

June, 1941

# THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

*A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism*

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*America Enters the War*

By THE EDITORS

*Aircraft and Finance Capital*

By FRANK DEMBY

*Total War and Revolution*

By C. D. E.

*Imperialism in Africa*

By J. R. JOHNSON

**Franz Mehring on Historical Materialism**

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# Manager's Column

With the publication of this issue, the third thirty-two page number since the decision to double the size of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, it is conclusively proved that we are publishing a magazine second to none in content, in its selection of theoretical and discussion articles, in important contributions to revolutionary thought—in other words, the finest Marxist theoretical organ in the country today.

No more can it be said that there is not enough reading matter, as was said about the sixteen-page size—the new thirty-two pager has not only enlarged the size of the magazine, but has brought with it an improvement in its content.

We have done our part in putting out this magazine and in fulfilling an unusually high standard, and we expect the branches to meet us half way by doing their part. A start has already been made. But it is necessary to go further

In a few cases the branches have already responded. The New York YPSLs have increased their bundle from 75 to 125 copies; the Philadelphia YPSLs from 10 to 15 copies; St. Louis from 25 to 35 copies; Kansas City from 5 to 15 copies. We are waiting to hear from other places. What about it, Local New York? And Chicago! Los Angeles!

Bookstores and newsstands that carry this type of literature will be glad to display it if you bring it to their attention; union educational department and libraries should be interested in at least one subscription each; university libraries should also be approached for a subscription; professors and teachers of political science, economics and sociology, among others, should be visited and/or written to, given a sample copy of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, and approached concerning a subscription; meetings of current events clubs, political science groups, etc., should be covered regularly; schools, classes in economics, political groups should also be covered with sales of the magazine; and, *above all, wherever workers congregate, at meetings, parks, parades, the N.I. should be sold.* Lists of all expired N.I. subscribers will be sent to all branches, and these should be covered by individual visits without fail.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL CAN be sold, but it takes plugging and work and concentration to do it. It MUST be sold, if we want to continue its publication on the present basis.

We cannot emphasize sufficiently the importance of consistent, day-to-day plugging by street sales and the visiting of contacts, the necessity for hard, conscientious work, the importance of having sample NEW INTERNATIONALS with you no matter what work you are doing.

## Editorial Notes

We regret that lack of space prevented the publication of Albert Gates' article on the "Managerial Revolution," a critique of the book by James Burnham. It will appear in the next issue. The July issue also will contain the concluding section of J. R. Johnson's article "Africa, Imperialism and Socialism." The issue will feature an article by David Coolidge entitled, "The Anatomy of Jim-Crowism." An additional section of Franz Mehring's "Concerning Historical Materialism" will also be published. Book reviewers, international news, and further discussion articles will complete the issue.

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## The Editor's Comments

### America Enters the War

**T**HAT PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT was planning to make an "epic" speech concerning American political and military policy had been bruited about in many circles for several weeks. The speech was often postponed, most recently because of Britain's defeat in the battle for the island of Crete. Finally, on the evening of May 27th, the President delivered his speech, setting down the policy of his administration in the present world crisis. To the millions of listeners Roosevelt spoke the creed of the American capitalist class.

Was there anything new in his oration? In truth, there was not. The policy expounded by him has been the undeviating course pursued by the Administration. Roosevelt and his intimate followers have long been aware that their views relating to the war and the necessity for greater and more direct intervention on behalf of the British Empire outdistanced the desires of the majority of the American people, including those sympathetic to the pro-British course chartered by the President. The plain fact is that the overwhelming majority of Americans are against military participation in the war.

#### Rallying the Masses

The anti-war sentiments of the American masses has long hindered the policies of the Administration, and for this reason Roosevelt has been and continues to chart a gradual course but one that must ultimately lead the United States to take an active military part in the war. Every war measure previously adopted by Roosevelt was accompanied by a specious defense, namely, that they were taken as measures to keep the United States out of the war. Yet for all of the "caution" of the Administration it has become increasingly clear to many millions that the United States will be in the war as a military force within a relatively short period of time. It was the purpose of the speech to lay the "ideological" basis prerequisite to American entrance into the war.

Unlike the First World War, the ruling classes of all the belligerent countries find it necessary to state that this war is truly being fought for a "new order of things." If the democratic powers are victorious it will mean the end to conditions which gave rise to a Hitler, for the democratic powers will then organize a more equitable world society. Fine words, these, but they are mere words. For the truth is that the rulers of the democratic countries represent the best interests of the capitalist class and their conception of a more equitable society is the maintenance of the economic, political and social power of the property owning class. For that reason they cannot conceive, in the event of a victory over Hitler, of any kind of world except the one which existed prior to the outbreak of the present World War.

Thus, when Roosevelt is compelled to concretize his views beyond the mere employment of phrases anent "freedom," "culture" and "civilization," not to speak of "democracy," we find a complete verification of everything we have written and said in the past: That this is an imperialist war arising out of the very conditions created by monopoly capitalism. Let us examine the President's speech in greater detail.

#### What the Fight Is For

In the very beginning of his speech, Roosevelt declared: "The pressing problems that confront us are military and naval problems. We cannot afford to approach them from the point of view of wishful thinking or sentimentalists. What we face is cold, hard fact.." The cold, hard fact is that the war is, at this stage, going against Great Britain. A defeat of Britain would mean that the United States would remain alone to face a strengthened German imperialism riding the crest of victory and hell-bent upon the economic domination of the world—thus seeking to accomplish what is essentially the aim of American capitalism.

For the above reason, the United States is now prepared to seize Dakar, the Azores and Cape Verde Islands, and any other territory, which in the opinion of the Administration, would safeguard (in both hemispheres) American shores from attack. Such words as "attack," "defense" and "offense" assume new and vigorous meaning in the midst of the war. None of the warring powers, as well as the United States, regard them in the same light. So far as the Axis powers are concerned, the United States is a belligerent nation since it strains every effort to make possible their defeat at the hands of Great Britain. Moreover, the United States makes no secret of this desire and intention. Only the particular state of the war at present prevents the Axis powers from engaging in direct assaults upon this country.

But what is it precisely that Roosevelt wishes to defend? Roosevelt says "freedom to live" and "our own security and for the kind of safe and civilized world in which we wish to live." What, precisely, is this freedom and civilized world we wish to live in? Is it the pre-war capitalism of the "ill-fed, ill-housed and ill-clothed?" Is it a society of class exploitation? Is it a world social order in which hundreds of millions of Asiatic people live under the heel of foreign imperialisms, India under the British Empire, China at the mercy of a half dozen powers, the East Indies under the Dutch? Is it a world which finds the African continent and its native population ground to dust by the vicious exploitation introduced by the profit-mad rulers of Great Britain, France, Belgium, Spain and

Italy? Is it Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, under "benevolent" American imperialism?

## A New Social Order?

That is the world which Roosevelt sees, for he cannot see any other. It is the kind of world that Anthony Eden is fighting for when he declared that the British war aim is to destroy the German people—making no distinction between the enslaved German masses and their barbaric rulers—and promising a return to the conditions which gave rise to the present world situation.

Roosevelt continues to speak of freedom of trade as being essential to "our economic life." He says: "The whole fabric of working life as we know it—business, manufacturing, mining, agriculture—all would be mangled under such a system (a Hitler victory)." It would mean, he went on to declare, a state of permanent war in society.

Yet what is it that has brought Hitler into being? The very existence of capitalism! Hitlerism and renascent German imperialism are the product of a world social order in which the well-being of one nation cannot be achieved without the economic and political destruction of another. Under conditions of decaying capitalism, one or two nations can enjoy economic prosperity only if it or they succeed in reducing the rest of the world to impotency. There cannot be an equitable distribution of the world markets, of raw materials and foreign trade since capitalism means fierce competition between nations for existence. What Roosevelt fears is that a Germany victory would give that brigand nation a predominating position in world economy at the expense of the United States. That is why England and China are outposts of America, fighting the battle against its two outstanding competitors: Germany and Japan. For the continued well-being of American capitalism, it is necessary to defeat Germany and Japan. That is the creed of the Roosevelt Administration. Therein lies the reason for the present hasty militarization of the nation and the preparation for American entrance into the war..

In further confirmation of this analysis, Roosevelt says: "We do not eat all the food we can produce; we do not burn all the oil we can pump; we do not use all the goods we can manufacture. It would not be an American wall to keep Nazi goods out it would be a Nazi wall to keep us in" (a Nazi victory and subsequent loss of foreign markets and foreign trade).

Forty-five million people in this country, one-third of the nation, are admittedly undernourished. Yet, we cannot feed them. Millions of Americans are in great need of manufactured goods of every variety, but they cannot enjoy them! Capital-labor relations under capitalism, the profit motive in production, make impossible the well-being of the people. The foreign markets offer a source of profit to the American ruling class, and in the present epoch a major source of trade, investments, etc. Thus, the present system, whose continuance the President is determined to defend at the cost of millions of lives, is a social order of exploitation, of hunger, of unemployment, of a low standard of living for the great majority and well-being for a small class which owns and controls the wealth of the nation produced by the sweat of fifty million proletarians.

## Whose War Aims?

It is not for this great mass of poor that Roosevelt seeks to wage war. It is not for the hundreds of millions of exploited colonial people. He utters not a word about India's inde-

pendence. He makes no mention of the right of self-determination of all national and colonial countries. He promises no freedom to millions of Africans. He asserts merely that he is fighting for the continuance of the "American way of life," which means ten million unemployed, forty-five million undernourished, and a nation with a standard of living which is constantly lowered as the world situation is intensified.

In this he is no different from his British counterparts. Churchill and his friends have thus far refused to state their war aims for fear that the disclosure of their real intentions would make impossible the prosecution of the war. Labor in England would hesitate to fight the First World War over again. But that is precisely what it is doing. And when Churchill says that "our war aim is victory," he seeks not only to avoid a genuine answer, but to lead the people to believe, by his silence, that he too is fighting for a new order.

If Churchill wished to give evidence of the new world for which he is fighting, he would declare the freedom of India. But if he did that, he would not be Churchill, that great representative of the British ruling classes, whose richness rests upon the economic domination of this immense Asiatic nation. Hitler "promises" the German youth and the German masses a new prosperity, security and peace if he wins the war. But Churchill and Roosevelt cannot promise even that. A victory on their part would only mean a return to pre-war conditions—not a very happy prospect for many millions.

To insure the application of his policies Roosevelt must already take steps toward totalitarian control. American engagement in the war needs continued production of war materials of every description. It means harnessing labor to the machine. Under capitalism, it means an enormous exploitation of the working class. But it does not signify any diminution of profits. On the contrary, profits appear limitless. Efforts on the part of labor to improve their economic conditions in this "boom" period have led to an intensified anti-labor campaign led by reactionary senators and congressmen, speaking for the American ruling class. The venal press rages and fumes at the very idea that the working class seeks to improve its situation.. Under the guise of national defense no efforts are spared to prevent the militant and free conduct of trade unions in their fight in behalf of labor. And to cap this anti-labor drive, the President has spoken, and he has called upon capital and labor to halt their differences! He threatens to invoke the powers of a declared "unlimited emergency" to compel continued production, and to end strikes.

## The Hope Is Socialism

The die is cast! America moves into the war. Totalitarian methods begin to make their way. Reaction raises its head everywhere. Labor is warned, cajoled and threatened. Civil liberties are being curbed. The war hysteria is carefully cultivated. The "reformist" Roosevelt, the banner-bearer of the New Deal, is now the banner-bearer of the war deal.

And yet withal the bankruptcy of capitalism looms greater. It is not that democracy is not worth fighting for, it is that there is no true democracy, economic or political. Roosevelt and his administration offer nothing but war against another imperialist capitalist nation, to defend one part of a rotten decaying system against another.

There is only one hope for the future: Socialism! Socialism alone guarantees the absence of exploitation, unemployment, hunger, poverty and war. Socialism alone guarantees true economic and political democracy. Socialism alone guarantees

the freedom of the peoples of the whole world. Socialism alone guarantees victory over fascism. Socialism is the only thing worth fighting for because it is the society of true and lasting peace and freedom for all mankind.

## Max Eastman's New Faith

**A** FEW YEARS AGO, the editors of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL conducted a series of polemics with Max Eastman on problems of historical method, the relation of Marxism to science, the inevitability of socialism, etc. To a casual observer it would have seemed a rather abstruse dispute on issues without immediate relevance to the problems of the day. Reality has once again shown, however, that as Eastman moved away from his original Marxist sympathies in the intellectual field, there was a constant correlative withdrawal on his part from the working class camp in the field of immediate social action.

Today Max Eastman, the firebrand who defied American jingoism in the famous *Masses* trial of the last war, has joined the camp of the "boobwahsie." Just as his denial of every tenet of scientific Marxism—from the theory of class struggle and historical materialism to the need of an assumption to power by the working class to prepare the way to socialism—has been complete, so has his conversion to the cause of the bourgeois democracy. For a final demonstration of where Eastman stands today, the reader is advised to see his letter to the *New York Times* of May 11 and his article in the June *Readers Digest* entitled "Socialism Doesn't Jibe with Human Nature."

In his three-column letter to the *Times*, Eastman calls for an open declaration of war by American imperialism. The war, he tells us, is a struggle between two ways of life, the democratic and the totalitarian. As proof, Eastman lists 21 characteristics of totalitarianism which destroy the values to which civilization is accustomed. It is of some interest to observe Eastman's method. He singles out, for example, "nationalistic emotion," "anti-intellectualism," "political lying and governmental hypocrisy adopted as a system," "parodies of representative government" as the most despicable characteristics of totalitarianism. No one can disagree with that. But one has the right to inquire: Do not all of these characteristics find their origin in the senile state of capitalism whose contradictions give rise to the movements of the ruling class to institute a fascist régime? Does not Eastman see a wave of "nationalistic emotion" being spread by the American warmongers today? Is not "political lying and government hypocrisy adopted as a system" characteristic of the capitalist government in Washington, as well as of the totalitarian régimes? Does not the continued existence of the British Empire have some relation to the "way of life" about which Eastman waxes so rhapsodic?

Eastman is greatly concerned, for example, with what has happened to religion and the church under fascism, but he says little or nothing about what has happened to the working class organizations, political and economic. This is in keeping with the new Eastman.

In short, why does not Eastman discuss what he knows very well—every one of these characteristics of fascism exists in more or less developed form in the democratic bourgeois state and they find their fullest development when this democratic bourgeois state is transformed into fascism. Eastman keeps quiet about these things because he knows better, because he

has surrendered, body and soul, to capitalism and to all its attendant lying and hypocrisy.

Eastman, the "social scientist," denounces revolutionary socialists because "they have lost faith in democracy." Eastman, of course, knows that it is not democracy in which our faith is wanting. We have no faith in the rotten system of capitalism! Nay, more. We wish to change this system and to establish a truly democratic society; we seek to prepare the way for socialism. But the level to which this "social scientist" has stooped is further evidenced by the fact that he analyzes the present war as a conflict between "democracy and fascism."

The final touch is added in his article "Socialism Doesn't Jibe with Human Nature." No extended comment is necessary. One need only to quote a few typical lines: ". . . an intellectual genius named Karl Marx undertook to prove that, although it (socialism) had failed dismally in Indiana, it was inevitably coming true. . . . Marx was personally more impractical, more like what you'd call a crank, than Owen. While telling a planet how its future business was to be run, he threw up his hands at the comparatively simple task of earning his own living. He had to be supported throughout his life like a baby, and as though to compensate he grew an enormous beard. . . ."

Thus, Eastman has spoken—like a Babbit. Marx was a failure, he couldn't support himself. And so on, ad nauseam! He who denounces Marxism as a religion now calls for "faith" in democracy. And, indeed, having turned his back upon socialism, what else remains for him but to adopt a new faith in the rotten, exploitative society which breeds poverty, hunger, unemployment and misery for the many hundreds of millions of people of the world. Yes, Marx did not make money, he did not live the easy life of bourgeois intellectuals with a "good start." But, on the other hand, Marx wrote a book called . . . *Capital*.

## Socialism in Britain

**D**OROTHY THOMPSON SET THE BALL a-rolling in a speech delivered last summer over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It was a panegyric to Churchill.

"Yes, but in England there was a man."

Yes, there it was, just like that. A direct quotation, not from "True Confessions," but from a political address by this eminent representative of bourgeois journalism. After rapturous enumeration of Churchill's personal habits, his tastes in food, in women, in recreation, Dorothy attacked Hitler for not being like Churchill. Reason? Because Hitler was not leading a socialist state.

"*The plutocratic England you attack is today a socialist state—a socialist state created without class war, created out of love and led by an aristocrat for whom England builds no eagle's nests . . .*" (Emphasis ours.—Ed.)

So far so good. We have had the new society in England and nobody it seems noticed it except Dorothy. But this same socialist state sent a sound old Tory to America as ambassador—Lord Halifax. Interviewed on landing, Halifax "conceded . . . that the war was causing social revolution in England but he dismissed as fantastic predictions that post-war England would be a communist, socialist, or totalitarian state." What then exactly was the nature of the social revolution? A social revolution is the most tremendous shattering dynamic occurrence in the life of society. Dorothy Thompson saw socialism

in Britain without social revolution. Halifax sees social revolution without socialism. Listen now to the eminent economist, Geoffrey Crowther, who writes in the *New York Times Magazine* of March 24. It is common knowledge that many Wall Street magnates here are nervous of what is happening to the social structure of Britain. Crowther explains to them the nature of the British revolution.

"The same misunderstandings arise over the world 'revolution.' In 1934 George Soule wrote a book called 'The Coming American Revolution,' a good part of which was taken up with explaining that by 'revolution' he did not mean anything like the popular meaning of the word. So when I say I believe there is going to be a revolution in England, I am using the word in the way Mr. Soule used it." A perfectly respectable revolution, in other words. Crowther's revolution, "the new order or ideal" that is growing up in England, is the welfare of the citizen, not the glory of the state. He says that the choice now is not between "Individual competitive enterprise and centralized organization by the state, it is between centralized control by the state and by private trust." But that for him is not too important. The new order or "ideal" will be based on (now for some sounding vacuities) "the emancipation of the individual," "consent after discussion," "the application of the economic sphere of government of the people, by the people, for the people." He ends with a coy disavowal of even the word revolution. "I think a better name for it would be democracy." So the democracy the workers must fight for is the democracy to come.

Bourgeois journalist, bourgeois statesman, bourgeois economist, this is the bilge they offer to the public as constructive thought in the face of the greatest social crisis that has ever faced humanity.

But there is another necessary element in bourgeois society where bourgeois democracy still lingers. That is the labor leader, and the most eminent of labor leaders today is Ernest Bevin. What are his views? Ralph Ingersoll interviewed him on labor and the future of England. Bevin declared: "I can tell you this: That England will never again tolerate large numbers of unemployed . . . and I can tell you this. That the profit motive cannot and will not try to solve the large problem of reconstruction in this country after the war. The old capitalism is dead." Who killed Cock Robin? Bevin knows that the profit motive cannot and will not try to solve problems! Where has it gone? Never were social revolutions, socialism, new societies appearing, old societies disappearing with such bewildering speed and with such secrecy as in the minds of the bourgeois spokesmen.

Ingersoll asked him what he thought would take the place of the old capitalism. And here Bevin kept his mouth clear of social revolution and socialism. Workers listen to him and might take his words seriously. He hedged. "Well, now, look here. The first thing we've got to do is to win this war." He wanted to see the great industries nationalized, he would give Ingersoll copies of some speeches he had made . . . yes. Bevin knew what he wanted to say.

These people, Thompson, Halifax, Crowther, Bevin and their New Dealer and Liberal friends, are not even sounding brass. They are today merely tinkling cymbals. They have not even a vision of the future that they can express in words. Lies and nonsense are the substance of their ideas, froth and equivocation the form. And yet, even in their self-contradictory blabberings, social reality forces itself. Socialism, social revolution, a new order, haunts them. For they too know that the old world is dead. And their wry-mouthed tongue-twist-

ings about socialism and revolution show that they have a pretty sound idea as to where and with whom lies the future of society.

## The TNEC Report

THE PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT of the Temporary National Economic Committee, more popularly known as the T.N.E.C., reveals nothing especially new about the true nature of American capitalism. It does show, however, though not with the power of a vigorous pursuit of its subject, an accentuation of long existent tendencies of native monopoly capitalism. In a study adding up to a great many volumes, we are again told that the polarization of wealth in the United States proceeds without interruption and that there is an ever-increasing concentration of economic ownership and control in the hands of the "Sixty Families"; that economic recovery for the American bourgeoisie, under the régimes of Roosevelt and his successive New Deal and War Deal, has been secured, but that none of the death-dealing contradictions of America's social order, unemployment, etc., have been solved.

Understandably enough, the bourgeois press, organs of big business by whom it is owned or upon whom it is dependent, published enough scraps of the report to avert the charge of a conspiracy to keep from the public the indictment of the capitalist order, which is the essence of the T.N.E.C. findings. But the press did succeed in so circumventing the report that within a week the findings of the T.N.E.C. have no more life than a dodo bird.

What were some of the revelations of the report? Namely:

The large corporations control 100 per cent of the communications industries and the manufacture and distribution of electric light, power and gas; 96 per cent of the mining industry, 89 per cent of transportation and 92 per cent of all manufacturing.

Less than 400 large corporations own 45 per cent of all corporated assets. Less than 250 of these received more than 40 per cent of the total corporate income. Fewer than 75,000 persons obtain half of corporate dividends. In all, only 9,000,000 people in a nation of 130,000,000, own corporate stock. They own stock valued at anywhere from \$1.00 a share to more than \$100, and in varying small amounts of between one share and 100. Eight million nine hundred and twenty-five thousand stock owners received as much in dividends as the aforementioned 75,000. One hundred and twenty-one million persons owned no stock at all in this land of free enterprise and free opportunity

Corporations own 78 per cent of all business wealth. Three hundred and ninety-four of the largest corporations, 1/10 of 1 per cent of all corporations, own 45 per cent of all corporate assets. Conversely, 65 per cent of small corporations own only 2 per cent of the total corporate income, while 80 per cent of savings is owned by 61½ of the large corporations.

Examined from another point of view, it is found that those earning more than \$5,000 a year make up only 2.4 per cent of all "consumer units" in the country. They saved \$5,000,000,000 in 1938-39, or one and a quarter billion dollars more than 97.5 per cent of all consumer units receiving less than \$5,000 a year.

T.N.E.C. continues:

"Today a state of unbalance exists, and it seems likely that under present conditions unbalance will continue and perhaps become even more pronounced . . .

"The persistence of mass unemployment in the U.S.A., despite marked economic recovery and the growing emphasis of technological advance, should cause grave concern to all thoughtful persons who seek the preservation of democracy."

With great labor our giants have given birth to a gnat! These Rooseveltian saviors of democracy can do no better since they are of a piece with the social order which they indict and whose natural, though destructive, aspects they seek to stem.

# Aircraft and Finance Capital

**T**HE KEY INDUSTRY of the war, fast becoming the leading industry of the country, is aircraft. Moreover, its strategic rôle and importance are not confined to war. Its potentialities for peacetime transportation and commerce may be somewhat obscured at present due to the destructive capacities of aviation as revealed by the blitzkrieg, but aircraft is clearly marked as *the* industry of the future. By August 1 of this year, more than half a million workers will be employed in the industry. The industry has a backlog of more than \$4 billion. Its expansion has been absolutely phenomenal, more so than any other industry in the history of American capitalism.

Much discussion has filled the press about the President's goal of 50,000 planes a year and why the United States is so far from filling it at present. More pertinent, however, would be the query: Why is it that the United States, whose inventive genius produced this remarkable invention at the turn of the century, should now lag way behind in the production of airplanes? The answer to this important question is to be found in the history of aircraft, an obscure story but one which is replete with scandals, greed, intrigue, financial manipulation, patent pools, fabulous profits, government subsidies, and monopoly control.

## How the Industry Began

In spite of the fact that The Hague Peace Conference had unanimously voted to outlaw the airplane as a weapon of warfare, the bourgeoisie was so entranced with the military potentialities of the airplane that all nations engaged in research and experimentation with this end in view. But from 1909-1913, while the United States spent \$435,000 on airplanes, with the result that at the outbreak of World War I, the Army had 28 planes on hand; Germany had spent \$28,000,000 during the same period and had 4,000 planes on hand. Thus, the birth of the aircraft industry in the United States coincided with the outbreak of World War I, the period when far-reaching monopolistic controls of virtually all American industry were being developed.

The pioneers of the industry were the original inventors and their successors. As soon as the Allies began to place orders for airplanes in the United States, and the prospect of tremendous profits opened up, Wall Street speculators and automobile manufacturers began to take an interest in the production of airplanes. A patent pool was formed under the aegis of the Manufacturers Aircraft Association, the first trade association in the aircraft industry. The association collected

The committee understands that it cannot do anything fundamental about the conditions which it has investigated, for that would mean tampering with the foundations of capitalism—heaven forbid! At that, we are certain that the new apostles of American imperialism, Messrs. Hacker, Hook, Eastman, et al., could do no better. But perhaps the committee already knew that when they demonstrated that capitalism means deepening class relations, the increase of wealth at one pole and poverty at the other, and the impossibility of solving the existent social contradictions on the basis of capitalism.

a blanket royalty fee of \$200 per airplane and apportioned the patent fees among the basic patent owners, the Curtiss Aeroplane & Motor Co. and the Wright-Martin Aircraft Co. These two companies collected over \$2,000,000 each from patent fee alone. The MAA secured the ear of official Washington through the persons of Howard E. Coffin, vice-president of Hudson Motor Co. (one of the automobile companies directly interested in the manufacture of airplanes), who became chairman of the Aircraft Production Board, and Edward A. Deeds, an individual with an extremely notorious record, who was one of the leading people in the organization of the Dayton Wright Airplane Co. Through their efforts over one billion dollars was appropriated by Congress to supply the U. S. Army with airplanes. At least 29,000 planes were expected as a result of this huge appropriation. However, only 196 actually saw service in Europe!

The Manufacturers Aircraft Association was attacked as a trust and a terrific scandal broke in the newspapers and finally landed in the halls of Congress. President Wilson felt compelled to appoint a committee of investigation headed by Snowden H. Marshall. This committee brought in a verdict of "no truth in the charges." Instead of subsiding, however, the stench began to rise. Deeds was court-martialed; but, through the intervention of Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, Deeds, was acquitted and the reputation of the industry was saved. Even this did not end the matter, as after the Armistice Wilson felt constrained to appoint another committee to investigate the aircraft industry—this time headed by Justice Hughes. This committee "found nothing to criticize" in the conduct of the aircraft industry.

## How the Profits Grew

The end of the war also saw the end of the huge profits reaped by the insiders. The scandals of the war period and the crashes of army fliers resulted in loss of confidence on the part of the public, especially the investing public. The aviation industry remained in a state of doldrums until Lindbergh's historic flight of May 20, 1927, which fortunately coincided with the beginning of the stock market boom. Public interest awakened; confidence in the future of aviation grew and aviation stocks began to be sold. By the end of 1929 the public had swallowed over a billion dollars in aviation stocks. By 1932 the value of these stocks had sunk to a low of fifty million dollars! Some people undoubtedly lost a lot of money, but again the insiders reaped huge fortunes.

For example, Charles W. Deeds, son of Albert A. Deeds

invested \$40 in 1926. At the 1929 high this was worth \$5,550,000. F. B. Rentschler (now chairman of the board of United Aircraft), brother of the future president of the National City Bank of New York, probably made the biggest killing of all. His investment of \$253 in Pratt & Whitney stock was worth a cool \$35,000,000 in 1929. Pratt & Whitney Corp., organized after the war with a capital of \$1,000 made, according to the Nye Munitions Investigating Committee, a profit of over 1,300,000 per cent in ten years! During all this time, of course, the actual production of airplanes was infinitesimal; other countries had forged way ahead of the U. S.

By 1929, through a combination of mergers, stock watering, holding company setups, and general financial chicanery, finance capital had achieved complete control of the aircraft industry. The 150 companies manufacturing aircraft were dominated and controlled by the following five companies: Curtiss Aeroplane & Manufacturing, United Aircraft & Transportation, Wright Aeronautical, Western Air Express and Aviation Corporation. During the past decade, more than half the companies have been eliminated. The remainder are dominated by three powerful, well-integrated finance capital units. They are, in order of their size (based on total assets at the end of 1940): Curtiss-Wright, \$202,000,000; United Aircraft, \$132,000,000; and North American Aviation, \$54,000,000.

## Interlocking Relations

Monopoly's baby has come of age. Each of the three leading systems is a top-holding company for an entire system, two of them, Curtiss-Wright and North American, representing General Motors—that is, the Morgan-duPont finance capital interests—and the other, United Aircraft, representing the National City Bank group. Curtiss-Wright, formed as a result of a merger between Curtiss Aeroplane & Manufacturing and Wright Aeronautical in 1929, now claims to be the world's largest group, with 29 subsidiaries and 18 affiliated companies. Indirectly controlled by General Motors, Curtiss-Wright has a maze of ties with virtually all sections of American industry through the more influential members of its board of directors. The chairman of the board, George Armsby, adorns the directorates of a mere 22 corporations, the more significant of those outside of aircraft being Vickers, Tide Water Associated Oil, Standard Gas & Electric, Petroleum Corporation, American Maracaibo, California Packing, and Loew's. Edgar S. Bloom is a very important member of its board. His 10 directorships help to establish cordial relations with Manufacturers Trust and Western Electric. In passing, it should be noted that Bloom is the director of purchases of the British Purchasing Commission, making him a rather useful person for an aircraft company to have on its board. Other members establish connections with Sperry Gyroscope, Ford Instrument, Douglas Aircraft, Transcontinental Air Transport, Empire Trust, Fisk Rubber, Hayden, Stone & So., Girard Trust, Kennecott Copper, Mack Truck and Adams Express. Manufacturers Trust, one of the Morgan banks, is represented through several men, especially the president of Curtiss-Wright, G. W. Vaughn.

## Finance Capital Dominates

United Aircraft acquires most of its importance through its control of Pratt & Whitney and Pan American Airways,

although Hamilton Standard Propellers and Vought-Sikorsky are becoming increasingly important. Its work is spread out among 650 vendors, scattered over twenty states. Its list of directors is not quite as imposing as Curtiss-Wright, but its key men, Rentschler, Eugene R. Wilson, who is president, Morgan B. Brainard, Byron C. Foy, William B. Mayo, provide links with National City Bank, Dime Savings Bank, Chrysler, some smaller automobile companies, New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad and other transportation interests, Swift & Co., and the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Co.

The most significant group, however, is probably the one headed by North American Aviation, for it was organized and is directly controlled by General Motors. Directly under its control are Ford Instrument, Sperry Bendix and Douglas. It controls Western Air Express and has great influence in Curtiss-Wright. Its strategic importance to General Motors can be seen merely from the fact that one of its directors is Henry B. duPont. The chairman of the board is Ernest R. Breech, a member of the board of General Motors and one of its key figures in the aircraft industry. It is also linked with International Nickel.

The other companies which serve to round out the picture of concentration in a few hands are the Aviation Corporation, which controls Vultee and American Airways, and is bossed by Victor Emanuel, one of the leading lights in the Rockefeller group. Bell and Lockheed appear to be independent corporations, but are, in reality, completely controlled by General Motors through one of its smaller holding companies, National Aviation. Consolidated is clearly controlled by Lehman Brothers. Its board of directors is loaded down with Lehman men, including Robert Lehman. The two other important companies, Martin and Boeing, have not escaped the long arm of capital, either. On Martin's board of directors appear John W. Castles, a partner in Smith-Barney & Co., and John W. Hanes, one of the most influential of Morgan representatives. Boeing apparently does not have any direct links with the better-known sections of finance capital, but is controlled by local Pacific Coast representatives.

American finance capital thus enters World War II with a firm grip on the aircraft industry. In 1938, 95 per cent of the total value of the industry's product was produced by the 13 leading companies. In 1940, 90 per cent of the greatly increased production was produced by the eight leading companies. With the aircraft industry tied up with virtually every other American industry (technically, this is necessary as aircraft represents the synthesis of all industry), with its dollar-a-year representatives in Washington performing meritorious services comparable to those of Coffin and Deeds in World War I, with the excess profits tax removing the ceiling on profits from the aircraft industry, with an escalator clause on prices in all contracts with the U. S. government, the latter, in effect, paying the cost of plant expansions, and with England and the Allies paying higher prices and cash in advance for, in many cases, inferior planes, it is no wonder that the industry is having a field day. World War II is presenting the industry with even larger profits than in the case of World War I. A scandal is in the making, which may not be concealed even by the secrecy which surrounds the industry today, and which, if it breaks, will dwarf that of the last war.



## Phenomenal Profits the Rule

The financial pages of the newspapers daily reveal how the aircraft industry is utilizing the tremendous subsidies and favorable contracts which it is receiving to demonstrate that "patriotism" pays off in hard cash. The following table (taken from the *New Republic*, Feb. 17, 1941) shows the annual rate of return on net worth of selected aircraft companies (in per cent) :

1939	1940			Total 9 Months
	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Third Quarter	
Curtiss-Wright .. 15	28	44	24	32
Douglas Aircraft 21	52	46	113	70
Martin, Glenn .. 23	48	47	11	36
North American 74	22	77	41	47
United Aircraft.. 29	29	47	37	38

1940, as is well known, was a banner year for American capitalists. The aircraft industry, however, made the rest of American industry look as if it was in a state of depression. According to a report in the *New York Times* of April 27, 1941: "Twenty-four makers of aircraft last year earned \$69,866, 405, more than double the profits shown in 1939, nearly three times 1938 results and more than five times their earnings in 1937. Each of these years set a new high record for the industry and *further peaks are likely under the national defense effort.*" (Italics mine—FD). Moreover, 14 of these companies made slightly more than \$60 million of the total, or more than 85 per cent of the total profit in aircraft went to these 14 companies. And the four largest companies made a total of \$47 million, or over 67 per cent of the total profit.

Many companies showed profits considerably above the 100 per cent increase that the industry as a whole shows over 1939. Two of the larger companies and two of the smaller companies in this category are:

Company	1940 Profit	1939 Profit	% Increase
Bell Aircraft.....	\$ 284,745	\$ 9,203	3,000
Curtiss-Wright .....	15,932,000	5,322,000	199
Douglas Aircraft .....	10,831,971	2,884,197	275
Vultee Aircraft .....	374,457	25,488	1,370

In addition, it should be pointed out that none of the figures on profits give any indication at all of the tremendous bonuses and salaries that the aircraft companies have been paying their executives. Nor, do they take into account the well-known fact that virtually all the aircraft companies have watered their stock to an unprecedented degree.

Perhaps the most important index of how the merchants of death profit at the expense of the workers can be seen if the rate of profit is compared with the rate of surplus value. Figuring the rate of profit on the basis of total assets (which yields the smallest percentage possible) and taking the three dominant companies as the basis for calculating the rate of profit (for the rate of profit for the industry as a whole must be larger than that shown by these three, as these have the largest investments in constant capital) we get the following picture: (From the 1940 financial statements) —

Company	Total Assets	Net Profit	Rate of Profit
Curtiss-Wright .....	\$202,298,846	\$15,932,251	8 %
North American .....	54,017,638	7,090,336	13
United Aircraft .....	132,214,877	13,139,983	10

The rate of profit for the industry as a whole is, therefore, at least 10 per cent. That this is a conservative figure is shown

by the fact that the average return on sales for the industry as a whole is about 20 per cent. In other words, if the average airplane (of the important military types) is sold to the government for about \$100,000 per plane, the cost per plane to the manufacturer is about \$80,000 (this, of course, makes no allowance for the phony bookkeeping of the capitalists) and the net profit per plane will run around \$10,000. In view of this situation, it is hardly a surprise that statistics concerning prices and costs of airplanes are considered a "military secret."

## The Rate of Surplus Value

While it is difficult under these circumstances to calculate the rate of surplus value, it is possible to arrive at a fair approximation, which is important in estimating the degree of exploitation of labor in the industry and in understanding how finance capital operates. Maximum estimates of the average wage per employee in the industry are given by *Fortune* (Mar., 1941) in its over-zealous whitewash issue of the aircraft industry is about \$1800. It is undoubtedly much lower than this as the minimum wage paid by most aircraft companies is 50¢ an hour or an annual wage for the worker and his family of \$1300. Taking the figure of \$1800 as the average wage, and assuming that the value of the constant capital transferred to the value of the finished commodity by the application of labor power is also equal to \$1800 per worker (it is certainly no larger than this), we find that the amount of surplus value produced by each worker is equal to \$2184 on the average for 1940. This is based on an estimate of \$5,784 as the value of each workers' output given by Donald Ross in his *An Appraisal of Prospects for the Aircraft Industry*. Dividing the amount of surplus value produced by each worker on the average by the average wage, the rate of surplus value in the aircraft industry for 1940 was over 120%, and, it must be emphasized, this is a conservative figure. The same methods show a rate of surplus value for 1939 of about 100%. Consequently, the rate of surplus value increased by, at least, 20% in 1940 as compared with 1939. No wonder profits increased phenomenally during the past year.

The growth in profits has paralleled the increase in employment. "Three years ago the building of aircraft required only 30,500 men—10,500 less than the knit-underwear business. Today over 200,000 workers are on aircrafts payroll—an increase of 150,000 in two years. Estimates from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that by August 1 (1941) employment will exceed 550,000—15 per cent larger than last year's average employment in steel and nearly 25 per cent more than motor vehicles, the present giants. The acceleration has been tenfold in thirty months, compared to a sevenfold increase in shipbuilding during the four years of the last war." (*Fortune*). The height of the expansion during the last war required only 175,000 workers in 1918. Today, it is estimated that by the end of 1943 when the industry expects to be producing at the rate of 50,000 planes a year, over 1,000,000 workers will be employed in the aircraft industry.

## Aircraft's Labor Policy

The bosses have reinforced their policy of low wages and bad housing conditions by one of the most vicious company union and anti-Negro and anti-Semitic policies of any section of American industry. When Consolidated's company union program collapsed in Buffalo during the NRA days, the com-

pany dismantled its plant and moved to the more attractive labor climate of California. Douglas broke two strikes through the use of thugs and armed vigilantes. As long as the labor force remained small and fairly stable, the aircraft manufacturers were able to escape the strike waves of recent years. The industry was firmly in the grip of finance capital, with the single exception of Brewster, which signed a union shop contract with the CIO-UAW in 1937. Otherwise, there wasn't a cloud on the horizon.

However, the expansion of the past two years brought on by the outbreak of World War II disturbed the equanimity of the aircraft manufacturers. Called on to expand production at a terrific rate, they found themselves surrounded by various monopolistic interests, such as Mellon's aluminum monopoly, that felt they could make more profit by getting every last cent out of present capital investment rather than building new plants. Consequently, the expansion of the entire war economy of American imperialism has been much slower than military necessity dictates. After all, profits come first. Cross-patents with German capitalists, such as in the case of beryllium, also interfered with the necessary expansion. Then, the automobile industry, which is closely linked with aircraft and has somewhat of a stranglehold on it, as I have shown, feared the consequences of rapid expansion. Hence, the rejection of the Reuther plan. To be sure, the aircraft manufacturers themselves were not loathe to follow this general policy of finance capital. All the entreaties of the Government to sub-contract production of airplanes and parts have been met with stubborn resistance on the part of these "patriots." Not even Knudsen's plea at the end of 1940 that aircraft production was 30 per cent behind schedule moved them.

What really disturbed the equanimity of the aircraft manufacturers was that with the influx of workers necessitated by the expansion that was being carried on, there also came a concerted drive on the part of organized labor to organize the industry. The heart of this union drive has been the Aircraft Division of the UAW, which began serious attempts to organize about a year ago. The focal point in the UAW's drive was Vultee. The success at Vultee, in spite of the combined opposition of the bosses and the government and a vicious newspaper campaign against the union, was the key to the 1941 strike wave and has led to several other contracts in the aircraft industry, mostly with small plants. The only closed shop so far achieved by the CIO is with Brewster, when its original contract was renewed earlier this year. Although, there are many progressive features in this contract, which the CIO is using as a model for the industry, the union prejudiced its chances with the workers by accepting a minimum wage clause of 55 cents an hour, thus compromising one of its basic demands—a minimum wage of 75 cents an hour.

Alarmed by the threat of the CIO, the bosses openly invited the AFL Machinist's union to come in and organize the workers in those plants where their company union setups proved of no avail against the CIO. With this as an opening wedge, and aided by a few strikes, the Machinists have made great headway in aircraft—already having contracts with Boeing, Lockheed and others. The Machinists probably have more contracts than the UAW, and the terms of their contracts appear to be as good. The jurisdictional situation is loaded with dynamite, but it is doubtful if the aircraft manufacturers will be able to maintain their company union policy, in spite of this serious division in organized labor's ranks.

## Anti-Semitism and Jim Crow

That which reveals the reactionary character of the aircraft manufacturers more than anything else, however, is their openly anti-Negro and anti-semitic policy. As *Fortune* delicately puts it: "The industry also has its prejudices. You will find an almost universal prejudice against Negroes—and in the West Coast plants against Jews. *This statement stands the test of observation; you almost never see Negroes in aircraft factories nor do you see Jews in the West Coast plants except in some engineering departments. There is little concealment about the anti-Negro policy—the National Negro Congress did indeed receive a letter from Gerard Tuttle of Vultee stating that 'it is not the policy of this company to employ people other than of the Caucasian race,' a frank statement that undoubtedly bespeaks the industry's belief that white workers have prejudices (sic). Anti-Jewish sentiment in Los Angeles is scrupulously denied, and if it exists, it is probably because the managers suspect all Jews of being infatuated intellectually with Communism in the between-wars world.*" (Italics mine—FD).

The selfish, reactionary and, at times, just plain stupid policy of finance capital in aircraft only partially explains why the U.S. lags behind Germany in the production of military planes. The rest can be explained by the extreme conservatism of the Army General Staff. (For the previous history of how military short-sightedness resulted in the cashiering of General Billy Mitchell, and for a fairly good account of the general aircraft swindle prior to the outbreak of World War II, see *THE AVIATION BUSINESS—FROM KITTY HAWK TO WALL STREET* by Elsbeth E. Freudenthal). The Germans, because of technical and economic deficiencies have, for example, discovered that for the purpose of laying waste cities and gaining military objectives the most effective method—and therefore the most efficient method—is to build cheap, poor quality planes in as huge quantities as possible. The average flying time of the average German military plane is thus based on an expectancy of about 48 hours. Compare this with the rigid requirement of the U.S. Army that American military planes must have a life-expectancy of 1,000 hours flying time, and the difference in approach is clearly revealed. However, this is a disputed military question, which is not a subject of this article.

It is not an exaggeration to say that developments in aircraft will alter the face of the globe. From a military point of view, this has already been amply demonstrated. The future course of the war will only reinforce this view. What should not be lost sight of, however, is that with the expansion of the aircraft industry, the economic and political struggles centering around aircraft will have a profound effect on the future course of American society. The workers, if fascism is to be defeated, must take a leaf from the book of finance capital and embark on a bold, militant policy in the aircraft industry. The central point in the program of the workers must be the nationalization of the aircraft industry, under the control of the aircraft workers, the maintenance of a high level of struggle for unionization, increased wages, lower hours, and a general improvement of working conditions.

FRANK DEMBY.

# Total War and Revolution

(Editor's Note: This is the second installment of an essay on the war and the labor movement sent to this magazine by a Canadian contributor.)

**O**NE OF THE most important lessons of the present war flows from the collapse of the German concept of blitzkrieg as a swift and definitive annihilation of the adversary.

Hitler has won the most startling military victories in history. Yet each of his conquests, instead of bringing him closer to the finale, has served only to broaden the scope of his war tasks. Of the blitzkrieg there remain only blitz-battles on rapidly changing fronts, which are mere stepping stones to evermore intricate military, economic and political problems.

Moreover, we must bear in mind that the present war is only the prelude to the most formidable armed conflict between the real contenders for world domination, the United States and Germany. Even more than the present war, this impending conflict will be long in duration and universal in scope. This perspective justifies our attempt, while there is still time for revolutionaries to communicate through the printed word, to arrive at a few general conclusions and predictions about total war and its influence on the class struggle, however schematic and one-sided they may be, in view of the novelty of the problem.

The outstanding feature of total war is that it represents the most gigantic economic enterprise of human history, an industrial revolution in its own right, which will change the face of society no less than did the industrial revolution of rising capitalism.

I shall not at this time deal with the question of how a prolonged total war will affect the position of the capitalists as a social class. I shall take up this problem in the discussion columns of this magazine. As for the working class, the war not only puts an end to the standing army of unemployed created by the general decline of capitalism, but also increases the numerical strength of this class far beyond its peacetime size.

## Social Position of the Proletariat

Basing themselves on the experience of the last war, Allied technicians have estimated that the ratio between the number of soldiers and the number of workers at home necessary to supply the army and civilian masses would be from 1:5 to 1:7 for the Allies, and from 1:10 to 1:12 for Germany. As for the United States, this ratio was in the neighborhood of 1:8 during the last World War.

However inexact these estimates, there can be no doubt that the war brings about a real mushroom growth of the industrial working class. This development will only be accentuated by the weakening of the ruling classes through the exhaustion of war and the pauperization of the middle classes whom war will free from their present inclination toward fascism as a way out of insecurity. Thus war will not lessen but rather increase the specific gravity of the working masses in society.

This general trend, however, is being to some extent offset

by counteracting forces. Germany, having assimilated the lesson of her own industrial restoration after the Versailles Treaty, has been systematically dismantling the economies (and especially the industries) of her conquered adversaries. This procedure has brought in its wake a decline in the strength of the working classes in those countries. Large masses of industrial workers in Poland, France and Czechoslovakia are being reduced to the status of slave-laborers and farm-hands, at the mercy of the German conquerors or their native mercenaries.

From these undeniable facts some former socialists in Europe have drawn the conclusion that Trotsky's forecast about the end of the proletariat's socialist mission under totalitarian régimes has already come to pass. But such a conclusion is as hasty as it is ill-considered.

The economic status of the conquered countries of Europe is still hanging fire, pending the final outcome of the military struggle. France, for example, is still wavering between the rôle of an imperialist country and that of a defeated and dismembered people confronted with the task of national liberation.

## Proletarian Militancy Inevitable

On the other hand, the frequently invoked dictum that the political mentality of the masses tends to straggle behind economic developments is working at this juncture on the side of the proletarian revolution. The French, Polish and Czech workers, uprooted from their social milieu, still remain proletarians in their minds, and one can safely predict that they will remain so for quite some years to come. Their nationalist sentiments will be inseparably linked with the aspiration of regaining their former social status, which will drive a wedge between them and the defeated bourgeoisie.

So much for occupied Europe. In the colonies our traditional predictions of increased imperialist pressure and growing nationalist opposition during wartime retain their full validity. But this nationalist opposition too will assume a specific form. Instead of stifling the industrial development of the colonies, the Anglo-Saxon imperialists will be forced, as the war broadens in scope, to stimulate the building of national industries in the backward countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia. Even now the United States is beginning to encounter difficulties in exporting to Latin America industrial commodities needed for defense, and is resorting instead to capital export.

Thus a young and militant working class will rise in the colonial countries, challenging not only imperialist rule but also the political leadership of their native bourgeoisie.

What has been said about the numerical growth of the industrial working class in modern countries applies above all to the Anglo-Saxon and German camps. But there is a decisive difference between the "industrial revolution" of total war and that of organic capitalism.

## Totalitarianism and Labor

While the latter was accompanied by the general spread of democratic forms of government and a comparatively free

labor movement—economic and political—the contemporary “industrial revolution” of war economy occurs simultaneously with the replacement, violent or gradual, of democratic by absolutist or totalitarian forms of government. No ruling class, representing an exploiter minority of society, can, in the long run, afford the granting of democratic rights to the masses in wartime. While expanding production and thereby the working class to the utmost limits, it must—by the very nature of its war—strive for the most far-reaching political atomization of its most antagonistic class in society. It must stifle and crush the labor movement.

This process varies according to the political and social conditions of the different countries before and at the outset of the war. In the United States and in Great Britain the war-boom has been and will still be accompanied by an upsurge of the labor movement. The drive for unionization in the United States will undoubtedly take proportions similar to those of the first period of the New Deal. In Great Britain the shop steward movement is advancing everywhere. But if war continues—and here we are mainly concerned with long term perspectives—a retrogressive development of organized labor is inevitable. For the advance of organized labor is incompatible with the continuation of war.

How such a transition to totalitarian or quasi-totalitarian régimes would occur we shall, at this point, not endeavor to analyze in detail. Suffice it to say that, if we bear in mind the Russian, French, Czechoslovak and Scandinavian experiences, one cannot exclude the possibility of a cold, gradual transition to totalitarian or quasi-totalitarian régimes with the aid of corrupt labor bureaucracies protected from the wrath of the workers by the restrictions of the social curfew in war times.

But, while it is possible temporarily to suppress the manifestations of class struggle, it is impossible to eliminate the basic social antagonism of modern life. Like microbes in a diseased organism, this antagonism would grope for new ways of expression. The revolutionary revival of the proletarian mass movement would most likely use the very channels created by the dictatorial powers with a view to harnessing labor to its war task, whether it be a bureaucratized trade union set-up, as in the United States and Great Britain, or whether it be, on the other hand, the *Arbeitsfront* of Ley or Mussolini's fascist corporations. The latter organizations have already more than once been used by the workers as a legal cover for their class opposition.

On the other hand, however, such a “disciplining” or atomizing of organized labor will seriously hamper the swift gathering of revolutionary forces under a unified leadership and with a clear-cut revolutionary program. As Trotsky puts it in the transitional program of the Fourth International: A revolutionary group and its program must be verified by mass experience. “And it is precisely experience in mass movements which is lacking in countries of totalitarian despotism.”

Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union, along with the nations conquered by the Axis, bear witness to the lack of an organized mass movement of the proletariat.

## The Effects of Total War

After the First World War the situation was different.. The international labor movement was left comparatively unscathed as an organized force. The Bolsheviks were quick in rallying, as were all other anti-czarist parties in Russia. In the other countries, the revolutionary leaders—all too often with untried hands—gathered their following from among the still

existing old socialist parties and unions.. The warring soldiers had remained in their mentality what they had been when the war began: workers, peasants, middle class people, longing again for the idyllic life of pre-war society. Thus the organizational continuity between the pre-war and the post-war labor movement, though at times threatened, was assured on the whole. The army assumed but an auxiliary character. All that was needed was a shift from reformist to revolutionary leadership (in part even in the Bolshevik party).

Total war, as we have said, cannot in the long run tolerate the maintenance of free labor organizations. More than that, it increasingly tends to replace the old parties by military and semi-military mass organizations. In the totalitarian countries, including Japan and Russia, the militarization of the people begins with children of six years and less. Military drill, complete abstention from independent thought, are the supreme aims. The Japanese have found for this branch of service a blunt and fitting official name. Their Gestapo they call: Thought Control.

If the war lasts long enough the present “democracies” will, no doubt, follow the “militant liberal,” Mr. Brailsford, who coined the battle cry:

“Banish from your daily lives the value and psychology of peace. Train your young men in the whole accursed art of war. Postpone for some years . . . every civilized purpose, every humane ambition. Adapt yourselves, in short, to a world abandoned to the unbridled lust for power.”

Soon they will herd boys and girls from every walk of life into semi-military groups of Prussian type. Thus total war will gradually abolish the old type of democratic political organizations and put the masses of mankind bodily and mentally into the straightjacket of militarism. It is therefore not only possible but very likely that the revolutions following the present series of total wars will, at variance with the revolutions after the first war, not be able to “take over” the old Socialist Party and trade union cadres of the democratic epoch, but will have to use a human mass educated in the spirit of military action as the supreme expression of political thought.

What concrete forms the revival of the labor movement would take under conditions of total war, is extremely difficult to forecast at this stage. However, this article is primarily concerned with analyzing the rôle of “the masses in uniform” in contemporary class struggles.

## Militarization of the Proletarian Revolution

The industrial workers groping for political articulation after years of totalitarian slavery and the monotony of factory life will not be the sole force of the proletarian revolution. Total war—barring the victory of the revolution in a very near future—means war in permanence, with only short intervals of peace. The military tasks of the war compel the imperialists to press large masses of skilled workers into uniforms, to give ever larger masses of young unemployed their first training and skill, their first and only social function—the craft of modern warfare.

And again the very nature of total war compels the imperialists—as we have shown in a previous article—to instill into the bulk of these craftsmen of warfare a sense of initiative, a wide latitude of independence and personal responsibility in action. Since a revolution presupposes the collapse of the war fronts, these soldiers, imbued with self-confidence, used to straight thinking and direct action, will be primarily interested in the one vital question: what kind of social order will

follow the war? They will face the grave problem of demobilization, difficult for those former workers who after years of war will have lost contact with civil life, doubly difficult for those whose only social function will have been soldiering. They will take an active and interested part in the great social controversy of the proletarian revolution. And, used to solving problems by military means, they will, in their turn, hasten to translate rhetoric into action against the forces of counter-revolution.

A very peculiar relationship between the "military" and the "civil" forces of the proletarian revolution may thus occur. The revolution might prove to be slow in rallying its expressly political and "civil" forces; far quicker and more dynamic in rallying its "military" forces. The proletarian revolution might, thus, in many instances, take preponderantly military forms. This would depend mainly on the degree of the destruction of the old labor movement wrought by the totalitarian forces, the duration and intensity of the war, etc.

But such a phenomenon would not be exactly new. Of the two outstanding bourgeois revolutions, the English and the French, the first had as its main moving force *Cromwell's Model Army*, the second various *political parties and fractions*. The first advanced chiefly through its military ventures, the second through its "police" terror. The Russian revolution, as we know, used both methods in succession, but even during the civil war the leadership remained with the political party of the revolution, the Bolsheviks.

In contemporary society we have, so far, seen revolutions in preponderantly military forms mainly in countries where the two main classes of society, the bourgeoisie and the working class, were relatively undeveloped. In China, in Latin-America, with no class strong enough to conquer power directly, the "Generals" (the privates, corporals, amateur "soldiers" of yesterday) established their Bonapartist rule, rooted above all in the formless peasant mass.

## The Socialist Revolution

But military "corporals" revolutions of the socialist type described above would be altogether different. They would be the highest expression of the social antagonism between the decayed capitalist and totalitarian rules and the highly developed proletarian class. At the same time, however, they would reflect the political inexperience, the lack of organization of the broad civilian working masses caused by the lapses and failures of the labor movement in the epoch of pre-war capitalism.

Such revolutions started or perhaps even led by large formations of proletarian soldier masses and backed by the formidable power of the industrial proletariat, would represent an almost unbeatable alliance and have the advantage of endowing the proletarian revolution from the outset with the necessary striking power. But they would also bear grave dangers. All past revolutions have shown that terror—the pioneer of new social orders—tends to perpetuate itself, to make itself independent of its original aim. This is doubly true of military dictatorships, whether bourgeois or proletarian. To lead the revolution into democratic channels, two things will be necessary: first, a swift and direct passage of the political leadership of the revolution into the organs of the industrial working class, the only group in society able to combine dictatorship against the former rulers with democracy for the masses; second, the presence of devoted and trained Marxists not only among the workers but among the leaders of the mili-

tary, to ward off the influence of adventurers and class-enemies and to give the struggle a unified purpose: toward workers' democracy and peaceful socialist planning.

In the last war the Bolsheviks did not have such an outlook. Although the 1905 revolution had been crushed by hostile troops, composed mainly of peasants, there was no systematic consideration of the rôle of the army in the struggles to come. "In revolutionary circles they had discussed (the army problem) much," Trotsky writes in his *History*, "but rather abstractly." Thus until the eve of the October Revolution there was in the army, which had assured the downfall of czarism, "hardly any reference to the Bolsheviks. The majority of the officers had hardly learned that strange name. When they raised the causes of the disintegration of the army, it was newspapers, agitators, soviets, 'politics' in general . . ." in other words, the "self-mobilization" of the masses. The rôle of the Bolsheviks was then not to guide the soldiers to the opening of the revolution, but remained limited to gaining political predominance after it had already taken place.

## Future Prospects

Trotsky spoke of the rising "military epoch," as an epoch which might stretch over long years and decades, preparing new and sharper forms of revolutionary struggle. To blot out the perspective of the possibility of early revolutionary outbreaks in the warring countries would be as senseless as it would be to fall into sanctimonious optimism and deny that the terror of the imperialist rulers may in the near future succeed in coping with incipient revolutions and that the labor fakery (whether reformists or Stalinists) could again lead the next wave of the revolution into disaster. This is why any revolutionary group must base itself on a combination of short-term and long-term perspectives.

This was Trotsky's viewpoint. While incessantly working to shape the cadres of the Fourth International, he warned that:

"It is necessary to prepare for *long years, if not decades*, of wars, uprisings, brief interludes of truce, new wars and new uprisings. . . . *It is a question of an entire revolutionary epoch.* . . . A young revolutionary party must base itself on this perspective. . . ."

Trotsky was far from falling into political Couéism of those who hold that the revolution is bound to knock at their—and nobody else's—door some nice day and humbly beg for leadership. His was not the view that one could solve the problem of a revolutionary vanguard party with appointing another five or ten "organizers." He who viewed our epoch as one of violent turns refused to graft the reformist views of slow evolution on the party question. He knew and has often stated that socialist-revolutionaries were the first victims of the very defeats against which they warn. And at every important turn of events Trotsky, who had firmly adopted the Leninist views on the necessity of a revolutionary party, placed his hope in the ability of the working class to generate its leadership in the fire of the revolution.

In 1936, during the French general strike, in his article, "The French Revolution Has Begun," he hailed the "self-mobilization" of the French workers. In their strike committees he detected the incipient general staff of the revolution. And without mentioning his own "party" (whose leadership he had, shortly before, sharply criticized for its inveterate sectarianism), he stated "real revolutionaries will seek contact (with the new leaders of the movement)."

In the United States again, scarcely four months after the

creation of the SWP, confronted with what he then thought to be the beginning of a trend toward the political independence of American labor, he came forward with the slogan of the Labor Party, motivating it as follows:

"... we cannot say to the trade unions, you should adhere to the Socialist Workers Party. It would be a joke (!) ... Why? Because the decline of capitalism develops ten, a hundred, times faster than the speed of our party. ... Our party is too small, with too little authority in order to organize the workers in its ranks. ... The slogan of the Labor Party is (for the masses). The second slogan (SWP) for the more advanced."

In another discussion he stresses the point:

"And we have the greatest interest in winning more time because we are weak and the workers are not prepared in the United States. ... In 1917 we would not have won without 1905. My generation was very young. During twelve years we had a very good chance to understand our defeats and to correct them and win. But even then we lost again to the new bureaucracy. *That is why we cannot see whether our party will directly lead the ... working class to victory. That can last for a long period, years and years, and during this time our people will steel themselves. ... Only wars produce heroes. ...*"

### Several Forecasts

Thus, several conclusions may be drawn from an analysis of the "military epoch" as they affect the formation of a revolutionary party.

*First:* At its formation, the Fourth International had hoped that the revolutionary struggles in France, Spain and America would create the conditions whereby its organizations would rise to the leadership of the masses. However, Trotsky's

admonition that "the war is advancing far more speedily than the rate at which new cadres of the proletarian revolution are being formed" has turned out to be undeniable fact. It is clear, as the war becomes universal, that a genuine proletarian vanguard party can only emerge, at the proper historical junction, through a regroupment of various Marxist formations on a "minimum program" of the socialist revolution and the merger of this "old guard" with new and as yet unknown militant leaders arising out of the chaos of war.

*Second:* The destruction of a free labor movement in a long-lasting war will deprive the revolutionary militants of a milieu in which to further their socialist ideas. In such years of isolation, only those will be able to survive who learn how to shake off the routinism of the mechanical propagation of ready-made formulae, and who are capable of acting with initiative, even if separated for long periods from an organized party.

*Third:* It would be sheer blindness to conclude that because of the spread of war and totalitarianism, and the likely proscription of the labor movement, the radicalization of the masses is forever postponed. Quite the contrary, military, bureaucratic and fascist totalitarian dictatorship, seeming all-powerful at the outset, will wear themselves out with every year of the war and place the imperialists to a test never before experienced by any ruling class. The reaction of the masses to the present war will be as violent as the war itself. In the present epoch, revolutionary optimism and determination must base themselves on such a long-term perspective and not on short-lived Jimmie Higgins enthusiasm.

C.D.E.

# Imperialism in Africa

THE GREAT WAR for democracy (or, from Hitler's point of view, the great war for fascism) is being fought out in Africa as fiercely as anywhere else. It is not only a question of strategy. The competing imperialisms want Africa, first and foremost for the sake of Africa, a fact which the democratic propagandists disregard with the Olympian sublimity of complete ignorance or complete hypocrisy. Hitler at any rate says plainly that he wants his living space. But let that pass. What we want to do here is to state a few facts about Africa and its rôle in imperialist economy, and its future in a socialist world. So tightly knit is the world market which capitalism has created that we shall find ourselves dealing with the fundamental problems of modern society and the solution of the permanent crisis not only in Africa but on a world scale.

Up to 1914 the British bourgeoisie had not the faintest idea of the revolutionary violence which capitalism was nursing in its bosom, particularly in the colonies. An obscure Russian revolutionary exile named Lenin wrote confidently about the inevitable emergence of the proletariat in India and China, as the leaders of the coming nationalist revolutions. But which British politician or world publicist worried himself about that? It is almost valuable to re-read what these wise men of thirty years ago used to say about the world and what

we used to say. But first the Russian revolution and then the wave of nationalist revolutions which swept through the British and French Empires after the war gave the British bourgeoisie a fright which goes far to explain their insatiable desire for appeasement. All the cunning, all the lies, the violence, the sanctimonious cruelty, which have so distinguished the British ruling class through the centuries, proved powerless to stifle the great Indian revolution, and though Churchill says little in public about India, he thinks about it only less than he thinks about Germany.

### India and Africa

The Indian revolution took British imperialism by surprise, but, as the full disintegration of capitalist society and its colonial consequences began to force itself upon the British bourgeoisie, a very distinctly enunciated current of thought took shape: We have been taken by surprise in India; if we do not act in Africa, we shall be taken by surprise there also. The climax was the formation of an African research society under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the disguise the British government assumes when it wants to investigate economic and political questions without official responsibility. A powerful commission was appointed, consisting of the ablest men who could be found in England

for the task. An economic adviser to the Bank of England, an Oxford professor of colonial history, the editor of *Nature*, Julian Huxley, Arthur Salter, Lord Lugard, after Cecil Rhodes the greatest of African pro-consuls, and some others, all under the chairmanship of that well known liberal, admirer of fascism, and defender of the British and American way of life. We refer to the late Lord Lothian. The committee decided to make a complete survey of colonial Africa and appointed Lord Hailey, the governor of the United provinces in India, to carry it out. Special researches were commissioned preparatory to the actual work in Africa, the most important being a study of capitalist investment in Africa, by Professor Frankel of Johannesburg. But the survey (1837 pages), and Frankel's volume (487 pages) were published in 1938 by the Royal Institute. They constitute an indictment of capitalist civilization impossible to find outside of the pages of Marxist writers.

Frankel writes with the freedom of one without official responsibility. Hailey has the caution of an old civil servant, with the understatement of the Englishman and the evangelical mode of expression which is part of the British imperialist burden. Both, however, come to the identical conclusion. Imperialism in Africa is bankrupt. There is only one way to save the situation, and that is to raise the standard of living, culture and productivity of the native Africans. The full significance of this economic conclusion can only be understood against the *political* background of Africa, for it is the first law of existence and self-preservation of every European in Africa, that the existence of European civilization in Africa (and by European civilization these people men, of course, European imperialism) depends upon one fact, the maintenance of the African in the position of inferiority, segregation and backwardness in which he is at present. In this bourgeois thought, by the process of separating what is dialectically inseparable, has reached the conclusion that, in Africa, to save itself it must destroy itself.

### What Is Africa?

Lord Hailey's survey comprises all of Africa south of the Sahara and was not confined to the British colonies, for the British wanted to find out officially all that there was to be found out about Africa. The African population of this territory is estimated at 100,000,000. Of this, the European population is about 2,250,000. Of these, over 2,000,000 are in the Union of South Africa alone. For the rest, you can find figures like these: French West Africa, population in round figures, 14 million, white population 19,000; Belgian Congo, population 10 million, white population 18,000. In Kenya, which is supposed to have areas particularly suited to white colonization, African population three million, white population 18,000. In Nigeria, African population 19 million, white population, 5,000. North of the Zambesi the white population is barely 100,000. The area of the territories is about 8,260,000 square miles, three times the size of the United States of America. Colonial Africa is for the most part one vast concentration camp, with a few thousand white slave drivers. In India there is an Indian industrial and landowning class, in China the same. In Africa there are just slaves and overseers. The British government three years ago awoke (theoretically) to the fact that this cannot go on, for it does not pay.

### The Railway Fiasco

The mercantilist system had exploited Africa as a field of commerce, first, slaves, and secondly, *pacotille*, the beads, colored cotton and other rubbish for which Negro slaves were exchanged. With the decline of the mercantile system, after the American war of independence, Africa receded out of the picture of European imperialism until the period for capital export. By 1935, the total capital investments from abroad amounted to \$6,111,000,000. Of this amount, 77 per cent, or \$4,705,000,000, is in *British territories* and *British investors have supplied 75 per cent of this total*. In trade it is the same. In 1935 the total trade of British territories formed 85 per cent of the total trade of Africa. In 1907 it was 84 per cent and for years it has never fallen below 80 per cent.

Britain dominates the whole of native Africa, the French, Belgian and Portuguese colonies being merely satellites of this swollen imperialist monster. Of the total of over six billion dollars invested from abroad in Africa, nearly one-half consists of loans and grants to governments, while a little less than a quarter of the whole, \$1,335,000,000, to be exact, has been invested in railways, which hang like a weight of chains on European capitalists and black labor in Africa. Africa did not need them. Railways must serve flourishing industrial areas, or densely populated agricultural regions, or they must open up new land (as in the United States) along which a thriving population develops and provides the railways with traffic. Except in the mining regions of South Africa, all these conditions are absent. Yet railways were needed, for the benefit of European investors and heavy industry, for some vague purpose known as the "opening up" of the continent, and for the all-important strategic purposes. The result is that in nearly every colony today railways have been developed by the governments and, up to today, only governments can afford to operate them. Most of them have been overbuilt. As a result of this expenditure the railways have been burdened with large interest obligations which cause excessively heavy rates on imported or local traffic.

### Capital and Slavery

In the attempt to improvise the production for export which is necessary to meet these heavy interest charges, various types of uneconomic production have been embarked upon. Uneconomic in themselves, chiefly of the one-crop type, and subjected to the fluctuations of the world market, some of these have now become burdens upon the territories concerned. As a result, Frankel comes to the following remarkable conclusion: ". . . Governments have been brought up time and again against the fundamental difficulty that capital investment in itself cannot lead to economic development, but requires a concomitant expansion of the other factors of production. Capital alone cannot solve the economic problem." In other words, capital cannot expect to flourish if the African native remains a slave. In colony after colony the complaints are the same. In 1934 the general manager of the Nigeria Government Railways reported: "*The trade of the colony is not yet developed to anything like the transport capacity of its railway route mileage*. No private railway company could have constructed so much mileage, and the whole colony has greatly benefitted from the transport facilities. . . . Were the annual capital charges of the railway to be set alongside the aggregate income of the population which it serves, it would be clear that, short of a *valuable bulk mineral discovery*, the

main direction in which the annual capital charges could be met year by year from railway earnings must be the carriage by it of a very large volume of agricultural products, and the whole of that volume wherever the railway can reach it. A sufficient volume of export products does not now exist. . . ."

Nigeria is one of the most prosperous of the colonies, and this chiefly because it has a large native peasantry. The railways reports from French Congo and Belgian Congo *say exactly the same*, only they say it in French and with more despair, because the native peasantry is absent from both these huge colonies. Frankel concludes: "In general, African railways have been constructed on the basis of a too optimistic view of the rate of economic development in the territories they serve. . . . Failing the development of new mineral resources, considerable further railway construction in the near future will not be warranted from an economic point of view." In other words, good-bye to railways.

## PART II

# The Mining Merry-Go-Round

**I**N 1935 THE EXPORT of gold was 47.6 per cent of the total export of Africa. Most of this gold has been produced in the Union of South Africa. This fabulously "wealthy" African state, with 90 per cent of the white population of colonial Africa, and the envy of all other African colonies, is in reality one of the most unstable economies in the world, and none knows it better than the South Africans themselves. Until the discovery of diamonds in 1857, the economic development of South Africa had been almost exclusively agricultural, and South Africa was of no importance. With the development of the diamond fields and afterwards of gold, the whole economy gradually grew dependent upon the income from these industries. For 25 years the legislature and the electorate have declared that the country must, for its own future salvation, find some ways and means of gaining income other than from mining. They have failed completely. With the exception of wool, today, in that vast country, there is not one important agricultural commodity which does not depend on protection or on the maintenance of an artificial price structure based on direct subsidy.

Exactly the same situation exists in industry, half of which would collapse but for the mining industry. Upon this unhealthy basis is grafted another vicious economic malformation. In 1934 and 1935, 41 per cent of the workers employed in private industrial undertakings were Europeans. They took 74 per cent of the wages and salaries paid, equivalent to \$1,010 per head. The remaining 59 per cent of the workers were non-Europeans, who obtained 26 per cent of the wages and salaries, equivalent to \$245 per head. In government undertakings, Europeans, consisting of 66.3 per cent of the employees, took 91 per cent of the total wages and salaries paid. The remaining 9 per cent of wages was divided among the 33.7 per cent of non-Europeans employed.

The organized labor movement, i.e., the aristocracy of labor, shortly after the First World War, forced through the Color Bar Act, which prohibited skilled labor to Africans. It is joined by the reactionary South African farmers, who keep the majority of natives on their farms in a state of peonage and slavery. Thus, the distinguishing characteristics of South

African labor are: 1) a low average productivity, 2) an artificial wage structure based on revenue from gold and diamonds, and 3) the literal pauperization and degradation of six million blacks by less than one-half the white population of two million; less than one-half because there is a huge poor white population. In the mining industry itself the ratio reaches incredible proportions. The average pay of the European employee in the mines is in round figures \$155 a month. That of the native is about \$20. The official title for this discrimination is the "civilized labor" policy.

## A Ruinous Policy

Lord Hailey sees that this is a ruinous business. He knows that both in industry and agriculture, ultimately the equally efficient and less costly producer would be the liberated African. As he states it, ". . . the accumulating weight of evidence would seem to inspire doubts . . ." as to whether European agriculture could every do more than make a very modest living as a return for hard work even in good times and be a constant recurrent charge upon the revenues of governments, even in bad. He admits that "though there may be both political and theoretical justifications for the adoption of a 'civilized labor' policy, its necessity must nevertheless be regretted." Hailey should be given the task of explaining to the labor aristocrats and Boer farmers exactly how beneficial a change would be. No amount of understatement would save him from being lynched.

The significance of South Africa is this: Most of the other colonies in Africa are either built on the same model or wish to heaven they could be. That is why they sigh for the discovery of some bulk mineral. They could then pay the interest on the railways and live on the rest, while the native does the work in the mines. Where there are no unions to subsidize him, the European is staring in the face the fact that he cannot compete with the native African. He can prevent the African from cultivating coffee, as in Kenya ("owing to physical and mental incapability") but the world market, such as it is, refuses to pay both the African for doing the work and the European farmer for living like a gentleman, drinking whiskey and playing polo. "Everywhere, therefore," says Hailey, "the progress of the European system of economy is likely in the future to be linked up with the exploitation of mines, with commerce and with certain specialized forms of agricultural production generally requiring capital for their development." Everywhere, in both Rhodesias, French and Belgian Congo, French and British West Africa everywhere except in South Africa (and Southern Rhodesia). We have seen upon what these areas depend. Their "ideal" is the ruthless suppression of the native.

Hailey murmurs deprecatingly that the "possibility of a complete fulfillment of this ideal depends on economic factors (such, for instance, as the continuance of gold production) which may themselves be subject to modification." It certainly looks today, three years after Hailey wrote, as if South African gold export may soon be "subjected to modification." For the other non-mining communities, their "future economic prosperity . . . depends more upon the general development of native economic activity than on the results of



European enterprise." Most important of all for British imperialism, he says flatly that there is no further field for capital export except for mining. After a little over 50 years, and the degradation of a population without parallel in the history of modern capitalism, this is where the imperialists have reached.

### Condition of the Workers

Hailey had to be careful. Frankel had no cause to be. In his work, packed with statistical tables, Frankel has one theme. He states it on page 7. The task is "to broaden the ideas and heighten the creative possibilities of the citizen in a wider society. To realize this is the key to colonial statesmanship." In South Africa, and all over East Africa, the African is bound by a series of pass-laws to particular employers, virtual slavery. Says Frankel, "it is no exaggeration to say that a basic cause of the low average income of the inhabitants of the Union is the lack of 'economic mobility' of its workers, both black and white. We are back again at the starting point of this study—progress involves change; inhibit change and inhibit progress."

Unlike Hailey, he calls for capital investment, if even not immediately profit producing; but on one condition: "In the last resort, however, the future of capital investment, like the future of all African economic progress, will depend on freeing the African peoples from the factors which have checked their progress in the past, and the artificial restrictions which in some territories still prevent the unfolding of their abilities. . . .

"If twentieth century experience in Africa has proved anything at all, it is that the wealth of Africa has, as yet, hardly been discovered, simply because it lies deep in the soil of Africa itself. Only by the co-operant efforts of Africans and Europeans will it be unearthed. . . . The curtain has only just risen on the African scene. . . .

"Indeed the twentieth century opens the era of constructive and creative activity by western powers in Africa." Frankel has stumbled on a tremendous conclusion here. He does not talk about "raising the standard of living," and such like primitive panaceas for the contradictions of capitalism. He has left the field of distribution and tackled the problem at its root—at the point of production.

### Marxism and the Colonies

What is happening in Africa and what the British imperialists think about it, concerns every American worker, not only Negroes. The contradictions of capitalist production express themselves in a concentration of wealth at one end of society and of misery at the other. Every thinking American worker knows the fact. But these contradictions also express themselves in the concentration of wealth in rich nations like America, Britain, France and Belgium, and the concentration of misery in poor ones like India, China and Africa. There are a hundred million Africans living in destitution; over four hundred million Chinese, nearly four hundred million Indians. Roosevelt talks about a third of a nation. These people constitute half of the world. It is capitalism which is destroying them as it is destroying the world. It has now confessed that in Africa it is bankrupt. They must therefore rid themselves of capitalism—for the same reason that the worker in the western world must rid himself of capitalism, to use

"capital" and not be used by it.

Frankel has hit upon a discovery but he has made a profound mistake in calling what Africa needs "capital." Nearly a hundred years ago, in *Wage-Labor and Capital*, Marx defined capital. It is accumulated labor. And land, not accumulated labor, was the chief means of material production in all societies previous to capitalist society. Capital, however, is accumulated labor in a definite social relation. "It is only the dominion of past accumulated materialized labor over immediate living labor that stamps the accumulated labor with the character of capital."

"Capital does not consist in the fact that accumulated labor serves living labor as a means for new production. It consists in the fact that living labor serves accumulated labor as the means of preserving and multiplying its exchange value." As Marx expresses it in the *Communist Manifesto*, "In bourgeois society living labor is but a means to increase accumulated labor. In Communist society accumulated labor is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the laborer." Frankel wants to promote, widen and enrich the existence of the Africans, not to save his immortal soul but to save African economy. Thus, what Frankel is really calling for is not capital, but communism. Hailey, however, merely observes: for that, no more accumulated labor. As usual, it is the Marxist and the bourgeois who face realities.

The inherent unworkability of the capital relation is seen very starkly in Africa. This is due to the advance stage of European capital development when capitalism began to penetrate into Africa, the primitive character of African labor, and the added sharpness of race differentiation. What Frankel does not know is that what he sees so clearly in Africa was seen by Marx three generations ago in relation not to Africa, but to all capitalist society. Marx had little to say about socialist society, particularly about its basis, the socialist organization of labor. That new organization of labor would be accomplished by the proletariat and, as Lenin said most emphatically, the proletariat alone could accomplish it. But, for Marx, Africa's problem was the problem of capitalist society and only socialism could solve it. "The actual wealth of society, and the possibility of continual expansion of its processes of reproduction, do not depend upon the surplus labor, but upon its productivity and upon the more or less fertile conditions of production under which it is performed (*Capital*, Vol. II, p. 954). But from start to finish he emphasized that this productivity was to be achieved by the development of man as an individual. Under socialism, man's consumption was to be governed by "the social productivity of his own individual labor in its capacity as a truly social one" and to the extent "required by the full development of his individuality" (*Capital*, Vol. III, p. 1021). He rarely spoke of socialism without coming back to this and perhaps his most emphatic statement to the same effect is found in his chapter on "Machinery and Modern Industry," ". . . Modern industry, on the other hand, through its catastrophes imposes the necessity of recognizing, as a fundamental law of production, variation of work, consequently fitness of the laborer for varied work, consequently the greatest possible development of his varied aptitudes. It becomes a question of life and death for society to adapt the mode of production to the normal functioning of this law. Modern industry, indeed, compels society, under penalty of death, to replace the detail-worker of today,

crippled by lifelong repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labors, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers." (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 534).

### The Only Solution

It is the only solution to the permanent crisis. Marx did not use phrases like life and death lightly. Let living labor use accumulated labor to develop itself. The problem of expansion will be solved. Let accumulated labor use living labor only for the sake of expanding accumulated labor and it automatically ruins its capacity to expand. No need to point out here the monumental researches and scientific exactness with which Marx demonstrated the inevitability of his conclusions. It is to Frankel's credit that he came to the same conclusion after the most thorough examination ever made of capitalist investment in Africa. His mistake is to believe that this accumulated labor can ever be at the disposal of the African unless by means of the socialist revolution in Africa and in Europe.

One more word remains to be said. All the great commu-

nists have known that man is the greatest of all productive forces. In the general collapse of revolutionary ideology which has kept pace with the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, there has grown up a pseudo-Marxism or "economic" analysis which sees all sorts of possibilities in the technical and institutional reorganization of society, without the slightest consideration for the rôle of labor. The most recent is Mr. Burnham, who informs us that the managerial society will solve the problems of expansion in colonial countries which "capitalism" could not solve. How? He does not say. Hitler, however, tells us that "The free choice of trades and professions by the Negroes leads to social assimilation, which in turn produces racial assimilation.. The occupations of the black colonial peoples and their function in the labor process of the 'new order' will therefore be entirely determined by the Germans." And again, ". . . [Negroes] will have no active or passive electoral rights in the German colonial empire; [they] are forbidden access to railways, street cars, restaurants, motion pictures and all public establishments." In other words, Hitler proposes to expand African economy by continuing to degrade African labor, the same old bankrupt policy of British imperialism. It is a contradiction that can be solved by socialism and not by Hitler's Panzer divisions, the race propaganda of Goebbels, nor the theoretical evasions of Burnham.

J. R. JOHNSON.

# Centrism and the War

**T**HE PUBLIC COMMISSION of *hari-kari* by the Independent Labor League of America (Lovestone group) furnished the revolutionary movement with an unpleasant glimpse of the inner organs of a typical centrist and sectarian organization. At the same time it has made it necessary and worthwhile to summarize the shameful fate of those parties and groups that, for the most part, were attached to the *London Bureau*, or "International Workers Front Against War."

Many years prior to September, 1939, Trotsky and the Fourth International had predicted what lay in store for centrism when struck by the thundering blows of world war. Just as the civil war in Spain was an advance school of rehearsal for the Second World War, so was it an advance warning—in the tragic downfall of the Spanish P.O.U.M.—of what would happen to those organizations whose anti-war policy rested upon clay feet.

### What Was the "London Bureau"?

It is not our objective here to give a detailed account of the Bureau's origin or history. In brief, it was a loosely organized, heterogeneous collection of small left-wing parties and isolated groupings bound together primarily by mutual confusion and opposition to Trotskyist "extremism." Its leading sections were represented by the British Independent Labor Party, the French P.S.O.P. (Workers' and Peasants Socialist Party) and, before its death, the Spanish P.O.U.M.

Hardly at any period in its brief career did it pass beyond the boundaries of Europe. On the continents of Africa, Australia and South America it *never* had any adherents. In Asia

only the Congress Socialist Party of India could, although unofficially, be associated with the Bureau because of its political program. In North America the above-mentioned Lovestone group and the Norman Thomas Socialist Party (the first officially, the latter unofficially) were categorized under the general heading of the *London Bureau*. Thus we see that insofar as it represented anything serious, the Bureau was almost completely in Europe.

Needless to say, the center of the Bureau issued lengthy and eloquent denunciations of the war as its bloody hand approached closer. But September 1, 1939, marked the demise of its literary career. It was "transferred" to Mexico and has since been maintaining silence.

What of the various sections and groups that made up the Bureau? One can say without the slightest exaggeration that only the British Independent Labor Party remains! To the others one of two things has occurred: either complete dissolution and abandonment of the anti-war struggle under war conditions; or open social-patriotic treachery and acceptance of the war as a struggle between "democracy and fascism."

Among those groups liquidating their anti-war protestations and openly supporting their own bourgeoisie were the India League of Radical Congressmen (the M. N. Roy group) and the Independent Labor League (Lovestone's group, which also won the unique distinction of voluntarily disbanding itself). The German S.A.P., an émigré group, is also supporting His Majesty's government. In addition, the Norman Thomas Socialist Party, or what remains of it after innumerable desertions, treads the path of near-appeasement in the absence of a fundamental anti-war program. Its "moral" support

to England, its sterile pacifism, the open association of its leaders with bourgeois "appeasers"—all these actions warrant our predicting an early transfer *in toto* to the group we have listed above.

Under the second heading—those that have voluntarily dissolved, or been organizationally destroyed by the war—must be listed the following: the French P.S.O.P. (voluntarily disbanded), the Congress Socialist Party of India, the R.S.A.P. of Holland and the Spanish P.O.U.M. In addition, a number of small and unimportant groups (Switzerland, Italy, Norway, etc.) have been unheard of since the war and have probably ceased functioning.

A sad record indeed for the "non-sectarian, anti-war" adherents of the London Bureau. Only the British I.L.P. remains to be considered as a serious political force. This does not mean that centrism as a political force has disappeared. The existence of the I.L.P. disproves this. In the inevitable revolutionary resurgence that will come in a later stage of the war centrism, and centrist leaders of the type of Brockway, Gorkin, Pivert, etc., will unquestionably tend to have a brief revival. But the rôle of the centrist sections in the war's earliest stages foredooms this to be a shadowy, short-lived revival.

### The Independent Labor Party in England

In no sense is it permissible for one to describe the I.L.P. as a consistent, homogeneous organization. It consists roughly of no less than *four* distinct tendencies: (1) A small group of outright social patriots who wish the party to support the war; (2) the three-member Parliamentary clique, who, with their followers, are nothing but bourgeois pacifists and followers of the deceased Neville Chamberlain; (3) the bulk of the party, headed by Fenner Brockway and John McNear, who represent classic centrism and are deliberately responsible for the vague formulations and nebulous actions of the party as a whole; and (4) scattered groups of genuine revolutionary militants. It is clear that such a party must have a difficult time in balancing off its conflicting tendencies which tend to tear it to shreds. When one speaks of the British I.L.P. it is necessary to clarify *which* I.L.P. is meant: the appeasement program of Jaems Maxton, M.P., the pro-war counsels of National Secretary C. A. Smith, the radical pacifism of Brockway. Before the British proletariat, the self-negating actions of this party in Parliament, in its press and in the unions must appear as utterly confusing.

The I.L.P. is now organizing its annual convention. If, as seems likely, this event concurs with the launching of a *blitzkrieg* offense against England, an internal crisis will grip the I.L.P., with a split-off of its pro-war section.

For the convention, the National Council of the party has published a discussion resolution on the war. It is not stated whether this unanimously represents the opinion of the N.C., but we doubt it. In addition, Brockway has published several articles in *The New Leader*—organ of his section of the party.

The resolution speaks the truth in many respects: "The government is a coalition between the most reactionary Tory imperialist elements and the Labour Party. The control of foreign policy, of India and the colonies, and of finance and industry remains in Tory hands, whilst the chief function of the Labour ministers is to discipline the working class." "The supreme purpose for which the British government declared

war on Germany was not the defense of democracy, as it alleged, but the maintenance of the Empire and of British capitalist interests."

It states the war aims of British imperialism clearly: ". . . the establishment of a British hegemony over Europe, subordinate financially to the U.S.A. and masked by insincere professions of loyalty to some form of League of Nations, or European Federal Union . . ."

The aims of the I.L.P. are stated as follows: "The I.L.P. stands on a third front, the front of the international working class, the victims alike of fascism in Europe, imperialism in the colonies and capitalism at home." We "demand a peace representing neither capitulation to Nazism nor the domination of capitalist-imperialism, but the victory of the common peoples over both."

All the above is good and commendable, particularly in view of the almost universal patriotic treachery that has submerged the labor movement. We heartily endorse it. But we cannot blind our eyes to three decisive factors: (1) Not one word is said about the Parliamentary clique whose every action flies in the face of these anti-war, revolutionary sentiments; (2) the only specific, *practical* proposal made in the resolution urges the calling of "an international conference to end the war . . ." By whom, under what circumstances? This is, in effect, the same proposal made by the I.L.P. Parliamentary group of urging the warring imperialisms to end the war; and (3) most important of all, there are no practical proposals for revolutionary action, no program for activity in the armed forces, no objectives proposed. The resolution hangs in air and expresses throughout abstract socialist aims, without methods of realizing them. In this respect it fits into the classic forms of centrist politics and policies—to each members of the I.L.P. it can mean at least a little of that which he wants it to mean.

### The Brockway Program

The same spirit, or rather lack of spirit, is found in the writings of the confirmed, hoary centrist, Brockway. "In the long run," says he, "agreement about the need for a socialist change in Britain and the Empire and for the offer of a socialist peace to the peoples of Europe will over-ride in importance present disagreements about the prosecution of the war." That is, our "disagreements" with the Labour Party will fade away because, after all, we're all for socialism!

"But how can power be won" for our program, asks Brockway? The Parliamentary by-elections, he answers, will reveal the strength of this new movement. "A series of by-election victories would compel Parliament either to reconsider its view that the people are to have no opportunity of changing the government before the end of the war, or to reveal that Britain had indeed become a dictatorship in the process of fighting dictatorship." "If Parliament really desired to take the opinion of the people it could do so effectively despite war circumstances." If this makes any sense, Brockway is proposing the familiar social-democratic way of "overthrowing" the imperialist régime of Winston Churchill by electing a Parliamentary majority. Hidebound reformism is the closest Brockway comes to a concrete proposal. But the British workers, who today are reviving their long-sleeping class spirit by building works committees and reconstructing the shop steward system, cannot be attracted by such a social-democratic

panacea. If these proletarians do not find the revolutionary path it will not be because of lack of desire, but lack of leadership.

Brockway goes still further. Seeking to discredit revolutionary policy he is guilty of a monstrous distortion of the meaning of revolutionary defeatism. "Revolutionary defeatism or a policy of sabotage aiming at military defeat." "Revolutionary defeatism is the theory that in a capitalist war socialists should work for the defeat of their government, not only internally by the working class, but externally by the enemy government. . . ." (our emphasis). Brockway might be surprised to learn that he approximates the position of James P. Cannon in this utterly false and distorted definition of revolutionary defeatism. Without elaborating the matter, we can only reply that the historic Marxist meaning attached to revolutionary defeatism means neither "acts of sabotage aiming at military defeat," nor working for defeat "by the enemy government." Revolutionary socialists are neither common spies,

nor terrorists. The genuine meaning of revolutionary defeatism, which implies precisely the sort of program the I.L.P. is incapable of organizing, is given in the program of the Fourth International: Continuation of the class struggle at home, regardless of its consequences on the military front.

The one remaining organization of centrism, and the London Bureau is equipped neither politically, morally nor organizationally to provide revolutionary leadership to the working class. We will not predict its soon-to-be collapse or disintegration as others have done prematurely. The absence of powerful revolutionary forces in England may "guarantee" a long existence for the bloc of the I.L.P. But it would be an illusion to expect anti-war leadership from this organization. Badly battered by the war, but firm in its principles, the Fourth International is still the only serious revolutionary gathering center and bright spot amid the chaos of world imperialism.

HENRY JUDD.

## DISCUSSION ARTICLE:

# What Is A Workers' State?

**M**Y POSITION on the "Russian Question" is substantially and fundamentally the one outlined by Comrade Shachtman in THE NEW INTERNATIONAL of December, 1940. That is, I hold (a) that Russia is not a workers' state, (b) the bureaucracy is a class, and (c) defense of the U.S.S.R. under certain conditions cannot be excluded. It is my belief that the position of Comrade Johnson—that Russia is a fascist state—must be rejected completely. Johnson's position, in my opinion, must be rejected not only for the reason that it cannot be sustained by any of the known and accepted canons of Marxist criticism and analysis, but also for the reason that Johnson has not succeeded in giving logical or theoretical validity to his position and his arguments. In my opinion, his proof (elucidation) is inadequate. At times his presentation is inexcusably flippant and irresponsible. This is particularly the case when he is polemizing against Comrade Trotsky. I will take up some of these points in detail later.

This question of the nature of the Russian state, now being discussed by the Workers Party, is one of profound importance, not only for the party itself but also for the world working class. Involved are the validity of the struggle for socialism, the theoretical bases of that struggle, its tactics and the possibilities for victory of the proletariat on a world scale. The question therefore is not an abstract one. This is especially true today, in the period of the Second World Imperialist War, when the world working class, disunited, shattered by doubt, and fearful of a Hitler victory, is being mobilized in the interest of the international bourgeoisie. It is our duty in the circumstances, therefore, to approach this question seriously and attentively.

### The Nature of the Workers' State

My first contribution to this discussion is given the title, "What Is a Workers' State?" This is the principal question

we have to answer. In summary, the Trotskyist movement reduced the answer to that question to the effect that a workers state is one in which the property is nationalized. According to this definition and according to numerous theses and articles on the question, the political régime was eliminated as a factor to be taken into consideration in arriving at this answer. Nationalized property was believed a sufficient condition for characterizing such a state as a workers state.

The most determined advocates of this position ignored the element of control and often hurled imprecations at all who dared insist that control of the state apparatus and the instruments of production should be considered fundamental factors in determining whether or not Russia is a workers' state. Inquiring individuals were met in the sternest manner with such rebuffs as: "If it isn't a workers' state, then what kind of state is it? Marx only mentioned two kinds of states: workers' state and bourgeois state." This was expected to silence the inquirer, scare him away from any outlying deviations and keep him safe within the fold. If this did not succeed, the next approach was to call up all the renegades from Marxism and Bolshevism, dangle them over the head of the doubter, and then inform him that he was about to take the same road into the ranks of the bourgeoisie.

Those of us who now comprise the Workers Party rejected this approach and this attitude as bureaucratic and doctrinaire. We said that we wanted to examine and reexamine our position on the Russian question. We wanted to go over the steps and the reasoning by which we had reached our position on the Russian question. We wanted to re-appraise some of our premises and relate them to concrete historical events in the Soviet Union. This, to us, meant the application of the basic principle of Marxism, its methodology, in the analysis of the nature of the Soviet state today. This I take it is what Marx intended his theory to be and what he tried to impress on the future Marxists.

There was not then, and is not today, a doubt in our minds as to the validity of Marxism, the correctness of Bolshevik theory and practice, or the permanent eminence of Comrade Trotsky in the field of Marxian theory and practice.

### Can Quotations Decide?

In my opinion it is not productive to approach this question by a servile appeal to quotations. A battle of quotations will not clarify and educate anybody. To proceed in this manner is to turn Marx into a Hebrew prophet and *Das Kapital* into sacred and authoritarian scripture. Quotations are useful when used for illumination. They fall short of their best value when injected merely to prove a debater's point or to refute another quotation. In *THE NEW INTERNATIONAL* for April, 1941, Comrade Trotsky in the piece on "Tradition and Revolutionary Policy," makes a significant reference to this manner of using quotations. He says:

"Leninism consists in not looking backward, in avoiding being bound by precedents, by purely formal reference to quotations. . . . Lenin cannot be chopped up into quotations suitable for all cases in life, because for Lenin the formula is never higher than the reality, it is always the instrument that makes possible grasping the reality and dominating it. One can find in Lenin, without difficulty, dozens and hundreds of passages, which, formally, seem to contradict one another. But it is necessary to see not the formal relationship between one passage and another, but the real relationship of each to the concrete reality in which the formula was introduced as a lever. The Leninist truth is always concrete."

The name of Marx can be substituted for Lenin in the passage quoted.

### What Bolshevism Believed

For some, Russia will remain a workers' state as long as the property is nationalized. No matter how much the workers are oppressed and straight-jacketed, no matter to what extent the bureaucracy seizes power and control, no matter that the soviets are destroyed and the party transformed into an instrument of the bureaucracy, no matter that the political rule of the proletariat has been completely liquidated, Russia could be and would be a workers' state so long as nationalized property remained. I do not believe that Lenin ever held such a view as this. As far as I have been able to learn, Lenin never based his political analyses on formal definitions divorced from concrete conditions and experience. It is difficult to believe that Comrade Trotsky held any such view as this in the post-Revolution days or at the beginning of the Stalinist régime. The leaders of the October Revolution did believe that political control of the state by the proletariat must accompany the nationalization of the property. This consideration is especially important when we—as we must—relate nationalized property to the manner of its nationalization: namely by virtue of the power of the proletariat acquired through the successful October Revolution. In my opinion, these two events go together and must not be separated.

The aim of the masses, of the proletariat was political and economic freedom: to gain political liberty and the material necessities of life. The Bolsheviks knew, however, that such a consummation was not a simple attainment. Tremendous expansion of the forces of production would be necessary. The necessary prerequisite was the revolution which would place in the hands of the proletariat the power to nationalize the bourgeois property, thus transforming it into state property. The revolution was the first step in a process leading to a

classless society. The goal was socialism and all that socialism connotes: political freedom, economic security and high cultural opportunity for the masses.

For a time after the revolution the soviets were a reality. The party was a living and potent force. The Russian proletariat had entered the "preparatory régime" that would lay the basis for the withering away of the state. If this had not been the case then nationalization would have been a fraud and a mere seizure of control by a clique. After October, Russia entered a transition period under the guidance and leadership of the Bolshevik Party. The party was dominant but it was a living and active party of the masses.

### The Stalinist Era

With the ascendancy of the Stalinist bureaucracy the party and the soviets were destroyed (Johnson and Macdonald would perhaps say that the party existed "in form only"). The transition to socialism was halted. In the midst of the transition period, with collectivized property as a foundation, a bureaucratic régime triumphed.

In my opinion it was at this point that Russia ceased to be a workers' state in any sense whatever. This is not a question of dates, or of "interpreters," but of the whole meaning and content of socialism. The victory of October was achieved under the leadership and on the program of the Bolshevik Party, and with the slogan of "all power to the soviets." But with the destruction of the soviets, the liquidation of the party and the distortion of the program, Russia ceased to be a workers state, even in the sense in which Lenin had called it a "workers and peasants' state with bureaucratic deformations." Nationalized property is necessary but not sufficient. In the transition period nationalized property must exist jointly with political control by the proletariat through the democratically operated party and other working class institutions.

Russia is not a workers' state but neither is it a capitalist state. Perhaps we cannot say now what kind of state it is. This would not be fatal except to those who disagree with Trotsky that "neither October, Brest-Litovsk, the creation of a regular peasant army, the system of requisitioning food products, the N.E.P. nor the State Plan were or could have been foreseen or predetermined by pre-October Marxism or Bolshevism." It will only prove fatal for those who believe, with Johnson, that ". . . Stalinist Russia is the greatest affirmation of his (Marx's) analysis of capital hitherto seen."

### Russia in Transition

Russia is still in the transitional period. In that sense it might be called a transitional state. I do not mean by this that the Stalinist bureaucracy is a transitional régime, that is, transitional to socialism. We can say that it is temporary but not transitional. On the foundation of the collectivized property and the removal of the bureaucracy along with the reconstituting of the party and the other organs of workers' power, the development toward socialism can be renewed. This is what is important and meaningful, not labels and definitions.

In *THE NEW INTERNATIONAL* for April, 1941, Comrade Johnson, after saying that after 1936, when all power was lost by the proletariat and the social relations were such as to keep Russian economy and society "in a state of permanent crisis,"

adds that "Stalinist Russia, like American capitalism, is transitional to crisis and collapse and to nothing else." It is very difficult to understand what Johnson means here. If he is saying that the Stalinist régime is not transitional to socialism, then we can agree with him. But to say that it is "transitional to crisis and collapse and to nothing else" doesn't tell us anything, or at least, very much. Johnson also passes over the crises and the constant imminence of collapse of Soviet economy under Lenin and Trotsky. Has Johnson ever heard of the serious crisis that motivated the trade union discussion, or that which motivated the N.E.P.? And does Comrade Johnson think that Stalinist Russia as well as capitalist America are near "collapse"? It appears that collectivized property is a far more powerful factor than Johnson thinks. Furthermore, there are yet several alternative developments possible for American capitalism which might save it from "collapse." It seems to be Johnson's position that the Stalinist bureaucracy adopted fascism to save Russian capitalism.

### Twists on Wage-Labor

Comrade Johnson is out to prove that Russia is a capitalist state and is no longer in a transition period. It was a "transitional state" under Lenin. But Johnson finds that *today* "in Russia the proletariat is a class of wage-laborers." And further, "this predominance of wage-labor makes the means of production capital." But Comrade Johnson isn't so certain about wage-labor in Leninist Russia. "Was there wage-labor in Leninist Russia? *In form only*; or yes and no, as is inevitable in a transitional state, but much more no than yes." Now which was it? Was there wage-labor under Lenin. Of course there was. And it isn't "much more no than yes." How could it have been otherwise in the circumstances, with the struggle for existence still a stern reality: in a "bourgeois state," albeit one "without a bourgeoisie."

How did the transition from the Leninist to the Stalinist period take place? What was the quality of this transformation by which Russia today is a capitalist state? Johnson says:

"The rule of the proletariat created a new economy . . . whereas in a capitalist society the basic relationship is on the one hand wage-labor and on the other hand means of production *in the hands of* the capitalist class; in Leninist Russia the relationship was: *the form of wage-labor only* on the one hand because on the other were the means of production in the hands of the laborer who owned the property through the state."

What does Comrade Johnson mean when he says that the means of production are "in the hands of the capitalist class." Means of production in the hands of the bourgeoisie has heretofore meant that they *own* it. This ownership by one class and the absence of ownership by the other class made it necessary for that class to work for wages. It is true that this was not the dominant form of wage-labor under Lenin. But is it the dominant form of wage-labor under Stalin? Does this form of wage-labor exist at all today in Russia? That is, does the Stalinist bureaucracy *own* the instruments of production in the sense of capitalist ownership?

Johnson says that under Lenin the means of production were in the hands of the "laborer" who "owned the property through the state." Does the Stalinist bureaucracy today own the property through the state? Johnson might argue this because it is his contention that Russian collectivized property under Lenin was progressive only because it was a workers' state. (Johnson ignores the manner of collectivization after

a proletarian revolution, and confuses this with the "statification" of capitalist property by a bourgeois government.) In his reasoning he totally ignores the structural economic changes wrought by the revolution. For that reason he is unable to describe the economic mechanics of the return or degeneration to capitalism.

### Germany and Russia

Later Comrade Johnson remarks: "In Germany and Russia the ruling class possesses, uses as its own, and for its own interests the means of production." What does "possesses" mean here? Does he mean that the bureaucracy in Russia *owns* the property and in the same way that the German bourgeoisie owns German property? In the United States, do Knudsen and Sloan possess General Motors or do du Pont and Raskob? In Germany, who possesses the iron works at Essen, the Krupps or the fascist government? Unless we are ready to accept the Burnham "managerial" thesis we are forced to say that in the United States and Germany the capitalists and not the managers possess (own) the property.

In some places Johnson seems to say that there is no private property in Russia; therefore no capitalist. He writes: "Stalin, contrary, contrary to Trotsky's persistent premonitions, strengthens *state property*, but if private property were restored in Russia tomorrow, it would inevitably be satisfied again." Again: "Of capitalist barbarism, Stalinist Russia is a forerunner." What do these statements mean? Is Russia capitalist, or isn't it?

### Juridical Details

But Comrade Johnson hasn't finished yet. He does a little injudicious twisting. In THE NEW INTERNATIONAL for December, 1940, Comrade Shachtman asked why Hitler, who is bold in other spheres, should halt when he faces the "juridical detail" (the quotations are Schachtman's) represented by private ownership of the means of production. Next he wrote: "Private ownership of capital, that 'juridical detail' before which Hitler comes to a halt, is a social reality of the profoundest importance." It is obvious that "juridical detail" is a quotation. (I think it emanates from Macdonald's article on German fascism.) It is also textually clear that that "juridical detail" is what is known in elementary grammar as a parenthetical clause. The sentence is: "*Private ownership of capital . . . is a social reality of the profoundest importance.*"

Now what does Comrade Johnson do in his haste? He asks of Shachtman: ". . . why may we not call the bureaucracy a capitalist class of the same *economic* type as the German bourgeoisie?" Says Shachtman: the "juridical detail" of ownership is of the "profoundest importance." Then Johnson continues: "This is indeed the magnification of a juridical relationship into the basis of society." And: "So capitalist society depends on Hitler's not changing that juridical detail, in fact for Shachtman, capitalist society is that juridical detail, ownership."

Here we have an excellent illustration of Comrade Johnson's "method," his hopeless confusion and the muddle which can be created when one chops Marx up into quotations and fails to understand the relationship of the quotations to the concrete reality.

## Ownership and Private Property

Comrade Johnson ran into a rather stiff barrier in his attempt to get proof that Russia is a capitalist state. There stood the question of ownership and private property and the collectivized property in the Soviet Union. He stubbornly attempts to dodge the question *per se*, progressive and the necessary foundation for socialist achievement.

One can sympathize with Comrade Johnson's horror at Stalinist barbarity, the condition of the Russian workers, the liquidation of their institutions and all the counter-revolutionary aspects of the Stalinist régime. We agree fully that the trend under Lenin was entirely different from the trend under Stalin. But none of these things can prove (explain) that Russia is a capitalist state. In my opinion all that Johnson proves is that Russia is not a workers' state. But to say as he does that it is a capitalist state is to do violence to all the fundamental Marxian criteria by which we judge such questions. One is privileged to revise Marxism; it has been done before and will be done again, but we would like to have it straight in front of us so that we know what it is we are discussing.

## Is Russia a Fascist State?

Comrade Johnson claims that Russia is not only a capitalist state but also a fascist state. Germany and Russia are identical types of states: both fascist. Comrade Johnson did not always believe this. In *THE NEW INTERNATIONAL* for July, 1940, he wrote an article, "Capitalist Society and the War." In that article Comrade Johnson makes what he himself calls "the Marxian analysis" of fascism. He wrote:

"The iron law of such a method of production (capitalist) is the accumulation of profits in the form of capital leading to an ever greater concentration." The fascists "compelled the bourgeoisie to invest a portion of its profits in armaments. The system, however, remains a capitalist system, in the method of production, the use of labor-power as a commodity, the inevitable accumulation of capital, the need for imperialist expansion. *The bourgeois investment in armaments is in reality a form of investment in colonies and new industrial opportunities which the armaments will win for them.*" (Italics in original.)

Continuing, Johnson says:

"The nature of bureaucratic power and the extent of its revenues are subordinate to the essential features of capitalist production in Germany . . . it (fascism) is capitalism in its last stages . . . such is the Marxian analysis of the question . . . it places the working class at the mercy of the capitalists in regard to wages and working conditions . . . Germany needed an expansion of agriculture, but the Nazis carefully guarded the property of the Junkers . . . after all, fascism is the government of finance-capital in decay."

Johnson adds, still speaking of fascist Germany, that:

"There has been a redistribution of income and a shift in political power, which afford scope for close study, and periodic reevaluation. But through all the changes, the fascist bureaucracy, even when Bonapartist-fashion it makes gestures, concrete and symbolic, to other classes, preserved the fundamentals of capitalist society in our day, the profits of finance-capital . . ."

## Johnson on Germany

This is the way Comrade Johnson described capitalism and fascism last July. He called it "The Marxian Analysis" of fascism. In Germany capitalism is one thing; in Russia it is something else. In Germany fascism is the government "of finance-capital in decay." In Russia, however, all that is necessary to have fascism is misery, barbarism and terror. In Ger-

many "redistribution of income and a shift in political power" produce no basic change, but in Russia they produce capitalism and fascism.

We cannot be certain, however, that Comrade Johnson really holds to his "Marxian Analysis" of last July. For in the April, 1941, *NEW INTERNATIONAL* he writes: "The German capitalist with every social relation of production, wages, trade, profit, all controlled by the state, is little more than a state functionary." How does Johnson make this statement square with his affirmations of July; with those already quoted and the following:

"It is true that the Nazis compelled the capitalists to reinvest profits over a certain amount (my italics.—D. C.) in such industries as were indicated by the state . . . but the direction of these enterprises they left to the capitalists themselves and they forbade any increase in the state administration of industry."

It seems that it has never occurred to Comrade Johnson that a state can be capitalist and not be fascist. It is not difficult, however, to detect the source of Johnson's difficulty. Although he is profuse in the distribution of quotations from Marx, and makes constant assertions about stern Marxian analysis, he demonstrates again and again that his thinking has been warped by the brutality and terror of the Stalinist

Comrade Johnson warns us to beware of "Trotsky's methodology on Russia applied to capitalism." Also Shachtman's "metaphysical and juristic" fictions, because, "this method of thinking . . . is bourgeois, and will lead us straight into the camp of the bourgeoisie."

This is strong language and I humbly urge that Comrade Johnson meditate on that last sentence about the "camp of the bourgeoisie" in connection with his claim that Russia is a fascist state. Also I believe that the following calls for some meditation also: "After nearly twenty-five years of work and thought on the Russian question, the successor of Marx, Engels and Lenin, pursuing a consistent line, invited us to enter one of the war camps and we refused. But for the accident of circumstances we would have been on one side of the barricades and the leader of the October revolution on the other." This is pure nonsense, but what I want to emphasize is that it is highly inappropriate and unacceptable nonsense.

There are many other aspects of this question that I should like to discuss but limitations of space dictate that they be left to others or to a later contribution of my own in a future number of *THE NEW INTERNATIONAL*.

DAVID COOLIDGE.

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## Concerning Historical Materialism

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following selection is taken from an essay by Franz Mehring which appeared as an introduction to the "*Lessing Legend*," German edition of 1895, in the book series, International Bibliothek—Dietz Verlag. The essay treats of the philosophical disputes of the time and while parts of the writing seems obsolete in our generation, the whole of it is very timely. Additional selections from this essay, a work which has not heretofore appeared in the English language, will appear in forthcoming issues of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL.)

THE bourgeois world today is really as much opposed to historical materialism as, a generation ago, it was opposed to Darwinism and a half generation ago to socialism. It slanders without understanding it. It has gradually and toilsomely enough admitted (*Kapiert*) that Darwinism is something different from an "ape theory," and that socialism wishes something different from a "division of the wealth," or "laying a predatory hand upon the fruits of a thousand years of culture." But historical materialism is still adequate for the purpose of being overwhelmed with foolish and cheap phrases, phrases, perhaps, of this kind: "that it is a phantasy invented by a pair of talented demagogues."

Actually—and naturally—the materialistic investigation of history is subject to the same dynamic laws of history, which it itself erects. It is a product of historical development; it could not have been imagined by the most gifted geniuses of any earlier age. Only at a certain stage of development could the history of mankind reveal its mystery.

"While the discovery of the impelling forces of history was entirely impossible in all previous periods, because of complicated and secret interconnections with their effects, our present period has so far simplified these interrelations that the problem can be solved. Since the establishment of large-scale industry, thus at least, since the European peace of 1815, it has no longer been a mystery to anyone in England that there the entire political struggle for hegemony has revolved around two classes, the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. In France the same fact has become visible with the return of the Bourbons; the historians of the Restoration, from Thierry to Guizot, Mignet and Thiers have declared it to be, above all, the key to an understanding of French history since the Middle Ages. And since 1830, the working class, the proletariat, has been recognized as the third competitor for hegemony in both countries. Relations have been so simplified that one would have to close his eyes, in order not to see in the struggle of the three great classes and in the conflict of their interests, the driving force of modern history, at least in the two most advanced countries."

So speaks Engels concerning that climactic period of history which first awakened in Marx and himself an understanding of the conception of historical materialism. How this conception was further developed may be gleaned from Engels

himself. (*Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the Effect of Classic German Philosophy.*)

### What Marx and Engels Did

The life work of Marx and Engels rests throughout upon historical materialism; upon this foundation were built all their writings. It is simply a lie of bourgeois pseudo-science to make it appear as if both men had only here and there made a little excursion into the science of history in order to establish a theory of history nursed by them since childhood. *Kapital*, as Kautsky has already particularly emphasized, is, in the first place, an historical work, and especially, with reference to its historical material, is it comparable to a treasure mine in great part still untouched. Likewise must one say that the works of Engels are incomparably richer in content than extent; that they contain infinitely more historical material than the academic wisdom of the school could possibly dream of, a school which discovers, perhaps, a pair of sentences, uncomprehended, or intentionally misunderstood by the superficial, and then gives itself over to wondering if it has not discovered a "contradiction" or something of the sort.

It would be a very worthwhile task systematically to gather together the totality of historical insights which are scattered through the writings of Marx and Engels. And certainly, this task ought to be once and for all discharged. But at this stage we will have to be satisfied with a general indication of what ought to be done, for here the only point is to unfold the most essential principles of historical materialism. And this must be done more negatively than positively, namely, by refuting the customary objections which have been raised against it.

In a manner as brief as it is convincing Karl Marx has extracted the substance of historical materialism in the preface to his work, *Zur Kritik der Politischen Okonomie*, which appeared in 1859. There he says:

"The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, served as the leading thread in my studies, may be briefly summarized as follows: In the social production of life, men enter into definite relations which are indispensable and independent of their wills; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of the development of their material powers of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real basis on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of the material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men which determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production come into conflict with existing productive relations or—what is only the legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations, within which these forces had previously worked. From forms of development of the productive forces, these relations turn into their



fetters. Then follows a period of social evolution. With the change in the economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is transformed more or less rapidly. In considering such a transformation one must always distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be established with scientific exactness, and the juristic, political, religious, artistic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as an individual cannot be judged in terms of what he imagines himself to be, so such a period of transformation cannot be judged by its own consciousness. On the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production. No social order ever disappears before all the forces of production, for which there exist sufficient room, are developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear in its place, before the material conditions for their existence have been matured in the womb of the old society. That is why mankind always concerns itself with only those problems which it can solve, for on more careful consideration, one would always find that the problems emerge only where the material conditions of their solutions already exist, or at least are in the process of being formed. In broad outlines, the Asiatic, antique, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production, antagonistic, not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of an antagonism growing out of the social conditions of life for individuals. However, the forces of production developing in the womb of bourgeois society are creating, at the same time, the material conditions for the solution of this antagonism. The primitive history of human society will conclude with this social formation."

### The Communist Manifesto

In these few words is stated the law of motion of human history in its transparent depth and with exhaustive clarity, the equal of which must be sought through all literature. And one must really be a university lecturer in philosophy, in the excellent town of Leipzig, in order to find in them with Mr. Paul Barth "undefined terms and pictures," formulations of social states and dynamics which are very vague and patched together with pictures. But insofar as men are the bearers of this historical development, this was already described by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto of 1848 as follows:

"The history of all previous societies has been the history of class struggles.

"Freemen and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman; in short, oppressor and oppressed have stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on and uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight which has ended each time with a revolutionary transformation of all society, or with the common destruction of the contending classes.

"In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complete organization of society into various classes, a manifold gradation into social ranks. In ancient Rome, we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guildmasters, journeymen, serfs, and within almost every one of these classes, again special gradations.

"Modern bourgeois society which has arisen from the ruins of feudal society, has not done away with class antagonisms. It has only established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in the place of the old.

"Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, is distinguished, however, in this respect, that it has simplified class antagonisms. Society, as a whole, is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes confronting each other—bourgeoisie and proletariat."

There follows the well-known description of how the bourgeoisie, on the one side, and the proletariat, on the other, must develop each according to its historical conditions of existence, a description which has brilliantly withstood in the meantime, the test of nearly a half-century, full of the most unprece-

dent transformations. There follows the proof why and how the proletariat will conquer the bourgeoisie. With the abolition of the old conditions of production, the proletariat puts an end to the class antagonisms, to classes in general, and thus to its own rule as a class. "In the place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms appears an association in which the free development of each one is the condition for the free development of all."

And then there ought also to be quoted the following from the words which Engels spoke at the open grave of his friend:

"Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history; the simple facts, hitherto concealed under ideological overgrowths that men previous to everything else must first eat, drink, have shelter and clothe themselves before they can study politics, science, art religion, etc.; that the production, therefore, of the immediate material means of life, and consequently the actual level of the economic development, at a given time of a people, constitute the basic conditions from which the organizations of the state, the ideas of justice, the art and the religious notions of the particular people have developed and in terms of which they, therefore, must be explained; not vice versa, as has hitherto been the case."

### Marxism and Historico-Romanticists

Above all, this idea is a simple fact, in the sense of Ludwig Feuerbach who remarked, "It is a specific characteristic of a philosopher that he is no professor of philosophy. The simplest truths are those which always come last to the human being." Feuerbach was the intermediate link between Hegel and Marx; but he was halted half-way because of the poverty of German conditions. He still considered the "discovery of truths" a purely ideological process. Nevertheless, Marx and Engels did not "hit upon" historical materialism in this fashion. To slander them out of kindness that they had spun it out of their heads, would mean to do them as great a wrong as to represent this assertion as an insult, for it means explaining, with the kindest intentions, the materialist conception of history as an empty brain phantasy. Moreover, the real renown of Marx and Engels consists in having given, by means of historical materialism, the most striking proof of its truth. They knew not merely German philosophy, like Feuerbach, but also the French Revolution and English industry. They solved the mystery of human history, although this task had hardly been set for mankind, although the material conditions for its solution were yet in the "process of being formed." And they proved themselves to be thinkers of the highest order, in that they recognized, nearly fifty years ago, comparatively weak traces of what the bourgeois science of all the nations has not yet been able to grasp, but, at most here and there, only to anticipate, despite an unlimited supply today of the most potent proofs.

How little this method of hatching a particular theoretical proposition can accomplish is illustrated by a remarkable example which sounds extraordinarily enlightening and seems to agree in thought and expression with that scientific knowledge, gained by a penetrating study of historical evolution. We are indebted to Professor Hugo Brentano for the proof of how close the historical school of the romantic bordered upon the materialist conception of history, particularly the reference to the position of Lavergne-Peguillen, which reads as follows:

"Perhaps the science of society as such has progressed little until now because the forms of economy have not been sufficiently distinguished;

because one has not appreciated that they constitute the foundations of the organization of society and the state, as a whole. One has not noticed that production, the distribution of products, culture and the spread of culture, state legislation and the state form have derived their content and their evolution entirely from the forms of economy; that the above highly important social factors rise just as unavoidably from the forms of economy and their appropriate management as the product from the reciprocal co-operation of the generating forces and that, where social diseases are to be discovered, these find their roots, as a rule, in the contradictions between social and state forms." (Lavergne-Peguillen, *Die Bewegungs und Produktionsgesetze*.)

This was written in the year 1838 by a renowned representative of the historico-romantic school, the same school which Marx, in the *Deutsch-Französischen Jahrbüchern* subjected to such an annihilating criticism. And yet, if one should disregard this fact that Marx does not derive the production and distribution of products from the forms of economy, but, on the contrary, the forms of economy from production and the distribution of products, then he appears, at first sight, to have plagiarized Lavergne-Peguillen's materialist theory of history.

### Feudalism and the Historico-Romanticists

However, there is the question of "appropriate management." The historico-romantic school was a reaction against bourgeois national economy, which explained the mode of production of the bourgeois classes as the only one in conformity with nature and the forms of economy of these classes as eternal, natural laws. Historical romanticism in the interests of the Junkers, turned against these exaggerations with the patriarchal glorification of the economic relation of dependence between the landlords and serfs; it opposed to the desires of the liberal school for political freedom the proposition that the real constitution of a people was not a pair of papers: the law and a constitution; but the economic relations of power; thus, in this particular case, the relationship of master and serf which were transmitted from feudal times. The theoretical struggle between bourgeois national economy and historical romanticism was the ideological reflection of the class struggle between bourgeois and Junker. Each of the two forces explained the modes of production and forms of economy approved by its class as eternal, unchanging natural laws. That the liberal vulgar economists, therefore, reckoned more with abstract illusions; the historical romantics, more with brutal facts; that the former had more of an idealistic, the latter more of a materialistic character, simply followed from the difference in the historical stage of development of both combating classes. The bourgeoisie wished for the first time to become the ruling class, and accordingly painted its future rule as the state of universal happiness. The Junker was the ruling class and had to remain satisfied with romantic glorification of the economic relation of dependence upon which its power rested.

At such a glorification only is this proposition of Lavergne-Peguillen aimed. Thus he wishes simply to say the feudal forms of economy ought to be the foundation, as a whole, of the organization of the state and of society; from them must be derived the form of state and the state legislation. Should society deviate from them, then it becomes sick. Lavergne-Peguillen makes no secret of his intentions in the further conclusions which he permits himself to draw from his proposition. He distinguished three forms of economy, which historically followed one another and are now "confused" with one another: the economy of force, the economy of interest, and

the economy of money to which correspond the state-forms: despotism, aristocracy, monarchy, and the moral feelings: fear, love, self-interest. The economy of interest, the aristocracy, or to call the child by its right name, feudalism, is—love. "The material exchange of mutual services," so Lavergne-Peguillen literally writes, 'is, above all, the source of love and attachment.'" But just as history once hit upon the perverted idea of obscuring this source and of "confusing" the state forms, so also does Lavergne-Peguillen, following her, wish to confuse the state forms, naturally in the idea of "appropriate management." The aristocracy ought to govern in the "community" with that power which the richer and more educated members of the community ought to exercise both as law-maker and as administrator over the great crowd of comrades, enjoying citizenship in the community. "In addition there ought to remain a certain amount of despotism," which "even in its dissolute form could hardly destroy the powers of society as much as the tyranny of law," and equally so, a certain amount of monarchy, but without "self-interest," moreover, "encompassing with its exalted point of view the interests of all with an equal love."

One easily sees what it is Lavergne-Peguillen wants: the restoration of the feudal rule and "of the absolute king, if he will do its will." His work has already been criticized by the *Communist Manifesto* in its judgment concerning feudal socialism: "at times striking the bourgeoisie to the heart's core, by its bitter, witty criticism, but always ludicrous in its effect because of a total inability to grasp the candle of modern history." The second part of this criticism is more applicable to German romanticism than the first. The overthrow of feudalism by the bourgeoisie considerably sharpened the wits of the feudal socialists in France and England and thus insinuated in them the pale foreboding that the "old expectation of a future restoration had become impossible." But German and particularly Prussian feudalism which was still alive, kept copybook in hand and was able to inscribe within its confines, with a clumsy vulgarity, the banner of mediaeval feudalism, clothed throughout in moralistic commonplaces, but still healthy, against the invasion of the by no means sweeping Stein-Hardenbergian legislation.

### Unrelated to Marx and Engels

The romantic school is characterized by its inability to understand any other form of economy than the feudal, which it understands only superficially; yet just because it sought, in its narrow class interest, to force all heaven and earth, all moral, political, religious, etc., relations within this economic form, so it arrived naturally at propositions which, from a distance, sound very much like historical materialism from which it is actually as far removed as it is from the class interests of science. Similar to the relations in which Lavergne-Peguillen stood to Marx and Engels, so twenty years later, stood Gerlach and Stahl to Lassalle. Gerlach, in the Prussian district presidential chamber, had often enough upheld in his own particular ways the future constitutional theory of Lassalle before the liberal position in the Prussian district presidential chamber; and yet Lassalle in his *System of Acquired Rights* gave these last outpourings of historical romanticism their scientific death-blow. Thus this school has nothing to do with his-

torical materialism, or, only, in the remotest sense, insofar as its unpainted class ideology has been one of the ferments by means of which Marx and Engels arrived at the materialist conception of history.

Only this last statement is also not true. This proposition from Lavergne-Peguilhen appeared sufficiently striking to us—this was before we were able to see the entire work which rightly enough is forgotten today—to send it to Engels with the question, whether he or Marx had known and been influenced by the authors of the romantic school, Marwits, Adam Müller, Haller, Lavergne-Peguilhen, etc. Engels had the great kindness to answer us on September 28 from J.:

I myself have a copy of the Memoirs of Marwits and I looked through the book several years ago, but I never discovered more in it than some excellent things concerning Cavalry and a stubborn belief in the wonderful powers of five lashes, when employed—by a noble upon a plebeian. In particular, the literature has remained absolutely alien to me since 1841 and 1842. I concerned myself only very superficially with it; and I certainly have nothing to be indebted to it. Marx became acquainted with Adam Müller and Mr. von Haller's Restoration, etc., during his stay in Bonn and Berlin. But he spoke with a natural repulsion of these empty, feeble phrase-swollen imitations of the French romantics, Joseph de Maistre and Cardinal Boland. And if he should have met up, at that time, with quotations like the ones cited from Lavergne-Peguilhen, they could not have made any impression upon him, even if he had understood, in general, what such people wished to say. At that time, Marx was an Hegelian for which such a position was absolute heresy; he knew absolutely nothing about economics. Thus he could make nothing out of a phrase like 'Forms of economy,' and so the particular passage, if he knew it, would have gone in one ear and out the other, without leaving behind a perceptible trace. But I hardly believe that one would find in the historical romantic writings read by Marx between 1837 and 1841 any suggestions of a similar kind. The passage is in every way very remarkable, though I should like to verify the quotation.

I do not know the book, and the author is known to me only as an adherent of the "historical school." The most extraordinary things is that the same people, who have abused history in the concrete, theoretically as well as practically, should have found in the abstract the concrete conception of history. People may have been able to see under Feudalism how the state form develops out of the economic form, because the thing was, so to say, so clear and concentrated at hand. I say, *they may have*, for apart from the above passage, I have never been able to discover any reason why the theoreticians of Feudalism should be less abstract than the bourgeois liberals. If one of them further generalized this conception of the connection of the spread of culture and the form of the state, with the form of economy within the feudal society—that it applies to all forms of economy and state—how then explain the total blindness of the same romantics as soon as it concerned the *other* forms of economy, the bourgeois form of economy and the state form corresponding to its levels of development—the medieval guild commune, absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, the Republic? This, however, is difficult to harmonize consistently? And the same man, who saw in the form of economy, the basis of the entire organization of society and the state, belonged to a school, for whom the absolute monarchy of the seventeenth and eighteenth century already means the fall of men and a transgression from the true doctrine of the state.

However, it is still true that the form of the state results unavoidably from the form of economy and its "appropriate organization" just as the child results from the cohabitation of man and wife. Considering the world-famous doctrine of the author, I can only explain it in this way: the true form of economy is the feudal. Insofar as the evil in men conspires against this form, it has to be organized accordingly so that it is able under such circumstances to protect and perpetuate itself against these attacks; and that the "form of the state," etc., might appropriately correspond to them, would bring us back to the 13th and 14th centuries. Then were the best of world and the most beautiful historical theories equally realized. And the Lavergne-Peguilhenian generalization is once more reduced to its real meaning: that feudal society produces a feudal order of state."

Thus Engels. Since we have now verified, according to his wish, this quotation and discovered in the exhumed work of

Lavergne-Peguilhen the connections expressed above, we can only answer him with sincere thanks for his remarkable interpretation in which he correctly constructed the entire feudal mastodon from a single bone.

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## Objections to Historical Materialism

Of the customary objections against historical materialism besides the two already dispatched, is one which is connected with its name. Idealism and materialism are the opposing answers to the great philosophical problem concerning the relation of thought to being, the question whether spirit or nature is fundamental. In and of themselves, they have not the slightest to do with moral ideals. Such ideals can be had by the philosophical materialist in the highest and purest sense, while the philosophical idealist does not need to possess them remotely. But because of the many years of slander by the priesthood, there has come to adhere to the word materialism an immorally oblique and additional idea which, in multifarious ways, has known how to creep into the works of bourgeois science. "The philistine understands by materialism, gluttony, boozing, sensuality, sexual lust, and high living, money greediness, avarice, covetousness, profiteering, swindling, speculation; in short, all the sordid vices to which he is himself secretly addicted; and by idealism (he understands) the belief in virtue, the universal love of mankind and in general, a 'better world,' of which he boasts before others, but in which he himself believes, at most, so long as he is in the habit of enduring the hangovers and breakdowns necessarily following from his customary 'materialistic' excesses; therefore he sings his favorite song: 'What is man—half beast, half angel.'" (Engels). If one uses the words in this translated sense, then must one say that today the creed of historical materialism demands a high moral idealism for it brings with it, unfailingly, poverty, persecution, and slander; while historical idealism is the affair of every panting careerist, for it offers the richest prospect for all earthly good fortunes, of fat sinecures, of all possible ranks, titles, and offices. We do not thereby assert, by any means, that all idealistic historians are impelled by impure motives, but we ought outright to reject every immoral stain which may have been attached to historical materialism as a foolish and shameless insinuation.

## The Nature of the Theory

Something which is understandable, although it is just as much gross error, is the confusion of the materialism of history with that of nature. This confusion overlooks the fact that man lives not only in nature, but also in society, that there is not only a science of nature, but also a science of society. Of course, historical materialism includes natural science, but natural science does not include the historical. Scientific naturalism sees in man a creature of nature endowed with consciousness, but it does not investigate in what way the consciousness of men within human society is determined. Thus, when it ventures into the historical field, it changes into its opposite, into the most extreme idealism. It believes in the magical, spiritual power of great men who make history. Let us recall Buchner's enthusiasm for Frederick II, and Haeckel's idolatrous adoration of Bismarck coupled with his most ridiculous hatred of socialists. It recognizes, in general, only ideal impulses in this human society.

A true example of this species is Hellwald's *History of Culture*. Its author does not see that the religious reformation of the sixteenth century was the ideological reflection of an economic movement; instead the "Reformation exercised an extraordinary influence upon the economic movement." He does not notice that the needs of Swiss commerce led to standing armies and commercial wars; instead "it was the growing love of freedom which created the standing armies and, immediately, new wars." He does not understand the economic necessity for the absolute monarchy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; instead "it can be proven that the despotism of a Ludwig XIV, the regiment of favorites and of courtesans of the court would never have been possible, if the people had placed their veto against it, for, in the last instance, all power still remains with them." And so on endlessly!

On nearly every one of his 800 pages, Hellwald commits similar or even worse blunders. Against such "materialistic" historical writing, the idealistic historians naturally have an easy victory. But they, nevertheless, ought not to make historical materialism responsible for Hellwald and Co. Scientific materialism attains by means of the greatest relevancy, actually, the greatest irrelevancy. Insofar as it comprehends man simply as an animal endowed with consciousness, it reduces the history of mankind to a variegated and meaningless play of ideal impulses and ends; by means of the false supposition of men endowed with consciousness as an isolated creation of nature, it arrives at the idealistic phantom of a human history which rushes by like a mad dance of shadows, because of the materialistic connections of the external totality of nature. Historical materialism, on the contrary, begins from the scientific fact that no man is simply an animal, but a social animal, that he obtains his consciousness only in the community of social ties (the horde, gens, the class); and only in it can he live as a conscious creature; that, therefore the material conditions of these ties determine his ideal consciousness; and their progressive evolution represents the predominating law of motion of mankind.

## Bourgeois Objections

So much, then, concerning the attacks upon historical materialism which have brought it such ill repute. They already exhaust the great part of the objections directed against it, for bourgeois science has not yet yielded a substantial criticism of the materialistic interpretation of history—with the exception of an investigation to be mentioned shortly. With what foolish talk the "most eminent" representatives of this science attempt unsuccessfully to hurdle this inconvenient obstacle which mars those rosy hopes, intended to lull bourgeois class consciousness. Of this, anyone can convince himself by the speeches by means of which Mr. Adolph Wagner, "the great teacher of political economy at the first German university," had, in particular, enlightened the enlightened gentlemen of the evangelical social congresses in the year 1892 (Adolph Wagner, *Das Neue Sozialdemokratische Program*). Now, though we are far removed from placing all representatives of bourgeois science on the same level with this accomplished sophist and sycophant, yet we have been able to discover, after long years of observation of their criticism of historical materialism, nothing more than some common modes of expression which are not so much actual objections as moral reproaches.

In content, historical materialism seems to be an arbitrary construction of history, which compresses the extraordinary, manifold life of mankind in a barren form. It appears to

deny all ideal forces; it seems to turn into a non-contradictory playball of mechanical development; it seems to reject all moral standards.

Now the opposite is the truth. Historical materialism dispenses with every arbitrary historical construction; it puts aside every barren formula, which wishes to treat the changing life of mankind in exactly the same fashion. "The materialistic method is transformed into its opposite, when it is employed not as a guide to the study of history, but as a finished stencil in accordance with which one accurately cuts the historical facts." (*Vorwaerts*, Oct. 5, 1890.)

Thus Engels protested, and similarly Kautsky protested against every "superficial interpretation" of historical materialism; as if in society, there were merely two estates, two classes which struggle against each other, two solid, homogeneous masses, the revolutionary and the reactionary masses. "If this were actually true, then the writing of history would be very easy. But in reality, relationships are not so simple. Society is and becomes ever more a uniquely complicated organism with the greatest differentiation of classes and of interests, which can group themselves, corresponding to the structure of things, into the greatest variety of parties." (Kautsky, *Class Antagonisms of 1879*.)

## The Methodology

Historical materialism approaches every portion of history without any prepossessions; it investigates it simply from its foundation to its roof, ascending from its economic structure to its spiritual conceptions..

But just that, one may say, is an "arbitrary construction of history." How otherwise would you know that economics is the foundation of historical development and not philosophy? Now, we know it simply for this reason; that men must first eat, drink, shelter and clothe themselves before they can think and write, that man only attains consciousness through social unity with other men; consequently that his consciousness is determined through his social existence and not, vice versa, through his consciousness. The assumption that men first come to drink and shelter by means of thought, to economics by means of philosophy, is the obviously "arbitrary" presupposition of historical idealism and leads it, consequently, to the most remarkable "constructions of history." In remarkable—and also in unremarkable—ways, this is admitted, in a certain sense, by its epigonian disciples, in that they do not know sufficient ways to make fun of the "historical constructions" of their great representative, namely, Hegel. Not only the "historical constructions" of Hegel, in which they outdo him a thousand fold, irritate them, but Hegel's scientific understanding of history as a process of human development whose graduated evolution is to be pursued through all its mistaken roads and whose inner conformity to law must be demonstrated through all apparent accidents. These great ideas, a rebirth of ancient Greek dialectic and the ripest fruit of our classical philosophy, were taken over from Hegel by Marx and Engels. "We German socialists are proud in this, that we stem not only from Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen, but also from Kant and Hegel." (Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*.)

But they acknowledged that Hegel in spite of many profound insights into the process of development had only arrived at an "arbitrary construction," because he took the effect

for the cause, things for copies of ideas, not, as is, in actuality, ideas for the copies of things. For Hegel, this conception was very natural, for the bourgeois classes in Germany had not, in general, really come to life. They had to take flight in the empyrean of the idea, in order to be able to save their independent existence. And here they fought their battles in forms which to the reigning absolutistic-feudal reaction were inoffensive or the least offensive possible. Hegel's dialectic method, which conceives the natural, historical and spiritual world, taken as a whole, as a process, as in constant movement and development, and seeks to trace the inner connection in this movement and development, ended, nevertheless, in a system which knew how to discover the absolute idea in the permanent monarchy, idealism in the blue Hussars, a necessary estate in the feudal lords, a deep meaning in "original sin," a category in the crown prince, etc.

As soon as a new class, however, arose in the course of the economic development out of the German bourgeoisie and entered the class struggle, namely, the proletariat, then it was natural that this new class should seek to bring the struggle to earth again, so that it might take possession of its material inheritance not without preparation, taking from bourgeois philosophy its revolutionary content but breaking with its reactionary form.

## Marx, Hegel, and Schopenhauer

We have already seen that the spiritual pioneers of the proletariat placed the dialectic of Hegel which had stood upon its head, once more upon its feet. "For Hegel, the thought process, which he transforms under the name, *idea*, into a self-existent subject, is the demiurgos of the real, which is only its external appearance. For me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing more than the material world, translated and transplanted into the minds of men" (Marx). But so Hegel was able to supply the bourgeois world which had fortunately been asleep, with a revolutionary content under the reactionary form of his dialectic.

"In its mystical form, dialectic became the German fashion, because it seemed to explain the extant. In its rational form, it is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinal spokesmen, because it includes, at the same time, in its positive comprehension of existence, also the understanding of its negation, of its necessary disappearance. It grasps every form which has come into existence in the flow of movement, thus, in terms of its transitions. It allows itself to be imposed upon by nothing. By its very nature, it is critical and revolutionary." (Marx, Karl, *Kapital*, I, 822. Second ed. German.)

And a scandal and an abomination did Hegel, in fact, become to the German bourgeoisie, not because of his weakness, but because of his strength; not because of his "arbitrary historical constructions," but because of his dialectical method. For only according to the latter, but not according to the former, does bourgeois science dance to its extinction.

As a consequence, Hegel had to be gotten rid of in toto; and this conclusion also was drawn by the most important philosopher of the German petty bourgeoisie. Schopenhauer rejected Hegel's philosophy. He saw in the history of mankind no ascending process of development; the German petty bourgeois, whose prophet he was, is Man as he was from the beginning and as he will be in the future. Schopenhauer's philosophy culminates in the "insight" that "at all times, it was, is, and will be the same." He writes:

"History shows itself, from every side, to be the same, only under dif-

ferent forms; the chapters of the history of peoples are distinguished basically only in the names and number of years; the really essential content is in everything the same. . . . The stuff of history is the only thing in its singleness and contingency, which always is and afterwards always is no more, the transitory interweavings of a world of men moving like clouds in the wind, often transformed by the most trivial accidents."

Thus Schopenhauer's philosophic idealism remains very close to scientific materialism. In fact, both are the opposite poles of the same limitation. And if Schopenhauer fiercely asserted concerning the scientific materialists: "These gentlemen of the crucible must be taught that mere chemistry is very useful to the apothecary but not to the philosopher"—then he ought to be taught that mere philosophizing is very useful to the hypocrites, but not to the investigator of history. But Schopenhauer was effective in his way, for when he rejected Hegel's dialectical method, he also had to throw away Hegel's historical construction.

Meanwhile, the more the German petty bourgeoisie developed into large industrial bourgeoisie, the more this bourgeoisie abjured its own ideals in the class struggle and plunged back into the shadows of feudal absolutism; the more powerful grew its need to demonstrate the historical "rationality" of this peculiar retrogression. And since Hegel's dialectic, upon the ground cited by Marx, was a scandal and an abomination, there therefore remained for it only Hegel's historical constructions. Its historians discovered the absolute idea in the German Reich, idealism in militarism, a deep meaning in the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, a necessary condition in the snobbishness of money, a category in the Hohenzollern dynasty, etc. And in its stupidly cunning business way, the bourgeoisie thought that thus they had preserved bourgeois idealism. While attacking the "arbitrary construction of history," it was the real saviour of what was significant and great in this idealism. Thus once more the Gracchii wept over the turmoil and wept even more for the Gracchii themselves!

Let us glance at the other objections and reproaches which have been made against historical materialism: that it denies all ideal forces; that it reduces mankind to a non-contradictory playball of mechanical evolution; that it rejects all moral criteria.

## A Means of Investigation

Historical materialism is no closed system crowned with an ultimate truth; it is a scientific method for the investigation of human development. It begins from the indisputable fact that men live not only in nature, but also in society. There are no such things as isolated men; every man, who by accident is left outside of human society, quickly starves and dies. Thus for this reason, historical materialism acknowledges all ideal forces in their widest compass.

"Of everything which occurs in nature, nothing occurs as an end wished-for, known. On the other hand, in the history of society, transactions between men are genuinely endowed with consciousness, burdened with reflection or passion, sought for certain purposes; nothing happens without conscious desire, without willed end. . . . The will is determined by reflection or passion, but the lever which again determine the passion or reflection, are of various sorts. In part they may be external objects; in part, ideal motives, ambition 'yearning for truth and justice,' personal hatred, or even purely individual whims of all sorts." (Engels.)

This is the essential point of difference between the history of the development of nature, on the one side, and of society

on the other. But apparently the numberless collisions of single transactions and single volitions in history only lead to the same result as the unconscious, blind forces in nature. On the surface of history, just as upon the surface of nature, accident appears to be the rule. "Seldom do things turn out as willed; in most cases the willed ends cross and conflict with each other or these ends are from the beginning unachievable or the means insufficient." Only when a universal law of motion can be asserted successfully of the conflicting play of all the blind accidents which seem to rule unconscious nature—only then is it justified to ask the question whether the thought and will of mankind acting consciously is not also ruled by such a law.

### The Character of History

This law is found, when we search for that which sets in motion the ideal impulses of men. Man can come to consciousness, act and think consciously, only within social bounds. The social community of which he is member awakens and directs his spiritual powers. But the foundation of every society is the mode of producing the material life.

In this way it determines, in the last instance, the spiritual process of life in all its manifold radiations. Historical materialism denies so little ideal forces that it investigates them to their roots, so that it can provide the necessary insight into how ideas develop their power. Certainly men make their history, but how they make their history depends, in every

case, upon how clearly or obscurely is imaged in their heads the material connection of things. For ideas do not arise out of nothing; they are products of social processes of production; and the more exactly an idea reflects this process, the more powerful it is. The human spirit does not exist outside but within the historical evolution of human society. It has sprung from, grown up in and with, material production. Only from the time when production begins to develop from an extremely multiform machine to simple and great antagonisms has man been able to understand its entire organization, and only after these last antagonisms have been pushed aside or destroyed, will he seize control of social production, "will the primitive history of mankind come to an end" (Marx), "will men with full consciousness make their own history; will the leap of mankind from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom be accomplished" (Engels).

Nevertheless, the previous development of society has been no dead mechanism, in which mankind served as a will-less plaything. The greater the portion of the entire lifetime of a generation which must be spent in the satisfaction of its total needs, the greater remains its dependence upon nature, and the smaller is its scope for spiritual development. But this scope grows in the same proportion in which acquired skill and assimilated experience teaches men how to master nature.

FRANZ MEHRING.

## + BOOKS +

### To and From the Finland Station

TO THE FINLAND STATION. • By EDMUND WILSON. 508 pp. Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Edmund Wilson found his way to the Finland Station in the wake of the proletarian revolution, but the revolution is now in eclipse and Wilson has lost his way. But Wilson is to be taken seriously for he has studied history and grappled with the Marxist material. Wilson rejects the dialectic. The Marxist movement is in a dilemma here. Engels said that the test of dialectic is Nature. Lenin, too, knew that Engels' illustrations about seeds were merely popularizations, that the demonstration of the dialectic lay in the study and analysis of science. Nobody has done any of the necessary work. It is as if Marx had written nothing about capitalist production except the *Communist Manifesto*. Wilson rejects, which proves as little as if Wilson accepts. Wilson rejects also the labor theory of value, which is another story. Marx dealt beautifully with a Wilson of his day. In his letter to Kugelmann, July 1868, Marx showed himself rather short-tempered with

the objection. "The nonsense about the necessity of proving the concept of value arises from complete ignorance, both of the subjects dealt with and of the method of science. Every child knows that a country which ceased to work, I will not say for a year, but for a few weeks, would die. Every child knows, too, that the mass of products corresponding to the different needs require different and quantitatively determined masses of the total labor of society. That this necessity of distributing social labor in definite proportions cannot be done away with by the *particular form* of social production, but can only change the *form it assumes*, is self-evident . . .

"The science consists precisely in working out *how* the law of value operates. So that if one wanted at the very beginning to 'explain' all the phenomena which apparently contradict that law, one would have to give the science *before* the science. It is precisely Ricardo's mistake . . ." etc. Now compare Wilson. "Nor was it necessary to accept the metaphysics of the Labor Theory of Value and to argue from it *a priori* . . ."

Metaphysics! Marx thinks every child can see it. And starting from that he solves, as Wilson admits, the future of capitalism.

Most of Wilson's other objections are answered already by Marx himself.

Wilson believes Marx to have demonstrated that capitalism must have an end and demonstrated also "the necessity for socialism." Marx demonstrated not necessity but inevitability. But let that pass for the moment. Where does Wilson stand, for after all that is what matters? The capitalist world is as we see it—it couldn't be worse. What is his attitude? And here Wilson breaks down. The British workers, through long subordination to machines and meager lives, have become "unfitted for class politics and class action". The British ruling class knows by bitter experience that this is nonsense. On America he is worse. Marx, he says, did not foresee that the absence of feudalism made possible in America a "genuine social democratization".

American people more nearly share "the same criteria than anywhere else in the civilized world". In America "money is always changing hands so rapidly that the class lines cannot get out very deep . . . we have the class quarrel out as we go along." What blindness is this! Even Roosevelt, the grand panjandrum of boloney, talks about a "third of the nation" and "economic royalists". The National Industrial Resources Board reported to Roosevelt in 1939: "The opportunity for a higher standard of living is so great, the social frustration from the failure to obtain it is so real, that other means will undoubtedly be sought if a democratic solution is not worked out. The time for finding such a solution is not unlimited." And while Rome

burns, Wilson sings fiddle-diddle-dee. Why is this intelligent and scholarly man so foolish on this issue of all issues? His book tells why.

It is a long study of the decline of the revolutionary tradition in French literature and the origins and development of revolutionary socialism in Europe and America, told chiefly through personal studies of key figures. Wilson plays about with psychoanalysis in an unpardonably light-minded manner, but his biographical work is interesting, his historical studies are valuable, and his essays on Michelet are splendid. He sees how, after the revolution of 1848 and the Commune of 1871, the French bourgeoisie could not write robust history any longer. Renan's portrait of Marcus Aurelius he sees as a projection of the personality of the French bourgeois after the Franco-German war and the Commune.

The book is full of many such judgments, large and small; not blatant, but acute and sensitive, never superficial and sometimes profound. I think Wilson underestimates how savagely Taine, after the Commune, turned on himself and raged at the French Revolution like a maniac. But all this is a badly needed contribution to the historical materialist elucidation of history. In all history writing, all, the influence of the class struggle stands out like a big nose in a small face. Thiers, for instance, in his history of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period, was democrat in those parts written before 1848, Bonapartist in the parts written during the Second Republic, and when Bonaparte's nephew nearly put him in jail, ended the history with attacks upon Bonapartism; while Mitford, the English historian, published an innocuous first volume of a history of Greece in 1784, but the French Revolution taking place in 1789, Mitford devoted the rest of his work to a fanatical attack on Greek democracy. Some day when a materialist history of history is written, it will be a marvelous verification of the Marxist approach and one of the most comic books ever published.

Wilson is a beautiful example of the same process he analyses so well. Despite his disagreements he was swept along by Marx and the proletariat, and at the Finland station he is as excited as any of those who traveled in the sealed train. He writes a brilliant and, for him, enthusiastic essay on Lenin's revolutionary personality. But the proletariat since then, knows only defeats. Hence Wilson's continued fascination by Marxism, his abstract belief in the necessity for socialism, but his opium dreams about American democracy.

The intellectual loves to show the class struggle acting on other people. He hates like hell for it to be applied to himself. There is only one way to overcome this and that is to accept it. Identify yourself with a fundamental class and go where it

goes, mount with it when it mounts and fall with it when it falls. On this basis you will commit some blunders. But you are always in a position to judge and intellectually command the contending forces of society. You can do this as a person identified with the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, or the struggle for preservation of the bourgeoisie. But once you stand in the middle looking from one side to the other, all the knowledge and intellectual honesty in the world will not save you from futility and folly. And even worse may befall. For Wilson in this book constantly lays stress on Marx's Jewish "blood", and he shows a truly Olympian calm in his remarks on Nazi Germany. Both are bad signs, especially in a man who nourishes such illusions about American bourgeois democracy.

J. R. JOHNSON.

## Civil War in Austria

THE DEFENDERS. By FRANZ HOELLERING. Little, Brown and Company.

Franz Hoellering, a young refugee writer, has set himself the extremely ambitious task, in his novel, *The Defenders*, of depicting a cross-section of Viennese society immediately before and during the suppression of the Austrian proletariat in February, 1934. The task is tremendous: not merely to show the effect of the actual struggle on different sections of society, but also to attempt a description of the social decay leading to the conflict; not merely to show one class of Vienna in the transition which led to the February revolt, but to attempt a description of the interweaving political and personal cross-currents which result in the revolt.

It is clear that only a master could succeed in this attempt and Hoellering is not a master—at least not yet. Most of the novels that have dealt successfully with themes of proletarian struggle have produced excitement and suspense by concentrating intensely on a specific event and the sharpened reactions of the participants in that event (*Man's Fate*); or they have been, in one or two cases, thoughtful discussions of the problems facing the proletariat, posed in terms of certain specific human problems (*Bread and Wine*.) But Hoellering has neither the intensity of Malraux nor the depth of Silone.

Resultantly, the novel winds itself into a serious contradiction which destroys it as a total effect and produces a series of disjointed parts. Such a situation is, of course, not unusual with a young writer.

Hoellering's description of the Viennese intelligentsia—the most futile of all intelligentsias—rotting in their cafes and

awaiting their doom, does not arouse interest in the reader; at best it arouses a mixture of detached pity and nausea. Here Hoellering can only produce stilted types who never come to life and about whom Hoellering can write only copy-book banalities. When he describes professors, actors, critics and passé noblemen, one gains the inescapable impression of receiving second-hand goods.

But not only is it that Hoellering appears to be incapable of bringing these people to life, it is impossible in a book of 500 pages to adequately develop all the situations and characters which he suggests. The result is that an entire section of the book is shadowy and irritatingly inadequate. It lacks the panoramic scope necessary to achieve Hoellering's intention and it is too disjointed and diffused to bring the drama which is present in the last section of the book—the description of the actual revolt—to its greatest possible intensity.

When Hoellering turns, however, to the proletariat, to the Social-Democratic movement, to the intellectuals attached to the movement, he gains confidence and assurance. Here he is at home. And in those chapters in which he writes of the Viennese proletariat the novel is vivid and extraordinarily moving. His capacities are as yet limited to an ability to write only of this one section of society, but that he does splendidly.

The capitulation of the German Social-Democracy and the Stalinists to Hitler without a struggle had an extremely depressing effect on the Austrian workers. But it was still possible to fight and win—provided the Viennese workers were rallied under a militant banner of audacious struggle. Such a struggle might have had unforetold results in the rest of Europe where there were still mighty organizations of the working class and might well have been the turning point to beat down the fascists. But the Austrian Social-Democracy restrained the workers after each provocation of the reactionary clerical government until the point was reached where large sections of the workers became demoralized and disgusted. Then the Heimwehr government—negotiating all the while with the Social-Democratic leaders—provoked the workers into an uneven struggle and smashed them.

All this is vividly shown in Hoellering's book. His picture of Hippmann, the two-faced SDP leader, is a biting portrait of the reformist leadership. Hippmann restrains the workers, cajoles them with pretty speeches about Socialist culture and humanitarianism. But a considerable section of the younger workers are restive and resentful; the hero of the novel is a young worker who resigns from the SDP because of disgust with its constant retreats. It is around this section of the

most militant of the Viennese workers that the most vital section of the novel revolves. Here the book grows to profound proportions. The picayune romances, the empty petty-bourgeois dimwits, the banalities and journalese ineptitudes that fill the other sections are absent. Here Hoellering writes with passion and warmth, with fire and understanding.

As a result, we meet a group of workers who are alive and important. The young worker-intellectual Merk who, after having left the SDP in disgust with its reformist position, gives up his life in the revolt; the older, experienced worker Kraus, who expresses the thoughts of the disciplined proletariat of Vienna when he enters the strug-

gle with the realization of defeat but with the words "*We are fighting on out of a sense of honor and to set an example for those who will come after us*" on his lips; the heroic Mother Merk, an old woman, out of the party, who gains dignity and purpose in life when she is entrusted with the secret hiding places of the arms caches and who, in her determination to continue the struggle, even after the defeat and the death of her only son, expresses the indomitable will of the proletariat to liberation; and, above all, the extraordinary figure of Franze, a drummer in the symphony orchestra, who gives tragic stature to his ridiculous personality by his devotion to the proletarian struggle through his last

act: dragging his dying body to a comrade's house in order to inform them of a police spy whom he has uncovered—these are a gallery of unforgettable characters.

If Hoellering had pared his book down only to the sections in which the revolt of the workers is described, it would have been a far better novel than it is. But even with all its technical imperfections, it is an extraordinarily moving account of one of the most heroic of all proletarian struggles; and as such it deserves to be read by all to whom the working class revolution is more than a mere reminiscence of past youthfulness.

IRVING HOWE.

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