism that as soon as the people feel the least measure of release from the totalitarian straitjacket there are few further steps they can take without ripping the whole straitjacket to shreds, or trying to.

The Poznan uprising was a warning to the Stalinist bureaucracy led by Edward Ochab. (One difference between the Polish and Hungarian developments is that the Polish rulers got this advance warnings; the Hungarian Stalinists did not. Ochab in Poland was able to adjust, where Gero in Hungary was not. Hence it is a paradoxical fact that the greater depth and strength of the Polish movement—and it was more deep-going than the corresponding one in Hungary—was the very reason why the Polish pattern was marked by less vio-

lence, bloody struggle and dramatic crises than the Hungarian.)

After Poznan, it was clear to the bureaucracy that revolution was brewing. The Poznan uprising was only the sharpest symptom. Among the students and intellectuals, reflected in ever more open utterances in the press, especially the cultural organs, voices of criticism, dissent, dissatisfaction and heterodoxy were daring to be heard; just as in Hungary the Petofi Circle was becoming a forum for free opinion.

What to do?

One could take the bull by the horns and crack down on these burgeoning tendencies, teach the most daring ones a lesson, shut their mouths with terror and blood. This *might* work to begin with, or it might not; even if it worked, it might only eventually stir a more determined and violent assault by the people; even if it didn't, it was the more expensive way of doing it; even aside from this, it meant dropping all pretense at ruling with some support from below, it meant unleashing a terror such as the bureaucracy itself would have to live in fear of.

A storm was brewing, but wouldn't it be better to try to ride it out than to stamp it out? Or, to change the metaphor, when the people start marching, you get in front of them and lead them around, ever so carefully, to a point where they came from. If you don't, someone else will lead them to a more dangerous place.

The Polish bureaucracy split into two sections. One faction, which came to be called after its meeting place *Natolia*, held out for bulldozing it through, with the help of the Russian fist where necessary: undisguised Stalinism; the formula as before. The decisive section of the bureaucracy headed by Ochab kept their eyes fixed on Poznan and decided to ride along with the upheaval, to channelize it.

When the revolutionary street demonstrations and fighting broke out in October and the temperature of revolution began to rise, the Ochab leadership of the party had already started taking steps toward calling in Wladislaw Gomulka, to handle what was too hot for them.

Wladislaw Gomulka had been condemned as a "Titoist" after the 1948 break; before that he had been a leader in the post-war Stalinist totalitarianization of Poland, but now he was in disgrace and in jail, suspected of too much independence vis-à-vis Moscow. He was a "good Communist," that is, cut out of the same ideological cloth as Ochab or any of the other Stalinists; but he had credit with the masses as result of his arrest and record. (That was true of Kadar in Hungary too, by the way; Kadar exhausted his credit in a different way.)

Calling in Gomulka, however, meant going farther than just trotting out a leader who had not yet been discredited. It meant making a real concession to the mass ferment: the curbing of complete Russian domination, in order to take some of the nationalist steam out of the looming social-revolutionary movement.

As we know from the experience of Titoism, such a step is not at all to be understood *merely* as a reluctant concession on the part of the Polish leaders. They are sincerely for obtaining a maximum measure of national autonomy from the Russians, to whatever extent this may be possible without endangering them; this is the

"Titoist" component which is an inherent element among the motivations of every satellite regime, even the most subservient. The revolution developing, however, made this course not simply a desirable aspiration but a *possibility* and even a *pressing necessity*.

It was a pressing necessity in order to head off the social outburst. It was a possibility because, by pointing to the threatening storm, they could hope to convince the Russians to agree to a reluctant acceptance of some "anti-Russian" steps as a lesser evil, that is, to some concessions on the national field. This is what happened in October on the occasion of the famous "Eighth Plenum" when Gomulka's installation was accepted all around.

Thus, by balancing between the revolution from below and the Russian power which overshadowed them, the new regime gained nationalist concessions (de-Russification of the army, ouster of the symbol Rokossovsky, etc.), though the Russian troops still remained in the country. With the popular credit thus obtained, the regime swung into its drive to tranquilize the uncontrolled revolutionary ferment, and then, by degrees, to re-totalitarianize.

Their positive program was a national-Stalinism: that is, a bureaucratic collectivist regime run by, and operated for the benefit of, Polish totalitarians, not Russian ones, but in amicable alliance with the Russians and not without profit to them. They sought to convince the Russians by pointing to the threat of revolution; they sought to convince the revolution by pointing to the Russians.

In order to stabilize this balancing act, the Gomulka regime (perhaps better called the Gomulka-Ochab regime) made its major new concessions not to the workers but to the peasantry (de-collectivization and drastic cut in compulsory deliveries) and to the Catholic Church (reinstitution of religious training in the schools, etc.). Thus the regime leaned across the workers and dissident intellectuals to find footing in the alien social forces represented by these two holdovers from the old society, without however fearing any serious pressure toward the restoration of the old capitalist society.

It is doubtful how long the regime can thus balance among the contending social forces, and how long it can avoid drawing closer and closer to the unreconstructed Stalinists in a common front against the revolution which is the basic threat to both. In any case, what is essential is that at stake in Poland is not good or bad reforms bestowed by a good or bad leader, but rather the fate of a revolution, a mass upheaval which began by shattering the Polish totalitarianism, and which is still very much alive, though in retreat, as this is written.

In this, "our side" is the side of the revolutionary democratic left wing in Poland, including the workers and Communist militants and students who are denounced by the regime as "revisionist" because of their democratic socialist aims. We do not and cannot give them advice on tactics or "prudence," but their course, however "prudently" pursued, is the deadly enemy of the Gomulka regime.

They will be in the forefront to defend Poland under anyone's regime, including Gomulka's, against Russian assault if it comes to that, but in Poland they cannot escape a fateful clash with the regime in their struggle to extend October to a social revolution—the democratic socialist revolution.

GORDON HASKELL

1951

17

SHALL IT BE WAR OR PEACE? THE THIRD-CAMP VIEW

What does the war in Korea teach us about the nature of the struggle for the world which is going on, and about the results which are to be expected from the policies of the American ruling class?

Here was a country which has not known political independence since ancient times. The United States defeated its latest oppressor (Japan) in war, and then divided the country with Russia as part of a world-wide political deal.

True, the United States wanted nothing in Korea . . . except strategic position and prestige in the cold war which broke out soon after the Nazis and Japanese imperialists had been defeated. It also wanted "stability," which meant actually keeping a reactionary, brutal, capitalist-landlord clique in power, headed by President Rhee.

In the North the Stalinists established their puppet regime also. Behind the political "leaders" imported from their training schools in Peiping and Moscow stood the power of Stalinist China and the master in the Kremlin.

Ground between these two political and military forces, the Korean people didn't have a chance. Political democracy, national independence, a right to decide their own social and economic institutions—all these were denied to them.

At one point in the jockeying of the cold war, the American military and political leaders had proclaimed that Korea was outside the American sphere in Asia. Stalin decided on a gamble, and the North Korean army invaded across the 38th parallel.

Despite the fact that South Korea contained 20 million people to North Korea's 8 million, the invasion was stopped not by Rhee's armies but only by the sheer weight of American firepower. The South Korean army was poorly equipped, it is true, but it disintegrated almost without a fight. Guerrilla forces appeared in its rear . . . and such forces cannot exist without support in the countryside. Whole detachments went over to the Stalinists. The nation did not leap to defend itself and its government against the Stalinist attack. It was apathetic . . . or even hostile to Rhee.

Since then, the war has raged back and forth over the lands, homes and bodies of the Korean people. The Chinese Stalinists came in at the moment when victory seemed assured to the United States forces. Today, no such victory is possible in a military sense, and in any event, who wins can matter little to the surviving Koreans. Their land is shattered. Decades of backbreaking work, a life always on the border of starvation . . . that is the future of the Korean people; whoever wins.

Yet the American soldiers fight on and die . . . for what? For democracy and freedom for the Koreans? That is a ghastly joke. To stem Stalinism in Asia? A decade of struggling up and down the peninsula would not do it. To

prove to other Asiatic and European peoples that if they will stand up to Stalinism the United States will back them up? One look at Seoul, at a hundred Korean towns and villages bombed and napalmed out of existence, and the peoples of Asia might even decide that quiet submission to Stalinism would be the lesser evil—TO THIS.

No one in the American government can make a practicable proposal to end the war. No one has! Stalin has a good thing, and he is not likely to let go even if the Chinese Stalinists should want to. At least not till he achieves his political objectives: admission of Stalinist China to the United Nations, a say in the Japanese peace treaty, etc. Yet whether or not the United States proposes to yield these concessions, to continue the war in Korea can only continue the killing and the destruction, it can produce nothing positive whatever.

An even better example of the nature of this struggle exists in Indo-China and Malaya. It is a better example because here the peoples of these countries have not been overwhelmed by foreign armies on both sides: they are doing their own fighting.

In Indo-China the French are fighting to retain their imperialist power in this rich country. The United States supports France with arms as part of the world struggle to "contain" Stalinism. Independent Socialists not only want Stalinism "contained," they want it destroyed. But what can possibly be accomplished by supporting the French in Indo-China?

The Vietminh forces get aid and support from Stalinist China. That is true. Yet they are a political movement which appeals to the desire of the people to be rid of foreign rule.

As long as the French insist on ruling, no genuine popular movement can be built in Indo-China to resist Stalinism. Every democrat who allies himself with the French becomes a supporter of foreign imperialism over his own people—and thus automatically ceases to be a democrat and a patriot. No popular, democratic, anti-Stalinist movement can be built there unless it is also against the French and their puppet Bao Dai. But any such movement will be crushed by American guns, planes and tanks operated by Frenchmen and foreign legionnaires . . . in the name of "democracy."

In Malaya, a powerful Stalinist movement exists, apparently chiefly among the vast Chinese population. It is against the great plantation owners and British rule. The Stalinist guerrillas find such strong support among the common people that the British government has embarked on a vast project of "resettling" the whole Chinese population in new concentration areas. Will they now bring "democracy" to the concentrated population?

It is under these circumstances that the actual military struggle to "contain" Stalinism takes place. In Europe and the rest of Asia, in Africa and Latin America

the struggle goes on by "peaceful" means—to the accompaniment of production converted from the necessities of life to the instruments of death.

Tens and hundreds of millions of people understand that Stalinism is a form of oppression, and they do not harken to its false blandishments. But everywhere they feel that no alternative worth fighting for and dying for is offered them. Reluctantly, grudgingly, they yield to the pressure, the threats and promises, the enormous economic weight of the United States.

They arm, but they have little heart for the fight. To them the prospect is not of a victory over a foe which threatens their progress toward a better world. For the government which arms them is openly and avowedly determined to keep the world socially and economically capitalist even if civilization is destroyed in the attempt.

In the United States the more conscious workers, labor leaders, the liberals and "men of good will" are uneasy about the foreign policy of the government. They see that it has failed to gain the support of the common people of the world, and that even those governments in the American camp who are most sensitive to the popular will, like those in Britain and India, resist the full implications of the "Truman doctrine." They rally to Truman against the open preventive-war advocates like MacArthur (that is what his policy boils down to, even if it is "only" a preventive war against China to start with). But they have no real policy of their own to offer.

Some of them want peace so badly that they bury their heads in the sands and cry out for "honest negotiations" with Stalin. Where these demands are not directly influenced by Stalinist and Stalinoid propaganda, they are simply an expression of wishful thinking, which may be a charming trait of childhood but is unbecoming to adults.

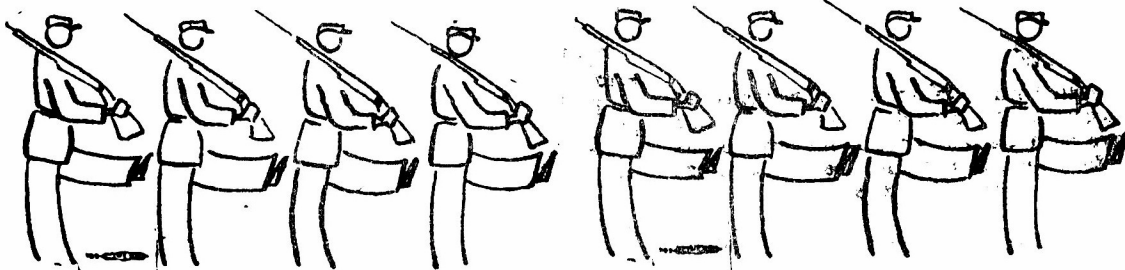
Others urge the government to put more money in the Voice of America, to make Point 4 aid a really major effort, and to give encouragement, aid and support to popular anti-Stalinist movements on both sides of the Iron Curtain. They are plunged into despair every time the government pulls a "boner" like its aid to Franco, and criticize it for doing so. They deplore the American support to reactionary governments, and are constantly in search for some good, solid liberal democrat or even socialist to whom the government should give its support.

These people have a glimmering of what is wrong, but it is hardly ever more than a glimmering. For the basic fact which they fail to see is that this government, this kind of government, is incapable of acting differently than it does, at least to any degree which could have real significance. They fail to recognize that what is wrong is not a "mistake" or a series of mistakes in policy. What is wrong is the central fact that this government wants to "contain" and defeat Stalinism not in the interest of democracy and freedom for the peoples of the world, but in the interest of maintaining capitalism in the world, a capitalism of which the United States is today the chief remaining beneficiary.

Stalinism will remain reactionary, totalitarian, and aggressive as long as it is in power and as long as it has the power to make an anti-capitalist appeal to the peoples. The American government will continue to support capitalism as long as it is a capitalist government, and will therefore continue to try to contain Stalinism by military force as its chief and only effective weapon. This means that unless a third force is brought into play, World War III is on the way.

This third force is precisely the desire of the masses of Asia, of Europe and the rest of the world to be rid of capitalism, and of the masses in the Stalinist countries to be rid of Stalinism. It expresses itself in a thousand ways. But it is almost nowhere consciously organized into a powerful, cohesive political movement. Up till now the sheer economic and military power of the two great camps headed by Washington and Moscow have been able in large measure to attract the elements of this Third Camp to themselves. Millions gravitate to Stalinism because they feel that the only alternative is a capitalist world dominated by America. Other millions gravitate to the camp of Washington because they fear the aggressive military power of the hated totalitarianism of Russia.

But along this path lies World War III, the devastation of the world, and a "victory"—if one is ever achieved by either side in such a struggle—which can put back the progress of humanity by a century. A way must be found to mobilize this Third Camp in its own name, under its own social and political banner, completely independent of the two war camps.



HAL DRAPER

1951

18

WAR AND CAPITALISM: ROOTS OF THE CRISIS IN THE WEST

When an Indian tribe went on the warpath to grab a neighbor's choice hunting ground, it is not likely that the braves spent too much time convincing each other that the scalps were necessary to further an idealistic crusade. They knew what they were fighting for because the *real* object of the war was also in the interest of the entire tribe. There was no overweening need for sloganized deception.

Bewilderment and demagogy over "war aims" has been an accompaniment of "civilization"—that is, of societies divided into ruling and ruled *classes*. This is the kind of civilized society we have known up to today.

No ruling class has ever inscribed on its war banner: "We fight for the Greater Glory of Our Class Interests." That is, no ruling class has ever done so if it expects the mass of people to do the fighting for it. It always wars, instead, for God, for country, for honor, for defense, for freedom—for an aim which is also shared by those who have to do the dying.

In the world wars of our modern age, there has been a pattern which cannot fail to provoke thought by those who are too ready to accept the current slogan used to explain why more millions must be slaughtered.

The First World War was fought to save the world for democracy—and there was *less* democracy left in the world after victory was won against Kaiserism. "Something" went wrong. There is plenty of evidence to prove that the war was really fought on behalf of one group of imperialist powers against another.

So they said the Second World War was different. It was different in many significant respects. But not in this: It was supposedly fought to save the "peace-loving democracies" from aggressive fascism, but the victors are now greasing the way for the return to power of the neo-Nazi reactionaries of Germany as well as preparing the rearming of Japan, rehabilitating the only fascist ally of Hitler still in power (Franco), etc.

"Something" went wrong again.

To lovers of freedom, the world picture is blacker today than before the second crusade for democracy. From the standpoint of a better world, both wars were tragic, useless butcheries.

Yet Kaiserism had to be fought. Nazism had to be fought. It was, indeed the anti-war socialists who fought these despotisms more uncompromisingly than anyone else.

But the two world wars of our century were not directed against those who are the enemies of freedom, peace or a better world. They were capitalist wars.

And now we face a third.

How can you doctrinaire socialists call this developing war with Russia a "capitalist war" on the part of the U. S.? Isn't it clear that Moscow menaces the whole of the free world? Are we supposed to stand aside and let Stalin grab up country after country for fear of being called "capitalist warmongers" by you socialists? Does your opposition to capitalism blind you to the fact—this time, anyway—the U. S. is not at bottom fighting to defend capitalism but to defend

its very life and every possibility of progress against the most brutal regime the world has ever seen? What planet are you living on? etc., etc.

It ill behooves those whose sincere liberal intentions were twice deceived—who proved two times running that they understood little of what was going on, and who now retrospectively ask themselves “What went wrong again?”—to pour arrogant scorn on the socialists. They would do better to ask themselves, with a little foresight this time, “What is wrong now?”

If the aim of this cold-war struggle, and of the big shooting war it is leading to, were really to crush Stalinist totalitarianism and ensure the blossoming of democracy, then we Independent Socialists would have no hesitation in getting behind it. But then many other things would be different, including the inevitability of that atomic war itself.

What is wrong is that this capitalist government *cannot* and will not wage either war or peace except in defense of capitalism and its interest. If you like the capitalist system, that may not trouble you—*Russian expansion will be stopped anyway, won't it?*

There's the rub: The only way in which this capitalist government can wage its war, cold or hot, is one which facilitates Russian Stalinist expansion on the one hand and offers, on the other, the possibility of stopping Russia only at the cost of destructive atomic warfare and only with the consequence of the intensification of every trend toward reaction, totalitarianism and a new barbarism.

Liberals may then no longer be able to write third-round articles about “What Went Wrong?” and “Why Did We Lose the Peace?”

It would be better to understand something about this social system of capitalism, which is going wrong right now, and about its relation to the war which the U. S. is preparing to fight.

Take, for example, the latest resolution on foreign policy adopted by the ADA (Americans for Democratic Action), the center America's organized liberals. Take, in fact, its best features.

The ADA sharply criticizes U. S. aid to Franco; calls for ~~who grants to starving India; urges the U. S. to “become the chief proponent of the revolutionary aspirations of the Asian peoples”;~~ ~~who supports Indo-China's independence from France; is “alarmed by the growing power of reaction and militarism in Latin America” and cautions that “any American military aid given to these countries ought to be dependent upon guarantees of essential political freedoms”;~~ notes that German “economic recovery has been accompanied by the resurgence of the power of the industrialists who aided Hitler”; complains that, outside of Britain and Scandinavia (“where government is in the hands of strongly progressive groups”) a result of the Marshall Plan has been that “a disproportionate share of the benefits has accrued to the already rich or well-to-do.”

A long list—is it not?—for a group which supports U. S. foreign policy as a whole . . . But not long enough, even in ADA terms. The White Paper breaking with Chiang Kai-shek is now a piece of paper and Chiang now is rehabilitated on the U. S. dole on an equal status with Marshall Plan countries. In Korea the U. S. supports the assassin regime of Syngman Rhee. In the Philippines the infamous Quirino is the U. S. stooge. . . .

In every hot spot of the world, there never has been a time when U. S. policy has been so overt in support of every reactionary force it can muster, so long as that force is anti-Russian.

Read the ADA resolution, and a startling omission appears. Nowhere in the long document can one discover that these reactionary policies are being carried on—not by the Republicans, not by the Dixiecrats, not by MacArthur, none of whom happens to be in the White House—but by Truman and his Fair Deal colleagues!

Are these things merely regrettable mistakes and deplorable errors in an otherwise progressive foreign policy? The list of “mistakes” and “errors” cover the whole globe and every continent!

Nowhere is it asked “Why?” *Why* are Truman-Acheson deliberately propping up the leading fascist in the world, in the very face of anti-Franco revolts among his people? *Why* did Franco get his grain in a twinkling, while India has so long been left to starve in the face of famine? *Why* has the U. S. occupation countenanced the return to power of Krupp and the cartels in Adenauer's Germany?

Why does the U. S. support a Rhee, under whose regime Robert Taft would be considered a dangerous subversive? *Why? Why? Why?*

It would be easy to reply that Truman and his fellow policy-makers simply dote on fascists and reactionaries—but that would not only be false, it would miss the main point. The fact is that a creature like Syngman Rhee, with his semi-feudal landlord clique, for example, is a pre-capitalist fossil repugnant even to a self-respecting capitalist reactionary. Acheson no doubt shuddered the last time Rhee ordered the murder of a political opponent. But—

He had no choice. The only other social force in Korea, besides the landlord clique, is the nameless lowly mass of the peasantry who, for generations, have been straining from below to rise up and throw off their semi-feudal exploiters in mass revolt. In a country like Korea, the only alternative to Rhee is: going to the people, supporting their rebellion in mass revolution from below against "law and order" and "established authorities."

That does not stop more than one good liberal from advocating that the U. S. do what is necessary—that is, "foster the Asian revolution," that is, become the vanguard of the world revolution. But it does stop the capitalist government of the U. S.! Washington is interested in preserving the status quo in the capitalist world, not in fostering revolution. . . . How naive is a liberal permitted to be?

There is no effective middle ground in Korea between the anti-capitalist, anti-landlord revolutionary strivings of the people at the bottom, and the corrupt Rhee dictatorship on top. Between these two, the U. S. chooses reaction—holding its nose.

But that precisely is the type of choice all over Asia, and all over the world! If the "industrialists who aided Hitler" are coming back in Germany, under the Adenauer regime whose victory in the last German election was hailed by U. S. capital, it is because these are the people whose comeback is necessary if German capitalism is to be propped up. (As Henry Wallace once naively put it, the difficulty with the program of "progressive capitalism" is . . . the lack of progressive capitalists.)

Test case: In Germany the U. S. occupation policy was faced with the choice of sacrificing German capitalism to the "war for democracy," or sacrificing democracy to the need of organizing Western capitalism against its Russian imperialist rival. The U. S. chose the latter because the interests of capitalism are its first and only basic concern. Hence the character and consequences of this cold war and of the war to come.

In sharper or more muffled form, this same type of choice is behind every U. S. "mistake" in piumping for the deepest-dyed reactionary scoundrels everywhere on the earth. There is less and less middle ground between these, and the anti-capitalist, revolutionary and socialist aspirations of the peoples all over the world, in a world where U. S. capitalism remains the only one in which the old system has still a bit of fat around its belt, still at any rate a going concern. The increasingly open reactionary character of U. S. foreign policy has developed with the decay of world capitalism itself.

The revolutionary strivings of the peoples are left wide open to the demagogy of the Stalinists, who are able to ride the anti-capitalist wave because they have no stake in capitalism themselves, being representatives of a rival exploitive system.

The U. S. cannot carry out a democratic foreign policy as long as capitalism holds sway at home.

This is the first sense in which capitalist America's war is necessarily a capitalist war.

To "contain" Stalinism, to prepare the war against Russia, the U. S. has to organize the West. It knows only one way to do that.

The capitalist governments of Europe are split among themselves. While all stand in fear and hatred before the upstart imperialism of Stalinist Russia, they are not too much more enthusiastic about ceding an inch of power and influence within the capitalist world than they are to lose all before Russian bureaucratic collectivist imperialism. They fight Stalinism not because it destroys democracy in the world but because it destroys their power along with their capitalist system. Their class interests are at stake within the tug-of-war of the Western bloc as well as in the tug-of-war over the globe.

The loose cooperating alliance through which groups of capitalist

countries fought the previous world wars—ceding a little here, snatching a little there at the first opportunity—will no longer do. For one thing, the fate of their social world is at stake, not merely advantage in imperialist rivalry. For another, the capitalism of the U. S. has developed in overpowering strength as their own has declined. The capitalism of the U. S. bestrides them as a colossus.

Such is the state of the old profit system that no one in Europe—not even the capitalist class—believes that even victory in war against Russia can mean much besides more destruction and decay for themselves. The U. S. can win the war—or Russia can win the war—but whoever wins, Europe loses.

These are the allies that the U. S. seeks to organize under its banner. It can marshal them into a fighting force only by imposing its own domination and control over them.

It is said that the U. S. "does not seek world domination." This is as meaningful a claim as the companion-piece that the U. S. "wants peace, and not war." Of course, the U. S. does not want war. Neither does Stalin. (Neither did Hitler.) They merely want *that* which can be gained, in the teeth of rivals, only *with* eventual war.

The U. S. does not "want" to control the world, if by that is meant some megalomaniac desire for power for its own sake. It merely is *driven to seek* effective domination over the world if it is to gain that which it *does* want.

It is perfectly true, in this sense, that the U. S. has accepted its "world responsibilities" reluctantly and in spite of national traditions against foreign entanglements and commitments. A good part of the "great debate" on foreign policy represents the continuing struggle between that tradition and the increasingly clear necessities of capitalist "internationalism." A good part of the internal inconsistency of the Republicans and the grossly hypocritical and double-tongued character of their foreign policy is due not merely to power-politics maneuvering but also to the fact that not all of them have entirely made the adjustment to American capitalism's new world role and tasks.

No, American capitalism does not "want" world domination. It merely wants the fruits of world power. For decades it has been able to assert its preponderance in the world through the power of its economic wealth and industrial power, without direct political domination. It has been able to capture and control one market after another, one source of raw materials after another, on the basis of its economic weapons.

And its economic weapons are still its most powerful today, when it has to organize the capitalist world against its Russian imperialist rival. The Marshall Plan, with its retinues of supervising controllers, checkers and overseers in the countries which are the beneficiaries of its charity, becomes an instrument to guide and twist the economies of the West in the direction that will fit in with the needs of the grand war alliance.

With lordly objectivity—when it's a question of the *other* fellow's shoe pinching—the U. S. overseers complain about the narrow nationalism displayed by their fellow capitalists abroad, who do not relish having their economies geared to war according to blueprints which are engineered to benefit U. S. capital and not their own.

It isn't a cold-blooded plot, of course. It's merely something like this: an ECA administrator in Rome can see with complete clarity how absurd it is, from the common standpoint, for Italian capitalism to insist on building its own steel industry; and he can put the kibosh on it; and if, in turn, embarrassing questions are raised about the "narrow nationalism" of U. S. tariff policy, for example . . . he can do nothing but write deploring letters to Washington. . . .

From the point of view of American capitalism, the Russian threat to world peace and democracy is no unmixed calamity. Without it, U. S. power could scarcely have extended to its present sway as the undisputed arbiter of the Western world. Without it, the capitalisms of Europe—weakened though they are—would scarcely have been brought to submit in so short a period to the tender mercies of overseership by Washington.

For Europe, the cold war has meant: an unconscionable drain for armaments on their weakened economic structures; the distortion of their economies away from rebuilding the standard of living of their peoples and toward war outlays; the squeezing of their industrial structures by American monopolization of raw-material sources (as Aneurin Bevan pointed out in his speech in Parliament); the pros-

pect of a war which can only drive them further toward complete bankruptcy.

But for America, sitting on top of the capitalist world, the cold war has meant prosperity, and the highest profit ranges in history.

Yes, the Russian threat is no unmixed calamity to American capitalism. One has only to ask oneself, as so many economists have done in fact: What would happen to U. S. economy if "peace broke out," that is, if the U. S. had to return to a peace economy? . . .

What is it that has held back the outbreak of another devastating depression and economic crisis such as raged in the '30s, until industry started gearing for World War II? What has happened to the galloping disease of capitalism which dooms it to recurrent spells of unemployment and breakdown in the midst of abundance—in fact, because of an abundance of goods which cannot be purchased by the mass of people?

If the great productive machinery of the U. S. now in operation were to be used to produce the necessities and luxuries of life for the consumption of the people, the expected post-war depression would already be upon us. For as long as the extraction of capitalist profit stands before the people's ability to buy back (with their wages) the goods which they themselves create, so long does the capitalist system periodically break down, choking in its own fat, as "over-production" comes into conflict with the restricted purchasing power of the masses.

But—happy times that we live in!—an economy decisively geared to the production of cannon, bombing planes, and the instruments of war destruction in general, does not have to depend on the inadequacies of mass purchasing power. Its market is the government. As the cost of war and war preparation rises, the government squeezes its funds from the standard of living of the people. Instead of catastrophic economic breakdowns, we are due to see a steady downward pressure on the workers' living conditions—while the capitalists draw their war profits unperturbed by possible stock crashes. . . .

Is this a diabolical plot to substitute war for depression? Of course not! This is simply the capitalist system in operation, following out its own trends behind the backs (and consciousness) even of its own "leaders."

If, to keep this war economy going at full blast, the U. S. must distort and strangle the economies of its capitalist colleagues abroad, is this the result of an evil conspiracy by Wall Street magnates to achieve world empire? Of course not! This is merely international capitalist competition at work, the fruit of the blessed private-enterprise system. . . .

If, in order for itself to remain healthy, U. S. capitalism must muscle in on and squeeze out the older capitalisms of Europe in control of markets and raw materials all over the globe, is this the heinous intent of rapacious imperialists developing a deep-dyed plan in a smoke-filled room? Of course not! This is merely the imperialism which is the very warp and woof of modern capitalism. . . .

And Stalinist Russia appears before the capitalist world, not merely as a challenger for the lion's share in an inter-capitalist division of world markets and wealth, not as an imperialist rival whose victory would mean a mere restriction of the loser's imperialist opportunities, but as an imperialist rival challenging the whole capitalist form of exploitation, in favor of its own form of exploitation and oppression.

Where it wins, capitalism is destroyed, and another section of the world is removed from any capitalist's range of operation. As the Stalinist system spreads, as it has already spread over a third of the planet, capitalism is more and more forced back upon its home market alone, in a tightening squeeze. If "socialism in one country" is impossible, "capitalism in one country" is even less possible.

From the point of view of a capitalist government, the struggle to "contain" Stalinism is the struggle to keep the world open for its type of exploitation, without which it would strangle behind its own national boundaries.

This is why, for the U. S., "everything goes" as long as it stops Russia—even if it also means the bureaucratic militarization and totalitarianization of capitalism itself.

On the one hand, the capitalist basis of U. S. foreign policy makes a democratic foreign policy IMPOSSIBLE.

On the other hand, the capitalist basis of U. S. foreign policy makes

a democratic foreign policy DISPENSABLE as far as the real aims of the struggle are concerned.

The only kind of government which can realize a truly democratic foreign policy is one which is ready to subordinate the interests of capitalism and imperialism to the necessary steps for defending the nation and the working people from the threat of Stalinist aggression and totalitarianism.

Only a government of labor could do this—a labor government which does not act like the AFL and CIO leaders today, who parrot the war slogans of the capitalist powers-that-be, but one which boldly accepts its task of remaking society as the “architects of the future.” Such a course, rejecting the downward paths of both capitalism and Stalinism, would be the path to a socialist democracy, a Socialist America, in a world of peace and plenty.

PHILIP COBEN

1957

19 BLOW FOR PEACE: IMPACT OF THE ANTI-KREMLIN REVOLT

The Hungarian and Polish revolutions of 1956 mark a new period not only in the struggle for socialist freedom against Stalinism, but also in the fight against war and the danger of war.

Its impact is not only on the underpinnings of the Russian empire but also on the bases of the Western capitalist war alliance.

Yesterday, supporters of the Western camp and its structure of military alliances with some of the most reactionary forces in the world, like Franco and Chiang Kai-shek, could scoff at the socialist alternative: the “visionary” idea of a democratic foreign policy which was aimed at blowing up the Russian empire from within—a socialist and revolutionary foreign policy, fundamentally incompatible with capitalism.

Yesterday, they could feel “realistic” and “practical” in supporting the line of an imperialist military alliance against the Stalinist threat, as the only thing that could save the “free world” from totalitarian conquest and enslavement.

But the revolution that was “unrealistic” yesterday now stands astride East Europe as big as life.

It is the world's most massive buffer against war.

And at the same time the NATO war alliance is seen to play the role of a reactionary barrier to the spread of this revolution which is the hope of the world.

It was the bogey of NATO and its rearmament of Germany, and virtually only this argument, which was trotted out in Poland in order to turn back the

onrush of the revolution. Gomulka's speeches pointed to the West's war bases as the justification of and reason for the maintenance of Russian troops in Poland, as against the revolutionists' demands. It was an argument that worked.

Even in Hungary, where no Stalinist argument had any chance of working, the main propagandistic weapon resorted to was to try to smear the revolution with a tie-up to the West, with capitalist “restorationism,” with pro-Western reactionaries like Cardinal Mindszenty.

The West's stock of H-bombs is no friend of the revolution against Stalinism. It is its enemy.

Right after the Hungarian Revolution, even American party-liners could see what was now the greatest deterrent to war. “U. S. SEES REVOLTS ENDING WAR THREAT,” was the headline over a N. Y. *Herald Tribune* think-piece by Marguerite Higgins. The Scripps-Howard foreign editor cabled from Berlin that the “best-informed diplomats” said “The biggest effect of the Polish-Hungarian revolts on the world situation will be to restrain Russian aggression in Europe.”

and the East Europe empire is no longer "a defensive fortress for Russia and a base for attack on the West" but rather "a death trap for Russian armies"—all because of the revolution.

Very true. But that which he says is no longer true; happens to be the only reason used to justify the existence of NATO and the whole military-alliance policy of the U.S. and the Western capitalist world.

In this new era of the same social revolution for socialist freedom against Stalinism, the danger of the third world war, whose shadow has been hanging over the world, now recedes. This is so not because of NATO but in spite of it; not because of the United States' stock of H-bombs but in spite of it; not because of Western threats of "massive retaliation" but in spite of them; not because the Stalinist camp is overawed or intimidated by a re-armed and remilitarized Germany in the heart of Europe, but in spite of the reactionary effects of this move.

Russia's greatest assist in its brutal massacre of the Hungarian people came from those mainstays of NATO, America's two leading allies England and France, when (together with Israel) they stole the show from Budapest by falling on Egypt in order to restore their imperialist power in the Middle East and North Africa. There has never been any more spectacular demonstration of how the two rapacious imperialisms, east and west, feed on each other's crimes.

What liberal can now find a reason for justifying the "realistic" policy of bolstering up Franco, and thus repressing the Spanish revolution, in the name of "defending the free world" against Stalinist armies pictured as sweeping over Europe? What inspires the revolution against Stalinism—American aid and friendship to this fascist ex-ally of Hitler, or a democratic and anti-imperialist policy of friendship with the revolutionary forces against this tyranny?

In Stalinist China, just as Gomulka points his finger at German militarization under the American aegis, so Mao Tse-tung points to the fact that the only American-sponsored alternative to his own totalitarian rule is the return of that butcher of the Chinese people, Chiang Kai-shek. Which is a bigger blow against the war treat—the installation of atomic guided missiles in Chiang's Formosa, as has now been done, or a break with this Chiang as part of a genuinely democratic foreign policy?

Which builds that "death trap" for Stalinism? And which on the other hand permits the Russians to extricate themselves from the consequences of the crushing hatred felt by the satellite peoples?

Which inspires the peoples of East Europe to put sharp teeth in the "death trap"—U.S. backing of a monarchist dictatorship in Jordan based on everything reactionary, backward and primitive in that country, bought for dollars, or rather a United States that would line

itself up in sympathy with progressive, anti-imperialist Arab aspirations?

The policy and very existence of the Western capitalist war camp is an impediment to the revolution against Stalinism. But the revolution against Stalinism is the greatest obstacle to war. This is the big lesson of the East European revolution to the West!

All this is bound up with the main reasons why the Western powers could not aid the Hungarian revolution. We mean aid politically, not militarily, since no socialist can advocate that the U.S. precipitate the third world war for this or any other fair-seeming pretext.

Here, too, under the direct impact of the revolutionary situation, even American party-liners got a glimmering.

• A *New Leader* editorial last November came out for steps toward a withdrawal of "all foreign troops from the Continent," in order to bring about "entirely new political possibilities [which] would emerge if Soviet troops went home."

• The *London Observer* reported that even Eisenhower himself was toying with the idea. There were people in Washington who were. The *N. Y. Herald Tribune's* Marguerite Higgins came out with a column that started like a manifesto: "There is a way of helping Hun-

gary. . . . This involves a dynamic move by the U.S. . . . to offer boldly to withdraw American forces west of the Rhine in Europe on condition that Russia withdraw forthwith from Eastern Europe and give Germany its freedom. . . ."

• In the *New Republic* about the same time, Richard Lowenthal discussed "Hungary—Were We Helpless?" He too offers a version of this idea. "It was the only chance," he says, of influencing the Russians' action, and "this chance was missed."

Yesterday, when socialists proposed withdrawal of troops, we were told that U.S. soldiers were the only defense against the Stalinist hordes. We replied that the real defense was the awakening of the revolution against Moscow. It was worth a smirk, a blank stare, or remarks about dogmatists who haven't learned anything. New Republican journalists and State Department hangers-on were talking nostalgically about what should have been done and the chances that were missed.

To be sure, this mood did not and could not last long with these elements. Their idea had crumpled up under the impress of dramatic struggles, not of a consistent idea; and they were able to forget it as soon as the headlines ceased screaming. It fitted in with none of their other ideas; it dropped out.

The ~~vague~~ bold conception can be an integral part only of a revolutionary approach to the problem of the war danger. The perspective of awakening revolution against Moscow requires that the revolutionary spirit first be awakened on this side.

But this flare-up of political thinking illuminated the potentiality.

Try to imagine a Western world which has given up its military-base and H-bomb encirclement of Russia in order to permit the revolution to encircle Russia; which has aligned itself in practice with the colonial peoples of Asia and Africa in order to spotlight the colonialism of Moscow; which has ceased to be the ally and prop of every oppressed people and reactionary in the non-Stalinist world; in other words, a Western world which is following a consistently democratic and anti-imperialist foreign policy:

What a tremendous impulsion would be given to the volcanic revolutionary forces which are battering at the inner vitals of the Russian empire!

This is not the only way in which political (not military) help could have come from the West. We are not only talking about demonstrations of solidarity—though even on this elementary ground the American labor movement was a disgrace. (It collected tens of thousands of dollars for relief purposes for refugees, etc., but its only manifestation of solidarity was, alas, in supporting a Madison Square Rally in New York which was dominated by a largely reactionary audience and which made news by booing Anna Kethly.)

Rainer Hildebrandt, German author of *The Explosion*, the book on the East German uprising of June 1953, has described how in West Berlin and West Germany workers' demonstrations and workers' leaders demanded that an appeal be made to the East German workers to come to the support of the Hungarian and Polish fighters. The chairman of the West Berlin trade unions, Ernst Scharnowski, had proposed that an appeal be broadcast to the East German working class for a "peaceful general strike" of solidarity. But the authorities made sure nothing was done. As in June 1953 for that matter, they were scared most of all by the very idea of revolutionary struggle, even if directed against the Stalinists, since it is contagious.

"I personally believe," wrote Hildebrandt, who is only a good liberal and not even a socialist, "that if at the end of October there had been sit-down strikes in Germany, the Soviets would not have been able to launch their blood-bath in Hungary. The Soviet military forces are not homogeneous. Soviet soldiers joined the Hungarian freedom-fighters in the first days of the revolt, and many Russians in uniform showed sympathy for the Hungarians. It would have been a great risk to proceed with such an army against several oppressed peoples simultaneously."

"Once before, the West passed up such a magnificent opportunity: On June 16, 1953, when the construction workers of East Berlin called for a general strike, Western government quarters knowingly suppressed the words 'general strike.' The radio stations [of West Berlin] were not allowed to broadcast this slogan. Today we know that if the forces which on

the following day created 'June 17' had assumed the form not of an explosion but of a strike lasting several days, the strike would have spread to the major plants of these satellites and the forced-labor camps of the Soviet Union."

But the truth is that the Western leaders were almost as much afraid of the spread of revolution as the Stalinist rulers themselves! Their failure to act was not due to stupidity or timidity alone, but to their political nature.

This startling fact has been put down in black and white by prominent spokesmen and commentators themselves. Last October and November the N. Y. *Times* and other papers were full of categorical reports from Washington as to the fears of the State Department that the East European revolution would get out of hand. To cite one: on October 28 Thomas J. Hamilton of the *Times* Washington bureau wrote of the "Hungarian patriots" that "Their successes thus far, paradoxically enough, cause some forebodings in Washington." The *Times* Drew Middleton cabled from London that opinion there looked on the Hungarian Revolution as *weakening* "democratic forces," and complained that "events have moved beyond the capacity of the West to guide or advise."

The "West" was getting as uneasy as Moscow that things were out of its control.

Foreign Minister Pineau of France publicly warned in a speech against any Western attempt to "exploit" the Polish and Hungarian revolts. It might give Moscow a pretext to go back on "de-Stalinization," he explained, like many others — "as if Moscow's "de-Stalinization" was more than a demagogic illusion if it was just looking for an excuse to go back on it!

Walter Lippman, most bluntly, soberly indicated warnings against helping the spread of the East European revolution on the ground that revolution, after all, was contagious. "If such a rebellion were to spread to Eastern Germany, as it might well do, it would almost certainly mean that in some way or other Western Germany would be sucked into the conflict."

And after Western Germany—what? A portentous revolutionary perspective opens up. The Western ideologists draw back in fright.

They cannot hold on to any revolutionary weapons to break up the Stalinist empire. Their only conception of a deal for "peace" is a deal to divide the world into spheres of power between the two empires—with Russia "containing" itself within its own bailiwick. They can think only of an imperialist road to "peace" which sacrifices the subject peoples to the masters on both sides.

The revolution in East Europe is a mortal danger to both war camps. It is therefore also the hope of socialism and peace on both sides of the world.

HAL DRAPER

1955

20

WHY THE WORKING CLASS
IS THE KEY TO PROGRESS

For social change toward a better world, socialists believe the most important and indeed decisive social force is the struggle of the working class. Why the working class?

Why do socialists believe there is a special connection between their own great goal of a new society and the interests of labor, this one segment of society? Is it because we "idealize" workers as being better, or more clever, or more honest, or more courageous, or more humanitarian, than non-workers?

—Isn't it rather true that the workers have time and again followed reactionary courses and leaders and have by no means showed any invariable affinity for progressive causes? Don't they follow the Stalinist totalitarianism in countries like France and Italy; and where they do not, are their own trade-union bureaucrats (like the British) much of an asset to genuine socialism? Haven't they been misled and deceived like any other section of society? Aren't they filled with race prejudices in the U. S., sometimes even more so than the upper classes? If it is true that workers are "naturally" pro-socialist, why is it they have made such a mess of things, voting for reactionaries and fakers and supporting the status quo? . . . And so on along the same lines.

Most of this type of questioning is based on pure and simple misunderstanding of the socialist viewpoint about the working class. Especially in this country, where the socialist movement has always been relatively weak, the most popular anti-socialist notions are most often founded on simple misinformation about what socialists believe, because their voices have not been loudly heard.

Socialists do not "idealize" workers in any sense whatever.

Taking them man for man, as individuals, there is no reason to argue whether workers are "better" human beings than others because they are workers. This whole approach, whether pro or con, has nothing to do with the socialist conception.

Let's underline this in a different way. If we try to view social issues as merely conflicts between Good People and Bad People, then surely we must say that men who insist on starving others are Bad. The 75-cent-an-hour wage minimum is surely a pittance. Yet opposition even to this pittance would be strong among employers, especially small-industry employers, while it is virtually absent among workers. Is this the trend among such employers because they are Bad Men? We would find, rather, that these employers are just as likely to be kind fathers, generous friends, charity-givers, indulgent husbands, and not the type to deliberately run over children in the street. They act one way as individual atoms in the social fabric; they act another way as part of their class collectivity.

They explain this, when they do, by saying "Business is business." This is their way of distinguishing their individual and human thoughts and role from their role as a member of the business community—that is, of their class. In the latter case, the conditions of existence and interests of "business" make out of them a social force that has little resemblance to their individual psychologies.

Like every other class or group, the working class is more than the sum of its individual atoms.

Man for man, workers are not "naturally" more pro-socialist than anyone else. It is a question of what direction they are pushed in by the conditions of their existence as a class and by their interests as workers, just as this is the question with every group.

This indeed is one reason why so often socialist ideas tend to be initiated in a systematic way not by ideologists from the working class but by men from the "educated classes," the bourgeoisie and intellectuals, men like Marx or Engels, for example, who were not proletarians themselves — although it should be noted that the impulses to the systematization of such ideas were coming from the working masses' struggles and conditions, not from other sections of society. Individual ideologists were led to align themselves with the working class.

If they were drawn in this direction, it was because here was the dynamic social force which they recognized as the decisive one for putting flesh and blood on ideas.

When a working class is politically and socially undeveloped, it is well-nigh inevitable that its members will be filled with all sorts of backward and even reactionary notions. For example, it has often been found in the U. S. that racial intolerance decreases with amount of education; college graduates are less prejudiced, etc. Now, in general, the children of the working classes get less schooling than the offspring of the middle classes and bourgeoisie. So, according to this pattern, workers should be far more filled with racism than the rest of the population. But what is instructive is to see where this neat pattern does not hold.

It holds best where labor is most poorly organized as a class, and where it is organized in the least class-conscious fashion. The South is not only a cauldron of racism but also a sinkhole of union-busting and open-shopism. Toward the other end of the scale, racism is nowhere so assiduously combated as in the more militant mass-production unions that sprang from the CIO upheaval, like the United Auto Workers, not to speak of the socialist movement which takes a vanguard role against racism.

Here anti-racism is not a function of school education; it is a function of class education.

More than that: in a union like the UAW or the CIO as a whole, the organization is often more anti-Jim-

Crow than the sum of its members. That is, the dynamics of the *class* push it as a whole more strongly against racism, which is divisive of the class, than do the individual opinions of its members.

What we have been emphasizing, then, is that the socialist sees no special magic in the "worker" as an atomized individual. The special "advantage" of the working class (if we may call it that) springs from certain inherent drives of its *class* position in society, its ineradicable interests as a group, its conditions of life; and this "advantage" comes into play insofar as this class organizes itself, as it is inevitably driven to do, and transforms the thinking and ideas of its individual components in the course of its class experiences. We will see what this "advantage" is.

Now it is this sort of thing that the socialist calls the development of class-consciousness. As other articles in this issue explain in sufficient detail, this country is the one modern country in the world where the working class is still at a rather elementary stage of class-consciousness. Therefore it is particularly in this country, and most particularly among academicians who have no roots in the real social struggle of our times, that the special role of the working class is most persistently questioned.

It would be much harder to do so in Great Britain, for example, where this "special role of the working class" is the daily headache of the Tories, who face as opposition a party which proclaims itself as a class party in its name.

Or in France and Italy, where (as we shall see) the special danger of Stalinism is closely connected with the Stalinists' ability to use and abuse the "special role of the working class."

Or in almost any other European country, where the working class is strongly organized as a class. Or even in leading countries of "backward" Asia, where prominent roles are played by socialist parties in the domestic struggle for power.

In this respect, it is the United States which is "out of step," which is the exception to the rule (as we discuss on page 2), and while American bourgeois thinkers may be grateful for their exceptional position, they have no license to deny the rule.

The "rule" is that all over the world organized working-class struggle is inextricably bound up with every effort toward freedom and human emancipation. Where the working class has been defeated, democracy and progress and humanity has been defeated too. Where the forces of freedom have fought, it is the working-class forces that have been in the van.

There is no other sector of society of which this or anything like it can be said—not the middle class, not the "intelligentsia," not the "educated classes," not the students, not the "managers," not anyone else except the organized proletariat, for good or ill.

What is this "advantage" which the working class possesses willy-nilly, by virtue of the terms of its own existence under capitalism? Here are in outline form the special characteristics inherent in a social class whose individual human components (remember) are no better or worse than you or I or any other Tom, Dick and Harry.

(1) The conditions of life of the working class lead it to *organize* in the first place—and most solidly as a homogeneous movement.

There is, of course, one other class which rivals the working class in this respect; the capitalists them-

selves, whose class-consciousness and sense of class solidarity are ever-present models for the workers themselves. But we are speaking of forces for freedom.

Nowhere and at no time has a predominantly agrarian population (farmers or peasants) been able to duplicate the organizational achievements of the working class.

The difference is no reflection on the individual farmer. By terms of their life, they live in atomized groups which stress self-sufficiency, separateness, reliance in individual effort; they are not thrown together in crowds and subjected to simultaneous stresses in the heat of social struggles as are workers.

Workers are taught organization not by their superior intelligence or by outside agitators, but by the capitalists themselves. They are organized on the assembly lines, in the factory gangs, in shifts, in work teams, in the division of labor of capitalism itself. Capitalism cannot live and cannot grow without "organizing" its workers and teaching them the virtues of a form of "solidarity," of working together.

It teaches discipline. It enforces centralization of effort. It hammers home every day the advantages of pooled effort, and the subordination of the interests of an individual to the needs of the group.

It does not teach this lesson equally to all workers: it is plainer for assembly-line workers in the mass-production industries than for (say) an office secretary who takes dictation from a personal boss, who works *with* a boss rather than *with* fellow workers. We use this simple example so that that reader can himself imagine the various degrees of "education" which the conditions of capitalism grant to different kinds of workers, and link these various degrees up with the social ideologies which arise from these different strata of workers, simply on the basis of this first point: class *organization*.

(2) The interests of workers as a solidarized group, organized by capitalism, lead them to *struggle*.

This is the whole theme of the article on page 3, and so we can pass over it briefly here. What that article will emphasize so clearly is that this can take place quite apart from the conscious desires and wishes of the labor leaders themselves.

Labor leaders, who have risen from the ranks of lowly workers and aspire to be accepted as respectable and responsible members of bourgeois society, often *want* to substitute pleasant and friendly conferences with management for any kind of conflict. Having freed themselves from the condition of existence to which the mass of workers are condemned, they are "bourgeoisified," they want to integrate themselves into the ruling class, or at least find as respectable a niche there as a corporation lawyer.

And indeed they could do so—so many others do!—if not for the fact that it is the working class that they are standing on in order to reach so high. For the working class needs representatives in order to oppose the bosses' interests; but the bosses accept the friendship of these labor leaders only insofar as they "behave"; from below these bourgeoisified bureaucrats, there always arises the pressure of mass demands, the unslakable needs of the workers which cannot be wished away with fine talk about class-collaboration, the aspirations steaming up from the depths of the class for delivery of the goods.



Some bureaucrats can continue their precarious balancing-act for substantial periods, in "normal" times of class quiet particularly, as everybody knows; but even the most conservative and most bourgeoisified union leader must to some extent satisfy the class needs of his constituent base, or else—. This is in the worst case, of course, and there are not a few such "worst" cases in the bourgeoisified labor bureaucracy of this country.

But it is by no means the typical case even here. Timidly or militantly, consistently or hesitantly, competently or crudely, even the conservative union leader who does not "believe" in class struggle *must* be its instrument to the extent that he functions as a labor leader at all.

(3) The directions of the workers' organized struggle inevitably tends to be *against capitalism*—or, to put it more fully, this struggle always tends to go outside the framework of capitalist institutions and ideas.

Steadily the labor movement's insistence on *social responsibility* for all aspects of life comes in conflict with the capitalist insistence on the rights of private property. For the essence of capitalist private-property relations is that this whole area of man's life—the economic sphere—is to be withdrawn from the rule of social responsibility and is to be ruled by the unilateral power of capital, as its birthright.

Many are the compromises that capitalism has been forced into here, as is well known, the compromise being mainly that (a) the state is accorded power to intervene as representative of "society," provided (b) that the associated capitalist class retain full control of this intervening state. (This is the process of "statification" under capitalism in a nutshell.) But whatever the compromises, the working-class movement—even the undeveloped union-conscious labor movement of this country—can never be satisfied.

Its best sections (UAW, for example) raise slogans like trade-union intervention in the setting of prices or in peering over the capitalists' books to check their profit. In periods of intense class struggle, sit-downers take over the factories without a qualm over the rights of private property. The tendency of the unions in politics is to support federal controls all the way down the line—over offshore oil, or natural gas, or prices, or the Salk vaccine, or health insurance, etc.—in the name of social responsibility vs. private property. Insofar as this support of "statification" takes place without concomitant insistence on control by a social democracy, this is indeed labor's contribution to the bureaucratization of capitalism, rather than its democratization.

But given a socialist framework it is this insistence on social responsibility vs. private property which is the germ of the labor movement's inherent and ineradicable "creeping socialism."

The intuition of the reactionaries is not altogether baseless in this respect, though wildly exaggerated and viciously directed. Even Samuel Gompers used to argue that his simple slogan of "More!" for the labor movement was a more "revolutionary" slogan than anything the socialists offered. And surely it is true that, insofar as labor incessantly presses for "more" out of the economic pie for itself, even when decent wages are incompatible with capitalist needs; insofar as labor presses for "more" social responsibility and less rule by private profit; insofar as labor presses in this direction without drawing back when the capitalists yell too violently, to this extent labor drives the logic of its own existence outside the bounds of the capitalist framework, and tends to explode it.

Of course, we socialists would maintain, and experience unanimously shows, that this does not happen except when the working-class movement grows up to adopting socialist leadership and program; but all we are stressing in the present connection is that the class conditions and needs and interests of the workers drive their organized movement, in the course of its struggle, right up against the bounds of the capitalist system.

This is not true of any other group in society—only of individuals from other classes, who may decide to throw in their lot with the working-class struggle. It is enlightening, for

example to make a study of the type of political program commonly adopted by non-working-class parties which set out to express protest and struggle: radical peasant parties, or urban parties appealing to the middle class, or farmers' parties in the U. S.

Peasant parties most typically stop well short of proposing the abolition of capitalism, confining themselves to proposals for improving their class's lot in ways compatible with the rule of private property; for the peasant is a very tenacious small private-property-holder himself, and does not easily see beyond this question.

In a quite different kind of case, as in the case of the Nazi appeal to middle-class elements, a kind of pseudo-anti-capitalism was patched up by directing slogans against bank capital as distinct from "good" productive capital; or, as in the case of Henry Wallace's program, supporting "progressive" capitalists against "reactionary" capitalists.

But what is noteworthy is this: only in the case of working-class parties, all over the world, does the program and goal of the movement turn fast or slow toward a basic assault on the bastions of the capitalist system itself.

Now obviously not all American readers will consider this inherent turn of proletarian parties toward anti-capitalism as necessarily a good thing in itself, nor are we arguing this point at the moment. The fact itself is what we point to, as illuminating the "special role of the working class," for the benefit of so many Americans who cannot see that the working class as a class can and does play any special role whatsoever.

(4) The conditions and interests of the working class not only push it toward organized struggle against capitalism but impel it toward a *courage and boldness and militancy* which are well nigh unique to it, at critical moments of struggle when these qualities are called for.

Now at first blush this may seem to be in contradiction with our earlier statements that workers are not necessarily personally "better" in any sense. Are we now saying that workers are braver and bolder?

Only with the same qualifications previously explained. We are talking about their potentialities as an organized class—plus perhaps, for many individuals whatever carry-over takes place from organized behavior to personal behavior as a result of education and conditioning in life situations. But it is the class behavior we are interested in.

Stereotypes are bad, including class stereotypes, but while we should avoid them we should not ignore the kernels of truth that they often contain (and, containing, exaggerate). Thus: there is the "timid professor." We have known many professors not at all personally timid. Yet the sweeping stereotype contains a kernel of truth about the impact of academic life and its pressures upon the social psychology of professors.

In the last chapter of his *White Collar*, a study of the middle class in America, Professor (non-timid variety) C. Wright Mills draws a generalized picture of the new middle class which, as it happens, was also quoted in our last week's issue of *Challenge* in connection with a study of student types. Here it is again, in our present connection, as summarized by Debbie Meier.

The new middle class are the "rearguarders," says Mills, waiting for someone else to move. As a group they have no cohesion, but are on sale to the highest bidder or the most likely winner. "They have no steady discontent or responsible struggle with the conditions of their lives. For discontent of this sort requires imagination, even a little vision; and responsible struggle requires leadership."

As individuals with private positions, continues Mills, "they hesitate, confused and vacillating in their opinions, unfocused and discontinuous in their actions . . . they have no targets on which to focus their worry and distrust. They may be politically irritable, but they have no political passion. They are a chorus, too afraid to grumble, too hysterical in their applause." In the short run, he concludes, they follow the panicky way of prestige; in the long run they follow the ways of power.

This scathing portrait by Professor Mills is a portrait of a

social class, not an insult directed against middle-class individuals; just as we have been analyzing the social potentialities of a class, and not "idealizing" workers.

But surely, with this portrait before one, and realizing the truth that it contains, it is easy to see why middle-class groups simply cannot work up the dynamic drive which is necessary before one can be "courageous and bold and militant."

Let us take a simple model: a factory worker on a picket line can, and often does, abuse entering scabs and may have to be restrained from physical attack; he is not constrained by notions of bourgeois respectability from acting this way, even though he may be quite "respectable" and "bourgeois" in his behavior on all other normal occasions. He is more alienated from class society, no matter how he thinks—or how he *thinks* he thinks. But go along the scale of workers up (or down) toward more and more "respectable white-collar workers and employees, to office employees, to bank tellers, to fashion-house fitters, to . . . college professors. And try to imagine them yelling at scabs on a picket line.

Not because we think yelling at scabs is itself the height of courage or boldness or militancy, but because it is a handy and visualizable token of what is at stake: the dynamism of the class in its organized struggle for "something better" and against what-is. We should rather examine the record of the working class in far more crucial situations than mere strikes; we should rather see how some of the heights of valor and self-sacrifice have been reached by unknown workers, not named heroes, in revolutionary struggles; but these are not visualizable for the average American reader, who after all is himself the product of a society dominated by middle-class mediocrity.

(5) Finally, we are talking about the organized and militant anti-capitalist struggle of the *only class which has the social power and weight* to abolish the old order and build a new society.

Whatever a historian says about the role of force in revolutions, it is a Marxist principle that social revolutions are not made by bullets. This is the caricature of socialist revolution implanted in the mind of the ignorant man by certain types of policemen and certain types of professors. The Marxist so-

cialist believes that when the working class, and its associated allies from other sections of the people, are in their massed majority ready for the abolition of capitalism, it is their *social power* which will determine the result in the last analysis.

The social power of the class depends not only on its numbers. It depends also on its homogeneity and organizability, as we have discussed, its striking power. It also depends on the indispensability of the services which it performs in keeping the world's work going.

No class has its hands so closely on the basic work without which the system grinds to a halt. Not a wheel can turn without them. No other class can precipitate a social crisis by the deliberate decision of its organized cadres as in a large-scale strike. When the working class goes into battle, all of society is embroiled, for all depends on it. Every time the working class stirs, the rest of society shakes. Yet there is debate over its "special role."

After all of the above, there is still a deeper "why" to be asked.

In the last analysis, the "rearguard" character of the middle classes, which Professor Mills points to, reflects their political and social blind-alley. They cannot give society a lead because there is no *social program* which in any way corresponds to the special interests of the

middle class. From the conditions of their existence arises no pointer to a way out for all of society.

In contrast, the working class, as the bottom layer of all classes, cannot even stir without *pointing* to a program, even when it itself rejects it: the abolition of capitalism, its class antagonist, and the assumption of social responsibility by the democratically organized people, regardless of private profit.

At bottom, it is because the interests of the working class, inherently contained in its struggles, point a program for a basic transformation and reconstruction of society that this class is pushed to take a vanguard role in every struggle for freedom and emancipation.

We need hardly spend much space affirming how cognizant we are of how often the working class and its interests have been deceived and betrayed by its enemies and false friends. The history of capitalism, from one point of view, is nothing but a history of continued duping of the working class. In fact, deception of the working class is one of the most important conditions for the maintenance of capitalism or any other exploitive system.

It is hardly necessary for us to learn all about this, then, from critics who like to argue that socialists' "faith" in the working class is misplaced. It is hardly necessary for us to be told, also, that today, in good part, the Stalinist menace feeds on its ability to dupe and deceive the working class in a number of capitalist countries like France and Italy. The battle for socialist democracy against both capitalism and Stalinism can even be summed up as the battle to free the working class from its deception by each of these class enemies.

But this is a battle which, by definition, is won as soon as the workers are "undeceived." It is meanwhile a downright irrelevancy in *this* connection for critics to tell us, as they do every so often, that because the working class has so long been deceived and betrayed, we must conclude that it is hopeless.

We point out only: It is the *working class* that it is crucial for the reaction to deceive, not the petty-bourgeoisie or any of its fellow rearguarders. And this is because only the working class can lead the movement to overthrow it, whether it be capitalist or Stalinist reaction.

The socialist revolution, once observed Rosa Luxemburg, is a war in which there are necessarily an unending series of "defeats" followed by only one victory. We guarantee nothing, of course, except the honor and dignity of fighting for a new and better world, rather than the vileness of adapting one's mind and heart to a vile one. We guarantee to no one that the working class is predestined to "behave according to our blueprints" even if we sit by in interested passivity to see whether it does so. We offer only a road of struggle and a choice of allies in the only war worth fighting, the battle for a socialist democracy against the rival world blocs of war and exploitation.

21

THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE TRADE-UNION MOVEMENT

"There is no class struggle in America": This precept now belongs in the American catechism along with the little boy who chopped down the cherry tree but wouldn't lie. And, as prescribed by the official Way of Life, unions obstinately refuse to "recognize" the class struggle and boast proudly that they remain aloof from it.

But it "recognizes" the unions; in fact, it creates them. Despite the most sincere protestations of labor officials, unions practice the class struggle and a hundred times a day demonstrate its persistence.

In his recent quest for a smattering of respectability, Walter Reuther has lately cautioned against class strife, and the formation of a Labor Party. But he is a living refutation of himself:

• He appeals to workers to form, join, build, and be loyal to their own class organizations—unions. He insists that they conduct their affairs without outside interference and excludes not only the Communist Party but lawyers, bankers, storekeepers, and employers. Unless he were a worker under the jurisdiction of a labor union, even J. Edgar Hoover would be barred from membership. The union is a class institution.

• He insists that unions concentrate on raising the living standards and rights of their membership, that they demand and fight for higher pay, shorter hours, better working conditions, security—even if this means cutting into employers' profits. These are class aims.

• He crusades for pensions for wage-workers. After reaching the age of 60-65 ("too old to work but too young to die") and after putting in 20-25 years of service and sweat on the job, workers must retire in dignity and security. What is this demand but a dramatic confession that tens of millions of men and women are fated to live out their whole lives as hired wage hands—in America?

• And through unions, workers fight for maternity benefits, hospitalization, life insurance and death benefits. From the hour of birth, through the long years of work, to pensions, to death—all under the surveillance of unionism. These demands and the unremitting struggle to achieve them are the unconscious recognition of the workers as a class, fixed within modern capitalist society.

• And far more through the unions: Reuther, and other labor leaders who publicly spurn the class struggle, challenge virtually every right of the employers: their right to hire and fire, to fix wages and hours, to regulate the speed of production and the intensity of labor, to discriminate, to promote, to transfer workers. The only right which they concede in theory is the general "right to own and manage" but they resist every effort to define this right concretely as a limitation on the range of unionism and the scope of its demands.

It was such a refusal by the labor leadership that helped to explode Truman's Labor-Management Conference in 1945.

• And they, the labor officials, call upon workers to rally to their own class political organizations—not a labor party it is true, but to a labor Political Action Committee, or a Labor's League for Political Education. And through this class-dominated political institution, candidates for public office are judged, tested, rejected, or endorsed on the basis of union criteria: Will their candidacy advance or retard the cause of labor? The conclusions they reach are usually wrong, for they persist in supporting Democrats and Republicans, but the question they ask is correct: Will their candidacy advance or retard the cause of labor?

• And their political organization is not satisfied with vote-catching and ward-heeling. It tries to elaborate a program and a philosophy, concerning itself not only with wages and hours but with all the problems faced by the nation: war and peace, foreign policy, democracy, race relations, industry, education, health, government.

It does not—not yet—propose that the power of government be placed in the hands of elected representatives of a labor party, but it does insist that all politics be guided by labor's outlook. And it appeals for support not only from union workmen but from all the poorer, ordinary people.

On the big questions before the country, the majority of the working class tends toward a common point of view. And that class against whom it struggles, the capitalist class, which owns the machinery of production and which therefore is able to live off the labor of others, also tends toward a common point of view. In industry, in politics, in society the organized workers are pitted against the organized employers: there is your class struggle.

"First organize them, then unionize them." That is the slogan of the United Auto Workers. It is a succinct statement of the task of unions, not only to enroll workers as union members but to change their whole outlook, to make them think as union men. No class struggle, no class-consciousness in America? But a loyal, enduring *union-consciousness* is deeply rooted in the organized working class. And this *union-consciousness* is class-consciousness at a lower level.

Nothing seemed more pitiful than the union movement in the late 1920s. It had been decimated by an open-shop drive after the First World War. In the United Mine Workers, John L. Lewis had crushed union democracy, expelled progressives who wanted to fight for industrial unionism everywhere, and carried the union into decline. The craft unions which dominated the AFL were hostile or indifferent to the organization of the unorganized mass-production industries. Racketeering flourished. The AFL remained aloof from poli-

tics, and when the depression hit, fought every demand for government aid to the unemployed.

In the crisis of 1929, industrial unions were almost obliterated. The Miners Union and the needle-trades unions were reduced to a small fragment of a still-organized minority holding on with desperation. Unions a result of the class struggle? It seemed ludicrous.

Yet, it was out of this union movement that the great revival emerged. John L. Lewis for the United Miners, David Dubinsky for the Ladies Garment Workers, and Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union formed the CIO and opened the great strike struggles that broke open-shoppism in the mass-production industries.

It was class struggle on a giant scale as auto workers and rubber workers seized the factories in mass sit-in strikes and defied all the threats of courts, police, militia, and vigilantes.

Their courage won. It was such a spirit that brought unionism to mass-production industry. The CIO was born in a wave of intense class struggle.

- It brought a measure of democracy into industry. For the first time, the giant monopolies were forced to recognize the class organizations of their workers in auto, steel, rubber, oil. Industrial unionism was founded.

- It struck a blow against racial discrimination in industry. Negroes poured into the new unions with equal rights and they won security on the job, the right to promotions, to seniority. Thousands of Negroes became trained workers' leaders in the course of strike struggles and union-building.

- It revived political democracy. It enrolled millions into industrial unions and quickly brought them into politics. It entered into election campaigns which became the forum for airing opposing social programs and demands and not simply a contest between Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

During the Second World War, union officials made an all-out effort at class peace. Virtually every important union with the exception of the United Mine Workers gave a "no-strike pledge," promising under no conditions to strike for the duration of the war. They were ready to surrender their weapons in the interests of uninterrupted production of munitions to defeat Japan and Hitler Germany.

But although they were ready to give up the class struggle and freeze the unions in a state of suspended animation, they were not ready to give up the unions, or let them be destroyed. The no-strike pledge, which was presumably an "unconditional" pledge, was actually founded on an unstated but decisive condition: democracy must remain and unions must be protected. Only the Stalinists, for their own pro-Russian anti-labor motives, were ready to enforce the pledge to the point of destroying unions.

The no-strike pledge proved impossible to enforce because the class struggle is impossible to eradicate in capitalist society. Wherever a free labor movement exists, the class struggle tends to spring to life within it. Even the most conservative unions (yes, even gangster and racket-ridden unions) contain the potential for regeneration as fighting institutions of the working class. Those who would wipe out the class struggle, or at least the possibility for an organized working-class struggle, would have to destroy root and branch every vestige of unionism.

The class struggle is not created by the quirk of individuals nor can it be set aside at their whim. It is "provoked" by the very nature of capitalist society and cannot be shrugged off as inconvenient even during wartime. If the labor leaders were quite eager to live

in peace and harmony, the employers and their political representatives were not. In fact, the more the unions stressed their peaceful intentions, the more provocative became the employers. Once the unions announced that they would not tolerate strikes, the bosses had a free hand to fire union activists, to chisel on wages and piecework, to speed up production by squeezing workers, to violate contracts in a thousand small ways, while controls made real wages drop behind prices.

The class struggle erupted, unofficial but real. Despite government pressure, harangues from the capitalist-owned press, and appeals from labor officials, strikes began—so-called "wild cats," unauthorized and spontaneous. Only in the United Mine Workers Union were the top officials courageous enough to organize and lead strikes to defend working standards.

But in other unions the strike movement went on as "wild-cat" stoppages opposed from above but led by rank-and-file union militants from below, in defiance of official policy. Literally hundreds, if not thousands, of unauthorized strikes sprinkled the country during the war, reaching every industrial city and every industry. The rubber industry was shut down by a general strike in the Akron rubber plants, unauthorized but solid. In Detroit, two or three new walkouts began every day. The movement began as a series of semi-spontaneous, isolated, disconnected incidents but grew in scope.

The no-strike pledge and resistance to it invaded the internal life of the unions as movements to rescind the pledge mounted. In the Rubber Workers Union, in the shipbuilding unions, and even in the solidly Stalinist-controlled United Electrical Workers, caucuses were founded to fight to rescind the pledge. But it was in the United Auto Workers that the movement reached its height. In local unions, the pledge became an election issue and by 1944 a nation-wide rank-and-file caucus was formed in advance of the union's convention, and gained one-third of the votes for rescinding.

Union officials who resisted the movement against the pledge too firmly or who sought to crush and expel unauthorized strike leaders found themselves in trouble. (The downfall of the Communist Party in the labor movement, the most vicious and unrelenting enemy of striking militants, dates from this period. It was in the struggle against the no-strike pledge that progressive unionists began to learn that Stalinism is a reactionary anti-working-class force.)

When the CIO was founded, we saw that a united labor officialdom could split in two, with one section leading mass struggles, even violent ones, to establish unionism in the basic industries. The war years were even more instructive. We saw that American unionists, if need be, were ready to cast aside their old leaders and take up the class struggle in new ways.

When the First World War ended, union-busting began. Unions which had enrolled millions of new members were forced back by a successful employers' open-shop drive. But unionism was finally established in the class struggle after the Second World War.

When the war ended in 1945, the union movement was freed of the shackles of the no-strike pledge. The official union leadership called mass strikes in every industry. Instead of going backward, unionism moved forward as millions went on the picket lines in auto, steel, oil, rubber. In these strikes, the leaders sought to make up for the passive war years and it was into these mass movements that the rank-and-file movements of the war years disappeared.

These were the days when unionists showed how little respect they felt for some of the sacrosanct privileges of their employers. "Open the Books," "Wage Increases Without Price Increases"—these slogans of the GM strike of 1945-6 inspired unionists everywhere. The

right of employers to the inviolate secrecy of their financial manipulations was challenged; their unilateral right to set prices was called into question. Although these rallying slogans have been shelved, they will be revived.

Now the unions are strong, self-reliant and entrenched. But it is impossible for them to relax in the comfortable enjoyment of class peace.

The employing class tolerates unionism because it can do nothing else; but for the last decade, ever since the powerful post-war strike wave, it pushes for government curbs on union power. And it has been successful:

The Taft-Hartley Law holds the threat of government injunction over every mass strike; it imposes political curbs and qualifications on union leaders; it

makes it illegal for strikers to vote in NLRB elections, a provision successfully used to smash unions in local cases. An employers' nation-wide "right-to-work" campaign is in full swing, putting over state laws outlawing the union shop. New laws are before Congress to curb the right of unions to participate in election campaigns. What employers cannot achieve in open class struggle on the industrial front they win on the political front.

The class struggle by the employers against the unions continues.

The unions are forced to defend themselves: it is the pressure of its class enemies that impels the AFL and CIO to unite. No class struggle in America? The unity of AFL and CIO tells a different story, as does all of American labor history.

BEN HALL

1953

22

LABOR AND DEMOCRACY: WHY THEY ARE INTERDEPENDENT

RICH and poor alike are forbidden to sleep under bridges. The writer who coined this biting aphorism was reminding us of the great gulf between noble proclamations of equality before the law and the annoying fact of economic inequality.

This ironic equality pervades political life under capitalism. Democracy gives rich and poor the right to enter the polling booth and cast equally weighted ballots. Each has the same right to free speech; the same theoretical right to publish a press, to establish parties, run for office; and out of it all, governmental power hypothetically emanates as a "will of the majority."

No one could ask for a more fair and square deal, except for one thing—*wealth dominates over democracy in a society of economic inequality.*

Despite its great power based upon wealth, the capitalist class suffers from an incurable ailment, one which will ultimately prove fatal. It is a tiny minority.

The common people possess not the strength of ownership and wealth but the weight of numbers. But numbers alone are without power. Politics in a capitalist democracy becomes a contest between the mass of people and a small minority with all the resources for misleading, deceiving, and disorganizing the majority.

The people can mobilize the democratic power of numbers only by ORGANIZATION.

The right to organize into independent associations free of state dictation is one of the most fundamental of all democratic rights; it is the only democratic right which can be exercised by the people with far greater effectiveness than any ruling class. A rich minority can buy newspapers and meeting halls just as they buy yachts and mansions; but they cannot purchase

voluntary associations of millions of people. Every dictatorship strikes at the right to organize.

Of all the classes in modern society, one class above all needs organization and has proved most capable of effecting it—the modern working class. The wealth of every ruling class comes out of this class's labors and it is compelled to organize first of all out of sheer self-interest.

Even if it were not warmed by the faintest spark of idealism, even if it knew nothing of democracy as an abstract principle, the working class would be compelled to band together to defend its wages and working conditions. To rise above the level of inanimate objects, to demand more considerate treatment than a lump of coal, this working class must organize in elementary collective bargaining with its employer.

To organize, it must have the right to assemble and prepare its demands and program; and to assemble it must have the right to speak, to print and distribute its message to millions. The working class, in defense of its daily life, requires democracy in all its fullness. It is always and everywhere battling for it; where it has won democracy, it fights to retain it; where it has surrendered or lost it, it soon feels the lash of intensified exploitation and degradation.

At various stages in the history of nations, the fate of democracy has rested with different classes: petty bourgeoisie, tradesmen, independent farmers. In society today, the cause of democracy goes with the working class, that class which has demonstrated in action a stubborn, consistent, inherent need for democracy.

There is more democracy in a backward labor union than in the most enlightened corporation. But such a comparison is only a small part of the whole story. Many unions are run by officials who cling to office by undemocratic, authoritarian measures. Seldom can we say: "Here is real internal union democracy." A double standard is the rule: in its struggle with the world of capitalism, the union movement insists upon democracy, but in its own private life, it is often willing to dispense with it.

Union leaders, even those who come out of the ranks, tend to rise above the workers; they begin to enjoy a higher standard of living, to consider themselves masters, not servants, of the rank and file. In extreme cases, which shock even the most conservative labor leaders, corrupt officials tie in with racketeers and gangsters.

Union members are often ready to tolerate restrictions on internal democracy because they fear the power of big capital which always threatens. By avoiding

differences of opinion and internal disputes they hope to maintain unity against attack. Such a shortsighted view makes it impossible for the unions to fulfill their responsibilities to the working class: to cultivate and expand the consciousness of democracy in the labor movement, and to prepare the working class to rule industry.

Despite these limitations, the organized labor movement fights for democracy. No matter how debased at any moment the labor movement (or any sector of it) might seem, it contains the seed of a speedy regeneration. In the last analysis, the power of union leadership rests not upon force but upon the consent of the ranks; every labor leadership must count upon its membership or face destruction in crises. This alone limits every inner union machine and makes every arbitrary power temporary.

"Tomorrow a psychological wave might pass through the minds of the mine workers," said John L. Lewis, whose personal power is unmatched in the labor movement, "and wash away whatever influence over their actions I have as an individual and as president of the United Mine Workers. That isn't power in the sense the word is generally employed about me. The president [of the United States] has power which no psychological change can take away from him while he holds his office. . . . Industrialists have the power conferred by financial resources on which labor depends for its bread. That is real power, of which I have none."

In periods of crisis, the working class has cast aside old leaders, revamped old organizations, and created new ones. We have seen it in action in the 1930s, when the CIO was founded and built in answer to the needs of the times.

The labor movement in this country remains conservative and pro-capitalist. Nevertheless, its organized participation has made politics in this country richer and more meaningful. Once millions of workers were herded to the polls by wardheelers and hacks of corrupt political machines. Now they are brought into political life for social reforms under the direct leadership of their own unions. Yesterday, American politics had degenerated into a farcical contest between Tweedledum and Tweedledee capitalist politicians wrangling over meaningless and trivial promises. Now, every election poses social questions: pensions, social security, fair employment. And this transformation has been effected by the clamorous intervention of unions into politics which compels the existing capitalist parties to take a stand on the vital issues of the day.

This from a working class which has only just begun to put itself forward as a political force, timidly, cautiously, strictly limited by its conservative loyalty to capitalism. When it once becomes aware of its own power, of the rights it deserves, and of the responsibilities it owes to all society, it will change the world.

23

SOCIALISTS IN TRADE UNIONS:
THE ISL EXPERIENCE

[The following is an excerpt from an article on the history of the Independent Socialist League.]

Most comrades who were not in the armed forces, worked throughout the war in the factories and the unions. It is to them primarily that the Independent Socialist League owes its sustained existence throughout these years, and owes above all the good socialist name it deserves. Our trade unionists showed thousands of their fellow-workers the meaning, so grievously distorted by others in the past, of socialist activity in the labor movement. They followed a course which was **living disproof** of the view that socialists pursue interests separated from the labor movement and hostile to it. They never allowed their loyalty to the working class and its movement to be questioned by anything they said or did. They were in the forefront of every movement to maintain the integrity of the unions throughout the war years, as they have been since, whether it was threatened by maneuvers of the government, the employers or the Stalinist. They were in the forefront of the educational work in favor of independent political action by the unions. They were prominent and tireless in the fight against wage-freezes and the pernicious incentive-pay schemes. They were in every other progressive cause in the unions.

The progressive groups that took shape during the war in a number of the most important unions of the country found our comrades initiating them, in their leadership, or in every case warmly active in the ranks, especially in the Auto Workers union, in the Rubber Workers union, in the Shipbuilders union, in the Electrical union and Radio Workers union, and among the Railroad unions. And we do not ever want to forget the splendid activity of our comrades—and our LABOR ACTION—in the strike of the Southeast Missouri sharecroppers, a small battle in itself but surely one of the most dramatic battles of Negro people in this country during the war.

The work done by our comrades in the broader movements, the trade unions in particular, was invaluable to us in more than one way. They acquired an experience and understanding indispensable to every socialist and to the socialist movement as a whole. One of the defects of many radicals, understandable but perilous, is that they regard the non-socialist working class and its non-socialist organizations not only from the outside but from the standpoint of an abstract radicalism.

This is true not only of many who become socialists before they come into contact with the labor movement but even of many who become socialists after having been in the labor movement for a time. Their socialist

political and educational activity is often tinged—one might almost say, tainted—by the attitude of the “outsider” looking down the side of his nose upon the labor movement as it actually is and without an understanding of how to help it become what it ought to be. They leave the non-socialist worker with the feeling that they have no comprehending sympathy for the real and concrete problems of the labor movement to which he is so strongly attached, that they are in that movement only in the interests of an “outside” organization with “outside” interests that are distinct from his own and even alien to them. Such socialists exhaust their radicalism in unrelied criticism of everything done by the unions as inadequate, false or disastrous and in rote denunciation of every union official as a reactionary bureaucrat who exists solely for the purpose of betraying the workers. By that token, they quickly exhaust their usefulness to the labor movement and therewith to the cause of socialism.

Experience, and our own conscious efforts, quickly rooted all such tendencies out of our socialist activity in the labor movement. Our comrades soon learned how to make it clear that their ideas are in fullest harmony with the true interests of the unions, that they differ from other unionists only in that they are socialist unionists who represent a movement that does not seek to weaken or replace or dictate to the unions but to help in every possible way to achieve their own stated objectives so that, thus fortified, they can advance to objectives of a higher and more durable kind. From the outset, we have supported every union demand, no matter how modest; defended every gain, no matter how small; taken earnest part in every progressive and democratic movement inside the unions; refused to be silent about shortcomings of the labor movement and blindness and errors of its leadership.

We have proceeded in our attitude toward the unions from the conception that, with all their inadequacies and their seamy sides, they are the principal pillar of democracy in the country. It takes little imagination to visualize what would happen to those democratic rights and prospects we have if the labor unions were crushed or even greatly weakened, or if they became mere instruments or vassals of the government. Our attitude and activity are therefore guided by the long-range aim of helping to develop this main force for democracy to play the decisive part, which no other force can play in resisting the retrogression of capitalist democracy, by transforming it into a socialist democracy. Under our conditions, the first big step in this direction—and it would be a revolutionary step—would be the formation of an independent political party opposed to the existing capitalist parties and challenging them for the right to lead the nation. Of all the liberal, democratic or progressive elements in the country, we know of none that can

even begin to compare with the labor movement in its ability to take effective initiative for such a step, or in the social and representative power it has to maintain and stabilize such a party. From the standpoint of labor, of democracy, and of the socialist future, such a step would be nothing short of a political revolution in the United States.

This basic thought has always been foremost in our minds in judging the problems of the unions in this country, and the problems which socialists face in the unions. We long ago ceased to counterpose the socialist movement to the labor movement, or to set up the former

as the latter's rival. Socialism in this country will advance only to the extent that it is an effective and respected educational and political force among all democratic elements in the country, but primarily and above all a force in the labor movement. Short of that, it will be a sect, a big sect or a small one, a good sect or a bad one, but a sect nonetheless. And to become such a force, it must work not on the labor movement but in it, loyally and responsibly, with utmost comradeship, sympathetic understanding, patience, and without a trace of supercilious demands, ultimatums, hostility and "outsiderness."

H. W. BENSON

1956

24

TOWARD A BASIC REALIGNMENT IN U.S. POLITICS

Any discussion of politics in the U.S. must sooner or later get around to the question of a "third" party.

Some caution against having "too many" parties. Others insist that another major party could only be a "protest" movement that could never win. Still others insist that the "two-party system" is so deeply entrenched in American life that it can never be replaced. Then there are those who warn against "class" parties, praise the virtues of "broad coalitions" that represent all the people and shun concentration of too much power in too few hands.

Most of this argument misses the mark; for what is at stake is not the number of parties, or even the two-party system as an abstract principle, but the reality of current American politics embodied in two real, not abstract, parties: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party.

The basic fact is this: since the organization of the majority of the American industrial working class, an achievement of the last 15 years, the structure of the nation's political party system has become utterly obsolete.

Power bumps back and forth, like the old Toonerville Trolley. But that section of the population which is largest in numbers, most strongly organized, strategically placed, and powerful, is hardly represented inside either of the two old parties.

That part of the population is the working class; and it scarcely obtains formal representation even in the party which it regularly supports and usually puts in power, the Democratic Party.

What is necessary is not just "another" party but a thoroughgoing reorganization of U.S. politics, a realignment of forces to truly represent reality. And in this realignment a party of the working people must emerge: a labor party.

Consider for a moment the absurd line-up of classes in the ruling parties.

The Republican Party has traditionally combined a most open concern for the big monopolies with the support of masses of independent farmers. Those who farm the farms are trapped inside one party with those who farm the farmers.

Monopolists who control the stockyards and packinghouses mulct the stock farmers who sell their animals at low prices to the meat trust only to discover that the public pays sky-high prices on the retail market. The milk farmer is milked by the dairy trust.

Yet they all cohabit in one party, whose slogan might truly be "What's good for General Motors is good for America."

Now the farmer is becoming restive and turns toward labor.

In Michigan, a new organization of dairy farmers collaborates with the CIO. In Iowa, and other grain states, new farm organizations are rising, contemplating not merely cooperation with the AFL-CIO but actual affiliation to it.

The farmer, then, is looking away from big business. But what does he find in the other party?

The Democratic Party unites the Slave Dealers of the South with the New Dealers of the North.

This party held power for 20 years with the support of the democratic masses of the cities: workers, Negroes, and poor people. Yet, in Congress, the party is dominated by the representatives of the Southern planters and mill owners who choose its top leaders and run its main committees.

Here in the South, the party remains in power by excluding the masses from political life: the whites by trickery; the Negroes by terror. Backwardness and dictatorship, that is the Democratic Party in the South.

And in the North? The Democratic Party is run not by the millions who put it in office but by exclusive machines of bosses, some legally and others only morally corrupt. The rich and powerful who buy the Republican Party outright have to buy the Democratic Party through its political bosses.

Such is our "two-party system." Would another set-up put too much power in the hands of one class? Could another system increase the influence of a small minority and thwart the will of the majority?

Anyone who answers such questions should ask himself: what do we have now?

Millions of farmers vote Republican only to learn to their dismay that they have turned the country over to Wall Street. And millions of workers and Negroes vote Democrat only to discover that they have turned the nation over to slave-dealers, or at least to a coalition of Southern reactionaries and Northern Wall Street agents.

As the people switch back and forth in the dizzying quest for proper representation, they never get what they want. At bottom, the power of wealth and monopoly remains; privilege and exploitation dominate in both parties.

High prices; growth of monopoly; war and imperialism; cycles of unemployment and prosperity; corruption in government; high taxes for the poor; ever-higher profits for the rich; small business to the wall; concentration and monopoly: It continues alike under Republican rule as it did under the Democrats.

Do you mean to say, it will be asked, that both parties are the same? Not at all.

They are as different as a Stanley Steamer and a Model T. Ford. But both are outlived in the age of jet-propulsion.

As we have just pointed out: they are different. Each appeals to different classes; each proposes a program different in important respects. To put it truthfully, each deceives different sections of the population by different devices.

But in this respect they resemble one another: the voters who put them in power cannot get what they want.

Farmers vote for a better life and higher income for themselves. They get high monopoly prices for the machines they must buy.

Labor and Negroes vote for democracy. They get right-to-work laws, and terror at the Southern polling booths.

They vote for Lehman; they get Eastland at the head of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

But hold on: Has there been nothing but reaction, profiteering, anti-democracy? Hasn't there been the New Deal, social legislation, rising incomes, better standard of living for the masses and a hundred and one other things?

Of course, and we have no intention of painting a picture of unrelieved gloom and utter blackness. There has been progress, great progress.

But that simple truth alone tells us very little. The important question is this: how was that progress achieved?

How did modern social legislation get on the books?

It was not *because* of the Democratic-Republican two-party system but despite it.

The Russians now have their folk-tale of the evil Stalin who plotted to turn their nation into a nightmare of terror. We have a charming dream to go along with it. It tells how a noble hero, Franklin D. Roosevelt, sat by the fireside and lifted a nation out of despair into happiness.

But the fairy tale of Prince Franklin is for children. It was not he; it was not the Democratic Party; it was not a club of honorable politicians who happily delivered the social legislation of the New Deal era to a grateful people.

These gains were won because the people fought; they fought a long and dramatic class battle.

Farmers gathered by the thousands, guns in hand, to prevent the foreclosure of their land; they toured the roads in trucks enforcing their produce strike in a National Farmers Holiday Movement which rallied millions.

Veterans marched on Washington for their bonus.

Unemployed demonstrated, forming into leagues and councils.

And finally, tens of thousands of workers seized the factories in a wave of sit-in strikes that broke open-shopism in industry.

In the wave of protest, the Socialist Party grew: Norman Thomas polled almost a million counted ballots alone in 1932. Mass indignation mounted and was even misdirected into the Communist Party which grew in size and influence.

These struggles, these demands, this mood compelled the politicians to yield, and under the pressure of the rising people they quickly enacted a series of laws which the people took and went on to demand more.

Let us ask a question: If the great gains of the past generation came from the two-party system, or at least from the Democratic Party, how can you account for this fact: since the era of the great social gains in the mid-thirties, social legislation has ground to a halt. At best, it is reduced to a dribble.

And yet, the forces of labor and liberalism are not weaker; they are far more powerful than ever.

In 1937 the union movement counted only two million. Now it enrolls 17 million. In 1932 the Southern Negro was beaten and disorganized. Now he is shaking up the whole South and rousing the attention of the country.

Twenty-five years after labor's great victories, George Meany, AFL-CIO president, announces that labor's legal and legislative position is at a historic low point.

In these years, the rising of the people was slowly brought under control and curbed by the two-party system of Democrats and Republicans. When the first popular waves subsided, political

power remained in the hands of political bosses, slave-dealers, and the rich.

The political forms and structure of American politics are now outdated not because there has been no progress but because there has been so much progress.

The people are too powerfully organized to permit political parties to be run by narrow cliques.

In fact, the political structure is already cracking up: the Democratic Party is torn between Southern reaction and labor liberalism. Walter Reuther explains: "you cannot have Senator Eastland and have us at the same time." The Negro deserts the Democratic Party while the farmer is deserting the Republicans. **But where are they all to go?**

What is to replace the decaying Democratic-Republican system?

No crystal ball is handy. The reorganization and reorientation can swirl about in confusion while fantastic alliances are patched together on the spur of the moment. None can match the fantasy of the old Democratic Party: Eastland and the Negro; Reuther and the "right-to-work" Democrats—all in one coalition!

We say simply this: if the coming political realignment is to be understandable, if it is to achieve the maximum for the people, then a labor party must be formed. Let those who want to rally to democracy and security for the people gather around a party of the working class. Let those who are ready to defend privilege and exploitation form their own party.

For the first time, the people can have a clear choice of alternatives.

Why a labor party? Doesn't that seem "dogmatic"? Such objections quickly spring to mind.

Remember, always, that the United States is the only modern democratic nation where there is no labor party.

And now, politics can only give a true picture of what is happening in real life when such a party is formed here.

To understand why there should be a labor party, consider first the question of democracy.

Democracy means the domination of government by the popular masses through the forms of free discussion, free organization, free elections. But the vast majority are poor; a tiny minority is rich. This becomes the great danger to popular democracy; for those who own wealth dominate society, not through numbers but through influence.

When a tiny class of bankers and industrialists can dominate the avenues of discussions, the press, the radio, television; when they can buy and sell politicians and intellectuals, then they can thwart the people even under the forms of democracy. Where concentrated wealth accumulates, democracy can live only when the force of money is counterbalanced by the organized people.

For a half century after the founding of the American republic, democracy depended upon the support of millions of

free farmers and small merchants who were determined that bankers and commercial combines should not thrust the people aside. They were the backbone of the Democratic Party. But with the rise of slavery and the dominance of slave-owners, and with the rise of industry, the old base of democracy began to crumble; the old alliances were torn asunder.

A new party, a "third" party if you like, rose to lead the fight against the spreading of slavery. It was the Republican Party, and to it went the support of the masses of people in the North who wanted democracy.

During and after the Civil War, great fortunes were made; industry flourished; trusts consolidated toward the end of the century; the Democratic Party was dominated by the former slave owners; the Republican Party became the direct tool of big business, which began impartially to buy and sell both parties. It was an age of the open domination of Big Business.

Democracy was kept alive by short-lived popular political upsurges, inside and outside the two parties and cutting across both: Populism, progressivism, free-silver. The old base of democracy, the free farmer, had been undermined. The importance of agriculture in the economy was in decline; industry was growing. The revolt of the farmer proved to be futile and despairing; the rule of big business continued unchecked.

Meanwhile, a new class was rising: the modern industrial working class.

But in its vast majority it was unorganized, backward, and largely foreign-born. Although a small minority of the class succeeded in organizing itself, and an even smaller minority founded an active socialist movement, the vast majority remained in disarray, organized only as voting cattle by corrupt capitalist political machines.

So it remained until just yesterday.

But now, the whole social balance in America has shifted.

Democracy finds its new social base in a new class: the working class. In the last 25 years, this class has organized itself industrially; it has lifted itself into political consciousness; it is a force so powerful, so invincible that no other class can move without taking its mood into account.

Yet, while the class structure has changed, politics remains formally what it was fifty years ago.

There is no party, there is no consciously organized faction of any party, that expresses and represents the fundamentally democratic class of our time.

If class antagonisms, the self-interest of social groups, do exist in reality, then let them be expressed openly and honestly in the forum of public discussion and politics. It would be a good thing: when a banker decries "socialism" and lauds "free enterprise," let the world know that he is really talking of his profit ledgers.

If class antagonisms do not exist in real life, then no party could possibly provoke them.

American politics today, however, successfully expresses the self-interest and class desires of a tiny group of rich and privileged. Hypocrisy is their device; they are satisfied with the reality of selfish class rule; they prefer not to talk of classes.

But if a labor party must not be organized because class interest is an evil thing that must be barred from politics, what holds the labor movement together? Why do workers organize into unions? Unions are class organizations; they enroll only wage-earners; they exclude their employers; they unashamedly advocate a program in the interests of the working people; they strive ceaselessly for higher wages, shorter hours, pensions and insurance for workers.

Could there be any more scientifically defined class movement?

Should any union leader suggest that the AFL-CIO and its affiliates dissolve because the organization of the working class provokes "class antagonism," he would be hastily dispatched to a rest home.

The antagonism between worker and boss is not created by the union; the workers organize because such a conflict of interests already exists. If they cannot organize, they live not in some paradise of class harmony but in a state of super-exploitation.

If the working class is organized in industry, why not in politics?

We may be told: It is true that the union organizes only workers, but it is not true that the union movement adopts a program only for workers; don't the most progressive union leaders always remind us that we want not a "nickel in the pay envelope" movement but one which will be responsible for the needs of all the people?

Precisely! And that is what proves our contention to the hilt. In other words, the union which may appear to employers as a "narrow" self-seeking grab for money is actually a great social movement.

Although it is actually organized on a class basis, it nevertheless is ready to take on the fight of all the poor people, workers or not, organized or not.

In fact, because the union is a working-class movement and is compelled to fight against the big monopolies, it and it alone has been capable of stimulating such a program and of rallying millions behind it. The working class must lead the nation. And a labor party can do no more and must do no less.

But let us get down to brass tacks. The labor movement talks about leading the nation; the UAW, for example, calls itself the vanguard in America, in words and in resolutions. But these lofty goals are never quite brought to life.

How, we ask, does the labor movement propose to lead farmers, Negroes, professionals, and the poor?

Fundamentally, the task is political; the unions must show how to organize government in the interests of the people. But in the last analysis, at present they have only this to offer: elect Democrats.

But in order to elect a government which will in reality carry out a people's program, it is not enough to pick and choose the few liberals who peep modestly like rare flowers among swamp rocks. A new movement, a new party dedicated to social progress must come forward, and that is a labor party.

Twenty-five years ago, industrial un-

ionism was a dream. Yet in the course of a single generation it has changed the face of America and brought millions of workers into conscious political life. With their rise, democracy in America took on new significance but it was still limited and curbed inside parties dominated by others.

And now, while the united labor movement hesitates in uncertainty, a great movement for democracy arises in the South, arousing hundreds of thousands of Negroes to demand equality.

For a labor party! It has been the need of our generation. It is now the imperative demand of the hour.

MAX MARTIN

1955

25 ON THE WAY TO AN AMERICAN LABOR-BASED PARTY

"We live in a world where everybody is bound to take care of himself. Yet the English working class allows the landlord, capitalist, and retail trading classes, with their tail of lawyers, newspaper writers, etc., to take care of its interests. No wonder reforms in the interests of the workman come so slow and in such miserable dribbles. The working people of England have but to will, and they are the masters to carry every reform, social and political, which their situation requires. Then why not make that effort?"

The question with which Frederick Engels ended his article "A Workingmen's Party," from which the above sentences are quoted, and which he directed to the British workers in 1881, can no longer be relevantly asked of them. It is the American proletariat and its economic institutions, the trade unions, which are called upon to supply an answer to this cogent query.

The English workers proclaimed their declaration of political independence from the capitalists 50 years ago and have had their own political party since that time. In the United States alone out of all modern countries in the world do we find the workers without a political party; only in this country do the workers continue to give political support to a party of their class enemy.

The American labor movement has yet to assert this elementary condition of dignity. It may grumble privately at what its "friends" in the councils of government are doing, and from time to time it may even grumble publicly. But when election time rolls around, the Democratic

Party knows that, no matter who its candidates and what its program, no matter how it has disregarded the interests of labor during the preceding four years, still the trade unions will support it and campaign for it and give it their votes.

This is one of the facets of the political underdevelopment of the American workers, which contrasts so sharply with their frequent combativeness in economic struggles. The historical roots of this situation have already been explained in another article in this issue.

To be sure, attempts at labor party formation were made. Many times throughout the 19th century local and regional groups of workers formed political parties and launched candidates for office. But these were almost always isolated local affairs of a transient character. Or else they were the efforts of groups of workers, sometimes new immigrant workers, alienated from the mainstream of the American working class. Their character was in many ways similar to that of the various socialist groupings and parties in this period.

The character of the labor movement's attitude toward politics in this country was best summed up in Gompers' famous phrase: "Reward your friends and punish your enemies." Day-by-day participation of the workers in politics was excluded; on election day, the trade unions would urge their members to vote for this capitalist candidate and against that one. These "recommendations" of labor were almost always confined to municipal and state elections.

From a narrow point of view, this policy could be said to correspond to the interests of the then trade-union movement. If a local craft union in the building trades was concerned that its members should have jobs, wasn't one way of achieving this to get the work-

ers to vote for that candidate for alderman who would promise to have the construction of a new Municipal Building turned over to a builder with whom the union had contract? And if the concern of the craft unions of the AFL was solely with municipal and state politics rather than national politics, didn't this correspond to the fact that what the unions wanted out of politics was safety regulations and factory legislation for the industries it organized, and these could be more easily satisfied in the municipal councils and state legislatures?

To be sure this meant ignoring the needs and interests of the broader, unorganized working class, not to speak of society as a whole, but the narrow craft unions were concerned only with the interests of the "aristocratic" dues-payers enrolled in their ranks.

The vast change which has occurred in the political life of the American working class in the last few years followed the creation of the CIO, that is, of industrial unionism. Naturally therefore, the first manifestations of a new attitude toward politics occurred in the CIO.

From the very beginning it intervened in national political life, indicating its preferences in presidential elections. And unlike the AFL, in which many leaders are supporters of the Republican Party, it was from the beginning the supporter of the Democratic Party and of Roosevelt's New Deal, of that party which seemed to it to be the party of political and social reform, the party of liberalism. That its attitude toward politics was serious could be seen by the role which John L. Lewis' support to the Republicans in 1940 played in his resignation from the office of CIO president, and the subsequent withdrawal of the Miners from the CIO.

Hand-in-hand with these attitudes went the creation of trade-union political machines. In the 1936 presidential elections there was created, as part of the wave which produced the CIO, Labor's Non-Partisan League, which in contrast to the old Gompers policy of endorsing this or that capitalist candidate mobilized the workers for cohesive action in the elections.

The creation of the CIO Political Action Committee for the 1944 elections signified the establishment of a more permanent political machine under the direct control of the more progressive of the two labor federations of the country, for permanent participation in all phases of political life. In the 11 years of its existence, PAC has grown and strengthened itself, has established branches in local wards and precincts, has in many areas taken over or become the mainstay of the machine of the Democratic Party, and has played a decisive role in many elections, including the 1948 election of Truman to the presidency.

The AFL, reluctantly perhaps, but nevertheless, followed suit, in correspondence with the growth of industrial unionism in its ranks. In 1952 its endorsement of a presidential candidate—the Democratic candidate at that—for the first time in its history, not counting the 1924 support it gave to LaFollette, marked a turning-point for it, as had its earlier creation of its own political machine, Labor's League for Political Education.

With these developments has gone a broadening of labor's political horizons. The two labor federations concern themselves today with all political and social questions, lobby actively for all types of legislation, including those not within the purview of the immediate narrow interests of the workers, operate on all political levels, and do so on a day-to-day basis.

The organization of millions of workers in the mass-production industries necessarily multiplied the political and social problems of the labor movement manifold. This situation, plus the ever-increasing intervention of the government into all phases of life, particularly the econ-

omy, created a condition in which labor saw many gains which it had won on the picket lines taken away in the halls of government. Indifference to politics was no longer possible.

These developments are progressive ones, but nonetheless they remain confined within a reactionary context. The political machines and activity of the trade unions serve one capitalist party, the Democratic Party; PAC and LLPE are machines which can form the basis of an independent labor party but today are instruments for the election of capitalist politicians. They are labor machines which the labor movement has placed at the disposal of one of the political parties of the capitalist class.

Not that the labor leaders are as enthusiastic about the Democratic Party as they were during the heyday of the New Deal or that they are very sanguine about the possibilities of that party enacting labor's program. But out of timidity and conservatism and on the basis of mistaken ideas, they continue to tie labor to the Democratic Party. This timidity and conservatism reflect the comparative prosperity of the workers and the comparative absence of sharp social and class struggle.

The labor movement would not even consider the idea of economic organizations which enrolled the workers and bosses together. But they continue to organize in the same political party with the bosses and the representatives of the bosses. As justification for this they give the shopworn arguments of the "lesser-evil": *If labor formed its own party, the Republicans would win and labor's influence and prestige in the government would disappear. Those few wretched reforms which trickle down to us from the Democrats would end and the reactionaries would take over the country, with all of its consequent evil for the workers.*

Leaving aside the facts that labor's influence in the government is negligible today under Eisenhower, and yesterday under Truman got labor nothing, and that the reforms which the Democrats are able to give labor are trivial in nature and grow fewer every day, the fact is that labor's lack of independence contributes heavily to its low influence and the paucity of its political gains.

Every member of a trade-union negotiating committee knows that the way to get a good contract is to be tough and militant during negotiations, to make large-scale demands and be prepared to fight for them. The trade-unionist who begins contract negotiations by asking for next to nothing, and informing management that the union will sign the contract regardless of whether management agrees even to its tiny demands, would get nothing. But the labor movement as a whole acts in just this way when it comes to politics.

A show of independence on labor's part and the formation of an independent labor party would result in an increase, not in a decrease, of its influence and gains. The creation of a labor party would put the capitalists and their political representatives on the defensive and force them to give more consideration to the needs and demands of the workers than they do today.

British labor had to go through such experiences too. Anti-picketing laws in the early 1870s had made the English workers take up independent political action in 1874. And sure enough, as a result, Gladstone's Liberal Party (*read the Democrats*) was defeated and the Tories (*read the Republicans*) were elected. The very next year the Tories repealed the anti-picketing laws and passed other pro-labor legislation including a broadening of the franchise. An accident? Hardly.

Even from the narrow view, militant independence by labor is the best way to squeeze the most concessions out of the present powers-that-be. And the new unity of the AFL and CIO eliminates the argument that labor's split makes a political party of its own unfeasible.

That a labor party will come to the United States should be doubted by no one, despite the fact that a clear-cut movement toward it is not now present. America cannot and will not escape the historical development to which every capitalist country is subject. All sharpenings of the class struggle, an economic recession, a major debacle for America in international events, as extension of the witchhunt to the labor movement, an intensified war danger, or a squeeze by the war economy on the living standards of the workers, can produce a movement for a labor party.

And despite today's economic prosperity, the long-time trends of the war economy involve a cutting of the workers' living standards and an elimination of the gains which the workers have achieved. This long-range prospect and the shorter-range economic and political vicissitudes which the workers face, can produce an intensification of social conflict and of political antagonisms.

What is certain is that an independent labor party will arise. Independent Socialists will look sympathetically upon all developments in the labor movement toward its creation and will participate to the best of their ability in such developments with the aim of deepening and sharpening the struggle so that a party of the workers may come sooner, rather than later, and have a stronger program, rather than a weaker one.

The creation of an independent labor party will only be the first step. That step will have to be followed by a struggle for a socialist program for the labor party, and a struggle for that party to take power in the nation. It is the beginning of the road which leads the working class to take command of the nation with a program to reorganize society on a socialist—which is to say, on a democratic—basis. But this first step will not, given the current political situation in the country, be a small one; it will represent a tremendous leap forward for the workers and for all of society.

The time for that step is now. As Engels said in the same article from which we have quoted above:

"And yet there never was a more widespread feeling . . . than now that the old parties are doomed, that the old shibboleths have become meaningless, that the old watchwords are exploded, that the old panaceas will not act any longer. Thinking men of all classes begin to see that a new line must be struck out, and that this line can only be in the direction of democracy. But . . . democracy means the dominion of the working class, neither more nor less. Let, then, that working class prepare itself for the task in store for it—the ruling of this great empire; let them understand the responsibilities which inevitably will fall to their share. And the best way to do this is to use the power already in their hands, the actual majority they possess in every large town in the kingdom, to send to Parliament men of their own order."

BEN HALL

1952

26

LABOR NEEDS A DECLARATION OF POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

"A broad change in the direction of labor-relations legislation has occurred [since 1940]," write two contributors to the U. S. Department of Labor's Monthly Review. "Prior legislation designed to encourage unionism and collective bargaining has been modified to include 'equalizing' features in the form of restrictions upon unions and governmental regulation of collective bargaining. This trend began in some of the states in 1939, and reached its culmination in 1947 in the substitution nationally of the Taft-Hartley Act for the Wagner Act, and in the enactment of restrictive labor-relations laws in no less than 30 states. Only a few of these state laws have since been repealed or held unconstitutional."

In ten years, the formal legal position of unionism in relation to government has deteriorated.

Yet in the same period, organized labor through constant struggle has increased its real power in every field; its membership has nearly doubled; its internal solidarity is unshakable; its picket lines are respected by the working class with near-unanimity; its political activities have been intensified. It has solidly organized the basic mass monopoly-industries.

In other words, while the real class strength of the American workers has mounted, what it is able to wrest from the government or through the government has declined. This is the record, the summary of labor's experience over the past decade with what has come to be known as "Fair-Dealism."

But to avoid misunderstanding we must explain in what sense we are speaking of the "Fair Deal." There is "Fair Dealism" as a program—

that is one thing. And there is the "Fair Deal" as a faction or wing of the Democratic Party—that is something else again.

The labor movement and some sincere liberals have become accustomed to referring to their own program as a "Fair Deal" platform. Thus they label their demands for a whole series of reforms to improve the living standards and rights of the common people and to curtail the power of big capital.

Such a program suffers from the weaknesses of all such reform programs; it tries to settle basic problems with half measures when radical solutions are necessary; it remains within the limits of capitalist thinking where it should embrace the socialist outlook.

For the purposes of this discussion, however, we will begin by ignoring the weaknesses of this, the standard program of the organized labor movement, and think only of its positive side. Taking it as it is, it demonstrates that the labor movement does, honestly and sincerely, seek to revamp national domestic policy in the interests of the people. What labor lacks, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF ITS OWN APPROACH, call it "Fair Deal" or anything else, is a clear and effective idea of how to fight to achieve it.

And this brings us to the second sense of "Fair Deal." The Truman wing of the Democratic Party, which coined the phrase "Fair Deal," is one capitalist section of a capitalist party. It is in the relations between the labor movement, which honestly and sincerely demands a real "Fair Deal" program of reforms, and the Truman Fair-Deal Democrats who give occasional lip service to it, that here we discover the source of the paradox of labor's great strength and political ineffectiveness. To achieve its own program, the labor movement has to stop relying upon the Fair Deal Democrats and become self-reliant politically.

In every country, except one, where modern industry exists and democracy prevails the labor movement has founded its own political party. Regardless of name—*Labor Party* in Britain, *Social-Democratic Party* in Germany, *Cooperative Commonwealth Federation* in Canada, *Socialist Party* in Belgium—the working-class party, by its very existence, proclaims to the nation: "We are able to run the government. We ask your support for the program we advocate in the interests of the people." The party of labor justifies its existence and its appeal for power not only because it represents the interests of the working class but because it alone, among all the parties and classes in the country, stands unambiguously for progress and freedom. In the United States, the only country where labor possesses democratic rights but no political party, the *union movement* stands as the greatest social force for freedom.

But it undermines its own effectiveness by refusing to form its own party and choosing instead to support one wing of a capitalist party, the Truman Fair-Deal Democrats. This political infantilism is put forward by the labor leaders as a brilliant piece of practical strategy. "Yes, yes," they might say, "we realize that Truman or Smith or Jones, the liberal Democrat, is a pretty weak-kneed character: we know that we can't rely on him; we know that he may only be making election speeches today to be forgotten tomorrow; but look at his opponent! Taft (or whoosis) is an outright reactionary. Isn't it clever to support the Fair-Deal Democrat against the conservative?"

Fifteen years ago the argument had the impressive ring of novelty but now we can judge its validity on the basis of a long political experience. By following this policy, the labor movement has permitted a steady and constant shift to the right in American politics. The "reactionary" always presses hard from the right. The "liberal" is horrified by the demands of his more conservative colleague but he gives in just a little. The conservative demands more and more; the liberal yields more and more. And always as they both move to the right, the "conservative" remains conservative and the "liberal" remains just a little "better."

By now, we have reached the point where a "liberal" need only make an occasional gesture and a kind speech. In all the years of the Truman administration the labor movement can hardly record a single big legislative achievement. But of speeches it has had more than enough. The British Labor Party, out of power, has a greater impact on the political life of its country than the American trade unions with "their" Fair Deal administration in power.

"But labor must not isolate itself politically," goes another argument. "The workers must seek the support of farmers, professionals, and middle-class people." This argument is not invalid; it simply does not justify labor's present course.

All politics is competition and struggle among various classes in society for the support of the people. When we say that labor must become politically independent, we do not propose that the working class "go it alone." That would be political stupidity. We propose that the labor movement in actual fact carry on a serious political struggle for its own program and in that way actually unite the common people.

That is *not* what it does today. The question is: who supports whom? Right now, labor supports a wing of the Democratic Party. But these Democrats do not support labor or fight for its program. The unions do not succeed in winning the political support of other classes for labor but only in throwing away the support of labor to a group of capitalist politicians.

In fact, when labor "loyally," ardently, and unconditionally exudes admiration for the Fair Deal administration in Washington, it is treated with implicit scorn and its demands are ignored. Only when it threatens to kick over the traces do the capitalist politicians rewrite their speeches, oozing with love for the common man.

A political formula could be constructed out of the experience of the past years: the more labor supports capitalist politicians, the less it gets; the less it supports them, the more it gets. The so-called liberal bourgeois politicians lose interest in labor when they are wooed too ardently; they feel quite protected from a docile labor movement on the left; they worry only about the demands of the conservatives on the right.

Without a clear class policy, the political tactics of labor leaders become ludicrous. They try to weigh the liberalism of this or that individual Democrat without knowing just what their scale is. Does he support the PAC program and will he fight for it? They never know because the Democrat has no responsibility to labor. In this game of political grab-bag no one knows just what he will pull out. In 1948, labor's clever tacticians wanted Eisenhower the "liberal." In 1952 he appears as a conservative Republican.

And this explains why all labor's celebrations of great election victories end in political hangovers. Labor leaders cheer madly on the first Tuesday after the first Monday and wake up on Wednesday with a bewildering headache. They clapped their hands in 1944 when Roosevelt and Truman swept into office. But soon after, they inquired of each other in perplexed tones, "Who really won the election?" Not to be discouraged by mere facts of life, they hurraed when Truman won in '48. As the

months went by and they followed the record of the new administration, they again puzzled over the lack of results.

And yet the labor movement itself has shown the way. In a few months in early '51, the unions gained more recognition by threatening to fight than in years of collaboration with Truman. They resigned from all war boards; they attacked the Wage Stabilization Board; they excoriated Truman, his political family, his program; they spoke like street-corner agitators; they threatened to strike. And by this course, they were able to protect, at least temporarily, the wage standards of their membership.

This program of struggle, which logically led out of the Democratic Party and toward the independence of labor, proved so effective and so practical that . . . the union leaders abandoned it to revert to their previous course! The steel workers have been able to win concessions from the Wage Board in 1952 because of labor's fight in 1951. Even the memory of an abandoned militant policy serves as a weapon in the class struggle. It is a reminder to the government of what labor can and will do.

The emergence of labor's own party would revolutionize American politics. Its very formation would open a new period of advance for the common people regardless of how it fared in early elections. For the first time, the American people would be given an opportunity to support a party which could and would fight for its program. Politics would cease to be merely the butt of cynical but apt jokes. It would become the serious business of the people.

The political trend in the United States is now to the right. Labor's declaration of political independence would change all that. A labor program? backed by a labor party? defended by labor candidates? The "liberal" Democrat would have to put on a big show of liberalism lest he be swept aside by the rising new movement; the conservative would have to stop squeezing the liberal too hard, and allow him a little room for maneuver, lest labor alone mobilize all progressive forces behind its program and party. And if neither of the two wings of capitalist politics were wise enough to pursue this conciliatory delaying action, the inevitable would come all the sooner: the unity of the people behind labor's independent party.



27

CAN LABOR CAPTURE
THE OLD PARTY MACHINE?

There is a wide chasm between labor's ability to control the Fair Deal's political machine and its ability to get Fair-Dealish speeches from Democratic politicians.

Part of the reason for this stems from the setup of the U. S. political system. The two old parties of American politics are not programmatic groupings primarily; that is, their reason for existence is not the advocacy of distinct political programs, even within the framework of capitalist ideas. Each, in different historical periods, has become the vehicle of various capitalist political platforms while preserving its organizational continuity.

What this does is provide a rationale for a status quo in which fundamentally the two major parties exist as power machines, not political alternatives.

It is this machine, which has never even been "captured" by the Fair Dealers (in the widest extension of the term), that the labor strategists think of using as their vehicle, instead of forming their own party.

There is, in fact, nothing inherently "American" about this setup. It has arisen, and still substantially survives today, not as a contribution to political thought but in part because of the relative backwardness of American political development. First and foremost, that backwardness is the backwardness of the labor movement which, unlike labor in almost all other important countries, has not yet entered on the political stage as an independent party to challenge the two-party system. American politics can remain the "political game" of Ins and Outs as long as the fundamental assumption behind both political machines is not seriously called into question: the preservation of the capitalist profit system. If the Democratic and Republican Parties as such have taken on a more "ideological" coloration in the last two decades it is because labor has more and more sought to organize its political strength as a class, through the CIO-PAC, etc., even if that strength is not yet utilized for its own independent political action.

What are these capitalist-party machines?

They are primarily loose coalitions of local coteries and power cliques, important individual politicians, individual financial contributors, and agents or representatives of "interest groups" and "pressure groups." The basic tie which holds them together is the patronage of office-holding, the indirect patronage of "favors" which accrue when one gets one's man into office, and the special interests of one or more pressure groups.

The machine is the "core" organization of the party. It may be "corrupt" or relatively "honest" in terms of the criteria of the civic-reformers; it may be strong or weak; unified or composed of struggling factions; be based on only a small group of office-holders or on active wardheelers in every precinct; limited to one ward or conglomerated in city, state or national machines; etc.

But all have one cement that binds them: patronage. The individual politicians with public-service motivations (of a reactionary character no less than of a progressive one) are secondary as far as the machine is concerned, though useful for its public appeal.

Interest and pressure groups are their most significant rivals. They range from those with very narrow interests, like the silver bloc, to those with some generalized program. But the most important are definite economic interest groups with several political aims, stretching from the National Association of Manufacturers to the CIO.

Even more than in the open political arena, those with the most money have the most weight in lobbying activities. To its great disadvantage, much of the labor movement's political activity is not far removed from the principle of being another competing pressure group, only occasionally deviating from aping their typical tactics.

In the present political setup, machine weakness need not be any great gain. It may only mean that pressure groups become relatively stronger. Programmatic responsibility within the party becomes even more attenuated.

The leaders of the labor movement have, during the New Deal and Fair Deal periods, considered themselves as leaders of another pressure group, particularly associated with the Democratic Party. The difference with the Gompers days is in the direction of more active and organized electoral intervention and closer ties to one particular party. Little effort has been made to combat the entire structure. Rarely have labor unions fought Democratic political machines. Occasional pre-nomination fights over personnel, the general union support for LaGuardia in New York and the activity of the unions that make up New York's Liberal Party, cannot be over-generalized.

The labor movement has generally collaborated with, and helped bolster, local Democratic machines. There would seem to be every reason why they should get along. Machines are interested in victory and patronage; unions are interested in specific policies. Machine politicians may favor these policies because they will enhance possibilities of electoral victory and are dictated by the needs of the national party. New Deal legislation passed Congress because of the support of the representatives of Flynn, Hague, Ed Kelly, Pendergast, and (sometimes) Crump. And these all gained strength thereby, when they might otherwise have soon tottered. This has not changed during the Truman administrations. Machines may have lost their power and structural stability, but they have not been replaced.

Because of the structural weakness of many local machines, labor leaders, and ideological Fair Deal liberals

in such organizations as Americans for Democratic Action, believe that they can "take over" sections of the Democratic Party. In some localities they have been able to fill up an organizational vacuum, or win out in primary fights for local leadership. Such "victories" most often mean only greater absorption into the politics and organization of the Democratic Party. The files capture the fly-paper.

Trying to compete in pressure-group rivalry has appeared to have its frequent successes. After all, labor does represent the largest pressure group, whose votes are essential for any Democratic victory on a national scale. Yet the coalition which makes up the Democratic Party is set on administering capitalism above all else, and time and time again in the past twenty years, the crucial yielding has been in favor of those interest groups that are most intimately associated with the control of capitalist America. The fact that these also have the most free money to wield is an inherent part of the same picture.

To add to the picture of the organizational futility of "working within the Democratic Party," the fact is that a strong section of the party, as well as much of the congressional leadership, comes from conservative Southern Democrats. The spread within the Democratic Party between Northern ADA liberals and Southern Dixiecrats is no anomaly for the American political set-up; it is characteristic of it. And time and again the Fair Deal machine has demonstrated that it considers this spread to be, not a bad and regrettable feature of the party, but a source of strength and fortune—which it is, indeed, from the viewpoint of the machine politician.

On the level of pressure-group politics, there are more powerful groups to control an administration geared to administering capitalism under a war economy, even if one or another of these groups is defeated on any single issue. On the level of pressure-group politics, labor cannot use its main levers of power.

The typical instrument of the pressure group is money. The typical instrument of the special-interest group is often its economic power exercised in other forms. The instrument of the labor movement, its forte, is the power of its numbers and the militancy of its class struggle.

The owners of industry have, time and again, gotten their way in vital matters of policy because, dealing with government officials sympathetic to their own fundamental class outlook, they have threatened or practiced unpublicized slowdowns of production or the deliberate creation of obstacles to policies which can only be achieved through their own cooperation as the private

masters of the plants. Labor can exercise its economic power only publicly, in strikes and the threat of strikes, and to do this to influence important government policy on any scale is even further from the thinking of the labor leaders than is forming a political party of their own. The elementary political weapon of labor is its numbers—and when the chips are down, the strength of this weapon is fragmented when the Fair Deal politicians know that they have nowhere to go on the political field.

A capitalist special-interest group can conceivably shuttle between the Democrats and Republicans, because of the community of class interest. For labor to "threaten" to support the GOP instead of the Fair Deal would be an empty gesture, except insofar as workers do in fact make the switch *in spite of and against* the pleas of their leaders!

More broadly speaking, labor cannot unleash its strength as a mere pressure group because it is NOT in fact a mere pressure group. What is involved for it is no small segment of policy, such as a special-interest lobby might be interested in, to be put across administratively by getting the right man in the key post, etc. For labor it is the broadest social (class) interests and basic questions of government orientation which are at stake. A representative of the natural-gas interests on the Federal Power Commission can do a job for his patrons behind the backs of the voters. A "labor man" who is kindly granted a seat in the administration's train tends to become a hostage, not a tribune.

This relationship between labor, the Fair Deal and the existing party machines is only an aspect of the whole question, to be sure, but an integral aspect of it. It is not the existence of party machines *per se* which is evil; it is the political character of the two big party machines of the day which stands in the way of labor's fruitful use of its power.

In the same sense, labor needs its OWN political machine. It needs a political machine which is the instrument of its own party. A labor party will not win victories merely by adopting a program; it will have to organize, from the grass-roots up, behind that program. But its grass-roots are not the venal wardheelers and patronage-peddlers who are associated in the popular mind with "practical politicals" (i.e., "dirty politics"); its grass-roots are the workers of the organized labor movement in the shops and factories and mines. As the British labor movement has shown, here is the resource—which cannot be tapped by the old parties—which can build a party machine stronger, more solid, more reliable, more dynamic, than any that the country has ever seen.



28

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY: ROAD OR ROADBLOCK?

Back in 1948, Truman upset the pollsters by his unpredicted victory, after a whistle-stop campaign in which he hauled out all of the best phrases of the Fair Deal and polished them up. In a moment of glowing gratitude, he told the press next day, "Labor did it!"

In fact, labor had a great part in doing it. It was done against the propaganda of the one-party press, against the apathy of the Democratic machine itself, and in spite of the fact that Truman himself had done little or nothing *as president* to make labor happy.

He had brought back the most hated of anti-labor weapons, the injunction, and had used it to break three great strikes; he had, not long before, appealed to Congress for a law a good deal more vicious than the Taft-Hartley Law—a law to draft strikers into the army; his record of positive accomplishment was not impressive. Expecting his defeat anyway, important sections of the labor movement were getting ready to break away. Even William Green, semi-fossilized president of the AFL, was talking about a labor third party, not to speak of several CIO leaders.

But as *candidate*, Truman delivered the goods—with speeches. He inveighed against the "special interests" and heartless big business, even if it was not always clear what he proposed to do about it. This is sometimes called "social demagoguery" but in capitalist politics it is considered very smart. He seemed to be telling labor that he was for labor's program; he seemed to be telling the small farmers that he was for their program; and they warmed up and flocked to vote for him, sweeping him back into the White House.

The Republicans were perfectly correct when, scandalized, they accused Truman of making a "class" appeal, stirring up "class antagonisms." He did, in that same "smart" fashion. It got him elected, even though the labor leaders who flocked to him insist on making speeches denouncing the idea of a labor party with a "narrow" class appeal.

"We did it!" crowed labor too, echoing Truman, not bothering to denounce itself for this obviously "class" analysis. In those briefly happy days, there was a temporary upsurge even of wild talk about "taking over" and "transforming" the Democratic Party into a reliable instrument of labor's interests.

One reason why this talk died down pretty rapidly was that, as soon as the Candidate became the President again, he went back to normal. You can't put butter on a speech about the "special interests."

Truman and the Democrats made no attempt to deliver on promises of civil-rights legislation. They made no meaningful attempt to repeal the Taft-Hartley Act. Truman went in for more strikebreaking, as the railroad workers found out.

His labor supporters were tarred with the festering corruption that boiled up out of his administration. Labor had to fight against Truman-appointed war-mobilization agencies infested with dollar-a-year big businessmen like the same C. E. Wilson who later told us "what's good for General Motors."

We got the Korean war. In foreign policy, we also got the U. S. turn back to friendship with the Franco fascist regime, and the change of line back in favor of Chiang Kai-shek.

We got the "subversive list," instituted by none other than Truman, and the government-initiated witchhunt which got started long before McCarthy.

This was the Democratic Party back at the old stand, with a Fair Deal sign over it.

A second reason, no doubt, why the talk died down of "taking over the Democratic Party" is more basic: What does it mean to take over a party like the Democratic Party?

(Incidentally, most of all this applies to the Republican Party even more, but we are not discussing the Republican Party separately because there is no important tendency in labor's political movement to orient in that direction. All the real questions of labor's dependent politics concern the Democrats.)

These two old parties are not programmatic groupings, but power coalitions and federations of machines. The Democratic Party is a coalition of city political machines and bosses, Southern reaction, and labor and liberal pressure politics. When the chips are down, it follows the politics of the more enlightened Northern capitalists tempered by the vicious racism and DixieGOP conservatism of the Southern white-supremacists. In this Popular Front, there is a division of labor: The workers and farmers provide the votes, and the city machines and Southerners run the Democratic administrations, while the labor-liberals mutter angrily and sometimes even protest audibly.

Truman may have got back to the White House by pitching his "class appeal" in one direction; but once back in the White House he knew what class had to be followed in deeds.

Now then: suppose labor and its liberal allies "captured" this party in some sense—not merely in some small town where it could elect the aldermen, but where it counted, in the national seats of power: Suppose, for example, labor and its liberal allies made a real fight at a Democratic national convention and sought to put over its own program, candidates, and party leaders. . . .

Would the Southern reactionaries bow to majority rule and accept the new leadership and spirit that had "captured" their party? The very thought is ridiculous, of course. They would walk out. They even walked out on Harry Truman in 1948.

Or the city machine politicians—would *they* simply salute their new leaders, underwrite the new program, and go along no matter what? The thought is almost as ridiculous. Could all the capitalist politicians and wardheeling fakery who infest the party submit to a labor-“captured” Democratic Party simply out of a spirit of discipline? This spirit doesn't exist.

Or would the labor movement simply capture itself in “taking over” the Democratic Party? Would it not rather be, at the very possible best, the beginning of a general sweeping realignment in American politics that would produce precisely what the labor leaders say they want to avoid: a party of labor?

Even if we assume for the sake of argument that it is conceivable, if not likely, that labor should really set about reforming this power-coalition called the Democratic Party and give it a progressive program and some likelihood that the program will be carried out: is it reasonable to expect that it could beat the entrenched Democratic political machines on their own terrain, inside the party, and make the effort worthwhile?

So, as we were saying, these were some of the considerations which put a quick end to the burgeoning idea of “taking over” the Democratic Party. But what is the alternative to that, if labor is to stay in political activity, as it must?

For the labor leaders, the alternative was—and still is—going back to the status of just another “pressure group” in the Democratic Party. Get behind the good things and good men; complain about the bad things and bad men—try to move the party over to the “left” as a whole. . . .

There are a number of difficulties about this pressure-group role, even though organized labor is so big, so powerful and so influential that it is the most feared or courted single pressure group in politics.

The first difficulty is inherent in the fact that labor is not inherently a pressure-group at all, even though it tries to act like one. It is a separate class.

What we mean concretely is this: If the natural-gas lobby can pressure both the Democratic and Republican Parties into jumping through the hoop, that is natural; because the interests of the oil and gas men, while only one sector of the total business interests, fit into the capitalist-party program; and as long as their special demands do not hurt all of business too much, they can get their way. True, it is another robbery of the public, but that is what bourgeois politics is for.

But if the labor movement tries to “pressure” the major parties into (say) repealing the Taft-Hartley Law, it finds itself up against the solidarity of all business interests, who are entrenched in the old parties.

Labor's distinctive program, even where exceedingly modest, tends to raise society-wide issues and tests, by its very nature—issues and tests which are not resolvable by pressure-group means.

That is a fundamental difficulty. There is another difficulty in labor's pressure-group politics which is more immediate—and which has wrought havoc with labor's effectiveness on the political field.

A pressure-group in this political tug-of-war can hope to exert its pressure only in one way: by promising support or withholding support—votes or campaign contributions, or anything.

Every social, economic and political pressure group in the country can operate this way. The neo-Klansmen in the South can threaten to bolt to the Republicans. The farmers can mutter about voting Democrat instead of for Eisenhower. The NAACP leaders can hint cautiously about voting GOP. Even the natural-gas men can grumble over Eisenhower's veto with the implied

threat of punishing him with votes or, more likely, campaign contributions. So it goes.

But labor *cannot* operate this way.

Labor's political movement cannot shuttle its votes back and forth between the two old parties, or successfully threaten to do so. If Adlai Stevenson refuses to make even a verbal obeisance in favor of the Negroes' epochal fight in the South, can Reuther and Meany “get even” by announcing support of Eisenhower and Nixon? If labor is dissatisfied with what it gets from the Democrats, outside of talk, where is it to get?

In the last analysis, this too is the outcome of the fact that labor is not merely a pressure group, not merely even a very big pressure group. It has a program, even when its leaders do not formulate one or are incapable of formulating one. Its program, branded on its forehead and unconcealable, is labor's needs and interests.

Its leaders can ignore this program, as they most often do successfully; its leaders can reduce this program to empty words, as they do very skillfully; its leaders can betray this program, as they do in good time too. But the program is there because it is spelled out in the course of the daily struggle in the shops and factories over the conflicting interests of two different classes.

Because the program is there, the labor leaders are prevented even from maneuvering with the more reactionary of the two parties and are inevitably oriented toward that party whose brand of social demagoguery appeals in its direction.

Now, everybody knows this is so. Hence the difficulty.

As long as labor has nowhere else to go, what is the pressure upon the Democratic machine to heed its complaints, protests, proposals or lamentations?

True, on a local scale in some areas, labor politics has flirted with “liberal” Republicans, as in New York City, but not where the main issues are decided.

True, the labor leaders can try to threaten, not that they will break with the Democrats and go to the Republicans, but that their rank and file will—unless such-and-such measures are carried out. Or they can threaten, usually with more justice, that unless the Democrats concede a few more crumbs, the worker-voters will just sit it out despite doorbell-ringing. A small component of labor's enormous pressure-power is thus brought into play. Even this small component has power. But how little compared to what is possible, as can be seen from the present political impotence of labor's political arms in an important election year.

In 1948 there was an enormous pressure on Truman, besides his fear of defeat. This was the Stalinist-led Wallace candidacy of the Progressive Party, which momentarily threatened to attract away part of the working-class support indispensable to Truman's election. This was an important reason for Truman's leftish talk in the campaign.

In 1952, and again in 1956, the fear of a Southern bolt is either the reason or the pretext for the pussy-footing on the Jim Crow question even by Northern Democratic liberals, like Stevenson.

But they are not afraid that labor will bolt.

No, labor is in their pocket. Safe. Don't have to worry about it much. It's the other side they have to worry about: the reactionaries, the current “moderates.”

So labor's tremendous political strength is expended like a free-spinning wheel stuck up in empty air, going nowhere.

Sooner or later labor will have to break with this Democratic Party and do what every other working class in the world has had to do: form its own party.

But there are different roads through which this can happen.

Meanwhile the great majority of the trade-unionists do not see or agree with this necessity. The most politically conscious among them believe in working with and supporting the Democratic Party. In spite of the lessons of experience, the leap over to a new party is still too great, at least for this period of war-economy prosperity.

A TRANSITIONAL ROAD

But for us, who are for a labor party, this does not mean an end to our dialogue with such workers. We have a very important thing to tell them:

You, for whatever reason, are against forming a labor party now. You want to support Democrats against Republicans, and good Democrats against bad Democrats. You want to do this not because you are a careerist or are looking for a wardheelers' job, but because you think labor's interests demand that you support the lesser evil against the greater evil.

Very well, then, you will work within the Democratic Party, but—

Work!

You're for a forthright civil-rights program by the Democrats? Then fight for it. Don't just advocate it: fight for it, for that is the only way it will be won.

Demand that your leaders at the Democratic Party conventions—and there will be a platoon of labor leaders there as delegates—fight all the way down to the floor on behalf of a few propositions of elementary democracy: clear endorsement of the desegregation decision of the Supreme Court; strong provision for its implementation; repudiation by name of all those who are fighting to keep the Negroes under, like the signers of the Southern Congressional Manifesto.

Insist that the Democratic platform firmly call for the repeal of Taft-Hartley. Call for abolition of the congressional seniority system whereby the Southern bloc automatically controls a Democratic Party-controlled Congress.

Implement Reuther's threat that "You cannot have Mr. Eastland and have us at the same time."

Labor's political machine can work in the Democratic Party by capitulating to its machine, or it can work to really achieve those good things which it claims it can convince the Democrats to accept.

So far, it has mainly tagged along as a fifth wheel of the party, not as a dynamic left wing of it.

You, who want to work in the Democratic Party: fight at least for what YOU believe in, since you disagree with our Labor Party views; and if you fight for it in the Democratic Party we will see whether you are right, and can really get what you want; or whether your fight will merely open up a different and broader road leading to genuine independent labor politics, a labor party, by breaking with this party.

ISL Program — in Brief

The Independent Socialist League stands for socialist democracy and against the two systems of exploitation which now divide the world: capitalism and Stalinism.

Capitalism cannot be reformed or liberalized, by any Fair Deal or other deal, so as to give the people freedom, abundance, security or peace. It must be abolished and replaced by a new social system, in which the people own and control the basic sectors of the economy, democratically controlling their own economic and political destinies.

Stalinism, in Russia and wherever it holds power, is a brutal totalitarianism—a new form of exploitation. Its agents in every country, the Communist Parties, are unrelenting enemies of socialism and have nothing in common with socialism—which cannot exist without effective democratic control by the people.

These two camps of capitalism and Stalinism are today at each other's throats in a world-wide imperialist rivalry for domination. This struggle can only lead to the most frightful war in history so long as the people leave the capitalist and Stalinist rulers in power. Independent Socialism stands for building and strengthening the Third Camp of the people against both war blocs.

The ISL, as a Marxist movement, looks to the working class and its ever-present struggle as the basic progressive force in society. The ISL is organized to spread the ideas of socialism in the labor movement and among all other sections of the people.

At the same time, Independent Socialists participate actively in every struggle to better the people's lot now—such as the fight for higher living standards, against Jim Crow and anti-Semitism, in defense of civil liberties and the trade-union movement. We seek to join together with all other militants in the labor movement as a left force working for the formation of an independent labor party and other progressive policies.

The fight for democracy and the fight for socialism are inseparable. There can be no lasting and genuine democracy without socialism, and there can be no socialism without democracy. To enroll under this banner, join the Independent Socialist League!

+ This box was regularly carried by Independent Socialist League publications of the 1950s as a capsule statement of its political program.

A List of THE ANNUAL PAMPHLET-ISSUES published by *Labor Action*

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