

**I SAW**

**RUSSIA**

**SOCIALISM IN THE MAKING**

BY MRS. VICTOR BERGER



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## INTRODUCTION

Mrs. Meta Berger, widow of Victor Berger, is an old time member of the Socialist Party. Both are well known in the labor movement in the United States; the success of the Socialist Party in Milwaukee was due, in a great measure, to their efforts. Mrs. Berger has been a member of the Milwaukee School Board for 25 successive years, at one time being President of the Board, the first woman to serve in that capacity. She served also on the Board of Normal School Regents, the Board of University Regents and on the State Board of Education.

Next to Debs, Victor Berger's name stands out as that of one of the eminent leaders of the American socialist movement. Berger was the first socialist in Congress, having been elected from Milwaukee in 1910, after the socialists carried the town. While in Congress, Berger was an active spokesman for Labor and a vigorous opponent of the U.S. entry into war in 1917. For his opposition Berger received a 20 year sentence, but despite the sentence was twice re-elected to Congress by his constituents; Congress, however, refused to seat him, and his place remained vacant till the end of his term.

Victor Berger always advocated unity of the labor movement. On many occasions, in face of opposition or defeat, he would tell the workers: "Comrades, we have not won this time. But when we unite, we shall win." At his side, Mrs. Berger learned the importance of unity in an every day, every week, every election, kind of way.

In 1923 the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party elected Mrs. Berger to a committee to visit the Soviet Union; but the visit did not take place. Last year she applied for permission to represent the state or county organization of the Socialist Party on a visit, but was denied that permission. She therefore availed herself of the invitation of the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers to be their representative on the Workers' Delegation organized by the Friends of the Soviet Union which went in April, 1935, to the U. S. S. R. for the May Day celebration.

# I SAW RUSSIA

By META BERGER

**I** TELL YOU, comrades and friends, I am neither a fool nor a liar. This is no time for modesty, so I remind you of a long record of costly honesty. As Victor Berger spoke during the war, so I will speak now.

Some of my friends quote Morris Hillquit and Victor Berger to silence me. It won't work. Theirs was honest and courageous thinking, and I respect it. Because I respect it for these qualities, I say we must take fresh inventory of our world. There is barely time. We have moved swiftly toward destruction. Soon we may be beyond choosing how to help themselves.

Comrades, you cannot keep referring the hurricane on the horizon to a committee for further consideration. Yet that is what we have been doing. That, and shutting our eyes and mumbling phrases of the past.

What I write about Russia is the simple truth. There is no room for mistake about the facts. If I am wrong in some conclusion or if there is some bad reasoning, it will be plain to you, and it is for you to point the error and reject the logic.

To know about Russia today is more important for you and me than to know all the facts and theories of history. You won't find the facts in the capitalist newspapers, any more than you found the truth about the World War in the capitalist newspapers. The success of the Soviet Union in contrast to the bankruptcy of capitalist countries has terrified Hearst and his kind. If Soviet Russia were failing, Hearst wouldn't have to spend millions of dollars to put that idea over. Everybody would know it. It is the success,

the unbelievable, tradition-threatening success of Bolshevism that has them scared stiff. Having been in Russia, I don't blame them. Even Hearst isn't going to be able to lie fast enough to keep the news from getting out.

I can't begin to tell you the whole story. It is told in detail in pamphlet after pamphlet, in articles and books. You know what has happened during the last six years in America, in Germany, in Italy. If you want to read figures that will excite you, get the statistics on Russia for the same period. If you believe as I do that the smell of war is already in the air, if you find everywhere the sounds and signs of growing violence and terror—then we must search anywhere and everywhere for a safe, sure way ahead. It is only if you know of a place or plan that is better for workers than Russia, that you can refuse to consider the facts. For Russia is the first test and proof of all the hopes and theories we have nourished for our salvation.

I was in Russia for a few weeks with the trade union delegation in the spring and summer of 1935. We filled our days and nights, but even so there are many things I know nothing about. That is true of political prisoners. I do not know how many political prisoners there still are in Russia. I do not know how badly they may have been treated. But suppose there are ten times as many as the worst stories have it—I can only say, having seen the millions of workers in field and factory, that that is too bad. It would have been easier for the world of "liberals" to accept and learn from Russia if no one had been imprisoned or executed. I believe the Bolsheviks would also have preferred to survive by persuasion. But for you and me there is no time to argue such possibilities now. Nor can we make many practical suggestions now—and from where we sit. What we must do is to appraise the results, taking the costs into consideration. Then we may or may not have time to debate the wisdom of the methods for our own purposes.

When the Bolsheviks took power there were few factories

in Russia and though there was much land, it was cultivated badly with sticks and hands. Russia did not produce enough to provide the workers with even the barest necessities and had no money with which to buy from hostile capitalist countries. Shortly after the October revolution, famine swept the country. Crops failed, thousands starved. Foreign armies invaded on three fronts. Counter-revolution spread seething among the hungry bewildered masses. That was the situation which the leaders faced. Of such forces and materials they had to build a new society. They had no experience, only their socialist theories to guide them.

In the teeth of these conditions, the workers of Russia began to build. Day and night wheels turned, fires were stoked, muscles and brains of men worked with cold fierce fervor. It took discipline and nerve and concentrated energy. I am awed before the achievement. Today Russia is on a higher, safer road to socialism than any political prophet would have dared to suggest was possible.

It is true that certain compromises and concessions were made by the men whose purpose and fire created collectivism from chaos. Until a new generation could be educated in socialist values, the Bolsheviks had to be tough with those who fought secretly to destroy them and their work.

Critics whose revolutionary experience has been only in ink and paper have jeered because party leaders relaxed their dogmatic theories before practical necessity. They insist that the practice of rewarding workers in proportion to the value of their services is the institution of the sweat shop. That is as stupid as to argue that work is work whether it is for the boss or for one's self. The Russian system is not the piece work system of capitalist sweat-shops. In Russia, every worker is guaranteed a decent minimum. Not only that, but every piece of work turned out is for his profit and the profit of his fellow workers, instead of swelling the investments of the owner. Socialism in Russia is not the finished and perfect product, and no one is more

insistent on this fact than those who wrought the new order against all the odds. But this much is true: There are no rich and no poor, no owners and no beggars.

You cannot understand, and you certainly cannot believe what has happened in Russia, unless you remember always that there money lost its power over men when private profit was abolished. Now every factory and farm is owned collectively. Every tractor and pair of shoes and automobile tire that is produced anywhere in Russia makes every Russian richer. Nothing is produced that will be wasted. All activity is planned for one end—to save Russia for her people; to give them food and comfort and culture so that in the midst of preying capitalist neighbors the workers will defend the new life.

To judge Russia, compare it with the Russia of twenty years ago. Or compare it with Europe and America today. Judge it from the point of view of workers, women, children, artists. Analyze whether the Russian system makes for peace or war, for cultural progress or for ignorance, for science or superstition, for security or insecurity, for more bread and freedom or for less. Put Russia to the test—every test you can think of. Then, finally, judge from the results whether there is work for you to do.

Take inventory of the major points.

### **Poverty or Wealth**

You have heard it said, perhaps, that people on relief in America are better off than the working people of Russia. Personally, I doubt it. If it is true, it won't be for long. And if it is true, I would still rather be a Russian worker than one of the unemployed in our own country. Every Russian worker is better off this year than last. And next year he will have more than this, and so with every year. In America, the prospect is in the other direction. Less this year than last, and still less next, as the relief rolls are cut and a "liberal" government forces the standard of living still

lower, in order to save itself from having to raise taxes from the rich. In Russia every new machine is a blessing. It means shortened hours, means more production for the workers. Here it is a threat. It means men laid off. In Russia, where the working day ranges from six to eight hours, every hour of work is for the benefit of workers all over Russia. To begin with, they had almost nothing. But what they had, they shared. In 1932 the general wage fund of Russia was 32.7 billion rubles. In 1937 it will be 50.7 billion rubles, estimating the increase on developments already accomplished. This does not take into consideration the drop in prices which makes every ruble worth more. And it does not count the priceless new privileges, social security such as pensions, hospitals, rest homes and sanatoria, educational and cultural institutions, from which all workers benefit free of charge. What gives emphasis to the picture is the fact that when young Russians turn their hands to the wheel, expertly and technically trained as their fathers were not, the production and rewards of the workers will multiply past all calculating.

I talked with many workers. They all said it was better for them—better and better. Even the old people nod, who have felt the fierce cost.

In the countryside, the new order had a slower start, but it has moved swiftly. Formerly the 25 million small peasant farms were scattered so that the use of machinery was almost impossible. Now there are great collectives. In the first five years, Russia produced five and a half times as much agricultural machinery as it ever had before, and, by 1932, 15 million peasant homesteads were combined into 211,000 great collective farms, doubling the number of sown acres. Since then collectivization has continued at greater speed because the advantages of life on the collectives were soon plain to every peasant. Collective farmers share the profits of the collectives after the tax to the government has been paid and certain other funds have been set aside for ma-

chinery, repairs and collective projects, in proportion to the work days they have contributed. As a tractor covers more ground than a plow, so the collective multiplies the productivity of the individual peasants. Each peasant benefits accordingly besides having all the cultural advantages of the new life—nurseries, movies, hospitals, radios, where in the old days the peasant had no other diversion than to beat his wife or go to the monastery to see lantern slides of the lives of the saints. Members of collectives have their own gardens and domestic animals, a cow, pig or chickens for themselves.

As I saw the fleets of tractors moving over fields that stretched to the horizon, I thought of our American solution to the farm problem: the transfer from the bankers to the government of the poorest mortgages, the plowing under of cotton and the contracts by which we, the people, pay for not growing wheat and hogs. In Russia, good crops mean more food. In America, big crops mean bulging warehouses, big bonfires and starving farmers.

### **Social Security**

In America we used to live in fear of “a rainy day”. That’s over. The rainy day is here permanently for workers. The rest of the people don’t care whether it rains or not. In Russia, there are no rainy days for anyone. There is no unemployment and there is no dependent old age. All workers retire on pensions, the men at 60, the women at 55. In America we are junked at 45 or 50 without a pension. In Russia the sick and disabled are cared for by the state. In America it is private charity in over-crowded clinics, or nothing. When Russian women have babies, they are cared for in hospitals free of charge, the baby is provided with a layette, and the mother is paid her wages for a month or two before and after the birth of the child although she does not work during that period.

In America we used to save up to educate our children



and now we don't know whether it's worth the expense, even if we could save. In Russia no worker needs to save to send his children to the university. Education with all the necessary books and equipment is free. Students are given a stipend while they go to the university, on the theory that society will profit from their training.

The whole Russian system is organized for the benefit of the workers. Consequently conditions in factory and shop are made as safe and comfortable and efficient as possible. The working day has already been decreased from eight to seven hours, and in some industries to six. The working week is five days. Two weeks' vacation on full pay is given to every worker. To the worker who has given distinguished service go extra privileges. The government may send him to some beautiful resort on the Black Sea, formerly the playground of the nobility. Or he may be rewarded with an automobile or travel.

"It's not so much the pay," a watchmaker told me. He did not belong to a trade union and was not as well off as most workers. "I don't want my wife to work and so we live simply. It's the free medicine and the pension and the schooling for our little girl, that counts."

### **The Children**

Which brings me to the care of the children. Mr. Hearst has printed innumerable pictures of pot-bellied, rickety wretches, supposed to have been abandoned by their Russian parents. I don't know where he made those pictures. It is even possible that he did not have to go to Russia. I know that in 4500 miles of travel I saw the healthiest, happiest lot of kids that I ever saw anywhere in the world. We visited nurseries, playgrounds, universities, schools in the cities and in the country. We spent a half day at a reformatory and an evening at an orphanage for the children of victims of Austrian fascism. From one end of the trip to the other, the children were rosy, husky, joyous, self-reliant. The equip-

ment was fine and efficient and the methods in the nurseries were as modern as any in the United States. I was particularly touched by the spirit and exuberance of the children in the orphanage, which was established and maintained by trade union funds. The kids clambered all over their Russian "uncle" who was the director. They were noisy, happy, and undeniably healthy. As for the reform school—I have never seen anything like it. Our own institutions—"Crime colleges"—are savage and insane by comparison. The Russian reformatory was democratically managed by the residents themselves. Not a single traditional prison method was used. Discipline was self-imposed. The results are sensationally successful. The unhappy, unadjusted children who reside there temporarily, go back to society, trained, useful, and wholly unscarred.

The fact is that the children of Russia are the luckiest children in the world. The new generation is a competent, spirited, even arrogant young citizenship, scorning greed and laziness, confident of its power and purposes to build a sane, fair world. From birth, the state has cared for them, bent its facilities and opportunities to their use. At maturity, they give their energies and highly skilled abilities in return.

There are no longer class distinctions among children. At first, while equipment was still crippled by czarist standards, there were not schools enough for all, and the children of the old middle-classes were excluded to make room for the children of the workers who had waited throughout history for their turn. But hundreds, even thousands of schools have been built. Now all children have equal opportunities.

### **Education**

But education is not for children alone, in Russia. Everyone studies. The Bolsheviks have built five hundred new universities in their span of less than twenty years. Cultural and technical classes are organized for every factory, and

for their many recreational centers. By 1937 they estimate that there will be 30 million children in elementary and secondary schools. As a monument for their short history they have practically wiped out illiteracy. More than nine out of every ten people can now read and write. Twenty years ago hardly three out of ten were literate.

Compare these facts with our own recent history. In June, 1935, the assistant director of F.E.R.A. announced that 12 million people in this country could not adequately read and write. Instead of building schools, we're closing them. More than 200,000 certified teachers were unemployed in 1933 and the number has increased since then. City school budgets have dropped 20 per cent and expenditures for school buildings have dropped 79 per cent since 1929. Incomplete figures show that something like three million school children—all children of workers—are unable to go to school.

But in the face of these facts my liberal friends make their inevitable protest. "Russian education is just propaganda," they say. Aside from the fact that the assertion is not true, it is pointless. The word "propaganda" has no longer the old terror for most of us. We have come to know that everything is propaganda—either from Mr. Hearst's point of view, or ours, who want to live in a decent world. What matters, is the *kind* of propaganda. Russian children learn that the most important thing in life is work well done. American children dream of becoming rich. Russian children dream of making a discovery, inventing a machine, writing a play, becoming a party leader. Young Americans read of the income tax evasions of rich government officials with calm acceptance. Their excited interest is reserved for the baseball score. In Russia, when a party leader is suspected of some defection, the whole country is aroused and young Russians debate the question with passionate concern. American children come to know with their A B C's that the rich are a people apart, with special privileges—public and

private. In Russia our young interpreters refused to accept our proffered gifts. They refused without righteousness, quite simply and humorously and as a matter of course. Special rewards are for distinguished service and they are given by the state. In America our children learn the meaning of rugged individualism, in or out of school. They know that the devil takes the hindmost and behave accordingly. In Russia, no child has the slightest doubt that what benefits all of the people, benefits each of them; that none can profit at the expense of any other.

These are the new values. This is the propaganda. But there is much more in the new education. There is, for instance, excellent technical training. It is important for the future wealth of Russia that her citizens be taught the greatest expertness and skill and efficiency in the use of their hands and their tools and their machines. Consequently every effort is made to develop competent, ingenious engineers, draftsmen, mechanics, architects and other craftsmen. The reward for efficiency and enterprise is greater common wealth, more leisure, more luxuries for all. No efforts are spared to this end.

Cultural opportunities such as only the children of the rich enjoy elsewhere are enjoyed by the children of the workers in Russia. I never saw any figures on the point, but I am sure that there are more theatres and dramatic groups in Russia than anywhere else. And while the artistic needs of our children are nourished on the sensuality and tinsel of Hollywood, Russian children are stimulated in and rewarded for creative activity and are exposed to free theatres, concerts, movies and libraries of a wholly different standard. Indeed, all the resources of Russia are marshalled for the education and culture of the generations upon whose development the future depends.

### Women

While legislatures in America demand that jobs be taken

away from women to make room for men; while the women of Italy and Germany are excluded from universities and professions and frankly valued only for breeding soldiers, Russia opens all doors to her women. In the chemistry laboratory, hospital, aviation field, factory, there is new invitation, new challenge to the intelligence of every Russian woman. The results are astounding; women sea-captains, women pilots, women engineers all making their distinguished contributions to this culture which has given them a chance. For the first time in history women use their brains as well as their bodies and their achievements are rewarded as men's work is. Russia profits as her women show their mettle.

But women do difficult, dangerous work. They climb scaffolding and dig ditches in this new freedom, and visitors to Russia are indignant for them. I admit I was a little worried about it myself. I asked one woman who was laboring as a brick mason why she did this heavy work.

"I do it because I want to," she replied. "There is other work. I wish to do this."

There was another thing that worried me, who am a little sentimental about "motherhood". The women working in factories leave their infants in the factory creche (nursery). I visited some of these nurseries. I saw the expert care, the balanced meals, the toys, the clean and modern equipment at the disposal of these workers' children. And suddenly I thought of American working-class mothers, bending over tubs, scrubbing and cooking the provisions left by the relief worker, wearily leaving their children to shift for themselves in the alley. Seeing these hearty Russian children at lunch I wondered how many workers' kids in America had meals planned by dieticians to include all the vitamins and calories necessary for perfect growth. The Russian mothers called for their babies at 4 o'clock, but long before that I had stopped worrying about the "lost joys" of motherhood.

## Science and Invention

Hitler has ordered German industrialists to scrap their new machinery in order to employ more men. American industrialists are known to have purchased certain patents for the sole purpose of *preventing* new and better processes from being developed. Desperate liberals the world over suggest a return to handicraft industry as the only solution for the world's difficulties. So everywhere, but Russia. There giant industries are expanded and more are built. There every new machine, every labor-saving invention is acclaimed and used. Twenty years ago there was almost no industry in Russia. Today the most efficient factories, the biggest power plants, the most modern machine shops are in Russia. Russian mines are equipped with the finest electrical machinery. Every safety device known to invention has been installed to protect workers. Since the workers are owners of plant, equipment and output, every technical improvement makes them richer, shortens their hours, makes life safer for them. Russian inventors do not die in poverty while others profit from their work. They are honored and rewarded as the most valuable citizens of the Soviet Union. Their fellow workers spend time and energy in trying to follow in their footsteps. Thousands attend technical schools to enlarge their knowledge and improve their skill. The result is that there is an extraordinary drive toward the cultivation of better techniques and an alert eagerness for new methods and devices.

Professional and scientific progress is sped and encouraged in much the same way. Scientists of the world who met a few months ago in Moscow for an international congress were astonished to find that there are 250,000 research workers in Russia today—experimenting, calculating, tabulating, to discover new methods to increase production, improve health, advance exploration and enlarge human knowledge. Each contribution is a gift to the whole country and the

whole country values these workers accordingly. But it is not only in Russia that their work is recognized. The world is learning to respect Russian daring, Russian scholarship, Russian investments in the field of human wisdom.

All doctors in Russia serve the state. There is no skill so expert that a worker cannot command it. And in order that this public medicine include current knowledge, all doctors are obliged to go back to school for further study every three years. Again the state spares no money, no energy, in the search for ways to make life longer and easier. If Russian scientists discover a cure for cancer, that cure will be available, free of charge, to every worker and his family. No medical treatment, no hospital service is too expensive for any worker.

### The New Culture

In historic Russia, as in all capitalist countries, culture was for the leisure classes. In the new Russia culture is for the whole people. And it seems almost as if the hunger and thirst for music and books and the theater had been accumulating through the centuries—so eagerly do the workers grasp it, now that it is for them.

At first the new literature was awkward and inartistic. But that stage is past. There is such a passion for books now that Russia has the world's record for publishing and for circulating libraries. Book publication cannot keep pace with a population that has only just learned the joy of reading. The most popular books are printed in millions of copies, but still there are waiting lists in the libraries of as many as 150 people for such books as "Soil Upturned" by Sholokhov.

I went frequently to the theater. Without understanding more than a few Russian sentences, I enjoyed the spirited, exuberant acting. Working their way out of revolution and hunger, the Russians begin to have room for joy—a richer and more lavish adventuring with it, than I have ever seen.

Guest artists from foreign countries are eagerly received, warmly applauded. There is so much for these workers, suddenly freed for pleasure and culture, to learn. Musicians are amazed at the inspired attention of Russian audiences. Actors and writers from capitalist countries are invariably infected by Russian enthusiasm—"a country where artists are more important than bankers".

The new life is still young, the new opportunities are still fresh for Russian workers. One forgets how recently it has all happened, so naturally and heartily have the Russians made use of their new opportunities and pleasures—from American jazz to classical opera. But sometimes we were sharply reminded of the fact that it must all be very strange and exciting for the people still. I remember how surprised we were in the beautiful new railroad station at Kiev to find peasants sleeping on the floor, their bundles on the seats. The peasants have had fewer contacts with new life than the city workers.

### Physical Changes

Among other things, the Bolsheviki have changed the face of Russian cities. For years they have been building—day and night—all hands. They have torn down the old hovels and built huge apartment houses. They have broadened the streets, made parks and boulevards where there were fish markets, tunnelled the city of Moscow with marble. There are immense new factories of glass and steel, new community centers, new roads, new railroad stations, new schools, theaters, libraries. The infamous mud huts of the miners are gone and in their places are modern apartment houses.

But even working in shifts all through the night, there has not been time to build enough. There must be more schools, more factories, more apartments, more everything. And there will be. Families in the cities are still crowded



into too few rooms. The peasants still live in miserable huts for the most part. But no one has any doubt that the building will go on, that as soon as possible, everything will be taken care of. The people have seen with their own eyes the transformation that has already taken place. They have seen work done faster than the plans demanded. They know that no man is idle, that all work in the same cause.

Briefly, and boned of statistics, this is the picture we of the trade unions saw in Russia last summer. We all started out determined to be skeptical. We all came back impressed and enthusiastic. The Russians asked us not to be too enthusiastic when we got home. They said that the American public could hardly believe all we had learned. Perhaps they are right. There are so many reports about Russia, not even counting the plain and fancy lies told by such as the Hearst press. Members of the old propertied classes are still telling their bitter stories of "escape" for what profit there may be in the telling. In many of these stories there is some germ of truth. Russia had room only for workers. And even less prejudiced visitors can still find conditions in Russia which, taken apart from all the rest, make a bad impression. After all, this new society is very young. Sanitation is still crude, and hardly worthy of the name in country districts. Propaganda is still spread with a heavy hand and may offend the foreigner's eye. Much more serious than this, there is still comparative poverty and those who refuse to see the relative improvement and the promise in all that has been achieved can draw an unpleasant picture. For Russia has not yet produced enough to give her workers the comforts which a more industrial country would yield under collectivism.

### **The Red Army**

But these are temporary hardships, passing difficulties. The new generation, having known nothing else, is undaunted and confident. And the old generation, having

known the denials of czarism and the hardships of revolution, is content now with the bread and peace brought by the new life. The Bolsheviks have won the gratitude of the people. The Red Army is unlike any other army in the world. Its patriotism is not a "follow-the-flag" (which follows the dollar) kind of loyalty. Its men are not trained as automatons, "not to question why". It is not inflamed by wild promise of conquest, nor is it organized for revenge. Together with all of the people, the Red Army owns the factories and parks and collective farms and theaters and resorts. It shares in the rewards of every hour of labor, every new invention, every planted acre. Although it counts in its regiments 160 different peoples, each speaking their own language and having their own culture, every man in the Red Army has one idea—to protect the Soviet Union, a land which is his.

Like other workers, the soldiers of the Red Army are trained technically and culturally. They have the same standards and the same ideals as all workers. They know that they will not be sent abroad to protect investments or conquer markets. They know that there are no forces making for war in Russia. They are organized to protect the Union of 160 different nationalities, all of whom have benefited from membership in the Soviet Union.

I saw the May Day celebration in Moscow. For hours I stood watching a review of Russian arms, from eskimo dogs to airplanes. And having seen this fervent demonstration I know that all the energy and intelligence and life of 170 million people will be given in defense of Russia.

### **The Dictatorship**

"But the dictatorship! How can you say *anything* good comes of a dictatorship?"

The reaction is typical of my liberal and socialist friends, not to mention well-intentioned conservatives who took their school books seriously.

I tell them what I saw in Russia—the new life of the people, the young generation, its contempt for private property, its passion to work well, its hope and courage, and they dismiss it all with one word “dictatorship”. The word strikes its authors deaf.

But there are dictatorships and dictatorships, just as there is Mussolini’s understanding of “civilization” and Haile Selassie’s understanding. Dictatorship is the method, the machinery, by which the will of the minority is made to prevail over that of the majority. To many of us, the idea is repulsive. However that may be, it is machinery that may be necessary under certain circumstances. It was necessary in Russia if the system of the Czars was to be permanently displaced by a socialist society. I doubt there is a liberal who would suggest that the czar would have permitted a more certain easier route to collective ownership. In Germany and Italy, on the other hand, dictatorship has been the machinery by which a decayed and frenzied capitalism has controlled the dissatisfied masses.

“They’re all dictators—Mussolini and Hitler and Stalin,” my friends say, as if that settled the question. But you might as well say that they are all people. It is true that these three men are leaders of parties whose power has been retained by dictatorial control of their respective countries. But that is the only thing they have in common. Neither the purposes, nor the methods nor the achievements of Hitler and Mussolini can be likened to those of Stalin. If we lump them together we run the risk of eating toadstools when we want mushrooms.

Compare their expressed purposes: Mussolini and Hitler promise to bring prosperity to Italy and Germany by imperialist expansion. They propose to increase population for the purpose of war and conquest. And through war and conquest, they hope to save capitalism and the profit system. They admit this. They boast of it. And they are working out their programs, as further analysis will show.

Stalin, on the contrary, at the head of the Communist Party of Russia, proposes to achieve socialism and to bring prosperity for everyone by means of united effort in increasing production. He, too, is working out his program, as I have reported here.

Compare next the methods of these dictators in achieving their desired goals:

Mussolini and Hitler have pushed war industries. They have taken women from industry and forbidden birth control information to be circulated in order that more soldiers may be bred. They have killed labor unions. Revenge in Germany, conquest in Italy, are the chief ends of statesmanship. Education, industry, literature, are bent to those ends. The contrast between these developments and those in Russia needs no further comment.

Compare also the respective dictatorial tactics: The Russian dictatorship has to its discredit executions, exiles, imprisonments. These things happened particularly in the early years when the new government was invaded and pervaded by enemies and in the struggle, only one side could survive. During the same period, the Bolsheviks encountered famine and the land-owners among the peasants hoarded their crops against the starving people. The dictatorship saved the workers then by harsh methods. Count these facts against the Russian dictatorship. They are things of the past. Discrimination against the old middle and upper classes have disappeared as all men and women become workers. Today, punishments are milder. Even counter-revolutionists are given their opportunity to cooperate. And more important than anything else, the Russian dictatorship by education and propaganda is preparing the people for democracy. The dictatorship is slowly abdicating, in accord with Communist policy.

In fascist countries the dictatorship moves in the opposite direction. There, too, were the sudden imprisonments, the executions, the exiles. But in Germany and Italy the mob

was deliberately inflamed by the government and the press to insane acts of violence. In Germany, particularly, Hitler fights not simply to maintain power: he indulges in orgies of revolting and degenerate cruelty for the pleasure of the torturers. Often the victims are wholly innocent of opposing him. But that does not matter. In Germany, the terror is an elaborate art, a part of the mania of perverts.

So much for the purposes and the methods of these dictators. Now judge them by their works:

In Italy and Germany the standard of living is constantly dropping. There are growing undercurrents of rebellion, partly because there is less food and it costs more. Already Hitler has commanded that Germans live on rations. Mussolini has been forced to even more desperate measures. The war with Ethiopia is Mussolini's last stand. By means of it he has distracted the people, trapped them again by false hopes. If he fails abroad, he fails at home. And he will inevitably fail. But first the workers will die in Africa to keep him in the saddle a little longer. But in the Soviet Union the ration system is over. Abundant supplies stock the thousands of new stores which are being built all over Russia to better satisfy the steadily rising standard of living.

Compare the cultural equipment being given to the next generation of Germans and Italians with that which I found in Russia. In both Germany and Italy book publication has dropped to pre-war levels. Not only are there few books printed, but those that are printed are censored first for their usefulness in promoting the new slogan "obey and fight". The censorship has increased, not only for the press and the theater, but also for personal mail and radio reception in private homes. Books have been banned and burned, statues and paintings destroyed, libraries and universities bent to fascist purposes in their science and scholarship. For the purposes of modern German anthropology, the Japanese are Aryans. Songs and plays have glorified Horst Wessel (a pimp killed in a brawl), while the names

of Heine and Wagner and Einstein have been erased from German history. Fascist culture is violent and lunatic—the last stage in the paresis of capitalism. Russian culture is the discovery and development of new and vigorous creative resources in the masses.

Having compared the purposes and actual history of Russian and fascist dictatorships, we should perhaps venture some speculation as to their probable future. Here, too, are sharp contrasts. In Germany and Italy the machinery of dictatorship has tightened. It dare not relax because it has no claim on public gratitude. It has maintained capitalism at the cost of the workers. They have paid not only with liberty, but with living. In Russia the dictatorship is gradually abdicating its powers. Long ago the secret police were disbanded. The secret ballot has lately been introduced in the country. Constructive criticism is welcomed and rewarded where it would once have been regarded as treasonable. In short, freedom and democracy are in the very near offing for Russia. War and revolution are the prospects for Italy and Germany. For Russia war would be a calamity. For Italy and Germany it is an economic necessity. Even dictatorial violence cannot put life into dying capitalism. However horrible the terror, however whipped the munitions industry, Italians and Germans cannot buy the products of their capitalist industries with their decreasing wages. War is the temporary hypodermic. But it will defeat fascist ends by destroying the markets of victory. Hitler and Mussolini lead their people along the bloodiest path to ruin.

If these conclusions are correct, liberals and socialists must choose which road they will take. To refuse to face that choice in time is to be forced along the road of Hitler and Mussolini as surely as the Germans were trapped before they knew what had happened to them.

It is possible that in this country where we still have some liberties (and any radical will testify how swiftly they are

disappearing) we may make such good use of our privileges that we can control our destiny. Perhaps we still have time to stir a discouraged public into a fight against fascism. But we cannot do it unless we clearly define the enemy. We cannot do it by bogey-man words. And certainly we cannot afford to be nervous or hesitant about our comrades in the united fight against fascism.



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