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Socialism and DEMOCRACY

DEMOCRACY IN CRISIS: The Independent Socialist View

By GORDON HASKELL

"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.

THE statement quoted above is, in very condensed form, one of the fundamental conceptions on which LABOR ACTION and the Independent Socialist League base themselves. In it are contained a view of the world in which we live and a general strategic guide to action which distinguishes Independent Socialism from all other political currents in America.

To Americans particularly, it may appear that the statement "there can be no lasting and genuine democracy without socialism" is dogmatic, perhaps even extravagant. The overwhelming majority of American liberals believe that they and this country represent the prime bulwark of democracy in the world today.

At the same time, they are anti-socialist and believe that for America, at least, socialism is an unnecessary concept, irrelevant at best, confusing and divisive at worst. Although they are willing to grant that in much of the rest of the world the movements and goals represented by the labor and social-democratic parties may be the best present alternative to Stalinism, in their heart of hearts they believe that if these foreigners would just copy the economic and political institutions which prevail in the United States, the world would be on the road to unlimited progress, to ever-expanding democracy and popular well-being. This view, in somewhat modified and uneasy form, is held also by the leaders of the American labor movement, and by the mass of the workers in this country as well.

Although this view is today unique for America, it is instructive to note that its twin has been held by liberal and even "socialist" spokesmen in many countries in the past. Every period of prolonged prosperity in European history has given rise to a similar opinion both inside and outside the working-class movement. Let depression and unemployment recede for ten or fifteen years, and all past experience is dumped into the trash can, while the theory of a "new" era of democracy and prosperity in permanence is trotted out to dazzle the relatively comfortable masses.

TO SAVE DEMOCRACY—

But one of the things which baffles the American prophets of the "new era" is that outside this country the masses cannot be convinced that the new day is at hand.

This is one way of describing the failure of America to receive enthusiastic popular support abroad either for its foreign policy in general, or for its economic contribution to the stabilization of Europe in particular.

The reason is simple: the peoples of Europe and Asia have experienced no real prosperity. At best, their stirring discontent has been held in leash. They know that even their relatively high level of employment is precarious, that it balances on the point of a pin.

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.

But does not the real menace of Stalinism to the 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?

—A SOCIAL PROGRAM IS NEEDED

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 intransigent 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.

DEMOCRACY PLUS

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 odds 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.

As a goal, socialism seeks the socialization of the major means of production, which is another way of saying their real democratization. For private ownership and arbitrary control of the basic economic machinery on which all are dependent for their livelihood, it proposes to substitute democratic ownership, democratic control and democratic planning in the interest of all.

But socialism is more than just a goal. Socialism also proposes a method for achieving this goal. It seeks to instill in the masses, and primarily in the workers who are the chief victims both of capitalism and of Stalinism, the conception that they can have freedom and security and democracy only if they organize and struggle for these goals themselves. Socialists propose to abolish capitalism and replace it with a thoroughly democratic society by the widest extension and employment of democracy now.

THE CRISIS IS SOCIAL

Democracy is not simply the existence of certain political and civil rights, although these are essential to it. Democracy, to be a living reality, requires the active participation in public affairs by the widest possible layers of the people.

While capitalism exists, and after it is abolished, socialists seek to bring these layers into the most active, consistent, and intimate participation in public life. In fact, they think such participation not only indispensable to the achievement of socialism, but equally indispensable as a school through which the masses must go in order to administer the truly democratic society of the future.

As long as capitalism and Stalinism continue to exist, whatever degree of democracy there is in the world remains in mortal peril. Hence the socialist movement must seek to awaken the workers, the youth, and the people in general to the menace which confronts them from both, and to organize them in struggle against both.

The rise of Stalinism in Russia on the ruins of a socialist revolution has served to re-emphasize the essential relationship between socialism as a new economic and social system and democracy. Without democracy, mere nationalization of the economy turns into a monstrous caricature of the aims of socialism, in fact, into their opposite. But lacking the democratic struggle for this new economic and social system, dying capitalism will drag democracy into a common grave.

That is why "the fight for democracy and the fight for socialism are inseparable."

Labor's Struggle Is the Key!

By BEN HALL

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. Organization is the cement of numbers. It permits a mass of people to counter the devices of the rich, to map out common objectives, to choose spokesmen, to initiate tactics, and to avoid being split into ineffective mutually antagonistic segments.

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.

NEEDS DEMOCRACY

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.

FREE LABOR

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.

Modern industry centralizes thousands upon thousands of workers into single giant factories; hundreds of thousands, into single capitalist enterprises; and millions into related industries. They meet in daily contact, learn from common experiences, and develop mutual interests and a common program.

They create the most powerful, popular institutions of modern times. In the United States, we know of the existence of labor unions which enroll more than 13,000,000 men and women in voluntary associations. In other countries, workers have founded not only unions, but political parties, which compete with the capitalist class for political dominance of the nation. And these organizations are created not by law, not by force, but by the free action of millions who band together to make the strength of numbers effective. Nowhere can we find anything like them in power and significance.

IN THE UNIONS

This working class stands almost instinctively for the defense and maintenance of democracy; but it has yet to become fully conscious of its own role.

In this country, it sets up unions to challenge the capitalists but grants them special monopoly rights in politics. Paradoxically, it concedes to the bourgeoisie that which undermines and enfeebles democracy: the right of capitalist billionaires to own big industry. The labor movement demands a republic in political life but tolerates limited monarchy in industry, where power remains in the hands of king-capitalist, checked and modified by labor. It has yet to demand an end of autocracy and the establishment of full democracy in industry.

Through the organized labor movement, workers gain experience and training vital for the reorganization of society on a more democratic, i.e., socialist, basis.

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.

LIMIT THE POWER

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.

WAVE OF THE FUTURE

"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.

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 ward-healers 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.

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Capitalism's Threat to Democracy

By JULIUS FALK

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.

The crusade against democracy in the United States is not just the work of evil men, wicked people here and there who are congenitally incapable of appreciating the worth of democracy between campaign speeches. True, not every specific attack on civil liberties is the inevitable result of a socially weakened capitalist class; nevertheless, the poisoned political atmosphere in this country as a whole is the inevitable end-product of a disoriented and frightened ruling class.

This reaction stemming from a fear of Stalinism is heightened and exaggerated by the primitive character of the American bourgeoisie.

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 bourgeoisie 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.

DRIVE AGAINST CIVIL LIBERTIES

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 McCarthys 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 McCarthys, 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.

In 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.

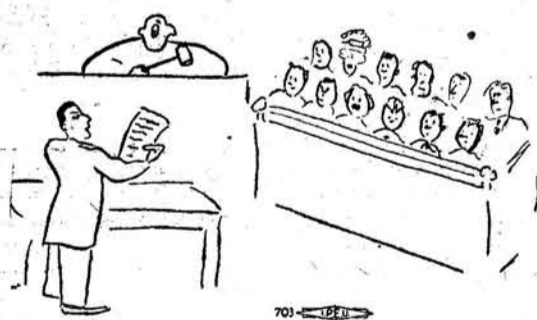
MORE OMINOUS TODAY

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 a 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 a 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 governments; 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.

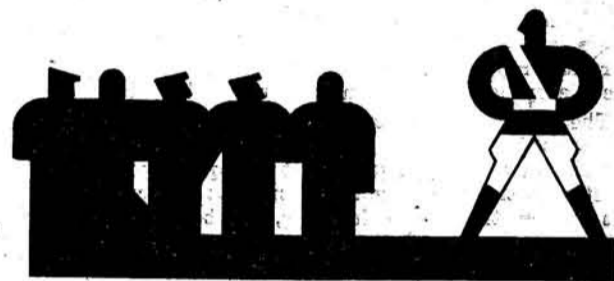
It would be unfair, perhaps, to abuse the liberal world too much for its "failure of nerve," for it is obviously more than that—it is failure of conviction.

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 RIGHT TO DISSENT

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 outspoken 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 intellectual 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.

The "Mistakes" of the Bolsheviks

The following article by Max Shachtman appeared 10 years ago in the New Internationalist for November 1943. It is here shortened to fit on this page but the bulk of the original article is included.—Ed.

By MAX SHACHTMAN

THE causes for the decay of the Russian Revolution are often sought in the "mistakes of the Bolsheviks."

If only they had not suppressed freedom of speech and press! . . . If only they had not established a one-party dictatorship! . . .

This is the tenor of most of the criticism leveled at the Bolsheviks in the labor movement. Consistently thought out, they boil down to the idea that the real mistake was made in November 1917 when the Bolsheviks took power. This judgment is based essentially on the same factors that generated the fundamental theory of the Stalinist, counter-revolution—"socialism in one country"—and differs from it only in that it is not so high a level.

The bonds by which czarism held together the Russian Empire were brittle in the extreme. . . . [In 1917] With czarist despotism gone as an integrating force, who was left to keep the nation together and maintain it as a power, economic as well as political? One or two hundred years earlier in similar circumstances, it was the bourgeoisie. . . . In Russia, however, the bourgeoisie had come too late. The solving of the problems of the democratic revolution had been too long postponed to permit a repetition of the French Revolution. This was the theory held in common by Lenin and Trotsky.

The period of the revolution in which czarism was overturned tested the theory to the end. The bourgeoisie did come to power, but it was quite incapable of mastering the centrifugal tendencies which czarism, in the comparatively peaceful days, had been able to hold in precarious check. . . .

It is unbelievable, but it is a fact, cried Lenin, that a peasant uprising is growing in a peasant country, "under a revolutionary republican government that is supported by the parties of the Social-Revolutionists and the Mensheviks." The peasant rising did not come to strengthen the bourgeoisie and its pallid democracy, but was directed against it. The bourgeoisie was unable to deal with it in any better way than the czar had discovered. At the same time, a proletarian power, the Soviets, not at all Bolshevik, grew up spontaneously by the side of the bourgeois power and threatened its existence.

NO BOURGEOIS SOLUTION

The bourgeois democracy was incapable of seriously approaching a single one of the social and political problems at home. . . . The country ruled by the bourgeois republicans was about to be overrun by foreign imperialism as a prelude to its partition among the great powers. This problem, too, the "revolutionary democracy" was unable to solve, or even undertake seriously to solve. The country faced complete economic ruin, political disintegration, chaos, dismemberment and subjugation from abroad, the imminent triumph of counter-revolution and reaction, with all the consequences flowing from them. The bourgeoisie, the bourgeois democracy, was impotent in dealing with the situation, notwithstanding the support it received from the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists.

To say that they might have solved these problems democratically if the Bolsheviks had not interfered is not only to ignore an overwhelming mass of facts but to stand the question on its head. The "interference" of the Bolsheviks was made possible only because the bourgeois democrats, plus the social-democrats, could not solve the problems. . . . The alternative to the "risky" seizure of power by the working class under Bolshevik leadership was not the painless flowering of "democracy" but the triumph of savage counter-revolution and the partitioning and colonialization of the country. . . .

The Bolsheviks cannot, and therefore must not, be judged as if they were uncontested masters of a situation in which they could calmly and undisturbedly plan a campaign of social reorganization. The disdainful critics like to overlook the fact that they, or at least their friends and patrons, left no stone unturned or unhurled to prevent the new state power from working out its destiny. Class interest came before "scientific interest" in the "new social experiment."

CHAOS AND TREASON

Both czar and bourgeoisie left the Bolsheviks, who took power almost without shedding a drop of blood, a heritage of chaos and violence and multitudinous unsolved problems.

The sabotage of the bourgeoisie, loyal patriots of the fatherland who were ready to sell it to foreign imperialism rather than have it ruled by the proletariat, forced the Bolsheviks to resort to the most radical socialist measures from the very beginning. The Bolsheviks were anything but Utopian. Their program was modest and realistic. If they took what would otherwise have been premature steps, it was done under the compulsions of the bitter class struggle immediately launched by the counter-revolution.

Decrees permitting capitalists to continue owning their factories under workers' control are impotent against shells loaded and fired at these factories by their departed owners. Terroristic attacks upon the government and its officials cannot be effectively met with sermons on the superiority of oral agitation and

moral suasion. Freedom of the press cannot be extended by a government to "critics" who come to overthrow it with arms and battalions furnished by czarists and foreign imperialists. Freedom must be defended from such critics, and with all available arms.

Not only the bourgeois democrats like Kerensky, but the Mensheviks and SRs resorted to arms against the democratic Soviet power. Nor were they too finicky about the company they kept in their crusade against the Bolsheviks. Alliance with the Bolsheviks against the reaction was inadmissible in principle and beneath the integrity of these democrats. Alliance with reaction, with the czarist generals, the Cossacks, the Clemenceaus and Churchills against the Bolsheviks, that was good practical politics, realistic, tolerable by democracy.

In any country, such "practical politics" are commonly known as treason and treated accordingly. Against the Soviet power, this was not merely "treason to the nation," but treason to the working class and the working-class revolution. . . .

What is downright outrageous is the impudence of the criticism of Bolshevism's dictatorial measures leveled by the very persons or groups which acted in such a manner as to leave the Soviet power no alternative but stern decisions of sheer self-defense.

BANKED ON WORLD REVOLUTION

This holds true also for the organization of the Communist International. . . . Its task was the organization of the victory of the proletariat in the capitalist countries. This was assigned to it by the Bolsheviks not out of considerations of abstract internationalism but out of the thousand-times-repeated conviction that without the revolution in the West, the Russian Workers' state could not hope to survive, much less solve its fundamental problems.

This fact is well known and widely acknowledged. Its full significance is not always grasped. The Russian Revolution was the first act of the world revolution. That is how it was conceived by its authors. That was the starting point of all their policies. The heart of the question of the "mistakes of the Bolsheviks" is reached when this is thoroughly understood. Everything remains mystery and confusion if the question is studied from the standpoint of Stalin's nationalist theory.

The program of the Bolsheviks called for establishing the widest possible democracy. The Soviet regime was to be the most democratic known in history. If a state power, that is, coercion and dictatorship, was needed, it was to be directed only against the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

Was so much concentration of dictatorial power and violence needed against the Russian bourgeoisie, that is, against a bourgeoisie described as helpless and hopeless? On a Russian national scale, the answer could easily have been in the negative. But as the world bourgeoisie understood, and immediately showed, the Russian Revolution was directed at international capitalism. Without world capitalism, the Russian bourgeoisie could have been disposed of by the Soviet power with a wave of the hand. With world capitalism behind it, the bourgeoisie of Russia, which is only another way of saying the danger of a victory for the counter-revolution, was a tremendous force against which the greatest vigilance was demanded.

Because the problem was only posed in Russia but could be solved only on a world scale, the Bolsheviks counted on the international revolution. Because they counted on the international revolution, the Bolsheviks allowed themselves all sorts of infringements upon the standards of political democracy, and even upon the standards of workers' democracy.

The suppression of democratic rights for other working-class organizations, even of those which were not directly engaged in armed insurrection against the Soviets, was first conceived as a temporary measure dictated by the isolation of the Russian Revolution and in virtue of that fact by the dangers to which it was immediately subject. . . .

MISTAKES OF THE BOLSHEVIKS

However, if this is so, an important conclusion follows. The proletariat that triumphs in the next wave of socialist revolutions and triumphs in several of the advanced countries will have neither wish nor need to repeat all the measures of the Russian Revolution. It is absurd to think otherwise. It is much more absurd for the revolutionary movement to adopt a program advocating the universal repetition of all the suppressive measures of the Russian Bolsheviks. This injunction applies most particularly against the idea of a single, legal, monopolistic party. . . .

The workers' power in the advanced countries will be able to assure the widest, genuine democracy to all working-class parties and organizations, and even (given favorable circumstances, which mean, primarily, no attempt at counter-revolution) to bourgeois parties, and this assurance must be set down in advance. The assurance cannot be confined to a ceremonial pledge on holiday occasions, but must be reflected in the daily political practice of the revolutionary vanguard party. In the concrete case, the "daily practice" includes a critical re-examination of the Russian experience.

There were "mistakes" imposed upon the Bolsheviks by the actions of their opponents and by conditions in general. There were mistakes, without skeptical quota-

tion marks, that cannot be sheltered under that heading.

The most critical and objective reconsideration of the Bolshevik revolution does not, in our view, justify the attacks made upon Lenin and Trotsky for the violence they used against their violent, insurrectionary adversaries. Nor, even after all these years, can the excesses in repression and violence be regarded as having been weighty factors in the degeneration of the Soviet state. To condemn a revolution for excesses is to condemn revolution; to condemn revolution is to doom society to stagnation and retrogression.

ONE-PARTY SYSTEM

But after having been compelled to outlaw all the non-Bolshevik parties, the leaders of the party in power made a virtue, and then a principle, out of a temporary necessity. "There is room for all kinds of parties in Russia," said one of them, Tomsy, if we rightly recall, "but only one of them in power and all the rest in prison." Tomsy merely expressed what had become the rule and principle for the other leaders.

The idea of one party in power is one thing, and not at all in violation of either bourgeois or workers' democracy. The idea that all other parties must be, not in opposition, with the rights of oppositions, but in prison, violates both bourgeois and workers' democracy, and it is with the latter that we are concerned here.

Even if every non-Bolshevik group, without exception, had resorted to armed struggle against the Soviet power, it was a disastrous mistake to outlaw them in perpetuity. From every point of view that may legitimately be held by a revolutionary party or a revolutionary government, it would have been wise and correct if the Soviet power had declared:

"Any political group or party that lays down its arms, breaks from the foreign imperialists and the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie at home, adapts itself in word and deed to Soviet legality, repudiates armed struggle against the government and those who resort to armed struggle, will enjoy full democratic rights in the country, equal to those of the party in power."

The Bolsheviks made no such declaration. Instead, the kind made by Tomsy gained prevalence. There can be no question in our mind that the adoption and enforcement of the "Tomsy policy" contributed heavily to the degeneration of the revolution and the victory of Stalinism. From the prohibition of all parties but the Bolshevik, only a step was needed to the prohibition of all factions inside the Bolshevik Party at its 10th congress. Anyone acquainted with the history of the subsequent developments knows that this decision, also taken as an "emergency" measure, was a most powerful weapon in the hands of the bureaucracy against the Left Opposition. Disloyally construed, disloyally used, it smoothed the road to the totalitarian dictatorship of the bureaucracy.

The whole Bolshevik Party was politically miseducated and ideologically intimidated against the very idea of more than one party in the country, and for this miseducation none of its leaders can escape his share of the responsibility. It is enough to recall that from the time of Zinoviev's first capitulation to Stalin in 1927 to the time of the last of the capitulators, every desertion from the Opposition was motivated to a considerable extent by the cry, "No two parties in the country!"

LESSON FOR MARXISTS

The Bolshevik revolution was betrayed and crushed by the Stalinist counter-revolution. . . . Not the least important lesson is the need to return to the principles set forth by Lenin in *The State and Revolution*. Especially in the light of what has happened, the heaviest emphasis must be laid upon the dictatorship of the proletariat as the democratic rule of the workers; as the widest and most genuine democracy the workers have ever had; as the equitable enjoyment of democratic rights by small groups, political opponents of the government included, and military opponents alone excluded; as the safeguard of the principle of electivity of officials, above all of the trade unions and soviets.

The revolutionary Marxists must learn, and then must teach, that the struggle for democratic rights is not just a clever device for embarrassing the undemocratic bourgeoisie, that the struggle is not confined to the days of capitalism. On the contrary: it is precisely when the new revolutionary power is set up that the struggle for democratic rights and democracy acquires its fullest meaning and its first opportunity for complete realization.

The revolutionists after the overturn of capitalism differ from the revolutionists before that overturn not in that they no longer need democratic rights and no longer demand them, but in the fact that they are for the first time really and fully able to promulgate them and see to it that they are preserved from all infringement, including infringement by the new state and by bureaucrats in it. The right of free speech, press and assembly, the right to organize and the right to strike are not less necessary under the dictatorship of the proletariat, but more necessary and more possible.

Socialism can and will be attained only by the fullest realization of democracy. The dictatorship of the proletariat must be counterposed to the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in this sphere because the latter denies the people access to and control over the very material bases whose monopoly by the bourgeoisie makes its "democracy" a formality not really enjoyed by the great masses.

That is what the revolutionary Marxists should teach. But first of all they must learn it, and thoroughly. It is one of the most important lessons of the Russian Revolution and its decay.



What to Learn from Stalinism

By HAL DRAPER

WHOEVER cannot 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. Whoever has not been able to learn lessons of the greatest importance from this, whatever movement has not been able to assimilate and readapt its conceptions to this, is doomed to impotence and worse—but to impotence only at the very best.

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.

THREE-CORNERED WORLD

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.

STATIFICATION AND SOCIALISM

(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

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.

STRUGGLE UNDER STALINISM

(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.

THE SOCIAL CONTENT

(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."



"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.

ECONOMICS OF 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-

For a Democratic Foreign Policy!

By MAX SHACHTMAN

THE foreign policy of the United States is a disaster. It was that under the late Roosevelt's War Deal, it remained that during Truman's Fair Deal, and it has gotten worse in the first 100 days of the Eisenhower administration.

Every thoughtful reactionary has known this for years, for he cannot blind himself to the big fact:

In the course of the Second World War, the Stalinists succeeded in conquering and consolidating their totalitarian power in a dozen countries of Europe and Asia. It is hard to recall another example in history of the establishment of an empire of comparable dimensions and significance at such speed, with so little resistance, and at such low cost, hardly a shot being fired. All this changed the face of the earth, perhaps more radically than in any comparable period of history.

And yet: the leaders and statesmen of all the capitalist powers, including the mighty U. S., stood by helpless to prevent these Stalinist victories, unable to do more than lift a finger to tear out their own hair. There is nothing in our lifetime to equal this.

And yet: the truth is that the more-or-less responsible reactionaries have no alternative to the foreign policy of yesterday. That policy is today what it was under Roosevelt and Truman—a policy of imperialism as adapted to the particular position and needs of American capitalism.

Whoever tries to apply an imperialist policy in the world today, where the outstanding common characteristic is hatred of imperialism and determination to be rid of it, is bound to reap disaster and nothing else. And this holds true even if the policy is directed against Stalinism, which is itself the most despotic and imperialistic power in the world.

Because there is no practical reactionary alternative to the present Washington policy, it does not follow that the fight against Stalinism is hopeless. There is an alternative to the Eisenhower-Truman-Roosevelt policy.

Its name is: A DEMOCRATIC FOREIGN POLICY.

Just One Point

To make the solution of the problem still simpler, the democratic foreign policy could confine itself, to begin with, to one single point: *the unreserved right of self-determination for all peoples and nations.*

Just a little point like that? Yes, that is all; for a beginning, that would be enough and more than enough, for it would be an immense and even (if we may use such a word nowadays) a revolutionary beginning.

The power of this idea—the right of people to govern themselves completely free from foreign domination—can hardly be exaggerated. Its power is no less than world-shaking—and woe to those who ignore or even underrate it! No tyranny in modern times has long been able to withstand its shattering force and that will prove to be just as true in the future as in the past.

The passion for freedom from alien oppression was so strong during the Second World War that Hitler found it impossible to organize his "New Order" in Europe in the face of the millions who sustained the national-resistance movements against the Germans.

It was so strong among the Ukrainian people who sought, as they still seek, to throw off the Muscovite yoke, that at first many of them even went to the appalling extreme of welcoming the German invader in the hope that he would help them achieve their end.

In turn, it was so strong among the Russian people that despite their hatred for their own exploiters they fought like tigers to ward off the threat to their national integrity and dignity from the Hitlerite Supermen.

It was and is so strong among the Yugoslavs that it produced the first deep and damaging breach in the Stalinist empire—the first but not the last.

It is so profound and irresistible among the hundreds of millions who make up the population of Asia and Africa, so long dormant, and now so aroused, that no imperialist power or combination of powers is strong enough to thwart these peoples in their epochal revolution.

The solidary support of this overwhelming majority of humanity is almost instantaneously on the side of that political force which seriously champions its aspirations. In world-politics today, in the world conflict today, whoever has this mighty fraternal support is invincible; whoever incurs its opposition is absolutely and irretrievably done for.

No Counterfeit Can Pass

Does that mean that Washington and Moscow are on the right track, since both speak so much and so often about national independence and sovereignty? Does it mean that, apart from other matters, both have a democratic foreign policy; or if not, that it is hard to distinguish good coin from base in this field?

Not hard at all! During the First World War, the German kaiser, in conflict with Britain, called for national independence for Ireland and India, and even

subsidized Irish and Indian nationalists with money and guns. But since he was not at all for national freedom for the Alsations, Galicians, Czechs and Africans who were oppressed by his imperialism, nobody was fooled into believing that the kaiser had a democratic foreign policy, not even the Irish and Indians.

Because the Russian czar was for the "national independence" of the Serbs, who were threatened by the Austrians, but himself kept the Poles under the Russian yoke, no Pole had any illusions about the czar's passion for democracy.

In the Second World War, Japan, at war with Britain, proclaimed its desire to see India and Burma independent from London; but very few people were fooled by the imperialists who at the same time kept Tokyo's armed boots on the throat of the Korean people.

Lenin, the Bolshevik Marxist, who was proud to call himself a consistent democrat, was the one who set forth the simple test for the real socialist, for the real internationalist, for the real democrat, the foolproof way in which to distinguish them from imperialist demagogues, apologists and oppressors: the true differs from the false by being for the right of self-determination, as we put it



above, "for all peoples and nations," and not just for those oppressed by "the other side."

A Declaration

Ever since the election campaign of last year, Eisenhower and his supporters have been talking about taking the "initiative" in the struggle with the Stalinists. They talk about it now. It is guaranteed-safe to assume that they will continue to talk about it without producing anything more than they have produced up to now, namely, zero.

Yet the initiative can be taken. It requires no more than the solemn public statement to the entire world by an authoritative American spokesman:

"We declare, in the name of democracy, that we stand and shall continue to stand firmly and unconditionally for the most fundamental of all democratic rights, the right of all peoples and nations to full national self-determination.

"We stand and shall continue to stand for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops and police from the territories of the people seeking to exercise this right, so that they may freely and sovereignly decide all questions concerning them in normal democratic elections.

"We call upon the Russian government to take the same stand with respect to the non-Russian peoples whom it rules and whose territories it occupies.

"However, regardless of the decision taken by the Russian government on our appeal, we declare that we favor and shall give appropriate support to all actions aimed at the realization of this right by the peoples and nations now under the rule of those governments allied with the United States, notably the colonies and possessions of Great Britain, France and Belgium.

"Not only shall we oppose sending American armed forces to the support of any nation which seeks to force its rule upon another nation, but we shall support those peoples and nations which are seeking the right of self-determination and shall deny all arms and financial aid to anyone seeking to deprive them of this right.

"However, again regardless of the decision taken by the governments allied with the United States on our appeal, we declare that we categorically favor setting the example within the United States and its territories by immediately granting the right to decide their political fate to all American possessions and territories such as Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, as well as Guam and all other Pacific possessions now occupied by American armed forces."

Who Can Do It?

In face of such a declaration, if made and maintained, how long would it be before the present and ever-growing suspicion, if not downright hostility, with which most of the people of the world look upon the United States, would change to warm and solid friendship?

How long would it be before the persistent and anything-but-ineffective Stalinist propaganda campaign against American imperialism collapsed?

How long would it be before the soil of the Stalinist empire, burned too hot for the feet of its present overlords?

We cannot say exactly, to be sure, but it would certainly take less time than it will to manufacture all the A-bombs and H-bombs needed in the great crusade to make Russia a super-Hiroshima.

That is the socialist view (the view of the Independent Socialists, of course, and not the State-Department socialists or the Defend-Russia socialists) of a democratic foreign policy.

To adopt it, we had no need to go to the great books of socialist principles. Where we found it was good

enough. We do not hesitate to take it from Wilson's Fourteen Points. We do not hesitate to take it from the Roosevelt-Churchill Atlantic Charter. The only difference is this: we are not among those socialists and those democrats who proclaim the principle on holiday occasions and spend the rest of the time explaining why it must be demanded of "the other side" but cannot, alas! be applied for the moment to "our side."

It goes without saying that such an elementary democratic policy will not be adopted, nor can it be, by the Eisenhower administration. Only a certified political idiot would even dream of expecting a democratic foreign policy from this or any other capitalist regime.

The noblest and sincerest Eisenhower man would not hesitate to explain that such a declaration is childish, utopian, unreasonable and impractical — although it would be impossible for him to say *why* in terms of democratic principle. The average Eisenhower man (this goes also for the average capital-D Democrat) would find the declaration good ground for suspecting its author of subversive intentions. So, if only in the interests of economizing time, we do not even, think in terms of persuading the Republicans—or the Democrats—to adopt such a foreign policy.

After all, the picture of the Eisenhower administration proclaiming such an elementary democratic policy is too much even for the most solidly balanced mind. Turn your back on the French colonial assassins just to win the support of the Algerian, Moroccan, Madagascan and Indo-Chinese people? No, better to send more arms and bombers to the French so that they can teach the obstreperous Indo-Chinese the virtues of the West.

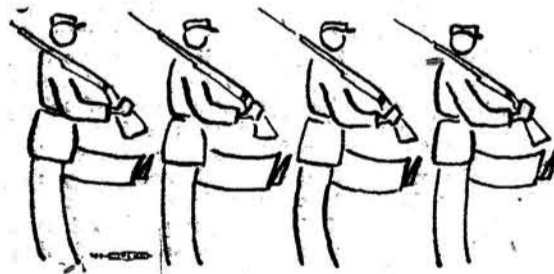
Say one single word against the villainous British campaign in Malaya or against the Mau Mau, and thus offend the Tory imperialists? Not for a moment! The most natural allies of an American imperialist policy are reactionaries and imperialists throughout the world, that is, those who ignore the revolutionary and democratic avalanche that is burying the old order throughout the world, those who do not understand it, those who despise the "lower classes" and the "backward peoples" and are resolved to "keep them in their places."

It's Up to Labor

But the American working class and its labor movement—that is something else again! It can and it must adopt this simple democratic proposition as its very own.

Every day that it continues to take responsibility for the administration's foreign policy—while more and more clearly realizing in its innermost councils that there is something radically wrong with the policy—it hurts itself and its interests more grievously, it brings discredit upon itself among the peoples abroad, it contributes to the explosive stalemate between the two imperialist contenders for world power, and above all it denies itself the birthright privilege of being the sturdiest champion of democracy in the nation.

Anyone with eyes in his head to see what is really going on in the world knows how American capitalism and its governments stand in the thinking of the people everywhere. Actively or passively, out of desperation or out of hopeful and clear-cut conviction, out of reluctant support to the "enemy of an enemy" or enthusiastic support of their authentic aspirations—it is these tens and hundreds of millions who are deciding the fate of the entire world. They will decide—not the



big statesmen, not the big exploiters and not even the big bombs.

Bigger Than the H-Bomb

And the fact that must hammer its way into the heads of all of us until it is firmly seated there is this: there is *no* chance on God's green earth that these tens and hundreds of millions of people will place their confidence in the Eisenhower administration, or in anything like that administration, or in anyone bearing political responsibility for it; there is no chance that they will become its reliable allies. Their masters, their rulers, their governments, perhaps; but the people themselves, no.

Their confidence *can* be won, however, by the American labor movement. Of that, there is not only a chance but a great chance and, under proper circumstances, a sure chance. But not if the American labor movement appears before these peoples as a mere agent cozening and inducing them in behalf of an Eisenhower administration or anything like it. Not if it bears responsibility in their eyes for the foreign policy of Eisenhower or even of the allied governments which Washington shelters, subsidizes and supports.

There is a great chance—but only if the American labor movement, starting with its most progressive elements, takes responsibility only for itself, speaks out in its own voice—the voice of the most powerful labor movement on earth today—and with that voice pledges labor's unremitting dedication to the foreign policy of democracy.

Democracy and Revolution

By ALBERT GATES

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 DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

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.

CAPITALISM'S LUXURY

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 abrogated 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.

MARXIAN TRADITION

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.

REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

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.

HOW CAPITALISM RULES

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.

PARLIAMENTARISM

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.

DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE

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.



Democracy Under Socialism

By PHILIP COBEN

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.

Socialism is not merely necessary as an "improvement" on what is called democracy today. It is that too. But above all it is the only road by which democracy can survive at all.

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.

THE ONLY GUARANTEE

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.

"ACTIVE DEMOCRACY"

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 "deplures," 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 instilled 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 which is supposed to "do them good." Sometimes, like Bellamy's, they do not even always succeed in being consistently democratic.

But it is not necessary to detail a blueprint to appreciate the tremendous power and possibilities of the key thought mentioned above. 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 needing 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.

FROM THE BOTTOM UP

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.

"MIXED" ECONOMY?

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.

For the big aim of socialism is not greater and greater centralization of life, but its decentralization. Only, socialists do not approach this aim as semi-anarchistic utopians who think that society can leap from its present-day capitalist structure to a decentralized commune. The decentralization of political and economic responsibility becomes a possibility only insofar as a socialist system digs firm roots, eradicates the habits of the past through education and usage and the rise of a new generation, and creates a really new society and a really "new man."

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. . ."

THE PEOPLE CAN RULE!

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.

