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Socialism in the United States —

***What Its Past and Present
Disclose About Its Future***

by Max Shachtman

***The Origins of the American
Communist Movement***

by Julius Falk

**RIGHT VERSUS LEFT IN
THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY**

MOSCOW IN LENIN'S DAYS: 1920-21

BOOKS IN REVIEW:

***A Study of Bolshevism
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Fall 1955

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

A Marxist Review

Vol. XXI, No. 3

Whole No. 169

FALL 1955

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Published quarterly by The New International Publishing Co., at 114 West 14th Street, New York 11, N. Y. Registered as second-class matter March 8, 1950, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Subscription rates: in the U. S., Canada and Australia \$2.00 per year; bundles 35c each for five copies and up. Britain, Ireland and Europe, 10/-British or \$1.40 U. S. per year; Asia 7/-British, or \$1.00 per year.

Address all editorial and business communications to The New International, 114 West 14th Street, New York 11, New York.

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Socialism in the United States —

What Can Its Past and Present Disclose About Its Future?

A Discussion of Why Socialism Has Declined—!

In the recent period there has been a revival of interest in the question of early American socialism and an attempt to seek out the reasons for the declining fortunes of socialism in this country. A number of books have been written on the subject recently, and others are scheduled to appear. Even the *New York Times* has entered the field with an article by Norman Thomas on prospects for socialism in the United States. Whether we agree with the various analyses made or not we nevertheless welcome any serious interest shown in problems pertaining to the past, present and future of American socialism.

With this issue we begin a series of articles on American socialism. Max Shachtman will deal with the question: why there is no mass socialist movement in this country today. Julius Falk's articles will discuss the events and political circumstances leading to the formation of the Communist Party. Both will be continued in the Winter issue. In addition, in the next issue, as part of our discussion of the future of socialism in the United States, T. N. Vance will discuss the much vaunted theory that the United States has an economy free of economic crisis and is therefore invulnerable to socialism.

There are few questions calculated to provoke answers of more far-reaching implications and consequences for the development of the world than this one: *Why is there no socialist movement in the United States?*

Such a movement does not exist today. To avoid misunderstanding, let us eliminate ambiguity. Socialist organizations do exist in the United States. But they are not sustained by support from any substantial section of the working class or social elements sympathetic to it. They are held together by the devotion of their own members whose numbers have continued to decline in an isolation, pro-

duced by social indifference or hostility, which is only enhanced as this devotion flags. A socialist movement is one that is so clearly established as a political force in the country that it not only commands a large part of the suffrage of the working class but is able to call substantial sections of that class to political actions and have them respond to the call. Such a movement exists in every important capitalist country of the world where political freedom is more or less maintained. Of these countries, the United States, which is the most highly developed of them all, is at the same time the great and outstanding exception.

Now, one of two things.

Either:

The United States has developed a capitalist society so distinctive in its fundamental differences from the rest of the capitalist world that its soil will not nourish a socialist movement of any importance. This would only be another way of saying that the conflict of classes has been or can be overcome, or at least the conflicting social interests have been or can be satisfactorily reconciled, without resorting to a socialism which would abolish the capitalist mode of production and the state that preserves it. The revolutionary consequences of this are all but unimaginable! That it would mean the final dethronement of Marxism goes without saying. It might show among other things that while socialism was destined to be the outcome of the evolution of *some* capitalisms which were unable to resolve the problem of the class struggle, it was not at all destined to terminate the development of *all* capitalisms, in particular that unique to the United States. Or it might turn out that socialism, no matter how big a movement developed in its name in various countries, finally dwindled to unimportance in every capitalist land or union of lands that managed in one way or another to acquire those characteristics that immunized U. S. capitalism. The elation and relief that these tidings would arouse in many quarters would be marred only by the reproach at their so tardy arrival.

Or:

What is unique about U. S. capitalism proves to be of transient importance so far as the appearance of a decisive and power-challenging socialist movement is concerned. The material conditions which distinguish the United States are themselves modified and along with them the so-

cial and political relations in the country. It becomes obvious that U. S. capitalism succeeded only in retarding the growth of a socialist movement but not in preventing it. That movement, rid of the not-at-all inherent errors of its past, acquires a new power that rests solidly in the largest and most mighty working class of the world. With the most highly developed machinery of production and exchange at its command for the reconstruction of society, it begins, last-born of the capitalist world though it is, to take its proper place at the head of international socialism. With its triumph, indeed with the approach of its triumph, the lifecourse of world capitalism, which even now exists solely due to American capitalism, is irretrievably ended. As for world Stalinism, it is then a problem to be disposed of in a trice. A development of greater consequence, certainly of greater hope, for the entire globe, is hard to envisage. In the ensuing leisure, the young could be entertained by archaeological expeditions to dig up the literary bones of those who prematurely buried the socialist movement in the United States and wrote scholarly epitaphs on why such a movement could never flourish on its soil.

Investigation yields the surprise that there is a paucity of such scholarly attempts from the intellectual and academic world where a lavish variety might be expected. Not in fifty years has there been such plausible ground, one might think, for the anti-socialist or non-socialist to argue that the failure of a socialist movement to grow is inherent in the nature and capacities for development of American capitalism. It is not a question of the vulgar trash that appears in the regular press or is heard from the blatherskite's platform about the

failure of socialism in the United States being due to its "un-Americanism" or its "immorality," but a question of a scholarly analysis, an attempt at an informed, cohesive, reasoned, objective appraisal. Yet, almost as startling as the failure of the socialist movement to grow in this country is the failure of its critics to explain it. In this general aridity almost anything, however unsatisfactory, would stand out like an oasis. Unfortunately, that is the main claim that can be made upon our attention by the most recent essay at an explanation.

Its author, whose work has been referred to before in our review, is Daniel Bell. He wrote the chapter on "The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in the United States" that appears in the fourth of the "Princeton Studies in American Civilization," a tome entitled *Socialism and American Life*. The rest of the chapters, with one or two exceptions, are hackneyed, bleak or ignorant, or all three at once, that is, authentic products of what passes in American academic life for "sociology."

Bell dropped in for a short visit to the Socialist Party, out of which he lifted himself to the position of managing editor of the *New Leader*, and then further up the mountain to the position of an editor of *Fortune*. His writings, unlike those of the vast bulk of the former people, are virtually free of vindictiveness and malice toward the abandoned movement, and one can even detect here and there the trace of a wish that it were stronger and more influential than it is. In his Princeton essay, whose two hundred pages make it the biggest in the collection, he shows himself to be a serious and well-informed student of the movement in this country, with an extensive and instructive docu-

mentation which suffers from relatively few and minor factual errors. It is the only essay which makes an elaborate attempt to analyze, criticize and therewith explain the feebleness of "Marxian socialism" here; the only essay that is worth a Marxian commentary and reply. After studying it, the Marxist has at least this consolation: If this is the best that an earnest academic criticism of socialism in the U. S. A. has to offer, then we are not so badly off after all. If we are weak today, then at least on the intellectual field our opponents and critics, even the less unkindly ones, are utterly helpless—we repeat, utterly helpless. An examination of Bell's views will make this sufficiently clear. At the same time, it will afford the opportunity for a long-postponed presentation of the Marxian view in a systematic and up-to-date outline.

BELL IS FAMILIAR with many of the elements in the explanation given by critical students up to now, both the Marxists and those who, with or without acknowledgment, employed the analytical method of Marxism. He recalls that fifty years ago, Werner Sombart, in replying to the question posed by the title of his book, *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?* "pointed to the open frontiers, the many opportunities for social ascent through individual effort, and the rising standard of living of the country as factors." Others, like Selig Perlman, explained the lack of class-consciousness here by "the absence of a 'settled' wage-earner class; the 'free gift' of the ballot . . . and third, the impact of succeeding waves of immigration. . . . In the end, all such explanations fall back on the naturally-endowed resources and material vastness of America. . . . Other explanations have indicated equally general,

and relevant, facts."

Nowhere does Bell deny the validity of these "general, and relevant, facts," that is, of the specific objective conditions under which American capitalism and consequently its working class have developed. But they do not satisfy him as adequate. "Implicit in many of these analyses, however, was the notion that such conditions were but temporary." It is at this point that Bell begins his sharp fork away from the analyses of the past, and on to a road of his own. The expectation that, as capitalism matured and crises followed, "a large, self-conscious wage-earner class and a socialist movement, perhaps on the European pattern, would probably emerge," is precisely what proved to be unwarranted, for nothing of the sort emerged when the "maturing" took place. The "depression was such a crisis." It left a permanent scar on the American workers' mind, shook the self-confidence of capitalism, produced a trade-union movement of more than fifteen million members, precipitated sharp class warfare, and brought labor into politics to safeguard its economic gains. "Here at last was the fertile soil which socialist theorists had long awaited. Yet no socialist movement emerged, nor has a coherent socialist ideology taken seed either in the labor movement or in government. So Sombart's question still remains unanswered."

So far, let us say, so good, or good enough, or not bad enough to make a fuss about it. The failure of socialism to become an effective political movement in this country was attributed in the past to this and that objective condition; and the rise of such a movement was predicated on an expected radical change in these conditions. A change did take place, "yet no socialist movement emerged."

So? The statement up to this point is not really enough to shock our interest to a quiver if only because it is not only familiar to tens of millions of people throughout the world but has actually been put down on paper by tens of hundreds of writers. It is only by what follows that the eye jaded by repetition of the obvious might be persuaded to open up. What follows? You might say:

The objective conditions that militated against a big socialist movement have not changed sufficiently, as is shown by the continued existence of this and that objective obstacle to its emergence and growth. In that case, the analyst who is exceptionally prudent would conclude that it is too soon to answer "Sombart's question" and judgment must therefore be reserved. If he is more venturesome, he would conclude, by and large, in one way or the other:

Taking into consideration the way in which the main social forces at work are moving, the obstacles in the path of a socialist movement will presently be overcome.

Or, there are no significant indications that they can or will be overcome.

That is, one conclusion would answer "Sombart's question" substantially the way Sombart himself did, rather prematurely, when he was himself still heavily under the influence of Marxism: the rise of a powerful socialist movement is as sure in the United States as is the change in the objective circumstances which so long impeded its rise. The other conclusion would answer it by saying that by virtue of the origin of American capitalism, by virtue of the way and the conditions in which it developed, and by virtue of the indications now visible of the way in which it will develop in the future—the basis for a

socialist movement in the United States does not exist objectively and its rise in the foreseeable future is for the same reason precluded.

Bell turns out to be the type who eschews prudence. He will not suspend judgment. He is ready to pronounce it, more in sorrow than in anger, and it is literally deadly. The socialist movement in the United States, which had a preposterous past, is today a corpse and it will never rise again. After almost two hundred pages in which he examines, in great detail, the rise and fall of the organized socialist movement in this country from its earliest days down to the present, Bell suddenly, almost out of the clear blue, blurts out this disconsolate conclusion:

American society at the middle of the twentieth century was evolving in a far different direction from that predicted by Marxist sociology. There were not in America an "Army," "Church," "Large Landowners," "Bureaucracy," "Bourgeoisie," "Petty Bourgeoisie," and "Proletariat"—the staple ingredients of European social politics which in different combination accounted for the social forms of Germany, Spain, France and Britain. How could one apply standard political categories to explain the "social role" of a Franklin D. Roosevelt? . . .

The old simplistic theories no longer hold. We seem to be evolving toward some form of technical-military-administrative state, especially as the pressures of a permanent war economy bring into focus a priority of needs which are national in character and override the demands of any particular interest group. The growth of a federal budget from four billion in 1930 to more than forty billion in 1950 (apart from the wartime peak budget of over ninety billion in 1944) was an unplanned and crescentive fact, and yet these new enormous magnitudes are of decisive import in shaping the economy. Along the way, the nascent state capitalism has had to enlarge its social budgets and provide for the welfare of large masses; quondam socialists, now in high positions in labor and government, have tended to instill

a sense of social responsibility. But it is not primarily a social welfare state which has developed. In the dimly-emerging social structure, new power sources are being created and new social divisions are being formed. Whatever the character of that new social structure may be—whether state capitalism, managerial society, or corporative capitalism—by 1950 American socialism as a political and social fact had become simply a notation in the archives of history.

And then, as if this heady cocktail must be completed with a couple of onions, the author concludes his essay with suggestions for an inscription and a remark which he nominates for a cenotaph for American socialism (a hard man, Bell, who wants to make so sure that this socialism which he has buried cannot possibly be resurrected that he weighs down its grave with a cenotaph.) One is the Chasidic tale of the Rabbi of Zans who is presented apparently as a symbol if not a member of the socialist movement. The eminent divine, fired in his youth with love of God sought to convert to it the whole world. He modified his ambition, successively, from the people of the whole world to his fellow townsmen, then to his household, and then concentrated exclusively on himself. At the heart-breaking end of his now modest effort, he grieves: "But I did not accomplish even this." The other is an injunction by Max Weber, presented by Bell to the public for the first time as a counsellor on political matters: "He who seeks the salvation of souls, his own as well as others, should not seek it along the avenue of politics."

COMING AT THE END of a long study on the American socialist movement, these conclusions, including the wisdom which is to be carved into the cenotaph for this generation and its heirs and assigns, it is enough to make your head spin in unison with the

author's. What is all this heavily compacted chaos? Why this need to over-tax a talent for hooking together meaningful words into meaningless sentences?

Does Bell know of a state which is not "technical-military-administrative" in form, and not only in form?

What particular "interest group" is making demands that are overridden by the needs of the permanent war economy? The interest group sometimes known as the labor movement? or that equally powerful interest group known as the American Committee for Cultural Freedom? or such obscure interest groups as the National Association of Manufacturers or General Motors?

Was the *crescive* fact, as it is commonly called, of the stupendous growth in the federal budget, including above all the arms budget, unforeseen in the *crescive* literature of Marxism on this subject in the past fifty years and more, and just what old and simplistic theory on this score no longer holds?

Has there been one modern capitalist country which, on the whole, has not had to enlarge its social budgets and provide for the welfare of large masses, with American capitalism enjoying the distinction of being the last of them all to place emphasis on the "enlarging" and "providing"? In any case, if it is "not primarily a social welfare state which has developed," then surely the enlarging, plus the providing, and on top of them both the quondam socialists who have tended to instill a sense of social responsibility (where? when? and especially in whom?)—have a grotesquely trivial importance, and certainly not a *crescive* one, which would seem to confirm at least one of the old and simplistic theories.

We cannot ask Bell to say what the

new social structure of tomorrow is, because he doesn't know and you can't get blood from a turnip. It might be added with apodictic certainty that Bell also doesn't know what "new power sources are being created" and what "new social divisions are being formed." There isn't a pistol made that could compel his soaring mind to describe these sources and divisions to us—they are even dimmer in emerging from his thoughts than they are in emerging from society.

What "state capitalism" means to him, is nowhere indicated and therefore we do not know, although we strongly doubt if that places us at a disadvantage with Bell; what his "corporate capitalism" has in common with his "state capitalism" if it has anything in common with it at all, is a mystery and will unquestionably remain one down to the seventh generation to follow (out of respect for Bell, we want to believe that he does not mean by it the rhetorical joke that Mussolini played with for a while and now and then); as for his "managerial society," the only right that any American has to refer seriously to this product of Burnham's first nightmare upon deserting the Marxist movement is the one granted by the Ninth Article of the Bill of Rights.

But "whatever the character of that new social structure may be"—American socialism is dead and everlastingly buried—it is dead as a movement and it is dead as a hope, let alone a reality, for society. Capitalism is not a devilish lot better off, for its successor, "whatever it may be," is enough to give you the shivers, even as seen in the dim emerging. Even more gloomy is the fact that, generally speaking, salvation of the soul (contrary to the old and simplistic theory of Marx and

Engels) is not attainable by political action, as proved scientifically by Max Weber. Worse yet, it is not attainable by the only fashionable alternative to politics, prayer, as proved scientifically by the Rabbi of Zans. It is all somehow depressing.

However, out of chaos is born a star, as Nietzsche used to say. This star throws all the necessary light on the problem of why socialism never did or could amount to anything in the United States. Unlike Germany, Spain, France, Britain and their similars, all of which have a strong socialist movement (speaking in the broadest sense, acceptable at this point, of a politically-organized working-class movement which openly avows its aim to abolish capitalism and establish a classless socialist society), the United States has no army, no church, no large landowners, no bureaucracy, no petty bourgeoisie—and above all other things of importance on earth, it has neither a bourgeoisie nor a proletariat. This is not quoted from the excited reports about this country sent back home by the first discoverers, explorers or settlers who came here to find nothing comparable to what they had known in the Old World. We have been quoting from an essay written in the year 1950 by a certified citizen of the country and published without abbreviation, elision or amendment by Princeton University. Now, if there is no bourgeoisie in this country and no proletariat either, then our problem is solved down to the last period, and "Sombart's question" is so explosively answered that the wonder of it is that anyone, the late Sombart included, was ever cretin enough to ask it.

If there is no bourgeoisie, against whom could the struggle of socialism be directed—inasmuch as socialism never aimed or could aim at any

other class but the bourgeoisie? If there is no proletariat, upon what class (or as it is commonly called, "interest group") could the struggle of socialism be based and what class would conduct the fight—inasmuch as socialism could never have as its basis or its director any other class but the proletariat? If socialism in the United States never had anyone to fight against or anyone to fight for it, the wonder of it is that it ever assembled as many advocates as the seven tailors of Tooley Street. A movement attempted under such conditions could never be anything but a mirage, doomed from the egg to disintegration and disillusionment.

There is still a tiny puzzle left—of no seminal importance, to be sure—as to why, in addition to the "psychological types" which the author assures us are attracted to the socialist movement, there were some intelligent and, at least at a quick glance, psychologically more or less normal people who made the attempt to organize such a movement when, no matter what they would do or how they would do it, their efforts were fore-ordained to failure by our unique and intrinsic national characteristics. But the failure of socialism in the United States is no longer a puzzle. This is now proved scientifically by Bell, or more exactly, he has now proved it all over again, for—right is right and fair is fair—it has been just as scientifically proved for decades in every school and university, in every church, and in virtually every newspaper and magazine, down to the most primeval of them.

But just a minute! Hold on! It just occurs to us that in the very first part of his essay, Bell wrote that "Sombart's question still remains unanswered." Didn't he indicate in that part that there is a different answer to

be made to the question than the ones he cites from others, an answer which is more significant than the customary ones that refer to objective conditions? So he did. Didn't he indicate that the explanation did not lie, or did not lie so much, in the specific nature of American capitalism as it did in the nature of the socialist movement. He did. But when we turn abruptly from the end of the essay to its beginning, the only connection between the two proves to be our short circuit and the little glimmer of light thrown on the problem is extinguished. We are thrown into a new chaos.

"Most of the attempted answers have discussed not *causes* but *conditions*," continues Bell after his references to Sombart's unanswered question which we have quoted above. He goes on to say:

An inquiry into the fate of a social movement has to be pinned in the specific questions of time, place and opportunity, and framed within a general hypothesis regarding the "why" of its success or failure. The "why" which this essay proposes (with the usual genuflections to *ceteris paribus*), is that the failure of the socialist movement in the United States is rooted in its inability to resolve a basic dilemma of ethics and politics. The socialist movement, by its very statement of goal and in its rejection of the capitalist order as a whole, could not relate itself to the specific problems of social action in the here-and-now, give-and-take political world. It was trapped by the unhappy problem of living "in but not of the world," so it could only act, and then inadequately, as the moral, but not political, man in immoral society. It could never resolve but only straddle the basic issue of either accepting capitalist society, and seeking to transform it from within as the labor movement did, or becoming the sworn enemy of that society, like the communists. A religious movement can split its allegiances and live *in* but not *of* the world (like Lutheranism); a political movement can not.

A couple of pages later on Bell comes to the end of what is really the preface and summary of the bulk of the essay and of what he deems to be his own contribution to the understanding of the problem:

Socialism is an eschatological movement; it is sure of its destiny, because "history" leads it to its goal. But though sure of its final ends, there is never a standard of testing the immediate means. The result is a constant fractiousness in socialist life. Each position taken is always open to challenge by those who feel that it would only swerve the movement from its final goal and lead it up some blind alley. And because it is an ideological movement, embracing all the realm of the human polity, the Socialist Party is always challenged to take a stand on every problem from Viet Nam to Finland, from prohibition to pacifism. And, since for every two socialists there are always three political opinions, the consequence has been that in its inner life, the Socialist Party has never, *even for a single year*, been without some issue which threatened to split the party and which forced it to spend much of its time on the problem of reconciliation or rupture. In this fact lies the chief clue to the impotence of American socialism as a political movement, especially in the past twenty years.

In between these two quotations there are the learned references, now standard equipment in all scholastic criticisms of socialism or Marxism or Bolshevism, to Max Weber, Karl Mannheim and of course Lord Acton, who are all as helpful in promoting our understanding in this matter as a blind man is to the progress of a seeing-eye dog. But the quotations themselves are enough and more than enough.

How does Bell distinguish between "causes" and "conditions"? Does he mean that the "conditions" to which reference is made by himself and others, the conditions in or under which the socialist movement exists (here or elsewhere) do not constitute

causes affecting its rise or decline in one degree or another? Does he mean that the "causes" to which he refers can determine the success or failure of a socialist movement although they are factors that somehow do not constitute part of the conditions of existence of the movement? If they are not part of the conditions of existence of the movement, then these "causes" must be inherent in and inseparable from the innermost nature, so to speak, of the socialist movement as an abstraction, that is, of a socialist movement independent of the conditions which gave it birth and in which it exists. But inasmuch as there is not, never was, never will be, and never could be such a movement, it would be impossible to know what Bell is writing about, impossible for us and impossible for him. Therefore, if it were not for the fact that specialists in semantics may know what Bell means and may disconcert us by explaining it in one of the modern languages, we would be tempted to conclude that his feet are entrapped in a bog of verbiage up to the armpits.

We are worse off when we come to Bell's special contribution, the one that distinguishes him from those who have discussed only conditions, his "general hypothesis" regarding the "why" of the socialist failure. The "why"—read each word at least twice, otherwise you will not believe your eyes—"is rooted in its inability to resolve a basic dilemma of ethics and politics."

We suggest with the usual politeness that this statement is, in the light of what Bell says elsewhere, literally and utterly without meaning.

In the first place, we must reiterate the question: If there is no proletariat in the country and no bourgeoisie, what conceivable basis could there be for a socialist party, a socialist move-

ment, of any kind? Is it not the absence of these two classes that makes the very attempt to form a socialist movement absurd, utopian, doomed for sure and for certain to failure? And if these two classes do not exist to begin with, how indeed could there be a socialist movement to begin with, and how could it have the basic dilemma between remote goal and immediate means, and what possible difference could it make how it resolved this dilemma?

Let us suppose I am dying of hunger in a desert and finally drag myself to a magnificent figtree guarded by a savage and well-armed nomad. I lie panting on the sand, ignored by the guardian except for the occasional kick in the face and stream of abuse he bestows on me, and I cogitate: Shall I kill him and make the figtree equally available to all, or trade him my scout knife for one immediate handful of figs, or wait for him to die of internal contradictions? Shall I ignore him altogether and try to shake down some figs with my hands, or lasso some with my lariat, or climb up to them with a ladder, or wait for an inevitable rain to loosen them, or lie under the tree until the fruit falls into my lap? There is a very wide variety of ideal and practical solutions, some ethical, some political, you might say. But unfortunately I am a congenital schizophrenic, full of ambivalences and God alone knows what. While I cogitate indecisively on a solution, I simply die of hunger. A not-badly-fed traveler who comes across my parched remains reads the diary of my agony (which, it seems, I left by my side) and reports to Princeton University that, contrary to the feverish images I conjured up in my utopian mind, there is, as far as the eye can see (a) no figtree, (b) no nomad, savage or otherwise, (c) no scout knife,

(d) no lariat, (e) no ladder and (f) not the slightest possibility of rain in the future. Then, to emphasize the pathos of my passion, he sets a stone over me with an epigram from Max Weber (or Lord Acton or Sidney Hook or H. V. Kaltenborn) saying that he who would sate his hunger should not look for food, and below that a Chasidic tale about a rabbi who no matter how much he ate died anyway.

Now I ask, repressing my doubts about the good taste of the cenotaph, was my failure rooted in my inability to resolve a basic dilemma of ethics and politics, or to the fact that there was no figtree there to begin with?

In the second place, Bell has constructed and qualified the terms of his "dilemma" in such a way as to make it irresolvable by definition. He starts his entire examination of the socialist (and, for that matter, the trade-union) movement in the United States from the standpoint of a dogma, which he states explicitly only at the very end and without any serious attempt at objective demonstration, but which suffuses everything he writes. That is: there are no classes in the United States, neither bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeoisie, nor proletariat (for how can there be a proletariat if it is not conscious of being one?—by which same token you could say that no man can be an imbecile unless he knows it). There are "interest groups" or "self-interest groups," as he calls them, but not classes. If there are no classes, there cannot be a class struggle. And obviously if there is no class struggle, it cannot be an irreconcilable one. With this viewpoint, the notion of a socialist prospect for the United States is ridiculous on the face of it, and so is the pathetic fool who entertains it. By definition, then, "socialist movement" is and cannot but

be a contradiction in terms. If it is "socialist" it cannot possibly be a "movement"—because socialism is a utopia that can attract only those who do not live in this world or do not want to live in it (they are for "rupture" with it). If it is a "movement" it cannot possibly be "socialist," because a movement can only be built with people who do live and want to live in the world (they are for "reconciliation" with it). And the "chief clue to the impotence of American socialism as a political movement, especially in the past twenty years," lies in its failure to decide for "rupture" or for "reconciliation." To decide for the one, meant to lose its influence; for the other, to lose its socialist character.

Let it be so. Then how does Bell explain the rise and power of what he acknowledges to be a socialist movement in Europe? (The communist and Stalinist movements, lumped into one by Bell, he places in a special category defined by as ridiculous a display of word-juggling as is to be found anywhere.) We cannot be put off by being told that, after all, the European socialist movement is or has become predominantly reformist. While this is true, it is irrelevant to the explanation worked out by Bell. For he asserts in one part of his essay that those who argued that "Capitalism as an evolving social system would of necessity 'mature.' Crises would follow, and at the same time a large, self-conscious wage-earner class and a socialist movement, perhaps on the European pattern, would probably emerge"—proved to be false prophets because they "discussed not *causes* but *conditions*," an error he would set straight. If the European socialist movement has *not* been a failure (we are speaking now in Bell's

terms, bear in mind), then his statement that "the failure of the socialist movement in the United States is rooted in its inability to resolve a basic dilemma of ethics and politics" must be taken in the literal sense of those words, namely, it is *only in the United States* (of the modern countries) that the socialist movement showed this inability.

In that case, all the learned references to Weber and Mannheim and Sorel and of course Lord Acton, and to orgiastic chiasm, the ethics of responsibility, the ethics of conscience, and the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, which are cited for their universal applicability, are beside the point. And in that case, the "inability" is *not* rooted in the socialist movement, at least not ineradicably rooted, for if that movement has grown in any number of countries (we are still speaking of the movement in Bell's terms), it must have succeeded, more or less, in solving the "basic dilemma."

The conclusion seems to us inescapable: the failure of socialism in the United States up to now does not lie in the nature of the socialist movement which, like original sin, brands it at birth, torments it in life and destines its death, but must lie primarily in the specific objective conditions of American capitalist development which, at all times, underlie the form and intensity of the class struggle and of its working-class political expression.

The trouble with the socialist movement (only here? everywhere? in the past? today and tomorrow as well?), the "unhappy problem" that has "trapped" it, is that it tries to "live *in* but not *of* the world"—and while a religious movement can do it "a political movement cannot." There is the most completely squeezed to-

gether summary of the wisdom that bourgeois sociology, as academically isolated from the decisive reality of the class struggle as it can get, has contributed to the understanding of the socialist movement. There is the contribution so fashionable, above all in the United States, among the apes of bourgeois sociology who now have their uneasy day in and around the labor movement. Bell has adopted and adapted it. So much the worse for him and for all the "quondam socialists," as he calls them, of whom he is one. When he puts on the same plane the "other world" of religion and the "other world" of socialism, he reveals not so much his agnosticism toward supernatural rubbish as the abysmally low esteem in which he, like all the wornout ex-socialists who have become "reconciled," holds humanity in general and in particular the working class which, to him, is forever doomed to the status of an exploited ox; it should be treated decently wherever possible, but well-treated or ill-treated, in the society of today or in the "dimly-emerging social structure" of tomorrow, it cannot but remain an ox.

Bell can be adjudged a popular writer, for there is nothing more popular today in the United States, it would seem, than the idea to which he makes his own particular contribution—the idea of completely dissolving the socialist movement, down to its very last remnant. In what other country than the one chosen by the Good Lord himself for his special beneficence would there be, on top of everything else, a magazine that dedicates itself, in the very name of socialism, to the proposition that the socialist movement should liquidate itself completely, head, hair, hide and hoof, fetlock and forelock, rump and rib, blood and bone? Where else could

that happen save in a country where there is neither a bourgeoisie nor a proletariat but a veritable polychrome of terrified, forlorn and disoriented philistines?

The socialist has no reason to be frightened by the charge that he lives "in but not of the world." "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," sayeth Solomon in *Proverbs*. Even if the words Bell likes so much have an ecclesiastical aroma, they are really fitly spoken—but only if properly understood. What Bell sees as the source of fatal weakness of the socialist movement, we see as the source of its strength. It represents the triumph of the revolutionary scientific socialism of Marx over all the schools of Utopians who preceded us as well as over all schools of thought and thoughtlessness to whom some original sin of the working class damns it forever and a day to the status of the ruled. It represents the basis of the power of the socialist movement as the militant political organization of the proletariat and the assurance of its triumph over the rule of capital. Bell's disdainful criticism only reveals his own basic incomprehension, not only of the socialist movement but of the proletariat. *That movement lives in but is not of this world because the proletariat which is its bearer lives in but at the same time is not of this—that is, of the capitalist—world!* The proletariat is compelled by the very conditions of existence that make up the capitalist world to fight against these conditions of existence. The socialist movement is nothing but the conscious expression, in the theoretical and political fields, of this proletarian struggle. It differs from the working class in its daily struggles not in that it finds it hard or impossible to participate in them lest it lose sight of the socialist

goal, but on the contrary only in this, that "in the movement of the present they [the Marxists] also represent and take care of the future of that movement."

If the socialist movement in this country is weak and uninfluential today it is due primarily to objective conditions beyond its immediate control. But only primarily. It would be idle to excuse our weakness today, and our weakness in the past fifty years, for that matter, by reference to the objective conditions exclusively. The socialist movement can live and grow only by a constant self-criticism and re-examination of its theoretical and political armament. This presupposes the obvious fact that seldom does the socialist movement utilize to the best advantage or even in the right way the possibilities afforded it within the limitations set each time by the objective conditions.

The history of the socialist movement in this country is, contrary to Bell, a long history of achievement. It is also a long history of errors and short-comings, not those listed so painstakingly by Bell or not so much those he compiles in his basic misunderstanding of the movement, relieved only by occasional and—we would be the last to deny it—very valuable insights. To review them could not, for a socialist, have as its purpose a supercilious hindsight criticism of the men and movements of the past, of those who were of the right wing or those who were of the left. It could have the fruitful object of distinguishing the essential from the accidental, the important from the trivial, the unavoidable weaknesses from the unnecessary one. Above all its object would be to learn from the past to prepare better for the future. In the course of such a review, a clearer and more balanced picture

would emerge for the reasons behind the present weakness of American socialism. At the same time it would be possible to indicate the grounds for our revolutionary optimism about its future. Bell, like so many others, has been a little previous about burying it. We will seek in the articles to

which we next devote ourselves to show why socialism is not dead but very much alive in the United States and why it has a grand future—a future that will make the final decision for the fate of the entire world.

MAX SHACHTMAN

Socialism in the United States—

The Origins of the Communist Movement in the United States

Communist Tendencies in the Socialist Party—I

Except for the sudden and all too brief revival of the Socialist Party in the early 1930's, the numbers, quality and influence of American socialism have been marked by a steady and precipitous decline from their peak some 35-40 years ago. The favored position of American capitalism, the peculiar characteristics of the American working class, government repression, the defeat of the European revolution, the growth of Stalinism—all these related factors have conspired to reduce socialism as an organized force to little more than a shadow of its once robust proportions. This virtual extinction of the socialist movement has made it uncommonly easy for the joyous would-be pallbearers of socialism to create the myth that socialism never amounted to anything in the United States, or that its early successes were an aberration of American life never to be repeated, or, certainly, that the decline of socialism is both evidence and proof of the invulnerability and dynamism of American capitalism. There are those such as Daniel Bell who would bury

socialism with a condescending sigh, explaining in fact-studded rites how American capitalism has given us a virtually classless, equalitarian society. Then there are the pulp writers ranging from Benjamin Gitlow to Jacob Spolansky who simply try to inter socialism under an avalanche of abuse, filth and distortions. The more serious biographers of American socialism such as Ira Kipnis and Ray Ginger have been, unfortunately, all but obscured by these embalmers and undertakers.

While socialism as an ideological and organized current in the American labor movement has fared poorly at the hands of the pulp writers, the particular currents in American socialism which led to the formation of the American Communist Party have been treated with studied indifference to facts, superciliousness and venom. In these articles, primarily concerned with the beginnings of Communism in America, we cannot pretend to provide all or most of the facts and political circumstances leading to the emergence of the American Commu-

nist movement. But, at the very least, we propose to treat the subject with the respect it merits.

BY 1912, JUST ELEVEN YEARS after its founding convention the American Socialist Party could boast of 150,000 book members. In the presidential elections of that year Eugene V. Debs received nearly 900,000 votes, six per cent of the total cast. The party published 13 daily newspapers in English and foreign languages, nearly 300 weeklies and a dozen monthly periodicals. The *Appeal to Reason* was one of the most popular and widely read newspapers in the midwest, reaching a circulation of 500,000. The party had fourteen locals in Alaska, one in Puerto Rico and members-at-large in the Canal Zone. It maintained a network of socialist schools for children and provided Lyceum courses for adults. In nation-wide local elections held in 1910 the party elected hundreds of local officials and by 1912 there were over 1,000 elected office holders with red cards, including 56 mayors, several state senators and one congressman. The leading spokesman of the party, Debs, had been for years a nationally prominent figure whose activities were as a matter of course reported in the press.

The American Socialist Party was by no means comparable in size or political maturity to the mass party of German social democracy. But it had become a balance of power organization with seeming possibilities for growth which provoked extravagant exaggerations of its potentialities in the bourgeois world.

Partially as an effort to curb the growing popularity of the Socialist Party the Democratic Party incorporated many of the S.P. demands in its platform. Even the Republicans included "radical" planks in their pro-

gram; and the newly organized Bull Moose party led by "Roosevelt I" (as Mencken titled a "glorified banner") adopted S.P. reform proposals as its very own. Socialist leader and congressman Victor Berger protested before the House in 1912 that "... 'progressives' are simply trying to appropriate some of our minor planks." This progressivism was impelled by the need to stabilize, make more palatable and somewhat civilize, America's raucous corporate wealth. But it was also inspired by a growing popular resentment against capitalist violence, and fed by a consciously felt need to head off the Socialist Party, whose reform campaigns were winning votes among progressive elements in the country. Progressivism was successful in deflecting votes from the S.P. to Wilson and Roosevelt, and its emergence was a tribute to the rapidly acquired strength of the Socialist Party.

The growth of the Socialist Party was in many ways unique when compared to the development of European social-democracy, particularly the German Social-Democratic Party. The party's progress did not follow or parallel a comparable expansion of the trade union movement. It grew at a time when America had hardly emerged from its frontier days, when a permanent, stable industrial working class was still in its formative stage. It grew without major assistance from a significant body of alienated intellectuals or radicalized youth. But the party could grow despite these inhibiting factors for it had become, in effect, not so much a party with a clearly defined social program, as a broad movement of social protest. It had attracted workers who, defeated in pitched battles with the bourgeoisie, felt they could continue

the struggle against their oppressors via the party; following the collapse of the People's Party thousands of populists joined the SP (in 1909, 15 per cent of the Socialist Party members had been previously associated with the Populists); middle-class reformers, ministers and professionals, outraged by the savagery of American capitalism, joined the party as a means of fighting social ills; thousands of German and Jewish immigrants born to socialism in the "old country" naturally found their way into the party. Populism, Utopianism, Christian Socialism, reformism, syndicalism and Marxism—all had been poured into the Socialist Party vessel.

But the fact that the party had become an all-embracing organization was not a source of permanent strength. As a coalescence of various and conflicting currents of political dissent the Socialist Party could prosper—but only for a limited period. By 1912, when the party was at its numerical peak it was also at its lowest potential, torn by irreconcilable factions.

THE TERM "PETTY-BOURGEOIS" is perhaps used loosely at times in the Marxist movement. But as applied to the bulk of SP leadership and a significant proportion of its membership by 1912 it is a literal as well as an ideological description. The party had become flooded with lawyers, doctors, accountants, small businessmen, farmers and reform-bent clergymen. Many brought with them prejudices common to their class: they attacked class hatred as immoral, they equivocated on racial discrimination, some were opposed to drinking and others thought women biologically inferior creatures ordained to cook and sew. Above all, they abhorred "extremes."

They were firmly convinced that the party was going to be voted into power. And Socialism, to them, was inevitable, not as the aftermath of revolutionary working class struggles, but, because capitalism was organically evolving in a socialist direction. The electoral successes of the party were confirmation for this Right Wing that its heavy emphasis on reform campaigns and deemphasis of the class struggle was the road to social salvation.

On the other end of the political spectrum in the party were the "reds," the revolutionary elements in the party, many of whom were members of the Industrial Workers of the World along with their acknowledged leader, Bill Haywood. This Left was not Marxist in character but revolutionary syndicalist. It was also as politically primitive as it was fundamentally correct in its reliance on the working class in the struggle for freedom. The Left Wing was repelled by the new paunch the party had grown following its electoral gains; it could not abide the 1,000 elected officials who now had a vested interest in maintaining a moderate reform party; it could not stand the unscrupulousness of a man like Victor Berger and it was not smitten by the highly polished Marxist phrases of the talented lawyer, Morris Hillquit.

Neither wing of the party was interested in building a broad forum of public opinion. Both wanted to build mass movements. And both wings were moved by an optimism which made a split inevitable. The revolutionary syndicalists were confident that the proletariat in America's rapidly expanding mass industries would heed the "propaganda of the deed"; the Right Wing was even more convinced that the voters of the nation would soon be swept up by its ballot

box appeal. The split came at the 1912 convention of the party, initiated and pushed through by the Right Wing. In the words of Berger at the convention: "The time has come when the two opposite trends of thought that we have had in our party must clash again. And the parting of the ways has come again." The parting of the ways was effectuated by a constitutional amendment, passed by 191 to 90, making membership incompatible with the advocacy of industrial sabotage and violence (Article II, Section 6). Years later Berger boasted that he was the author of the amendment. The Right Wing succeeded in splitting the party. Bill Haywood was recalled from his position on the National Committee. The party membership which had reached 150,000 a few weeks before the convention (held in Indianapolis, May 12-18) dropped to a yearly average of 118,000. The difference between the peak and average figures was largely due to the exodus of thousands of militants from the party. Their energies, however, were to be dissipated. A large number were immediately lost to the revolutionary movement and thousands of ex-party members who went to the IWW exclusively went to a movement that was foredoomed. For the IWW—given its aversion to political action, its hostility to theory and intellectuals, its uncompromising opposition to the official labor movement and, most important, its failure to understand the psychology of the American worker and the growing strength of American capitalism—could not, in its very nature have achieved any degree of permanence.

FOLLOWING THE EXPULSION of the syndicalist Left in 1912-1913 the Socialist Party moved rapidly—in reverse gear. By 1916 the membership declined to

83,000, little more than half of its 1912 high point. Its vote in the 1916 presidential elections was cut to 600,000—two-thirds of the total received in 1912 but given the rise in the voting population only one-half of the six per cent of the votes garnered four years earlier. Ironically enough, the 30,000 Left Wingers forced out of the party who had nothing but contempt for the vote-getting policy of the SP were an important factor in explaining the party's declining fortunes at the ballot box. It was in those sections where the Left Wing was strongest that the 1912 SP vote showed an enormous increase over the 1908 figures and a corresponding drop in 1916.* Also, responsible for the loss of votes was the choice of Allan Benson, a Right-Wing nonentity, as presidential candidate. Much to the delight of the party leadership, Debs, a Left-Winger with enormous popular appeal, had neither the inclination nor the physical energy to run for the presidency as he had on four previous, successive occasions.

The only claim to fame that history will reserve for Benson was his striking contrast to Debs as a socialist presidential candidate. Debs always stamped his campaign with his own personality—energetic, colorful, militant. Benson also left his mark, a barely visible imprint of an imposter in the socialist movement. It was only six months after his campaign was over that Benson, the "anti-war" candidate of the party denounced those who upheld an anti-war position

*The Left Wing was particularly strong in the following states: Montana, Nevada, Arizona, West Virginia, Ohio, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Texas, Tennessee. In 1912 the S.P. in Montana received 13.6 per cent of the vote; in 1916 it was down to 5.4 per cent. In Ohio it dropped from 8.9 to 3.4 per cent; Washington from 12.4 to 5.9 per cent; Oregon moved down from 9.8 to 3.7. These ten Left Wing strongholds alone (there were others) account for a drop of approximately 100,000 votes from 1912 to 1916.

adopted at the St. Louis convention of the party a few days after the U. S. entered the war. He noted, with an antediluvian's sulkiness, that:

Young hotheads who were wearing knee breeches when many of the middle-aged men present became socialists, felt entirely prepared to brand such of these older men as disagreed with them with regard to tactics as "traitors."

The "tactics" were whether or not to support the imperialist war!

The party was in a state of organizational decay. It was not only because of the failure of Debs to run or the exit of so many thousands of militants. "Progressivism" was becoming a competitive force to the party. The appeal of Wilson's liberal rhetoric and the "radicalism" of the Bull Moose Party undoubtedly drew many thousands of voters away from the SP by 1912. As the party continued to water down its program "progressivism" and Socialism were almost tangential movements. In 1916, not only party supporters refused to vote for the SP candidates, but well known socialists such as John Reed* and Max Eastman declared themselves for Wilson. Even the presidential candidate of the party, Allan Benson, moved by Wilson's pacific declarations in the 1916 campaign asked the electorate to vote for the Democratic candidate—if they didn't vote for Benson.

In the midwest a farmers' movement wrought havoc with the party organization. The Non-Partisan League of North Dakota had been organized in 1916 by a former active socialist, A. C. Townley. It had a farmer's program, demanding a state marketing system, a state agency to purchase and distribute farm supplies, a low interest state rural credit

*John Reed was a socialist in 1916 and collaborated with many leading party members though he did not formally join the organization until 1917.

system, etc. As a pure farmer's organization with a militant reform program it attracted large numbers of farmers who previously had been loyal only to the Socialist Party. By 1918 it had over 180,000 members and was to elect governors, congressmen and scores of state officials, spreading to South Dakota, Oregon, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Idaho, Colorado, Washington and Montana. In a special report to the Socialist Party's National Committee, John Spargo, an extreme Right-Winger (a McCarthyite today!) stated that the League is going "far toward wrecking the Socialist Party, unless some adjustments in our party organization can be made. . . ." Instead of an "adjustment," however, the party took a hostile position toward the League, branding it a dual, competitive organization and forbidding party members to join. But the pull of the League proved irresistible not only for rank and filers but even for members of the National Committee. Lewis J. Duncan of Montana, a leading Left Winger at the 1912 convention, and Arthur Le Seuer, a Right Winger from North Dakota, were members of both the National Committee and the Non-Partisan League.

While Progressivism was taking its toll in the Socialist Party, the prosperity of 1915-1916 born of the World War was also dissipating the influence of the party. The 1912 election campaign took place on the threshold of a new economic crisis; four years later the United States had replaced England in the South American market and factories were humming, producing war materials for the Allies.

By 1916 the party was not only in an organizational funk, but intellectually, it had become utterly lifeless. Its official publications had a somnambulist quality born of piety, reformism and confusion. As a sample

of confusion we might offer the following excerpt from an article by a leading party intellectual, Max Eastman:

I think that men's hereditary intuitive reactions are such that they will go to war (even against their economic interests) whenever a plausible war is declared, that our only hope is in *preventing declarational war*, that this can be accomplished only through international federation and that the main driving power toward international federation is international capital—the biggest of big business. We ought to support and encourage the capitalistic governments in their new motion toward internationalism, because they will go there before we will. (*Masses*, February, 1917. Italics in original.)

A DETAILED DISCUSSION of the Socialist Party prior to America's entry into the war is outside the scope of this article. The above sketchy paragraphs on the SP from 1912 to 1916 are intended merely to illustrate an important point in considering American Communism: that the American Communist movement began from virtually nothing. It was not the continuation of the Left Wing of 1912, and was fundamentally different from it. The earlier Left Wing was directly the product of the American class struggle. It fought that struggle on the picket lines and, in a sense, it fought that struggle within the Socialist Party against the petty bourgeois leadership. It was a revolutionary but utopian syndicalist group which tried to push the working class onto the path of revolutionary industrial unionism in a manner alien to that class—and toward an objective for which it was not historically prepared. During the war, a new Left Wing was to emerge, but unlike the earlier syndicalists, it was generated by world-shaking international events: the World War and the Russian Revolution. This Marxist Left Wing was as

removed from direct participation in the class struggle at home as the syndicalists were a part of it; it was as devoted to the cause of the international working class as the syndicalists were indifferent to world politics. In social composition and attitude toward theory the two Left Wings were different: the first had as its basis proletarians and underprivileged farmers, who shied away from theoretical debate; the later Marxist Left Wing acquired considerable support from the more advanced and educated workers and middle class intellectuals, and was absorbed with the theoretical problems of international socialism.

In any analysis of the American Communist movement it is necessary at all times to bear in mind that communism in America had a pre-history of but a few years. It had no native Marxist traditions to draw on and the personnel of the Socialist Party's 1917-1919 Left Wing had little previous experience in the American class struggle. In fact a number of leading Left Wingers of 1912 who remained with the party were among those most hostile to the Left Wing which grew up after April, 1917: Frank Bohn, Rives La Monte, H. L. Slobodin, William English Walling.

The failure of the American working class to develop a significant and continuous Marxist tradition was, to be sure, a reflection of the special characteristics of the American bourgeoisie and the American working class. By the time the United States declared war on the Central powers it had become the world's most powerful capitalist nation. But the ascendancy of finance capital in the United States was swifter than in any European nation. The industrial revolution in this country was not under way until after the Civil War and the American frontier was not closed un-

til the 1890's. By the time an American proletariat was beginning to emerge the working classes of the advanced European nations had already made their mark on history.

The growth of large scale industries here was so swift and their organizers so powerful and ruthless that the newly formed proletariat could not adequately defend itself. The embryonic proletarian class had neither the economic wherewithal, the stability, the experience or the public sympathy to resist the blood spattered wealth of America's "Robber Barons" with their spies, thugs, economic resources and friendly courts. The political and economic organization of the working class was complicated by its culturally diversified character, composed in its great majority as late as 1910 of foreign born from all parts of the old world. Its organization was further inhibited by the fluidity and social mobility of American life. Chances for advancement did exist within expanding industries and if an immigrant did not advance his position in society, he felt that his children, at least, might achieve the respectability and security denied to him.

The new magnates of American industry were a cold-blooded and pragmatic lot. They were not concerned with ideology or political finesse. The working class, too, showed a similar disdain for political theory. The violent and telescoped growth of concentrated capital combined with the misery of a worker's existence did not allow the growth of an intellectualized body of workers who could, by their own efforts, raise themselves above the limited political insight of their class. Those sections of the working class which resisted the bourgeoisie were often waylaid by simple political panaceas or exhausted themselves in magnificent trade union

struggles which had little chance of immediate success. And at no point in its early history did the socialist movement recruit to its banner numbers of educated, middle-class Marxists who could identify themselves with the working class. America produced its literary realists and muckrakers who performed invaluable services in exposing the inhumanity and corruption accompanying the growth of monopoly. But at no time could the American socialist movement boast of a sizeable group of theorists respected by the ranks, integrated into the life of the movement, absorbed in the problem of building a working class party and capable of understanding the special problems of the American workingclass.

This lack of theoretical leadership was common to all wings of the American Socialist Party. By 1912 the German Left had Rosa Luxemburg while the American Left was led by Bill Haywood; the German Center had Kautsky while the Americans had Morris Hillquit, the German revisionists had Bernstein while the extreme Right Wing in the American party had to settle for Victor Berger.

It was more than a difference between individual talents, accidentally placed. It was the difference between two worlds, two histories.

FOR FIVE YEARS after the collapse of the syndicalist faction there was no well knit Left Wing opposition in the Socialist Party. But not all the direct actionists left with Bill Haywood. In addition, not all the Left Wingers of 1912 were in agreement with the growing anti-politicalism of the syndicalist Left. Some of the leading figures in the party, whose denunciations of the Right Wing rivaled the colorful epithets of the syndicalists,

remained political socialists. Men such as Debs, Louis Boudin and Henry Slobodin did not revile the SP for participating in elections; they attacked the party for making electioneering a political way of life and for the mildness of its campaigns. And they emphasized the necessity of the political organization of the working class to overthrow the political institutions of the bourgeois state. Although they supported the Left Wing as against the Right there was no reason why they should have left the party along with the thousands who dropped out after the 1912 convention. In their view, and they were correct, the Socialist Party was still the only political, socialist movement in which to function. (The Socialist Labor Party had been, for years, a hopelessly sterile, bureaucratic, i.e., sectarian, group).

The only individual who could have taken up the cudgels once again for a militant program was Eugene Debs. His popularity was enormous and his position in the party inviolable. But Debs never abandoned his saintly attitude toward factionalism, thus doing himself and the movement a grave disservice. He would not participate in faction fights or, even, in conventions, on the ground that his weight in the party was so great that if it were harnessed to a particular faction in an organizational fight it might produce an unthinking endorsement of his views. What Debs would not do in the way of reorganizing the remnants of the Left neither Boudin, the major Marxist theorist in the party, nor Slobodin, former national secretary of the party who was to become a militant chauvinist, nor Charles Ruthenberg, a leader in the Ohio SP—a gray and overestimated man in the history of American socialism, nor a dozen other leading

leftists in the party could do. The mood in the party—and in the nation—ran counter to the re-emergence of a strong, unified Left.

THE SIGNS OF A NEW LEFT were first visible early in 1915 with the formation in the SP of the Socialist Propaganda League.

This League from its very inception was composed primarily of foreign born workers. It was organized largely through the efforts of two foreign socialists: Fritz Rozin and S. J. Rutgers. Rozin, born in Latvia, was a representative of the Lettish Social Democratic Party on the Bolshevik Central Committee. Arrested by the Czarist police in 1907 he escaped to the United States where he edited a Lettish newspaper and became secretary of a Lettish socialist organization in Boston. Rozin returned to Russia after the October revolution where he died in 1919. Rutgers' role is perhaps even more important in its influence on the Left in the Socialist Party which was the forerunner of American Communism. He was also a "Bostonian" but not of the Back Bay variety. Rutgers was active in the Boston Lettish group and like Rozin worked on a Lettish newspaper. He was Dutch by birth, however, and a member of the Social-Democratic Party there until he emigrated to the United States. After the Bolshevik revolution, Rutgers went to Russia where he engaged in Comintern activities as a member of the Dutch Communist Party. His contributions to the English language Left Wing socialist press were among the best political writings of the Left.

Lenin established contact with the League upon receiving one of its handbills in 1915. In exchange for the leaflet Lenin sent material on the Zimmerwald Left and a copy of So-

cialism and War in German "in the hope that there is a comrade in your League who knows German." Lenin placed considerable importance on the role of the League urging A. Kollantai—who made two trips to the U. S. between 1915 and 1917—and N. Bukharin—who was here in the winter of 1916-1917—to maintain contact with the League and to pay particularly close attention to the strong, militant, Lettish wing of the party.

Upon receiving material of the Zimmerwald Left the League immediately adopted its views pressing them inside and out of the Socialist Party. It was not until January 1917, however, that the League published its first regular periodical, *The Internationalist*, which shortly was renamed *The New Internationalist* and edited by Louis C. Fraina.*

*If there were room for only one name in this discussion of the pre-history of the Communist movement it would be reserved for Louis C. Fraina. It was Fraina (better known later as Lewis Corey) who, as much as any individual, was responsible for the organization of the Left Wing of the Socialist Party. To those who are not at all familiar with the early socialist movement this may appear surprising; but only because the Stalinists have had considerable success in obliterating his role by ignoring it. In the latest Stalinist monumental history of the American Communist movement (William Z. Foster's 600 tedious pages) Fraina is never once discussed! That is comparable to discussing the steel strike of 1919 without mentioning Foster. On the other hand where he has been mentioned by other "historians" it is usually with condescension at best or venality at worst. The most venomous account of Fraina, perhaps, is to be found in the pulp writings of that sickening personification of moral decay, Benjamin Gitlow, according to whom, Fraina was practically a sex-fiend, certainly a lunatic—and, worst of all, a factional opponent of Gitlow in the Communist movement.

Fraina was a very young man when he came to the Socialist Party in 1915 leaving the Socialist Labor Party behind him. By 1917 he was a leading figure in the Left-Wing. He edited the first national publication of the Socialist Propaganda League, *The New Internationalist*, he was on the editorial board of the superb *Class Struggle*, was editor of the *Revolutionary Age* which was to become the national publication of the powerful, organized Left Wing of the Socialist Party in 1918. He earned these posts while still in his mid-twenties.

The articles by Fraina on the war, his analysis of modern imperialism, his understanding of the Russian Revolution marked him as a man who earned his place. There were other men of theoretical talent in the Left Wing such as his co-editors on *The Class Struggle*, Louis Boudin and Ludwig Lone, but Fraina could hold his own with the best of them. In addition to his intellectual abilities, however, Fraina was an "organizational man," obviously

The League achieved considerable notoriety inside the SP but in its early period was in no position to function as a national, cohesive faction fighting for organizational control of the party. It was not until America's participation in the war was imminent that the proper political topsoil was laid in which a new revolutionary Left Wing could flourish in the party. This soil, watered by the Russian Revolution, permitted the Socialist Propaganda League and similar tendencies to sink their roots deep into the party with branches embracing thousands outside the SP, as well, and crushing the Socialist Party in the process of growth. By June 1917, *The New Internationalist* was able to boast that the Socialist Propaganda League had 20 organized groups in 12 states. But this growth was even outdistanced by the political influence of the League and complemented by the emergence of other organized Left Wing currents.

PRIOR TO THE WORLD WAR, the American socialist movement's attitude on foreign policy bordered on indifference. It suffered from a provincialism which reflected the general sense of insular security from world political problems shared by the vast majority of the population. The Left Wing

driven by a passion for organizational leadership. He constantly debated at local branch meetings and spoke at mass rallies. With a sharp tongue, a deft literary style and a genuine intellectual gift to draw from, Fraina rightfully rose from obscurity to national prominence in the socialist movement.

Fraina moulded the political views of the Left Wing as much as any other personality—but it was not an unmixed blessing. He brought with him from the SLP many of its ultra leftist notions. While Fraina helped to lead the Left Wing in a Marxist direction on international class struggle issues, on problems related to the class struggle at home he must bear his burden of responsibility for the incredible stand of the early Communist movement on trade unions, elections, reforms, etc.

Fraina also suffered from a lack of moral fibre. His demise in the Communist movement was a tragic fall of an individual whose character proved no match for his ambitions or his talent. Some of the details of Fraina's history will be discussed in the course of these articles.

was certainly no more conscious of international developments than the Right. At the 1912 convention there were resolutions on Temperance and White Slavery but no one seemed to feel the need for a special resolution or discussion on war, imperialism and foreign policy.

The American party was, nevertheless an anti-war movement. It formally endorsed the vigorous anti-war resolutions of the 1910 and 1912 international socialist congresses. It ran occasional articles which attacked militarism and the growing concern of American capitalism with foreign markets and sources of raw material. There was also in the party a strong element of Christian socialism which on pacifist principles was opposed to all wars.

Before August 4, 1914, the party had implicit faith in the ability of the Second International to prevent a European conflagration. It never doubted that in a war which pitted worker against worker in the interests of capitalism the mass parties of European social democracy would be true to its promise of carrying on class struggle activity to frustrate the ambitions of European militarists. When the war came, not over the opposition of European Socialism, but with its blessing, the American party was genuinely shocked—though not sufficiently aroused to call a special convention to discuss both the war and the betrayal of the Second International. (A convention was not to be held for another 2½ years.) Shocked though it was by the conduct of the International, the Socialist Party refused to condemn its “brother parties” in Europe. This reluctance was one of the important political differences on the war which sparked the new Left Wing.

One week after the opening of hostilities in Europe the party issued an anti-war manifesto which began:

The Socialist Party of the United States hereby extends its sympathy to the workers of Europe in their hour of trial, when they have been plunged into a bloody and senseless war by ambition crazed monarchs, designing politicians and scheming capitalists.

But in the same manifesto, a few paragraphs later:

The Socialist Party of the United States hereby pledges its loyal support to the Socialist parties of Europe in any measures they might think it necessary to advance the cause of peace and good will among men.

We doubt that this appeal for “good will” produced more than a yawn on the military visage of the Second International but for the Left Wingers in the party it was to provide political ammunition.

The National Committee of the party made repeated attempts to revive an International which did not want to be and could not be reactivated as a force “to advance the cause of peace.” One of the earliest efforts was made in September, 1914. The party issued an appeal to all European socialists to consider meeting in Washington, D. C., to discuss ways and means of ending the war. The party promised to foot the bill. Quixotic, to say the least, and, as could only be expected, nothing came of it. Included in this appeal was the following:

We do not presume to pass judgment upon the conduct of our brother parties in Europe. We realize that they are the victims of the present vicious industrial, political and military systems and they did the best they could under the circumstances.

The Left Wing elements in the party demanded that the leadership

face up to the reality of the Second International betrayal. Without branding European socialism for its conduct, the sincerity of the party’s anti-war manifestos was questioned by the Left Wing. But for the Right Wing leadership of the party to condemn, say, German social-democracy implied a repudiation of itself. German social-democracy had been held up to the membership by the SP leadership as a model organization. Just two years earlier, the leadership of the party at the 1912 convention used Karl Legien, Social-Democratic member of the Reichstag and president of the German Federation of Trade Unions, to beat the syndicalists over the head. Legien accepted an invitation to address the convention and in his speech immediately proceeded to use his authority and prestige to belittle the syndicalists: “In our German movement we have no room for sabotage and similar syndicalist tendencies.” To repudiate the German party, and Karl Legien and the whole of the International required a self-effacing act of courage which it was constitutionally incapable of doing *at the time*.

In September 1915, nearly forty observers and delegates from anti-war socialist parties and anti-war tendencies within pro-war parties met in an international conference at Zimmerwald. According to A. Kollontai, who made two trips to the United States between 1915-1917, the initial attempts to recruit the American Socialist Party to the Zimmerwald movement failed, when at a meeting of German language socialists a proposal brought in by Ludwig Lore to join the movement was defeated “after heated debates” by Morris Hillquit and Maxim Romm (Romm was a Russian political exile living in the United States). A month later, however, the organiz-

ing committee of the Zimmerwald movement (the International Socialist Committee) received a communication from the Executive Committee of the SP announcing that it and all its affiliated foreign federations joined the Zimmerwald movement. Joining the Zimmerwald movement unquestionably reflected a growing left mood in the party, although the Zimmerwald movement was itself very broad, embracing all wings of anti-war socialism from moderate pacifist-socialism to the revolutionary, class struggle views of the Zimmerwald Left, led by the Bolsheviks.

The critics of the party leadership had more to go on than the embarrassed apologies made for the “brother parties” in Europe. In the life of the Socialist Party, during the war, before and after America’s entry, there was a considerable gap between the manifesto and the deed. The anti-war declarations had an inflamed, passionate quality which gave a distorted image of the political convictions of the leadership, its activities and the party’s day to day propaganda. In May 1915, the National Committee of the party proposed an amendment which would expel any SP office-holder who voted for military or war appropriations. This amendment was passed in referendum by the one-sided vote of 11,041-782. But this didn’t stop the seven socialist aldermen in New York from supporting the third Liberty Loan three years later, nor did it deter Mayor Hoans’ Socialist administration in Milwaukee from meeting its patriotic obligations; and socialist congressman Meyer London met with no rebuff from the party officialdom when he failed to vote against military appropriations immediately after America’s declaration of war.

While the military posturing of

American politicians was condemned, the architect of American imperialism, Woodrow Wilson, was often regarded in the party press as a misled, somewhat inconsistent pacifist. As late as December, 1916, the party's official organ, *The Call*, editorially referred to ". . . President Wilson's latest move in the interest of peace. . . ." A much touted brochure by Allan Benson, the party's 1916 presidential candidate written in that year was a mish-mash of pacifism, an appeal to the better side of Wilson and an endless number of pages intended to prove that instead of building battleships Congress could use the money better to mine the entire Atlantic coastal waters—a mine every few hundred feet.

In addition to the party's tolerant views on its "brother parties" and the gap between its resolutions and activities, the leftists in the party had a third serious grievance. They charged that a number of party leaders were moved in their formal denunciations of Allied imperialism by a pro-German sentiment. An editorial in the May-June issue of *The Class Struggle* (published by the Left-Wing Socialist Publication Society) referred to:

. . . the offensive and degrading pro-Germanism of a large proportion of our membership and party bureaucracy, who seek to cover up the sin of Germany and of Germany's majority—Socialists by the mantle of "neutrality."

Considering the month and year this Left-Wing charge was made it was at best a gross exaggeration. There can be no question, however, that for at least the first year or two after the opening of hostilities a pro-German sentiment did exist within the party. Among the Jewish workers, there was no love lost for the Allies. Many of them had recently fled from Czarist anti-Semitic terror and all of them

took bitter note of pogroms accompanying the Russian armies' advances and retreats. When Russian pogroms were matched against the reputed benevolence of Franz Joseph many Jewish workers found themselves sympathizing with the latter in the military conflict. But this was no longer a factor at the time *The Class Struggle* made its charges for the Czar had been overthrown two months earlier and Jewish workers, in particular, celebrated, for it meant the end of pogroms in Russia as a conscious, Czarist-inspired policy. There was also a pro-German tendency among German party members who could not bring themselves to denounce German war aims and among a strata of party members who would not renounce German social-democracy. But these sources of pro-Germanism had also been largely dissipated by the middle of 1917.

ON APRIL 7, 1917 the Socialist Party met in its historic St. Louis convention. Called as an emergency convention by the party's National Committee it was given a special dramatic and timely significance as its opening sessions followed by a day Congress' declaration of war. The convention called but one month earlier was long overdue. It was five years since the last convention and more than two since the opening of European hostilities. The convention was not preceded by organized discussion in the ranks and voting delegates appeared at convention sessions without proper authorization by the membership.

There were nearly two hundred delegates at the St. Louis convention. A fifteen-man Committee on War and Militarism was chosen and after several days of debate three reports were made to the convention: the majority report signed by 11 committee mem-

bers, including Berger, Hillquit, Ruthenberg and Algernon Lee; a minority report signed by Boudin, Kate Sadler and Walter Dillon; a second minority, pro-war report signed only by John Spargo.

Spargo's report consisted of all the trite arguments for support of the war gaining currency among an important section of party writers and intellectuals. The Allied powers were to be supported because:

The present war, which broke out in the summer of 1914, had its origins in the economic conditions and the political institutions and national ideals prevailing in Europe. Germany began the war, and rejected all attempts at arbitration, because of the peculiar conjunctions of economic conditions and political institutions and national ideals characteristic of her national life.

American capitalism entered the hostilities not out of imperialistic considerations but because:

The provocation to war, which this nation has borne with a patience and forbearance which will glow brightly in our history, has been great indeed. No nation with power to defend itself has, in modern times, endured so much.

Then there is the shallow "lesser-evilism" which has become such a cheap and popular game with ex-radicals who, losing heart in socialism have done the next best thing, embraced the bourgeoisie, or, at best, remained aloof from the class struggle:

. . . Regardless of the capitalist motives involved, it is a fact that on one side are ranged the greatest autocracies in the world, the most powerful reactionary nations, while on the other side are ranged the most progressive and democratic nations in the world. To this fact we cannot be indifferent.

Spargo's report, crude in its construction and permeated with enraged chauvinism, mustered a grand total of five votes. However, the ac-

tual support for a defensist position was much greater. Following the rejection of his report, Spargo drew up a new resolution, much briefer and less obvious in its meaning, but consistent with his rejected report. According to this resolution:

We opposed the entrance of this Republic into the war, but we failed. The political and economic organizations of the working-class were not strong enough to do more than protest.

Having failed to prevent the war by our agitation, we can only recognize it as a fact and try to force upon the government, through pressure and public opinion, a constructive program.

This resolution, whose greater ambiguity carried a greater conscience sop to the pro-war elements in the party was signed by fifty-two convention delegates. It was submitted to the membership in a referendum vote and overwhelmingly defeated.

The rejection by the convention and then by the membership of Spargo's position soon brought to a close one chapter in the fragmentation of the Socialist Party.

Some of the most talented party spokesmen and publicists, including a few associated with the Left Wing in the past, but most of them inveterate Right-Wingers, collapsed completely under the social pressure of a liberal, bourgeois nation preparing for, then entering the war. Charles E. Russell, a leading party educator, more impatient than his patriotic colleagues, had moved into the pro-war camp two years before the St. Louis convention, and shortly afterward wormed his way up as a collaborator of the arch-reactionary Elihu Root. A few months after the convention Frank Bohn announced in a letter to the *New York Times* that the war was between feudal Germany and the modern West. Therefore he had to

leave the party which did not accept these formulations or his conclusions. (Bohn had already been dropped by the party for non-payment of dues!) In a letter to *The Call* printed a few days before the delegates convened, A. M. Simons, an outstanding historian and a founding member of the party, announced that there was a "close connection between the German foreign office and the Socialist Party." Simons together with Winfield Gaylord as their parting crack at the party wrote a letter to Senator Hastings of Wisconsin a week after the St. Louis convention in which they denounced the anti-war position finally adopted by the party and urged "the discreet use of authority for the prevention of general circulation of this pernicious propaganda." Walling, Upton Sinclair, Stokes, Stoddard also left the party. After Spargo's resolutions met a crushing defeat he sent the party a kindly resignation announcing that he could not live in a party making "Teutonic" demands. And Allan Benson announced that "Socialist lawyers" who were convention delegates told him that parts of the Majority resolution "were treasonable" and thus ended his brief fling with socialism.

The Committee on War and Militarism's majority report to the St. Louis convention met with the approval of 140 of the 200 delegates. From its opening sentence—"The Socialist Party of the United States in the present grave crisis solemnly reaffirms its allegiance to the principle of internationalism and working-class solidarity the world over, and proclaims its unalterable opposition to the war just declared by the Government of the United States"—to its last—"The Socialist Party calls upon all the workers to join in its struggle to reach this goal (socialism), and thus

bring into the world a new society in which peace, fraternity, and human brotherhood will be the dominant ideals"—the St. Louis resolution was as militant, as clear and as impassioned a protest against imperialist butchery as the socialist movement in this country has produced. Wars, "whether they have been frankly waged as wars of aggression or have been hypocritically represented as wars of 'defense,' they have always been made by the classes and fought by the masses." The resolution called "upon the workers of all countries to refuse support to their governments in their wars. . . . The only struggle which would justify the workers in taking up arms is the great struggle of the working-class of the world to free itself from economic exploitation and political oppression, and we particularly warn the workers against the snare and delusion of so-called defensive warfare." As a course of action the resolution called for: "Continuous, active, and public opposition to the war, through demonstrations, mass petition, and all other means within our power," at a time when ". . . the acute situation created by war calls for an even more vigorous prosecution of the class struggle. . . ."

Although this resolution received the votes of two-thirds of the convention delegates it no more presented an accurate reflection of the political composition of the party than the meager five votes given to Spargo's.

The views in the majority resolution were not subscribed to even by some of its authors. This charge was made by both the extreme Right and the new Left in the party. It was also to be acknowledged by a number against whom the charge had been directed.

How does one explain the leftward turn of the Socialist Party? The party

leadership was no less reformist than its European counterparts who rallied to the "defense of the nation" when war was not merely a threat but a horrible reality. The answer lies in a combination of circumstances:

1. Unlike German social democracy the Socialist Party had no stake in society. It could not be made to feel the same pressure and responsibility as German social democracy which was a powerful mass party whose actions could have a direct bearing on the military fortunes of the Kaiser. The American party was small, and in a sense, this weakness was a source of political strength for it afforded reformist elements the luxury of militancy without being made to feel that their anti-war policies had any practical consequences.

- In Germany, there was the best organized and most powerful working class in the world. The bureaucracy of the German Federation of Trade Unions was intertwined with that of the Social Democratic Party. It was a relatively easy matter for a reformist party, given its strength in this powerful trade union movement to adopt a policy of civil peace in time of war. The need to protect the living standards of the German workers and the need to defend the economic and political institutions of Europe's most advanced proletariat required, so the rationalization went, a suspension of the class struggle. In the United States the trade union movement had grown considerably by 1917 but the Socialist Party had become a negligible factor in the AFL. From 1911 to 1913 socialists had a considerable base in the AFL, actually challenging the Gompers leadership and winning the support of one-third of the AFL convention of 1913. Gompers immediately waged a successful war against the Socialists and as the AFL grew in

strength from 1913 to 1917 the Socialist strength dwindled to the vanishing point. By the time of the St. Louis convention the party's trade union strength was eagerly confined to radical, Jewish unions inside and out of the AFL. Unlike German social democracy, then, the party's weakness in the organized labor movement also served to discourage any thought that it had a material stake in the war.

2. The United States entered the war when all of its ghouliness had fully unfolded. Given this simple fact it is easy to understand how the chauvinist elements in the party, primarily middle class intellectuals, could not rally any enthusiasm in the ranks for their views and were compelled to leave. The horrors of war were not only apparent to the ranks of the party. They were clear to the nation as a whole. This, plus the isolationist background of American political life, Wilson's past hypocritical declarations of peace which won the election for him, left large sections of the American people cold, even hostile, toward the military, imperialist ambitions of American capitalism in 1917. This anti-war sentiment provided a fertile field for recruitment—for an anti-war socialist movement.

3. The Russian revolution and the resurgence of anti-war sentiments in European socialism also operated as a Left-Wing pull on the political consciousness of the reformist leadership of the party and, above all, the ranks.

4. Finally, the reformist wing of the party feared the growing strength of the Left Wing. Certainly, under more normal circumstances an individual such as Berger could no more vote for the St. Louis Resolution of which he was an author than Jasper

MacLevy could join the I.W.W. today. But there is this difference: Berger was faced with a resurgent revolutionary Left-Wing in the party which had to be headed off, while MacLevy has excellent reasons to believe Bridgeport safe from wobbly control. Berger later admitted that though the St. Louis resolution was completely alien to his way of thinking he feared that if he and others were to insist on a more moderate resolution, given the mood of the party, the Left Wing might have presented to the membership and won its support for an even more militant declaration than the one adopted. It is also possible that had the United States thrown its weight on the German side of the trenches Berger might have taken a more "principled" stand against an anti-war resolution. But Berger was not typical of the reformist wing of the party. He was an inflexible municipal "socialist" without a touch of Marxism in his bloodstream. This was not true of men like Algernon Lee and Morris Hillquit, the principal authors of the resolution, who were genuinely influenced by events in Europe, affected by the isolation of the party from the labor movement, aware of the anti-war feelings of large numbers of Americans and, of course, unwilling to allow the real Left Wing of the party to be sole spokesmen for a revolutionary, anti-war stand.

There was, in the St. Louis Resolution, the element of compromise in some of its phraseology. But the document, as a whole, was, in fact, not so much a compromise resolution between the Left Wing and the leadership as a case of more moderate elements forced to bargain for greater "reasonableness" in some of the resolution's formulations. For example, Hillquit, apprehensive of the mili-

tancy of the Left Wing with its theory of "mass action" (a theory which we will discuss in detail in the next issue—J. F.), insisted that the phrase "mass movement" be inserted in the following action plank of the Resolution: "Should such conscription [military and/or industrial] be forced upon the people we pledge ourselves to continuous efforts for the repeal of such laws and to the support of all mass movements in opposition to conscription." Hillquit was anxious to have concrete party manifestation of anti-conscription activity based on a "mass movement." He feared—not without justice—a tendency in the Left Wing to engage in isolated, adventurist, anti-conscription protests. The other "concessions" to the moderates were of a similar nature; they did not always subtract from the Majority resolution's militancy and sometimes added to its theoretical correctness. The moderates were frightened by their own child somewhat reluctantly conceived and born of "compromise." Sooner or later most of them began a long process of disowning the spirit and eventually the letter of the anti-war manifesto. In less than a month after the resolution was penned, Hillquit said of that section pledging party opposition to the war through demonstrations, mass petitions and "all other means within our power."

As to the phrase "all other means within our power" what means are in our power except the legitimate ones, and then only such of them as the powers that be will care to leave open to us?

There was nothing in the resolution specifically favoring use of anti-militarist techniques outside the framework of "legitimacy"; but in the spirit of the resolution there was anything but the commitment to wage the struggle against militarism within the confines of legal operations cir-

cumscribed for the party by the "powers that be."

The attitude of the Left Wing toward the majority resolution was a curious thing, indeed. For months after its passage the Left Wing pressed as carping critics. It was attacked by influential Left Wingers as the product of "compromise" and derided for not taking a clear-cut revolutionary position on burning problems of the relation of nationalism to internationalism, of class struggle to national struggle, on the question of defense of small nations, etc. The criticisms of the resolution's deficiencies as a final, definitive, theoretical and all-knowing exposition of every political problem posed by the war were either wrong, misplaced, irrelevant or unfair in their severity. These Lefts claimed that the convention majority "was the result of political tricks and maneuvers such as has seldom been seen before at a Socialist convention." That there were maneuvers, even tricks, is not to be doubted. But the all important point was missed by many Left Wingers: after the smoke of battle "maneuvers" had cleared the moderates had to sign an armistice with the Left via a moving and politically sound, class struggle oriented condemnation of the war. Some of the Left Wingers were apparently more enraged by the names of Berger and Hillquit being coupled with that of Ruthenberg on the resolution than impressed by its close correspondence to their own views. This hostility was shared by 31 Left Wing delegates at the convention* who did not vote for the majority resolution.

When one considers the resolution these Left Wing delegates did vote for, their post convention criticisms

*In an article in *The Class Struggle* Boudin estimates that there were 75 Left-Wingers, over half of whom voted for the Majority Resolution.

become "curiouser and curiouser." If one could turnabout and move backwards in socialist history, coming upon the Left-Wing criticisms of the St. Louis convention he could only expect to see, shortly, a detailed, brilliant and revolutionary Left Wing analysis of the war. What a disappointment would await our time-inverted traveler. The Left Wing resolution was far inferior to that supported by the convention. Half the length of the majority resolution, it had no separate suggested course of action as did the majority's, its language was pedestrian, and its formulation no more precise or Marxistical than the majority's. And if the dissenting Left Wingers were disappointed with a resolution which did not explicitly condemn the Second International it could not have been inferred from their own resolution which did not have one censorious line on the European parties of War Socialism.

The failure of the entire Left Wing to support the majority resolution at the convention demonstrates what was to become a characteristic failing of the Left: an unreasoned sectarian impulse to differentiate itself from all other tendencies inside the movement, and radical and working class organizations outside of it.

The disunity of the Left Wing elements at St. Louis, half voting for the Majority resolution and half for its own document, was due only in part to the Left's lack of organization inside the party and the speed with which the convention was assembled. The common misrepresentation of the pre-Communist left in the Socialist Party is of a bunch of irreconcilable hotheads torn only by inner factional maneuvers of different power oriented blocs. Nothing could be

more erroneous. In no sense was the Left Wing at any time in its history a monolithic or even a cohesive tendency. True enough, it was to be rent by petty bickering, but it was also divided in a much healthier fashion by genuine differences of political conceptions, sometimes obscured but always operative.

As an example of how wide a gulf sometimes existed among prominent members of the Left and pertinent to our discussion of the Left and the war we should pause for a moment to note the war position of Louis Boudin. Louis Boudin, as we have already mentioned, was the party Marxist, high in the councils of the Left Wing, the most important Left Wing figure at the St. Louis convention and probable author of its minority report.

In Boudin's many and lengthy articles on the war he always began with the roar of a famished lion flushing out weak game, but by the time Boudin finished his polemics the would-be victims could feel safe in their lair. For Boudin's roar was not that of the Lord of the Jungle but of the timid lion in the Wizard of Oz. Boudin was highly critical of the St. Louis resolution for its alleged lack of revolutionary, Marxist clarity. But his own articles on the war often included proposals on how to achieve lasting peace which, by comparison, would make the United World Federalists look like flaming revolutionaries. Boudin, the Left Wing leader at the St. Louis convention believed that the bourgeoisie, brought to its senses, realizing that war was self-destructive, could be persuaded that out of self-interest it adopt the policy of "complete disarmament, and international organization." Boudin gives a detailed blueprint of how this bour-

geois "United States of the World" would meet and resolve problems:

But there is a certain minimum of powers which such international organization must possess, in order to answer the present emergency: the administration of all underdeveloped countries, and the protectorate of all semi-developed countries, must be placed in its hands; to be administered primarily in the interests of the natives, and then of the world at large without discrimination between nations; and to remain under such administration until they shall have become ripe for self-government, when they shall be admitted into the community of nations. Once the fear of war, and with it all *strategical* reasons, are abolished, there is absolutely no reason in any enlightened self-interest, even from the capitalist point of view, why the different nations interested should not turn over all of their possessions in Africa, for instance, to the International Administration, just as the American colonies gave up their claims to the Northwestern territory in favor of the Federal Government, and why the entire African continent, with the exception of the self-governing communities of the South-African Federation, should not, thereupon, be administered internationally, and new states carved out therefrom, from time to time, to be admitted into the World-Union, or some integral part of the World-Union, as its Constitution may provide.

The World-Union, and its International Administration, must, of course, have an armed force, in order to be a real power.

As neither this writer nor the readers of the N.I. are likely recruits for the Legion of Space Cadets we need not debate the interminable sentences just quoted: a melange of world-federalism, pacifism and imperialism. They are of significance, however, as an example of the diversity of political concepts this country's prenatal Communist movement.

It is of interest that the views expressed by Boudin were not at all foreign to the Socialist Party. The party peace program in 1915 called for "in-

ternational Federation—The United States of the World." In 1917, after the St. Louis convention Hillquit wrote that peace can be attained "even today before the competitive system of capitalism, the most direct cause of modern wars, is abolished." This was in direct conflict with the St. Louis Resolution which Hillquit helped author, which explicitly states that the war "was the logical outcome of the competitive capitalist system." But Hillquit at least modified his views of permanent peace within the framework of world capitalism—and contributed to political confusion—by adding that "To this end the governments must first of all be divorced from the capitalist interests, and be true mouthpieces of the people." With Boudin, however, such qualifications were not essential to his view.

IN THE YEAR FOLLOWING the United States' declaration of war the Socialist Party made capital gains on the basis of its anti-war position. This was graphically demonstrated in the 1917 election campaign of the party. In New York City, Morris Hillquit, running for mayor, received 142,000 votes, nearly 25 per cent of the total cast. When one considers the large number of foreign-born workers who were not citizens and additional allowances for Tammany fraud as the party claimed, the percentage of actual party support in the city unquestionably topped the 25 per cent figure. Four years earlier, Charles E. Russell, running for the same office, received 33,000 votes. New York elected ten socialists to the State Legislature, seven party members to the Board of Aldermen, and one socialist was elected to the municipal bench. In Chicago the socialist candidates received 80,000 votes out of 240,000. In Cleveland the socialists went up from 6,000 in 1915

to 21,000. In Dayton, Ohio, the party received 45 per cent of the total, losing out to the combined efforts of the Republicans and Democrats. Similar increases were recorded in other industrial centers, including Buffalo, Yonkers, Utica, Toledo, Ft. Wayne, Allentown and a host of other communities in Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania.

The party campaign was subjected to the sharpest criticism by Left Wing writers. As was to be so often the case with the Left Wing their criticisms combined elements of theoretical correctness and poor judgment. Whether or not some moderate party campaigners waived in their attacks on the war, the party campaign on the whole was conducted on an anti-war basis, revolving around the injustice of the war itself and attacking the high cost of living and other hardships it induced. The voters took the party at its word—the St. Louis Resolution—and their vote could only be understood as a mass demonstration against war and capitalist oppression.

The gains the party made were not restricted to the ballot box. The May 1917 circulation of *The Call* doubled that of 1916. More important, was the membership turnover in the party. Where, before the war, the strongest sections of party influence were in rural areas, the centers of organized party strength had shifted to larger Eastern and industrial metropolises, without incurring any loss in numerical strength. Thousands left the party immediately before and after the St. Louis convention but their places were taken by new members.

These recruits were largely foreign born workers who could not work up any enthusiasm for the imperialist ambitions of their new homeland where conditions of life were often more like Gehenna than the Prom-

ised Land. Opposed to the war and inspired by revolutionary developments in Europe, large numbers of these immigrant workers joined the foreign federations affiliated to the Socialist Party and formed the mass base of the Left Wing*

THE LEFT WING CRITICISM of the SP election campaign was but one example of how an abstract, theoretically correct criticism could be transformed into petty sniping at all the deficiencies of a progressive mass movement. The fact that such left wing Wilsonians as Amos Pinchot and Dudley Field Malone supported Hillquit was enough to bring jeers from the Left Wing press. But while the criticism of the SP campaign was unwise and not always justified in all specific instances, and its articles generally weighted too heavily in a critical direction, the Left Wing, at least, did support the candidates of the Socialist Party.

The first major demonstration of the negativistic purity of the Left was its hostility to the peace movement in the United States which assumed mass proportions following Congress' declaration of war. This peace movement is a sadly neglected chapter in the history of American radicalism. We cannot remedy that in this article, but a brief review of it is an integral part of our analysis of the Left Wing spearhead of the American Communist movement.

In the most important section of the organized labor movement, the AFL, a modest peace movement was manifested in 1915. A conference of trade unionists was organized consisting mainly of representatives from

*In 1915 the Socialist Party had 79,000 members and the foreign language federations accounted for about 15,000 members. By the end of 1917 the party had well over 80,000 members with the federations claiming more than 30,000 members.

the West and Midwest which met in Indianapolis in May 1915, under the chairmanship of Daniel Tobin. Among the delegates were miners, carpenters and teamsters. It was prompted by the downpour of militaristic propaganda following the sinking of the Lusitania. But the conference, though of an anti-militarist nature, took no concrete measures and was fated to collapse under chauvinist pressure from the outside and the Gompers leadership within. The Socialist Party was in no position to provide leadership to this anti-war sentiment in the labor movement for it had successfully isolated itself as a political force inside the AFL. Whether the organized labor movement in the United States would have withstood the test of war, remaining true to its anti-militarist traditions, if the Socialist Party had a constructive policy of functioning inside the AFL as an organized political tendency, or had the revolutionary dual unionists of the I.W.W. chosen a policy of "boring from within" the AFL, is a purely speculative question. All we can say with certainty is that the SP policy of "non-interference" in the affairs of the union movement and the attitude of dual unionists who wanted to destroy the AFL reduced to a minimum any opportunity for a successful struggle against the pro-war Gompers leadership within the "house of labor."

Although organized labor resistance to militarism waned in the years 1915-1917, the pacifist movement, nonetheless, gained momentum. Unfortunately, the pacifist movement in this period was of a middle class nature consisting of religious organizations, women's leagues, liberal intellectuals, etc. It fought a losing battle for U. S. neutrality and, occasionally, some of its leading members were at-

tracted by such preposterous projects as Henry Ford's famous peace mission to Sweden.

Just prior to U. S. entry into the war the Emergency Peace Federation was organized out of the American Neutral Conference Committee which included among its leaders, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, George Kirchwey, and Jane Addams. This new organization included a large number of socialists and made a highly concentrated effort to attract segments of the labor movement. An important conference called by the Federation in May 1917, one month after the declaration of war, was attended by Morris Hillquit, John Haynes Holmes, Rabbi Judah L. Magnes, Lillian Wald (of the Henry Street Settlement), Edward J. Cassidy (President of the Big Six Typographical Union) and about 35 others likewise prominent in socialist, pacifist, reform and labor movements. They agreed upon an "immediate program" of the Federation which previewed an interesting shift in the pacifist movement. With war now a fact in the United States the Federation program reflected an interest in broader social problems. It was concerned with questions of political democracy, war aims and terms of peace, and was inspired by the Russian Revolution. Impelled by the need to further broaden the social outlook of the peace movement, the Federation was instrumental in organizing the First American Conference for Peace and Democracy held in New York on May 30 and 31, with a second major conference held in Chicago. These conferences revealed the growing strength of the anti-war movement, the increased prestige of the Socialist Party within it, and its evolution as a movement with political perspectives adopting the Russian peace program as its own.

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The New York Conference was climaxed by a jam-packed rally in Madison Square Garden and a call for a "People's Council." Many local "councils" were organized. And with a significant use of language a "Constituent Assembly of Peoples Councils" was called, to be held in Minneapolis the first two days of September. Minneapolis was chosen as the city most likely to be safe from government persecution because of its Socialist administration. Its meeting rights were denied, however, by the governor of Minnesota and the delegates to the Council moved to Chicago. After succeeding in holding its main sessions there, the Assembly was broken up by troops sent by the Illinois governor. At the session held, however, a program was projected advocating: repeal of the conscription law, the defense of civil liberties, rights of national self-determination, a democratic control of foreign policy and a referendum on war, safeguarding labor's rights, taxing the wealthy for the war and an international organization for maintaining world peace. A permanent People's Council was set up with headquarters in New York.

Exactly how powerful this Council movement was is difficult to estimate. Its leaders claimed that its affiliated organizations—Socialist locals, labor councils, farm organizations, reform groups—represented well over two million members. This figure may be exaggerated but there is no question that the pacifist movement, which had been restricted in policy and membership before the war had grown to mass proportions and evolved a radical, though by no means revolutionary, social outlook. Scott Nearing, chairman of the People's Councils, correctly referred to it as the "clearing house for the liberal

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and radical elements in American life." A measure of the strength of the Council movement and its influence in the labor movement was the hysterical reaction of the government and of Samuel Gompers who now sat high in the government war councils.

Gompers, in collaboration with a number of the pro-war socialists who had deserted the party before and after the St. Louis convention, organized the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy. It was to counter the influence of the Socialist Party and to fight possible contagion of the peace movement in the ranks of organized labor. Intended as a demonstration of organized labor's loyalty to imperialism the Alliance called its first national convention in Minneapolis to coincide with the planned Constituent Assembly of the Peoples Council. The Minnesota governor did not deny the American Alliance its meeting rights.

Gompers explained at the 1917 convention of the AFL:

I wasn't going to run away. I was going to be there where they were. The psychology of the time and the situation demanded that there should be a clear cut distinction between what the People's Council represented and what the American trade-unionists represented, and because the mind of the people of the United States was focused upon Minneapolis we decided the conference should be held there.

Meanwhile the Left Wing writers of the Socialist Party were also expressing their dissatisfaction with the peace movement and the People's Council. Fraina wrote of the People's Council:

The Socialist Party in its support of the People's Council has again made a tactical error of the first importance. Indeed, the tragedy of the situation is seen in the circumstance that our party has practically lost its identity national-

ly as a force against war. All its anti-war activity is virtually centered in the People's Council, an organization that does not accept revolutionary action, and the conservatism of which, moreover, is strengthened by the party bureaucrats dominant in its management.

. . . The People's Council does not square with our general revolutionary aims, nor does it even adopt temporarily radical actions against the war. The party should immediately separate itself from this bourgeois concern.

Many of the specific indictments of the Left Wing against the People's Council and against the party role in it were, in a limited sense, correct. The Council was neither revolutionary nor anti-capitalist and the moderate leadership of the party spent, perhaps, an inordinate amount of time and energy in it. Moreover, the People's Council, although it had some support in the labor movement was not a working class organization. *In the long run*, a movement such as the People's Council, if it does not win to it the organized working class, the only class capable of leading a successful revolutionary struggle against imperialism, may boil for a while but it will, eventually, only evaporate into steam. And this is what did happen to the People's Council. But the People's Council, for all its weaknesses in composition, compromises and hesitations was nevertheless a mass movement of social protest, moved by a genuine sympathy with the Russian Revolution—which it could not understand, and an aversion to war. It was responsible for an awakened political consciousness of thousands, with a radicalizing effect on American workers and liberals. By abstaining from it and condemning it, by not trying to make its views felt within it the Left Wing helped to assure the dissolution of a promising but politically limited mass movement.

The attitude of the Left Wingers would have been correct were they discussing a comparable organization in revolutionary Russia. And that was one of the fundamental weaknesses of this Left. It functioned on the American scene as if it were involved in a direct and immediate revolutionary struggle for power. It could not understand the level of American politics. It adopted an uncompromising, rigid political attitude, in disregard of the stage of development of the American working class and ignorant of the power of American capitalism. In this sense, Gompers understood the class struggle better than Fraina.

In the next issue we will discuss the reasons for the sectarian malady of the Left: What there was in the composition of the Left and its political environment and background that gave rise to self-destructive attitudes and activities. As part of this discussion we will deal with the theory of "mass action," the Left and the labor movement, its view on reforms and elections; also, the effect of the Russian Revolution on the Left and the labor movement. Finally, we will present a detailed picture of the actual organization of the Left as an organized faction with its fusions and splits leading to the formation of two Communist parties.

JULIUS FALK

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British Labor After the Elections

The Struggle for Power in the British Labor Party

The defeat of the British Labor Party in the general election a few months ago has brought to public notice a fact which has long been the subject of discussion inside the party itself—that the Labor Party is today in one of the most significant phases in its history. It has successfully struggled through the formative years during which it built itself into the mass political expression of the British working class. It has experienced a period of power during which it sought to translate its program into practical reality and during which it carried out certain modifications of Britain's social structure and established what is now universally known as the Welfare State. Now, having experienced an electoral defeat which probably relegates it to the role of opposition for the next five years, it has reached a critical stage in its development and one which will determine the general character of British politics for many years to come. In order to fully appreciate the Labor Party's position it is necessary to take a brief look at its fortunes during the years since the end of the war.

THE POST-WAR HISTORY of the Labor Party really begins in the early part of 1945 when the war in Europe was obviously entering its closing stages. The long period of electoral truce and governmental coalition with the Tories had for long lain heavy on the stomachs of many members of the Labor Party and a steady pressure had been maintained within the party ranks for an ending of this situation at the earliest opportunity. With the end of the European war in sight the

party decided that the time was fast approaching when it would have to make its bid for power. Brushing aside the voices which urged a continuation of the coalition it set to work formulating the program which would constitute the basis of its challenge. The result was a document, entitled *Let Us Face the Future*, which was far in advance of anything produced by the party in the whole of its history—in fact it was probably the most radical document ever produced by a similarly constituted party anywhere in the world.

It stated that Labor's participation in the wartime coalition had been undertaken with the objective of ensuring a victory of a different type to that envisaged by the Tories—that, as far as the Labor Party was concerned, military victory was but the prelude to victories of a different character in different spheres. "The Labor Party," it said, "is a Socialist Party, and proud of it. Its ultimate purpose at home is the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain—free, democratic, efficient, progressive, public spirited, its material resources organized in the service of the British people." Then, to remove any doubts that these were empty phrases capable of any interpretation, it laid out the practical and specific details of its program for the first five years should it be returned as the government.

Pride of place in the program was given to the measures for bringing in to public ownership certain basic industries—the list was impressive. Coal, gas, electricity, road transport, airlines, railroads, canals, iron and steel industries. All of these were ear-

marked for nationalization on the basis of "fair compensation" and were to be "conducted in the interests of consumers, coupled with proper status and conditions for the workers employed in them." Alongside these plans for outright public ownership were others for the establishment and maintenance of various physical controls covering practically the whole range of economic activity in the country.

On the other side of the picture the Labor manifesto promised far reaching measures of social services for the whole of the population. Educational facilities were to be greatly expanded; health was to be protected under a comprehensive scheme organized and managed by the state; social insurance schemes providing cash benefits for sickness, unemployment, old age, child allowances and death grants were to be instituted or expanded. From the cradle to the grave the British worker was to be assured a minimum—albeit a low one—standard of life guaranteed by the state.

These, then, were the fundamentals with which the Labor Party challenged the Tory representatives of the capitalist class. The electoral clash was one of clear contrast with no one left in doubt as to the real issue involved. Either a forward movement with Labor toward a new type of social structure or a continuance of the *status quo* with the Tories. The challenge, the program and the mood of the British people after six years of war could not fail to produce a triumph for the Labor Party. It swept to victory with 396 seats in the House of Commons against 189 for the Tories and gained a clear majority of 186 above all other parties. When Parliament first assembled the Labor members stood in their places to greet the new Labor Prime Minister—Cle-

ment Attlee—by singing *The Red Flag* as he entered the chamber. The British bourgeoisie trembled as it fearfully awaited the tramp of the jackboots of the Socialist "Gestapo" promised by Winston Churchill should the Labor Party attain power.

THE STRONG POSITION of the Labor Party in Parliament at this time was not reflected by a similar position in the local constituency organizations. The wartime electoral truce, coupled with the disruption of life through air-raids, evacuation of population and the large numbers of workers serving in the armed forces, had played havoc with the local party machinery which had dwindled—in many places, to nothingness. The individual membership of the party, which stood at 408,844 in 1939, had fallen to 265,763 by the end of 1944 and, although the affiliated membership from trade unions had grown, the lack of individual members in the constituency organizations had reduced inner party life to a very low ebb. But pockets of activists remained and, with the filling of the electoral victory, they set about re-building the party machinery. Recruits came flocking in and by the end of 1946 the individual membership had climbed to 645,345 and the local machinery was once again running smoothly. Many of the new recruits to the party were young men returning from service with the armed forces. They were inexperienced in the practical workings of a political organization and most of them had little theoretical knowledge of socialism; but they were young and enthusiastic—their imaginations had been fired by the promises held out by the Labor victory and their horizons broadened by contact with foreign lands and peoples during the war.

This big increase in party membership—and the accompanying growth of political activity at the lower levels of the party—meant that the newcomers had a very rapid political apprenticeship. They developed very quickly and were soon producing local leaders who presented a serious challenge to older members for leadership of local party organizations. Inevitably, conflicts began to develop; first in a vague form in the shape of the impetuosity of youth against the apparent slowness of age and, then, as political understanding developed, the limited scope of youth versus age conflict was raised to a higher ideological plane. Older members of the party Left began to impart their knowledge to the younger members. Endless pints of beer and cups of tea were consumed as the “old hands” yarned into the small hours in what were, in fact, impromptu education sessions. Slowly, new forces were being born in the Labor Party. It was primarily an unconscious process, unplanned and vague; creating a force from which the present-day Left derives much of its strength.

During this period the Labor Government in Parliament was carrying on its arduous task of translating the election manifesto into reality through legislation. At the same time, many points of disagreement arose among the Labor MPs, and on occasion, odd Parliamentary groupings of Laborites would emerge which endeavored to secure various points of policy in opposition to the line of the party leadership. But, on the whole, there was no emergence of a definite and clear cut left wing group. The nearest to such that arose was in opposition to the foreign policy of the party which was being handled in Parliament by Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary. Time after time at-

tempts were made to challenge this policy—and time after time the opposition was beaten into submission by the lack of clear alternatives, the forceful debating power of Bevin and the massive strength which he, as an old trade union leader, drew from the Right Wing trade union leadership. At the party annual conferences feeble rallying of opposition were annually defeated to retire into semi-obscure.

One of the reasons for this initial lack of success of those advocating policies in opposition to the official leadership was due to the narrowness of approach. Little or no attempt was made to relate specific points of opposition to the broader pattern of party policy as a whole. This, to some extent, is understandable, for while the Labor Government was still steadfastly pursuing the main objectives laid down in *Let Us Face The Future* there arose little occasion for debate on fundamentals concerning future perspectives—an effective opposition from the Left could never emerge while confining itself to points of detail.

A SECOND, PERHAPS MORE SERIOUS, reason for the lack of success of those in opposition to the party leadership was the fairly high degree of Stalinist influence then existing among some of the more vocal elements of the opposition. The Communist Party, having been most rudely pushed aside in the general swing to the left in the 1945 election, was doing its utmost to influence the Labor Party through its dissatisfied elements. This tactic had achieved some results with the consequence that what left force there was in the Labor Party was greatly influenced by Stalinist ideology and was often vocally represented at party gatherings by Stalinist or near Stalin-

ist elements. A direct outcome of this Stalinist influence was the retardation of the growth of a real Socialist left wing inside the Labor Party; for many who were dissatisfied with the official party line were by no means anxious to join the international chorus which followed the baton of the Kremlin choirmaster. Hence there existed within the Labor Party a potential left wing which required a catalyst to bring it into action. This catalyst was provided when, in April 1951, Aneurin Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman resigned their government posts because of lack of sympathy with policies then being pursued by the government.

The resignation of these three was sparked by the annual budget for 1951 introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer—Hugh Gaitskell. Drawn up in the context of the rearmament program, adopted by the Labor Government as a consequence of the Korean War and pressure from the United States, the budget hit hard at the so-called Welfare State. It increased the purchase tax on a wide range of items—such as radio and television sets, cars, vacuum cleaners, washing machines and similar domestic equipment—by 100 per cent. It increased the tax on gasoline which in turn brought an all round increase in transport costs. The food subsidies, a device designed to cushion the working class from increases in the price of basic foodstuffs, were pegged at £410 millions—in spite of the soaring prices resulting from the Korean War. The National Health Service—the apple of Aneurin Bevan’s eye—was caught in the cold blast; for the first time charges were placed upon patients for the provision of such items as false teeth and spectacles. Every feature of the budget was designed to restrict the purchasing power of the people in

order to release industrial capacity and provide the finance for the insatiable appetite of the arms program. The budget was a formal announcement that the order of priorities had been reversed; that social welfare—hitherto considered sacrosanct—had relinquished its privileged position to military requirements.

The budget was the last straw. It represented the limit beyond which Bevan, Wilson and Freeman were not prepared to go and was therefore responsible for the qualitative change which took place. The quantitative changes preceding it had been building up over a period and stemmed from the lack of ultimate objectives by the party leadership.

Having run out its allotted span the Labor Government had sent the country to the polls in February 1950 with the result that Labor’s solid majority of 186 of the previous election had been slashed away to a mere 8 and placed it in an extremely precarious position. The 1950 election, unlike that of 1945, was not characterized by any marked boldness on the part of the Labor Party. The reasons are plain enough to see. The first post-war Labor Government had swept to power on the basis of *Let Us Face The Future* and during its period of office had implemented practically all the proposals contained in that document; one or two major items left outstanding were, in fact, in course of preparation when the election was called and had only been postponed because of the very heavy program of legislation carried out by the government. Having reached this position the Labor Party was faced with the necessity of formulating its future program should it find itself once again in power as the government. This formulation immediately called into account the ultimate ob-

jective of the party; whether *Let Us Face The Future* represented the fulfillment of this objective, or whether it represented but a first step on a much longer road. The critical economic situation prevailing at this time served to sharpen these two distinct courses of action.

The Right Wing showed no hesitation in making up its mind and, given the ideological lead of Herbert Morrison, emblazoned upon its banners the slogans—"Woo The Middle Class" and "Consolidation." It did not emphatically reject the idea of any further advancement—but it did propagate the idea that the main task was accomplished with the creation of the Welfare State and all that remained was to do a little tidying up—and even this would have to wait until the economic situation improved. The Left Wing, which by now was beginning to get the situation in proper focus, took the contrary view and pressure began to build up behind agitation for a return to the dynamism of 1945. The British Labor movement is characterized, to a large extent, by the fashion in which the elements coming into collision with the Right Wing leadership begin their agitation on a "get back to" theme. On this particular occasion the dissenters wanted a return to *Let Us Face The Future*—which by now had become almost legendary in the Labor Party. What a large number failed to appreciate was the fact that it was not a question of "getting back" to 1945—but of pushing forward from the point reached by the 1945 program. Similarly, many who could not understand why the Right Wing had adopted such a radical program in 1945 yet refused to pursue a similar one in 1950, failed to realize that the measures taken by the Labor Government had advanced the position of the working class

along the road to power. The resistance of the bourgeoisie increased as their positions of economic and political power fell to the working class. The Right Wing, however, realized this; it realized, also, that the going would be harder and the risk of a head on clash with the bourgeoisie more likely. Hence its effort to call a halt to further advance with the cries of "consolidation" and its attempt to dilute the class character of the Labor Party by appeals to the middle class elements. This, then, was the real background against which the resignation of Bevan must be viewed—and there is every indication that he was perfectly aware of the full import of the situation.

The resignations of the three acted as the catalyst for which the torpid Left forces of the Labor Party had waited. Very soon the party—indeed the whole of the country—was ablaze with argument, debate and discussion. Focal point of it all was the pamphlet *One Way Only* published by the weekly newspaper *Tribune*. Subtitled *A Socialist Analysis of the Present World Crisis* and signed by Bevan, Wilson and Freeman, the pamphlet became a best seller; no less than 100,000 copies of it were sold and it was read, reviewed and railed against all over the country.

The three authors, in their signed foreword, made clear that the pamphlet was not intended to be a statement of policy for the Labor Party, for that function, they pointed out, belonged to the annual conference of the party. It was, they said, a serious contribution to the great debate taking place in the Labor Party and was an endeavor "to focus discussion on the central problem of our time." Much of the pamphlet was taken up with the economics of the rearmament program and the foreign policy which

necessitated its adoption—for these were the issues which had prompted the final breach. It also recalled that the party had adopted a program entitled *Let Us Win Through Together* which had included proposals for the nationalization of sugar, cement and part of the chemical industry; the public ownership of the meat wholesaling trade and the creation of publicly owned markets. It had pronounced in favor of the control of "financial forces," the abolition of price rings and action against monopolies. All of these, said the pamphlet, still remained to be carried out and within their framework there was ample scope for the Labor Government to tackle the then current economic problems. "These plans for extending Socialism have been put into cold storage" said the pamphlet. In other words the authors of the pamphlet showed their recognition of the fact that the Right Wing was following its expected role and using the first signs of economic difficulties as an excuse for throwing overboard the few radical measures contained in the 1950 program. By calling for full implementation of the already existing program Bevan and his friends showed a deep understanding of the mind of the Labor Party. They were not, at this stage, calling for a change in the party program. They were merely demanding that the leadership stop ignoring and pursue with vigor the program already agreed upon by the party annual conference. In this way they were assured of the maximum amount of support within the party from those who had not grasped the full significance of the situation. But the long term objectives were firmly in the mind of the authors, as the statement, "there is still a long way to go before we can claim to have

established a Socialist society," bears witness.

FOUR YEARS and two election defeats after the emergence of the Bevanites the situation discerned by only a few in the Labor Party in 1951 now stands out clearly and—although still not openly acknowledged by all the participants—forms the basis for the conflict which now has become a normal feature of Labor Party discussions. The electoral defeat of a few months ago has merely served to accentuate the nature of the division and hence brings the picture more sharply into focus.

The first remarkable feature of the Labor Party's activities immediately following the recent election defeat is the manner in which a large number of hounds have spent a considerable amount of time in chasing a phony hare. At its first meeting after the election the National Executive Committee of the party set up a special sub-committee to conduct a large scale inquiry into the weaknesses of party organization under the chairmanship of Harold Wilson. In this, it was responding to a great clamor which arose—seemingly quite spontaneously—almost before the complete election results had been announced. The actual origins of this uproar are hard to trace, but beyond doubt they were considerably influenced by the stories skillfully constructed by pressmen as they made their rounds during the election campaign; stories which consistently compared the slick smoothness of the Tory apparatus with the ponderous wheezing of the Labor engine. The journalists were bound to angle this particular side of the election campaign because of the absence—in the main—of fierce conflict by the propagandists of the rival parties. But it cannot be supposed that in doing

so they were aware that they would set a large proportion of the Labor Party membership scratching around like hens in their own backyard.

That there are wide differences in the efficiency of the two party machines is beyond dispute, and that Labor could find much room for improvement in its organization is no less true. During the past ten years, following its sound trouncing at the polls in 1945, the Tory Party has given a great deal of attention to its party machinery. It has created an efficient head office with a top rate public relations department and a network of highly paid professional political agents—receiving salaries about double those of the average worker—all over the country. The recent election presented the first opportunity for this machine to really go into action having sorted out its weaknesses as exposed by the two previous elections. The result was that it presented a first rate standard against which to measure the Labor election machinery.

But, and this is extremely important and relevant, what the leaders of the Labor Party—and all those who follow their example of worshipping before the god of functional efficiency—are apparently overlooking is the fact that the Labor election machine was this year at its worst for a long time. But, more important, they have seemingly ignored the reasons for this phenomena, reasons which are of a profound political character. Depending, as it does, upon the activities of vast numbers of voluntary workers to conduct its election campaign, the degree of success of Labor's organization is in direct relation to the enthusiasm of those workers. The leaders of these groups of voluntary workers in the constituency parties are—in the main—rank and file militants

of the Left Wing. It is because large numbers of these local leaders found it difficult to generate any enthusiasm in themselves on the basis of the electoral program of the Labor Party that the party's election machine functioned so poorly and thus over-emphasized and magnified the efficiency of the Tory organization in relation to it. Thus, while there is definitely much room for improvement in functional apparatus, the present concern of the party leadership is by-passing the real issue which is political. It is hard to believe that the leadership does not recognize this and leads one to the conclusion that it is a conscious tactical move to play down debate on policy matters until a time chosen by the Right Wing as being most opportune from their own point of view.

If this is the case then it must be stated that their tactics have met with some success for undoubtedly the present organizational fetish in the party has tended to rush much of the post election debate into a blind alley. Even experienced campaigners have swallowed the bait and blossomed out into efficiency experts—complete with slide rules and graph paper. *The New Statesman and Nation*, in an editorial investigation of Labor's fallen fortunes on June 4, made three main points which, it claimed, would provide the basis for restoring those fortunes. Two of them concerned organization and the one which did concern policy seemed strangely out of place in a journal which claims to give expression to the minds of the Left intellectuals. The political point urged that the Parliamentary Labor Party accept *Forward With Labor*—the program on which Labor had fought, and lost, the election—as its agreed policy upon which to build a fighting opposition to the Tory Government. (Apparently *The*

New Statesman overlooked the fact that it had described *Challenge to Britain*, of which *Forward With Labor* was more or less a digested version, as “neither a revivalist's bible nor speaker's handbook, too pedestrian for a crusade, too imprecise for an election platform” and that “when it comes to action, realism is clouded by compromise.”) Having demonstrated what can only be classified as its uncanny knack of performing political acrobatics without moving the *New Statesman* advanced its dual solution for Labor's organizational difficulties. First, the “ageing leadership” must be renovated—with Clement Attlee remaining as chairman of the Parliamentary Party for the sole purpose of building up a new team of younger men. And, secondly, Morgan Phillips—the party secretary—should be persuaded to agree to the long overdue overhaul of the organization under his control. The adoption of these proposals, according to the *New Statesman*, would enable a business-like interim report to be produced at the next party annual conference which would “send the delegates back to the constituencies in a fighting mood.”

The *New Statesman* was by no means alone in sponsoring a remedy for Labor's ills which concerned itself with organization as a central feature; from practically every section of the party came advice of a similar character. As an inevitable consequence the discussion which should have been taking place on political matters important has been pushed into the background—a situation reflected by the fact that no less than 73 resolutions on the agenda for the annual conference this year come under the heading of “Party Administration.”

This is not to say, however, that political discussion has been absent

within the Labor Party or that many members of the party have not grasped the full implications of the present position. It is more an indication of the successful tactics of the Right Wing which apparently wishes to deal with the Left of the party in an organizational manner prior to engaging in any serious political discussion—a fact which seems to have crept out in parts of the debate which has so far taken place. Herbert Morrison, writing in *Socialist Commentary* immediately after the election, gave one or two pointers in this direction. In what was an obvious reference to the Bevanite weekly *Tribune*, although its name was not actually mentioned, Morrison spoke of “uncomradely matter” which was published week after week in “certain periodicals” and which was “harmful and confusing within the party and among the public.” What the party badly needed, he said, was “a real Labor and socialist weekly.” He also denounced what he called a “party within the party” and demanded an end to “highly organized persistent opposition and campaigning.” The constituency parties, he said, should get on with their real work and protect themselves against “politically foreign elements seeking to penetrate us from the outside.”

This was faintly reminiscent of the arguments used by the Right Wing when they successfully shut down the Left Wing *Socialist Outlook* twelve months earlier—an affair in which it is said that Morrison played a prominent part when the matter was initiated by a sub-committee of the NEC. In the circular announcing the ban on the *Socialist Outlook* the NEC recalled that sometime earlier the Socialist Fellowship—an organization within the Labor Party which was supported by the *Socialist Outlook*—had been proscribed “since the frac-

tional activities it organized had a disturbing effect on many parties and led to a diversion of effort and attention from the task of building up an efficient electoral machine in the constituencies." In spite of the subsequent dissolution of the Socialist Fellowship, said the NEC, "it is plain that there is an organized faction at work within a number of Constituency Labor Parties in support of policies advocated in *Socialist Outlook*." This is a clear indication of what Morrison, and the remainder of the Right Wing, see as the "real work" of constituency parties—they are to be merely administrative cogs in a vast electoral machine. And, equally apparent, is the desire of the Right Wing to have this machine firmly in the hands of the Right Wing so that it can be used to stifle any voices of opposition.

At the moment many local constituency parties employ a full time paid organizer. He is appointed by the local party and his wages are paid from the funds of the local organization itself. This means, theoretically at least, that the party head office at Transport House has no more control over them than over the ordinary party member. It has long been known that many Right Wingers would like to see an end to this position; they would prefer to see the local organizers recruited by the head office and under its firm control. In his article in *Socialist Commentary* Morrison raised this point and said that he was in favor of a national service of organizing agents "with real responsibility from and to head office." That there are financial and organizational advantages in this scheme is beyond dispute—but many on the party Left feel that it is yet another attempt by the Right Wing to stifle independent thought on the part of constituency

parties. With local organizers under the control of head office it would mean, in effect, that the Right Wing had a loyal servant in those constituency parties where they were working and that they could be relied upon to crack down on the Left as well as keeping Transport House fully informed of the latest activities of the Left in the local parties.

OF GREATER IMPORTANCE is the desire of some people to alter the party organization in respect to the relationships which at present exist between the mass party membership, the annual conference and the Parliamentary Labor Party. According to the party Constitution the annual conference is the supreme body of the party; to quote: "The Party Conference shall decide from time to time what specific proposals of legislative, financial or administrative reform shall be included in the party program. No proposal shall be included in the party program unless it has been adopted by the party conference by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the votes recorded on a card vote." And further: "The work of the party shall be under the direction and control of the party conference." The effect of this was clearly summed up by the present leader of the party, Clement Attlee, in his book *The Labor Party In Perspective*, which was written in 1937 and re-issued in 1949. In it he says of the party conference: "It lays down the policy of the party, and issues instructions which must be carried out by the Executive, the affiliated organizations and its representatives in Parliament and on local authorities . . . the Labor Party Conference is in fact a parliament of the movement."

This position contrasts starkly with what exists within the Tory Party.

The Tory leaders look upon their annual conference as little more than a sociable get-together once a year at which the party leadership can convey its policies to the members gathered in conference. The Tory annual conference exercises absolutely no control over either policy or the activities of its representatives within Parliament. This charade is looked upon with scorn by the Labor Party and frequent use is made of it during polemics with the Tories—but of late many Right Wingers within the Labor Party have realized how convenient such an arrangement is. The party leadership is left free from the influences of the mass of members and can pursue a policy which—it can claim—is dictated by circumstances existing within Parliament.

In actuality, of course, the leadership of the Labor Party manages to exercise control in the manner it desires in spite of the constitutional supremacy of the annual conference. This is achieved by the preponderance of votes held at the conference by the trade unions who are—in the main—dominated by Right Wing elements. Thus, when it comes to a conflict between Left and Right, the trade union votes decide the issue in favor of the Right. But this situation is full of uncertainty and can only continue to exist for as long as the Right Wing can maintain its grip upon the trade unions. When big issues arise it is possible for an alliance to be formed which, in spite of the adherence of the bigger unions to the Right Wing, brings the leadership close to defeat. Such a situation developed at the conference last year when the question of German re-armament was put to a vote. In spite of a plan by Attlee not to pass a resolution against German re-armament which would "tie the hands of a fu-

ture Labor Foreign Secretary" the conference came within an inch of beating the platform; and, indeed, would have actually done so had it not been for the fact that a couple of union delegations actually voted for the re-armament of Germany in defiance of contrary views expressed at their own annual conferences. Clearly, such a position is not welcomed by the Right Wing—and a solution is doubtless being thought out.

Most outspoken in this respect is R. T. McKenzie—the author of *British Political Parties*—and he is currently engaged in expounding his views on the subject in any publication which will print them. It cannot be claimed that McKenzie has much, if any, influence with the Right Wing leadership—but all the same he is providing them with a considerable amount of ammunition. In the post-election issue of the *Fabian Journal* McKenzie wrote that "intra-party democracy" is incompatible with parliamentary government. The mass organizations of any parliamentary party must be primarily a vote-getting organization. In return for its labors it can expect to be invited to make some contribution to the formulation of party policy. But it is dangerous to continue to encourage the illusion that the party leaders (who collectively are either a Cabinet or potential Cabinet) can be bound to obey the instructions of a party conference." On this argument McKenzie advocated that the party Constitution be revised to give more effective control to the party leadership for, he said, on once again taking office the present constitution would "hang like an albatross around the neck of the Parliamentary Party."

It is not without significance that the *Sunday Observer*, which is currently running a series entitled *La-*

bor's Future, should feature as its first contribution an article by McKenzie in which he reiterates the arguments made in the *Fabian Journal* earlier. After recalling a remark of Sydney Webb that the constituency parties "were frequently unrepresentative groups of nonentities dominated by fanatics and cranks" McKenzie puts his finger on one of the difficulties with which the party Right Wing leadership is confronted at this moment. "The difficulty for the Labor Leaders," he wrote, "is this: the trade union leaders provide both the party funds and the block votes which keep the conference in check; but the much despised 'nonentities, fanatics and cranks,' with their devotion to full-blooded Socialism, do the work in the constituencies." Clearly this is a matter of some importance for the Right Wing leadership; for while it is desperately anxious to extend its grip over the party machine it is confronted with the unpleasant situation in which those who disagree most violently with the present policies of the party are the very people upon whom in the final analysis, the electoral success of the party in elections depends. The rank and file workers in the constituencies are already in an atmosphere of frustration owing to the frequent stifling of their point of view in the party program—to further manipulate the party organization brings the risk that this frustration will be further increased and the effectiveness of the electoral machine reduced as a consequence. This is the dilemma in which the Right Wing at present finds itself and which it is seeking to solve—hence its concentration upon organizational topics in this immediate post election-period.

Indications of the manner in which it will be solved were apparent at the recent Trades Union Congress, where

Hugh Gaitskell—the party treasurer—called together a meeting of union leaders to discuss the ways in which they could increase their financial contribution to the party. With many of the local parties leading hand to mouth existence financially the Right Wing trade union leaders could increase their influence—and also that of the party Right Wing—by the simple expedient of buying it. One manner in which this could be achieved is by giving greater financial backing to those local parties prepared to adopt candidates sponsored by the Right Wing trade unions. In this way the money poured into the local party would enable it to conduct election campaigns with all the publicity media available through normal commercial channels—as does the Tory Party at present. Hence the voluntary party worker would be replaced by high pressure leaflet and poster campaigns and voluntary labor would be replaced by paid employees in those parts of the election machine where this is possible by law. (Under British electoral law certain activities must be done on a voluntary basis—any payment constituting an illegal practice and punishable at law. But these particular activities can largely be dispensed with if enough money is available to conduct the election through other channels; such as large poster billboards and press advertisements in place of door to door canvassers—who are one of the categories for which no payment can be made.) The difficulty in the way of adopting this solution is that the choice of a Parliamentary candidate depends—to a large degree—upon the constituency party; hence the first obstacle is getting the local party to accept a Right Wing trade union sponsored candidate. Until the Left in the local parties are effectively upon this as a sure solution to their

altogether, the Right Wing cannot rely upon this is a sure solution to their problem.

In face of this emphasis on organizational matters the Left Wing has adopted, in many instances, an effective counter by arguing that organization is not something abstract which can be divorced from the outlook of the party as a whole. Organizational strength is largely dependent on political, programmatic agreement around which a campaign can be organized. In addition, it is not only to efficient organization in election campaigns that the party must aspire. It must also concentrate on the conduct of its affairs between election times.

Writing in *Tribune* soon after the election, Bevan made this point when he said: "... no amount of technical efficiency can make up for deficiencies in policy. There is increasing doubt as to whether electoral campaigns change many votes. The mood of the electorate is usually set by the behavior of the political parties on day to day issues between election campaigns. All the election campaign can do is harvest that mood for good or ill. An efficient machine can give an added cutting edge during the campaign, but it is the thrust of the shaft that really matters and that is determined long before the election date is fixed."

This attitude is reflected in the many resolutions down for discussion at the party conference which deal with the Parliamentary Party and its activities in recent years. Says the Essex Federation of Labor Parties: "This Conference is of the opinion that our defeat in the General Election was partly due to the lack of energetic opposition to the Tory Government, shown by the Parliamentary Labor Party in the House of Commons." Or the resolution standing in

the name of the two constituency parties of Oldham which reads, in part: "This Conference expresses its strong disapproval at the continued acquiescent state of H. M. Opposition in the House of Commons." These resolutions, and others of a similar character, display the awareness of local parties that the Parliamentary Party—even within the limits set by the present party policy—have not been fulfilling the role of an active opposition in the House of Commons and that, with the prospect of five years in opposition now before it, the Parliamentary Labor Party must conduct itself in a much more militant fashion. The rank and file of the constituency parties do not—thank goodness—have any regard for the constitutional niceties of British Parliamentary practice. To them Parliament is seen as a spearhead of the general fight against the capitalist class as a whole—the suggestion that the Parliamentary Labor Party should act in the role cast for it by Parliamentary tradition is rudely rejected.

Alongside this pressure for a more militant attitude on the part of its representatives in Parliament the Left Wing continues to push for the adoption of a policy designed to commit the party to a program so constructed that it will continue from the point where *Let Us Face The Future* ended. This has tended to concentrate primarily around domestic issues. The emphasis upon foreign policy which, to a large degree, has characterized the opposition of the Left during the past few years has been replaced—the future extent of nationalization has now become one of the main debating points.

The soft pedalling which the Right Wing has been performing on nationalization for some time has become much more pronounced since the

election defeat. The Right has swung its propaganda around to the provision of better social and welfare facilities, improved living standards and what it calls the "growing Americanization" of the British people. As the Right Wing see it the appetites of the British workers have been whetted by the end of post-war austerity in Britain; television sets, washing machines, refrigerators and motor cars are now the most important things to the British workers. In such a situation, claims the Right Wing, what the Labor Party has to do is to reflect this mood and seek to capture the support of the electorate by promising them of these blessings of civilization. It must show them that the Labor Party can feed their appetites better than the Tories and with less dangers of economic upsets in the process.

No one in the Labor Party decries this demand of the British worker for higher living standards, or denies the desirability of meeting them. But whereas the Right are of the opinion that they can be met simply by the installation of a Labor Government—which can better administer the economic fortunes of Britain—the Left Wing is making a serious endeavor to tie them in with the ultimate objective of establishing a Socialist society. With the recent popularity which automation and the application of atomic energy to industrial purposes has enjoyed in the British press the Left Wing has been quick to seize the opportunity of relating industrial developments to both higher living standards and the extension of nationalization. In this way they have succeeded in making the pace and creating a favorable impression of the Left Wing as a body fully aware of all the possibilities of the future.

On the agenda for the forthcoming

annual conference there are some twenty resolutions which deal with automation and nuclear energy—the content of many of them shows how the Left Wing is endeavoring to relate these new developments to the advancement of Socialism in Britain. Says the Isle of Ely: "Conference is convinced that only a bold socialist policy can ensure that all the workers benefit from the advantages and opportunities which will arise from this further development in industry." It then calls for workers' participation in the control of industry, shorter hours, new education and training schemes and the diversion of all benefits to the workers, consumers and the "backward areas of the Commonwealth." Resolution after resolution demands that these technological developments be made the opportunity for an extension of publicly controlled industry. At the Trade Union Congress earlier this year the Left Wing National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) made a similar demand in an amendment which it moved to a resolution moved by the National Union of General and Municipal Workers—one of the big unions of the Right. It was, of course, defeated; but the vote of 4,465,000 of the Right Wing was only a short head in front of the 3,359,000 registered by the Left. The debate was marked by the clear fashion in which Bryn Roberts, moving the amendment on behalf of NUPE, outlined the approach which the Labor movement should make to new industrial developments. He said that discussions and "joint consultation" (which the original resolution saw as the answer to the problems of automation) could never provide the answer—only public ownership, he said, could ensure that the workers would not be the victims of new social forces arising from these

developments. The spokesmen of the Right at the TUC, on the other hand, advised caution and spoke of the speculation which was apparent during talks of automation. This line is somewhat general of the way in which the Right is trying to dampen down the pressure from the Left—having no positive approach they endeavor to raise all sorts of doubts and uncertainties in the minds of the membership.

Thus a pattern is emerging of the Left Wing seeking to take up the loose threads where they were dropped after the first five years or so of the Labor Government and also, at the same time, realizing that if it is to advance its position it must relate its demands to the developments which are taking place in Britain today. This is essential from both a long and short term view. For, with the present combination of industrial developments coupled with economic instability existing in Britain today, an immediate program of action is as necessary as a long term perspective. The big question is whether the Left of the Labor Party can thrash out such policies in detail—rather than in general as at present—and then pursue them with consistency and in a coherent manner.

SINCE THE EMERGENCE of the Left as a recognizable political force following the resignation of Bevan, the lack of consistency and of a coherently expressed program has been a big weakness. Throughout the Labor Party there exists what has been termed an "amorphous Left" which, since 1951, has been expressed through the tendency now popularly known as Bevanism; this Left force has developed to nothing like its full potential because of the failure to act in a fashion demanded by the situation. For too long

personalities have filled a space which should have been occupied by policies and emotional discontent has largely dominated over logical advancement of alternative policies. Such a situation was understandable a few years ago—it was part of the evolutionary development of the Left. But now the situation in the Labor Party—with the Right Wing seemingly more determined than ever to change the character of the party and its ultimate perspectives—the time has come for the Left Wing to discard these signs of its infancy and to act as a definite political force rather than a loose collection of individuals.

Much depends upon Bevan and his immediate associates. If they give the lead there are thousands prepared to follow. If they do not, then others will ultimately be found who are able to give expression and reflection of the moods and aspirations of the Left Wing workers in the constituencies—only the process will be longer and the way harder as the Right Wing extends its position while the new leadership of the Left develops. The signs are that the rank and file militants are ready and anxious to take advantage of the present situation and this in turn may act as the spur which prods the Bevanite leadership into action. Should the Bevanite leaders fail to respond then the cause of Labor's Left will not be lost—but it will be very badly damaged and the Right Wing, which is at this moment making great efforts to re-direct the party into even narrower channels of reformism, will have gained a respite which may last many years.

OWEN ROBERTS

London, September 1955.

Moscow in Lenin's Days: 1920-21

Two Chapters from the Revolution's Heroic Period

XVI

The Eastern People's at the Baku Congress

With the three setbacks suffered by the interventionists through the destruction of the forces of Kolchak, Yudenich, and Denikin the counter-revolution was defeated. There remained only Wrangel, who was attempting to reorganize the remnants of Denikin's army, and it was possible to disregard him.

After thorough-going discussions, the Second Congress defined the conceptions which were to serve as the basis for the formation of the world communist parties. The tasks and the role of the International were unambiguously fixed. It placed great emphasis on the national question and on the status of the semi-colonial and colonial peoples. The 1905 revolution had provoked profound repercussions among them in Turkey, Persia, and especially in China. That of 1917 taught them in sharper form the tactics they would have to learn and apply if they were to liberate themselves. Moscow had just showed them how a relatively non-industrialized people, composed in the great majority of peasantry, could overthrow its autocratic regime and victoriously resist the intervention of the imperialist powers.

As a logical consequence of the work of the Second Congress and as a necessary complement to it the Executive Committee decided to call representatives of all the oppressed peoples together in a big conference. The place chosen for this gathering was Baku, where Europe and Asia meet.

Zinoviev, Radek, and Bela Kun were to represent the Communist International and were to be accompanied by delegates from the countries which possessed colonies. The delegates were Tom Quelch, representing the British, Jansen from Holland, John Reed, and myself.

The trip, Zinoviev told us, was not without risk. It was a long one, since the whole country had to be crossed, and though at the moment there was no organized resistance it was possible that we would come across a few bands of soldiers en route. It took five days to reach Baku, since we stayed over a day in Rostov and in several cities in the Caucasus. We were glad to be able to put this unusual trip to maximum use.

The trip was full of interest and without any danger. It enabled us to see at first hand the immensity of the ruins caused by the civil war. Most of the railroad stations had been destroyed, everywhere the sidings were jammed with the remains of half-burned railroad cars. Whenever the Whites had been beaten they had withdrawn creating the maximum possible destruction. Lozovaya, one of the most important stations in the Ukraine, had quite recently been attacked by one of the bands. We saw right before our eyes the damage created by such attacks, which were still frequent in these areas. As a consequence, the extent of the task which confronted the soviet régime could be measured.

On the other hand, in these devastated areas the food was more varied; on the station platforms peasants of-

fered us eggs and even small roasted chickens, both of which were rare or unknown in Moscow. The whole length of the Caucasus there were mountains of mouth-watering fruits: watermelons, grapes, pears, figs, dates, and all kinds of melons. John Reed sat near us in the train; he often came to chat with us. As soon as the train stopped he would run to the peddlers' baskets and come back with his arms loaded with fruit. After Petrovsk the train ran along the Caspian. Whenever the stop was long enough he would run down to the sea and plunge in. He enjoyed the trip the way a young American can. Once, in his hurry to get dressed again, he tore his pants—a tragic situation since he did not have another pair.

We went from the station to the theater, where a meeting had been called. The train had fallen behind schedule toward the end of the trip and the theater had been jammed for an hour before we got there. The audience was extremely picturesque; all the various Eastern costumes combined to create a picture of an astonishing and rich color. The speeches, which had to be translated into several languages, were frantically applauded; they were listened to with passionate interest. John Reed, who could embellish his English with a few words of Russian, was a real success. He questioned his listeners rhetorically, crying out, "You don't know how Baku is pronounced in American? It's pronounced *oil!*" The serious-faced delegates broke out into sudden laughter.

It was terribly hot, an oppressive, humid heat to which we—Muscovites that we had now become—were not accustomed. While the Congress was going on several demonstrations were held. The most impressive was the burial of twenty-six peoples' commis-

sars whom the English had seized and carried off to the other side of the Caspian, where they were shot. The coffins were borne by communist militants to the continuous accompaniment of the beautiful and moving *Song of the Dead*.¹

The oil wells were in a lamentable state. The revolution did not yet have either the time or the means to repair them, and the rigs which Czarism had left were far from being modern equipment. The workers — Persians for the most part—lived in miserable huts. The road leading to the oil fields was in bad shape and was very dusty. Only a few wells were in operation. Everything contributed to the creation of an unpleasant picture of this extraordinary source of wealth. On the other hand, the extremely picturesque city was very charming. Only rarely did the pitiless rays of the sun penetrate into the narrow streets. Sunlight and shadow were equally intense.

John Reed had found stores where magnificent pieces of silk were being sold.

You ought to buy some—they have some unique samples here.

But we don't have any money.

Ask Zinoviev for a few rubles. As a member of the Executive Committee you ought to be able to get them from him.

1. In a review of a book on the execution of the commissars, Sosnovsky wrote: "A. Chaikin, a former member of the Constituent Assembly and of the central committee of the Social-Revolutionary party, has just published a highly interesting book, *l'Execution des 26 commissaires de Bakou*. It is a serious study of the policy of English imperialism in the Caspian region at the beginning of the civil war. . . . When the Georgian mensheviks granted the Turkish army the right to pass through their territory in order to occupy Baku, the government heads of that city (who were in any case pliant tools of the English) called on the English for help. The leaders of the soviet movement were immediately arrested and taken to Kislovodsk, where the English headquarters was located. On September 19th the twenty-six red militants were removed from prison 'to be taken to India via Persia' and 'kept as hostages.' This was the official version. The truth is that these twenty-six militants were all taken to an isolated spot and beheaded." (L. Sosnovsky, *Correspondence Internationale*, March 18, 1922.)

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS of the congress, incontestably the first of its type, which had brought together representatives of all the countries, races, and peoples of the Orient? In the immediate sense nothing which was hoped for actually occurred. In the months that followed, no uprisings took place which were serious enough to worry and preoccupy the imperialist powers. The stimulating effect was profound, but it did not make itself felt until later. Time was necessary for the discussions and the resolutions to bear fruit, and for recruiting class-conscious forces big enough to be mobilized against their heretofore all-powerful masters.

Contrary to what the anti-soviet newspapers asserted, Enver Pasha did not participate in the congress. At his own request he was authorized simply to make a statement in which he limited himself to an expression of sympathy for the initiative taken by Moscow. But his game was soon revealed. In the last days of the congress a parade was held, one in which the delegates and the local and regional organizations participated. Enver thought of turning it to his own account by presenting himself as the hero of the demonstration. Mounted on horseback on a little rise in the ground at the corner of the square where the parade turned, he was saluted and even acclaimed. His maneuver was obvious, he was asked to leave. From that time on he openly opposed the soviet republic and tried to carve out a Moslem state for himself in Turkestan, where he died in August, 1922. The news of his death was sometimes met with disbelief but an eyewitness wrote in *Pravda* of October 11th that "its correctness could not be doubted." And he gave the following details: "On August 4th, eight miles from the city of Balzhuan, superior

red army forces surrounded a small contingent of *basmatch* (Moslem insurgents) among whom were Enver Pasha and his collaborator, the Moslem leader Davyet-Min Bey. After a sharp engagement the *basmatch* were defeated. The body of a man wearing English clothes and a fez was picked up off the battlefield. In his pockets were found two personal seals belonging to Enver, his correspondence with his wife, a letter from his son mailed from Berlin, a packet of English papers published in India, and dispatches in code. The people of the area recognized the body as that of Enver. The *basmatch* prisoners confirmed this identification. (*Correspondence Internationale*, October 30, 1922.)

On the way back there was an alert. Early one morning as we were going through the Caucasus we were suddenly awakened. An attack had been made on the railroad line. The rails had been torn up, causing the derailment of a locomotive which had been preceding us. The nearby station, that of Naurskaya, had been attacked simultaneously. We were stuck. But the group which had organized the attack did not have the means to fully exploit the situation created by the derailment, otherwise the situation would have been a rather critical one for us. The engine of our train had been uncoupled so that the extent of the damage could be assessed on the spot. When it returned, bringing back the men who had gone to investigate, no one was surprised to find John Reed among them. It had been an unrivaled opportunity for him.

Just before reaching Rostov we were surprised to run into Blumkin, the social-revolutionary who had participated in the assassination of Count Mirbach, the German ambassador to Moscow. The assassination had cre-

ated serious difficulties for the soviet government at that time. Apologies had to be presented to the British government, which was threatening to increase the severity of the draconian conditions it had laid down at Brest-Litovsk. Blumkin later joined the Bolsheviks. When we met him he was returning from a mission which the government had entrusted to him. He had lived for a while in Paris and spoke a little French. He asked me about the socialist movement in France and about its leaders, some of whom he had known—Jean Longuet, in particular, whom he insisted should be sent to the guillotine. Several times he interrupted himself suddenly, saying, "Longuette," and then bringing down his hand (like the blade of that sinister machine) upon the neck of Karl Marx's unfortunate grandson (who certainly did not deserve such punishment) he would break out into loud laughter. He was the typical embodiment, I think, of that combination of heroism and puerility which was common among social-revolutionaries. This time we stopped at Rostov only to participate in a demonstration which was to close with a meeting. The crowd filled a vast square, where speaking platforms had been set up. Blumkin came with me to the one I was to speak from, and he insisted on translating the speech. I refrained from speaking of Longuet, but I have always entertained the suspicion that he made me demand that more than one head roll.

SAD NEWS AWAITED us at Moscow. John Reed, who had come back ahead of us, was in the hospital with typhus. No effort was spared to save him but it was all in vain; he died several days later. His body lay in state in the great hall of the House of Trade Unions. On the day of the burial winter

had already arrived, snow was beginning to fall. We were overwhelmed with sadness. The trip to Baku had permitted us to get to know him well. Before I had met him I had read and translated the articles which he had sent from Petrograd during the Kerensky regime to the excellent American magazine *Masses*, of which Max Eastman was the editor. They were exceptionally informative, really first-rate—shrewd, perceptive, and colorful. He had already been in Russia and Europe during the imperialist war, in company with the artist Boardman Robinson. For a free lance journalist like him these excursions were adventures which on several occasions wound up in jail, notably in Poland and then in Petrograd. He therefore had a great deal to relate to us. He went over with us the material which he had published in London in 1916 under the title *The War in Eastern Europe*. But he talked with us even more about the October days, those "ten days that shook the world," of which he had been the enthusiastic witness. Later he was to be the faithful narrator of those days in the book that he wrote on his return to New York in 1919. His friend Max Eastman once told me that it had hardly taken more than ten days for the book to be written. He had protected himself from all visitors by moving into a room in Greenwich Village. He assembled a mass of important reference material there and went out only to eat a hasty meal. During the trip we had seen him full of fire and youth—and sudden spells of sadness, too—and it was he who was to create the first gap in our ranks. His frank, sometimes even rude, speeches at the congress had made him popular with everybody. . . . A place was found for him in the section of the Kremlin wall reserved for the heroes who had fallen

in the revolutionary struggle. The words of farewell were spoken by Bukharin for the central committee of the Russian communist party, by Kolontai, and by his comrades on the executive committee. Louise Bryant, who had arrived only to see him die, was there, crushed by grief. It was all of an infinite sadness.²

OUR RETURN TO MOSCOW was marked by death and sorrow. The congress had already begun when three Frenchmen arrived, each one of them known for his seriousness and courage. Raymond Lefebvre, a talented newspaperman and writer, had been won over to communism; Vergeat, a machinist, was a syndicalist; Lepetit of the common laborers' union, was an anarchist. The choice was an excellent one. The delegation, though small in number, was very representative of the current tendencies in the French workingclass movement. Raymond Lefebvre was the most enthusiastic. He participated with youthful fire in the discussions among the delegates, asking questions and learning. "Everything that we did up to now will have to be done over," he told me on one occasion. It was the conclusion which he had drawn from what he had seen and learned during his stay. Because of his personality, and because of the fact that he was outside the party, Vergeat was more reserved. He was a solid militant who did not make decisions without thinking. He was one of those syndicalists who was

2. In a letter sent to Max Eastman, Louise Bryant wrote: "Before he took sick we had spent only a week together. We were terribly happy to be with each other again. I found him older looking, saddened, full of gentleness, and extraordinarily handsome. His clothes were in rags. He had been so affected by the suffering which surrounded him that he had forgotten all about himself. I was deeply troubled by this. I felt myself incapable of attaining such a degree of enthusiasm. We visited Lenin, Trotsky, and Kamenev together; we went to the theater and saw the ballet and Prince Igor. He was burning to return to America."

completely devoted to the Russian Revolution but who still had to get together with others so that they could examine among themselves the serious problems which joining a political party posed. Of the three, Lepetit was by nature the most critical. Nevertheless, his letters, written from Moscow and published in *Le Libértaire*, showed that though his criticisms were sharp they did not negate his basic sympathy for the new régime.

When I went to Baku I left them in Moscow confident that when I came back I would find them still there and would be able to have the long talks with them which the work of the congress had not permitted. But all three of them were impatient to return to France in order to resume their activity as militants. At this time the trip back was made via Murmansk, from where boats left for the various ports of the West. When they arrived at Murmansk a storm was raging, the sea was very rough. Nevertheless, a boat was ready to leave and they left on it. After that we had been without news of them. What caused the most anxiety was that delegates who had left before them had already arrived in Paris. We clung to the hope that they would be found. Searches were made for them everywhere, but it was all in vain. We were forced to resign ourselves to their disappearance. The revolution had levied a heavy tribute on the French workingclass movement.

Pierre Pascal had been especially close to two of them, Vergeat and Lepetit. During their stay in Russia he had helped and guided them. They profited from his knowledge of men, the régime, and the country. He wrote from Moscow: "Vergeat and Lepetit left the country very much changed. They learned a fundamental

truth here which they had not appreciated in France. Formerly they had more or less consciously thought that one day or another the new classless and non-exploitive society would be set up complete immediately following the revolution. They learned in Russia that, on the contrary, this society would have to be painfully hammered out in years of effort. . . . In addition, their education had been completed by Lenin himself, both in person and through his writings. They read the French translation of his work *State and Revolution*. It was a real revelation for them. . . . Their death was due to their devotion to duty. They died victims of their eagerness to bring back to France the glad tidings of communism. (*Bulletin Communiste*, February 17, 1921.)

XVII

The Russian Trade Unions

We had hardly settled down again in our rooms at Dyelovoy Dvor when we were informed of our impending transfer to the Hotel Lux. Dyelovoy Dvor served its purpose so well that the thought of leaving it was unpleasant. It was all the more so after we visited our new residence. The hotel was on one of the swarming and noisy streets of the city, the Tverskaya. It was a huge building, every aspect of which was in bad taste—the exterior, the furniture, and the remnants of that "luxury" which had given its name to the hotel. There were drawing rooms which were utilizable only during periods in which congresses were being held, when beds had to be set up everywhere. When Amédée Dunois stayed over briefly in Moscow I found him put up in one of these heavily gilded and ornamented salons. As he had come in a rather critical frame of mind such ac-

commodations could only serve to accentuate his reservations. "Where is the Communist International?" he asked. "When Zinoviev went to Petrograd it would seem that he took it with him."

I remained at the Lux for a whole year, until October, 1921, and afterwards I spent shorter periods there whenever I was called to Moscow. I always found it rather disagreeable, but it in no way resembled what it became later, after the Stalinist police had established a permanent régime of suspicion and informing. There was nothing which could be compared to the picture Margarete Buber-Neumann drew of it in her testimony at the Kravchenko trial and which is also found in her book *Under Two Dictators*. But if the setting had changed, our life remained the same: meetings, discussions, the preparation of reports, reading. Newspapers began to arrive, though irregularly.

I went every day to the offices of the Russian federation of trade unions, where rooms were set aside for the provisional international council of the red trade unions. Here there was neither luxury nor even a trace of luxury of any sort, just extreme poverty and a bare minimum of what was necessary in order to work. There was little or no heat, and above all there was a terrible smell of fish chowder which permeated the whole building. It seemed to be the sole item on the canteen's menu.

When all was said and done, the unions were poor relations, but not because importance was not attached to them (they were soon to be the subject of the most serious discussions within the central committee and the party). On the contrary, huge tasks in the building of the communist society had been reserved for them. But the emphasis was nevertheless upon the

party. It was the party which received the lion's share of the resources of the republic in manpower and material aid. The overwhelming fact was that qualified men were lacking. The ranks of the best people had been ravaged by the war, and those who were left, despite an exhausting workday, were not sufficient to get everything done. A choice had to be made, and the unions came after the party. (It should be remembered, however, that for the Russian communists the distinction which was sometimes made between union and party, or even the opposition which was drawn between them, was unknown.)

At the end of a day spent in these freezing offices a person became a little dull. You were glad to get into the bracing air outside, even if the thermometer was fifteen below zero. I liked to prolong my coming back by walking along the boulevards to the statue of Pushkin. The sun, which was setting behind the black trees, still gave out a little of its pleasant warmth.

By chance I met one of the typists in the office, a young Polish girl who had studied in Paris and knew several of my friends. She offered to do translations of any material which I might find useful, adding immediately, "But I have to tell you that I am a Menshevik." I said, "If you promise to work honestly that won't make any difference to me." With her around I did not have to fear being unaware of the bad side of the picture. She never failed to stress the inadequacies and the weak points of the régime. When she translated material in which the mensheviks were roughly dealt with, she would break out into denunciations, shouting, "It's false. They're lying!"

She lived at Dyelovoy Dvor, our former living quarters having been

turned over to the trade union officials and secretaries. Needing a translation quickly one evening, I went there. A painful sight met my eyes: everything had gone to rack and ruin. The building, which we remembered being so neat and attractive, was unrecognizable. An incapable or careless building superintendent was all that it took to bring about such a disaster. The floor was broken through in several places, the walls were stained, the plumbing was stopped up, light bulbs were missing. This was no longer Europe but the Orient, where the daily maintenance routine is generally skipped. This oriental slovenliness was one of the negative aspects of the Russian character—which is otherwise so attractive.

I had worked with this secretary for several months when one morning she informed me through one of her girl friends that she had just been arrested by the GPU. I immediately went to Lozovsky to find out what was going on. It was only a matter of an investigation, he told me; they had several questions they wanted to ask her. She was freed the next day and came to tell me her story. She had got together several times with members of the Polish Bund (a Jewish socialist organization) who could not be said to be friends of the soviet republic. Their meetings had taken on a secret, quasi-conspiratorial character. The GPU, which had some reason to put these Poles under surveillance, had then proceeded to arrest several of them, including her. The more than normal calmness of tone, and the fact that she spoke of her arrest without anger, indicated that in her own eyes the intervention of the GPU was not without justification.

THE DUTCH REPRESENTATIVE on the executive committee was named Jan-

sen. He was a close friend and admirer of Görter, that enthusiastic defender of the conceptions of the German Communist Workers Party (KAPD). I had met Jansen in Berlin, where we were both looking for a way to get to Moscow. He had maintained contact between Amsterdam and Berlin and after the war. He knew the German workingclass movement well, including its leaders, with whom he was not very sympathetic. He severely criticized them. He was often correct, but never completely so. His evaluations were partially distorted by a touch of Germanophobia. We got together, discussing and exchanging observations, during walks we took together at night in Moscow.

One day we decided to visit a factory. A young communist who had worked for a while in Belgium went with us. We took a streetcar well into the suburbs, but a sizable stretch of road still had to be covered on foot. The sky was clouded over, but there was no wind and we were warmly dressed; it was pleasant walking. We saw a line of wagons pulled up before a tavern. We decided to go in, hoping to get a glass of tea. In any case, we thought it would be interesting to look the place and the people over. There were still several cafés in the city, including that of the imagists. We never went there. Slightly tinted hot water was brought us. The teapot and glasses were chipped, but at least we could warm ourselves up. It was not the first time that what was referred to as tea turned out to be boiling water.

Needless to say, our coming in provoked general curiosity among the patrons; they couldn't wait to question us: Who were we? Where were we going? Our young comrade got into conversation with his neighbor, and the unfortunate idea came to him

of revealing our important positions as members of the executive committee of the Communist International.

"Then they're Jews," replied the man who was questioning him, in a tone of complete contempt.

"No, they're not Jews!"

He was surprised at first, and stared at us, but in the end it was impossible to get him to let go of the idea. Neither he nor those who were with him came to our rescue—all the soviet leaders were Jews. They were not at all backward in criticizing the régime, even in the coarsest terms. It was very revealing. Incidents of this type were precious insights into the popular mind; the revolution had a big job ahead of it in counteracting the effect of the poison with which Czarism had infected these crude mentalities.

For entirely different reasons the visit to the factory left us with a similar impression as to the extent of the task, but here it was not a matter of people; the workers and the leaders were very understanding. Completely devoted to the régime, they soberly voiced their complaints and told us about the troubles which they were running into. The work was well organized but the available equipment was inadequate. Indispensable items were lacking and it was impossible to procure them.

We were too tired to walk the whole way back and the idea of returning by sleigh attracted us. And in fact it was very pleasant at first, with the cold air cutting our faces—but not for long. We were well covered up but not sufficiently so for this sort of ride. We quickly decided to let our sleigh riding experiences ride with this first one.

THE CONTROVERSY OVER what was to be the program of the German Communist Workers Party, the KAPD—a

party of the masses, not one of leaders, which was opposed to parliamentarism and trade unions—seem to have been exhausted. The epilogue had taken place at the second congress of the Communist International. However, Hermann Görter, the Dutch communist who was the theoretician of this tendency, having addressed *An Open Letter to Comrade Lenin* in which he reopened the question, the leadership of the Communist International had decided to invite Görter to Moscow for a new discussion. A special session of the executive committee was called. Görter was a poet, even a great poet, and with him the discussion inevitably took a literary turn. This is the way that the summary closing his open letter went:

In conclusion, in order to get my analyses, in as brief and organized form as possible, before the workers who have acquired a clear conception of the tactics involved, I will sum them up in several points:

(1) The tactics of the revolution in the West must be entirely different from those of the Russian revolution;

(2) For in the West the proletariat stands alone;

(3) The proletariat must therefore make the revolution against all other classes by itself;

(4) The importance of the proletarian masses is therefore relatively greater, and that of the leaders smaller, than in Russia;

(5) The proletariat must have only the best weapons in order to make the revolution;

(6) Since trade unions are defective weapons they have to be abolished or radically transformed and replaced by factory organizations united in a central body;

(7) Since the proletariat must make the revolution by itself without any outside help whatsoever, it must raise itself to a high level of consciousness and courage. It is best to avoid parliamentarism in making the revolution.

What was laid down in this manner was obviously the complete platform

of the KAPD. Görter's principal interest, however, was the trade union question. When we met he put it to me almost point-blank: "I hope that you are going to revise your trade union resolution." He seemed surprised to learn that the syndicalists were in agreement with the resolution of the Communist International and not at all with his, which had been made even worse by this statement against strikes: "We have remained small in number; our KAPD forces are so reduced that we must concentrate them on the revolution, not waste them in strikes."

The session took place on November 24. Görter made a long speech. The previous discussions had been so full that it was impossible to advance new arguments; everything had been said on both sides. But in regard to Görter there was a new element: the form of his presentation itself. It was remarkable, but its foundation was not a solid one. This was very obvious at the time; when from the vantage point of today you reread the summary of his open letter which we previously quoted you cannot help being struck by its naiveté. Trotsky—it was he who had been chosen to make the rebuttal—refuted Görter's statements and stressed the contradictions, the most flagrant of which dealt precisely with "the masses." Reference to the masses often appeared in Görter's statement; he opposed them to the leaders and at the same time he accused the Communist International of "chasing after the masses." That the revolution in the West would develop differently than in Russia nobody would have thought of denying. Lenin had said it repeatedly. But there was no necessity to go so far as to divide Europe into two entirely different worlds, as Görter had done. There were, at the same time, many

points in common between Russia and the West

Hélène Brion was then in Moscow, where she stayed briefly. An active militant in the teachers' union she had participated in the minorityite syndicalist movement in France; her activity during the war had caused

her to be arrested and sentenced to jail. She followed the discussions with sharp interest and at their conclusion expressed her satisfaction at having been present at discussions conducted on such a high level.

ALFRED ROSMER

Translated by James Fenwick

BOOKS IN REVIEW

A Studied Failure

A STUDY OF BOLSHEVISM, by Nathan Leites. Published by the Free Press, Glencoe, Ill.

This book is an attempt to explain what the author calls the "operational code" of Bolshevism so that the Western world may know what to expect in the behavior of Russia and thus prepare to meet its challenge. In shrill exaggeration and pleading tone Sidney Hook has written of the book that "our future party depends on how seriously the conclusions of this analysis are taken by statesmen of the Western world."

It would seem from such a description that the book should have had some impact upon diplomacy in the West. That it hasn't is caused not so much by the unwillingness of statesmen to receive a broad intelligence on a vexing problem, but by the fact that, despite its innumerable quotations of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Gogol, Chekhov, etc., nothing really certain can be learned from the book.

Understanding Russia is a great pastime today. Leites plays the game by quoting endlessly, beginning with 1930 and running to the Malenkov period. He sees a consistent pattern of Bolshevik behavior throughout. The analysis of the phenomenon of Bolshevism is unrewarding because

the author has treated the movement of Lenin and the movement of Stalin as identical in all fundamental respects. The periods of 1903, 1917, 1926-7, 1934-36 and 1953 are all regarded as a continuous evolutionary stream of Bolshevism. Despite the near-ending internal struggle the main aspects of Bolshevism are assumed to carry through from Lenin to Stalin. A good historian would know that this is nonsense.

Actually, Leites deals only with matters of narrow party or practical state politics. Nothing is related to objective history, to the great changes in the party, to the alteration of its traditions and mores to the fact that the party and regime of 1917 are altogether different from the party and regime of Stalin.

Quoting Stalin or the other Stalinist leaders to show that there is a continuity between the two organizations or the two states has as much value as comparing the Republican Party of this century with the party of Lincoln and the Civil War.

The work is influenced by the political feud Social Democracy has carried on against the Russian Revolution. But Social Democracy has no consistent thorough-going view of the nature of Russian society, though it has much to say about the political regime. Its own lack of clarity on

what kind of society Stalinism has created, assists the disorientation of the West.

The root source of the difficulty in accurately characterizing the Russian state is the failure to understand what kind of a society prevails in that country. If the bourgeoisie of the West considers the Stalinist world to be socialist, this is in accord with the propaganda of Stalinism and works in its behalf. Social Democracy merely muddies up the waters of its own puddle because, like the bourgeoisie, the Stalinists and Stalinoids, it is itself confused on the nature of the post-Lenin phenomenon.

The key to penetrating the Stalinist world lies not in lumping hundreds of quotations of the leaders of Russian socialism on the one hand and of the Stalinists on the other, in order to show similarities, but in establishing the historical background of the social orders.

The similarities of speech are in this case of little importance. The dissimilarities are decisive. The dissimilarities are profound, and spring from the fact that Stalinism is a new type of state power in which collective property is owned by a new type of ruling class: bureaucratic collectivists. It is a modern slave state, anti-socialist in its doctrine and practices, as it is anti-capitalist.

Leites seemingly understands nothing of this. Neither does the West. They think in terms of worn-out clichés about Bolshevism, the Revolution and socialism. That is one of the reasons why Stalinism bewilders them with strategies and tactics which are not understood, much less predicted.

Leites does not even pretend to write about Russia in terms of the class nature of its state. He deals with the politics of Stalinism as an independent phenomenon without any

roots except a long tradition. Worst of all, he seems to have ignored some of the more important works of the critics of the Russian Revolution who have least understood that neither the Stalinist State nor the Stalinist Party can be spoken of in the same way as their predecessors.

Thus Hook, who never quite seems to know just exactly what his views are from year to year writes, in reviewing the book, that if the Stalinists gave up their dogma of fear of an attack from the West, they would "lose the chief justification for (their) internal dictatorship." This ignores the internal driving forces of the Stalinist social order, wherein the totalitarian regime emerges from the peculiar class relations of the bureaucratic collectivist phenomenon. The regime evolved and hardened precisely in a period when foreign intervention was at its lowest ebb.

The Russian State and its counterparts in the satellite nations grow out of the constellation of class forces based on new property forms. These regimes strengthen their state power not merely against the foreign danger (in a sense that is secondary), but as much against the working class and peasantry they exploit. A slackening of the totalitarian regimes would result in their overthrow. If only few understand this, the Stalinists are constantly aware of the danger. The "fear of intervention" conveniently serves the national class interests of these regimes.

These are the reasons why the Leites book is a failure. If the West has not made much progress in the cold war against Stalinism, it is not because it has not adopted the lessons of "A Study of Bolshevism," but because bourgeois obtuseness and class interest leave it the prey of Stalinist demagoguery.

A. G.

An Important Book

STRUGGLE FOR INDOCHINA, by Ellen J. Hammer. Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif., 1954, \$5.00, 342 pp. Published under the auspices of the Institute of Pacific Relations. Maps and Bibliography.

Indochina—the tip of South-eastern Asia divided among the three small nations of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam—was once a land of ancient cultures, imperious kingdoms and proud peoples. Historically the Vietnamese were the most dynamic, among the three peoples, in their insistence upon their independence and unity. "We have fought a thousand years," ran the Vietnamese boast, "and we will fight a thousand more if need be."

Today Vietnam is split again; north of the 17th parallel the Viet Minh-dominated government erects a wall of apparent order and stability, behind it one feels the tense silence of the Stalinist-ruled. South of the line nothing can screen the chaotic reality—a weak government, dependent upon the approval of the Western powers, threatened by rebellious native bands in crisis built on crisis—a situation rubbed raw by ceaseless friction between Vietnamese, between Vietnamese and French, between French and Americans. The Asian revolt against the domination of the white man has no where else been so tragically extended, in a bitter struggle caught and accentuated by the tensions of the cold war.

Vietnam has earned plenty of news space in the last five years, its position as a battleground in the U. S.-Stalinist conflict has been the subject of hundreds of anxious dispatches and editorials, but behind the recurring explosive headlines the history of Vietnam and its people has remained a vague outline. Ellen Hammer's book is an admirable attempt to fill in that outline with content and meaning. Her account is mainly narrative, with political emphasis, rather than analytical, her writing is rarely dramatic, yet the story emerging from her pages builds up a clear—and always sympathetic—picture of the Vietnamese people. Broadly speaking, Hammer develops three main themes: she describes carefully the semi-feudalistic, integrated Vietnamese society before the arrival of the French; then the ruinous effects of

French colonial policy and the rebellious reactions of the Vietnamese; and finally, the aftermath, the groping attempts and abortive experiments to find some new synthesis, to build a new national unity.

Hammer devotes a long chapter to the background of Vietnamese society, from its origins in Southeastern China in the 1st century A.D. to a hard-won unification of the regions of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China into the Vietnamese Empire in the 1700's. For ten centuries the Vietnamese were dominated by the Chinese, a memory which still lingers in suspicion of their massive northern neighbor. Chinese influence was evident in their culture; the basic unit of society was the village, in which the lives of the people were regulated by long custom and cooperative traditions, while the whole political structure was cemented by the central authority of the emperor. Security, stability, the theory, at least, of equal opportunity, a rooted, static, in-growing system—these were the chief characteristics.

In the 1860's this backward and potentially rich Indochinese area provided an irresistible lure for the European imperialists. The French moved in for plunder; by 1867 Cochin China, the southern section, had been subdued and absorbed as a colony, and protectorate status was subsequently assigned to Annam and Tonkin, where native resistance was bitter and prolonged. The tiny kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia were taken as protectorates too, although with a distinct difference—the rulers there were relieved to have French protection against Vietnamese aggression.

Hammer declares that French colonial motives and practices were far worse than the British or Dutch, a statement which says a great deal. The French took over Vietnam, owning mines, plantations, industries, completely controlling the administration; contrary to usual colonial custom, the most minor jobs in governmental fields were filled by Frenchmen, a detail presently pertinent in the sad lack of experienced administrators among Vietnam's educated elite. By the turn of the century Indochina had become a fabulous possession—one of the world's chief sources of rice and rubber and tin. A bottomless well of raw materials for France and a market for French goods, it was more than a colony—it was an empire in itself. Underneath

the wealth were the restless Vietnamese, rated as second-class citizens—frustrated ex-mandarins, intellectuals and young nationalists increasingly absorbed with Western revolutionary ideas, and the uprooted peasant, struggling to hang on to his tiny plot of land, burdened with an always growing load of debt.

In the 1920's the years of oppression paid off in an upsurge of nationalist activity. Millions of Vietnamese joined movements aimed at freeing their country from the French, some wanting to fight for independence immediately, others willing to work for reform under colonial administration. The French handled all political opposition with indiscriminate suppression. Determined nationalists, thus threatened with police reprisal, were forced into clandestine, revolutionary groups. Dozens of such vague alliances were formed, among them the Trotskyist party in the South, but the only group with Western mechanics of action—and corresponding success—to develop in Vietnam was the Communist Party, which grew out of the "Revolutionary Youth Association" founded by Ho Chi Minh.

Nineteen thirty was a year of terror—and a memorable date that might be used as a marker for Vietnam's revolution. At Yen Bay, in Tonkin, a group of non-communist revolutionaries made a vain and bloody strike at the French garrison; in retaliation the French police ranged the countryside, rounding up and executing the members. Scarcely had the Yen Bay incident been suppressed when the communists launched an offensive, leading the peasants in a series of mass demonstrations. They organized illegal unions and led strikes in the cities; on the land their encouragement of attacks against the big landlords and attempts to break up large estates produced full-scale peasant revolts. The French answer was brutally effective. Foreign Legion troops were brought in to choke off the rebellion; thousands were killed, thousands more were sentenced *en masse* and sent to prisons or concentration camps. All the nationalist groups suffered heavily under the round-up, including the Communists, but if the French colonials relaxed, more than willing to forget the "Red Terror," Ho Chi Minh's party did not. Under the orders and direction of the Comintern the Vietnamese CP built again, honeycombing the coun-

try with a series of secret cells.

By 1939 the French had more to worry them than stubborn Vietnamese agitators. The growing threat of Japanese aggression had already cast a shadow across Indochina in an order to halt the selling of supplies across the border to Chiang Kai-shek's reelin garmies. The surrender in Paris to the Germans exposed France's appalling weakness, and the Japanese moved in with an ultimatum to the colonial officials, demanding that Japanese troops be allowed to occupy Indochinese airfields, railroads and military installations "until China was subdued." The French tried desperately to save their colonial outpost, appealing even to their German conqueror, hoping that Hitler's racial views would persuade him to help keep the white man dominant in Asia. In the end, the French were permitted to run the administration of Indochina, since the Japanese had neither the time nor the desire to do it, and Japanese took over the strategic points, cutting China off from aid, and building for future expansion into Malaya and Burma. The Vichy regime made a memorable excuse for this deal, explaining that the Japanese were needed in Indochina to protect French interests from the British and the De Gaullists.

Nationalist groups in all three of Vietnam's regions reacted to signs of French weakness with isolated, sporadic uprisings. Once more, the police, with Foreign Legion help, were able to put them down. But during the war years the French were forced to meet the competition of Japanese appeals to nationalism, the slogan of "Asia for the Asians," and even more serious, Japanese encouragement of political opposition. Very cautiously colonial officials allowed youth groups to form, some technical training was given, even a vestige of authority—well controlled—was granted to the Vietnamese elite.

In the North Ho Chi Minh broadened his party into a wide nationalist movement; virtually undisputed in Tonkin, the Viet Minh became the main force behind the will for independence from both French and Japanese occupation. In the South the situation was considerably more complex and confusing. The Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, militant, quasi-religious movements, prospered under Japanese protection, gaining thousands of new converts. Trotskyists, whom

Hammer covers very briefly, worked among the peasants, although the effectiveness of the movement was hampered almost from its beginnings by a faction willing to cooperate with the Stalinists. Various groups of intellectuals and writers, youth organizations and peasants' parties worked with and were shielded by the Japanese.

With the approaching defeat of the Axis Powers in 1945, French colonials discovered that they were, after all, De Gaullists. The High Command conceived a plan to take over Indochina, drive out the Japanese themselves, and present a *fait accompli*, a recovered French possession, to the victorious Allied nations. But in March of '45 the Japanese put an end to French delusions, and with a series of quick strikes took over complete administration of Vietnam. In the summer, just before the end of the war, the three regions of Vietnam were unified under a pro-Japanese, puppet government headed by the Emperor, Bao Dai. The men in the government were all anti-French nationalists, none of them, however, had had previous administrative experience or any sort of revolutionary background. The Japanese had broken the French colonial hold, they had given impetus and hope to the idea of nationalism; the problem now was to find able officials among the politically sterile, upper-class Vietnamese.

With the declaration of the truce, the contending forces started to move. In Tonkin the Viet Minh walked into power accompanied by wild enthusiasm from the people. Al over the North peoples' committees sprang up, to take control of villages and towns, with amazing order and self-confidence. The Japanese made no attempt to govern, French troops and officials were interned or helpless, yet there was definite sign of the firm hand of a central government, calling itself the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh, who had become an almost mystical symbol of independence for the people, took over the presidency and formed a coalition government of radical youth reformers. With its power uncontested in the north the Viet Minh tried to extend its hegemony to the Southern nationalist groups. The tremendous popular prestige of the government persuaded most of the groups to join with the Viet Minh, opposition came only from the hard core of Trotskyists, suspicious

from bitter experience of any coalition with the Stalinists. But the Trotskyists were ruthlessly silenced and a politically consolidated "Committee for the South" occupied the former government buildings and palatial offices of French colonial officialdom in Saigon.

Meanwhile the victorious Allied Powers were unimpressed by Vietnamese surface unity. Under the terms of the Potsdam agreement Britain was to effect the surrender of Japanese troops in Southern Vietnam, and China had agreed to accept the surrender in the North. Chinese troops, for the most part, tolerated, even protected, the Viet Minh in Tonkin; with their bitter memories the Chinese had no desire to help re-establish the French Empire. And in Tonkin, too, a small group of U. S. Intelligence agents who had worked with and supplied the Viet Minh underground during the war lent their unofficial support. But in the South, the British Command used supposedly demobilized Japanese troops to maintain order among the Vietnamese until French forces could sail into Saigon, and the British government pressured the United States into an official statement that recognized Southeastern Asia as a French sphere of interest. Russia throughout was apparently indifferent to troubles in Indochina.

In September 1945, the French arrived in force under General Leclerc. The Committee for the South was driven out in a vicious and bloody attack on Vietnamese civilians, and Leclerc began "mopping up" in Cochin China, a task he estimated would take two or three months. Ho Chi Minh's Republic stood alone in Tonkin; the Chinese had pulled out, the U. S. had issued its declaration of solid neutrality, and Stalin refused to recognize the new state.

With independence slipping from their fingers, the Vietnamese looked to Paris, hoping for negotiation with the post-war, leftist French cabinet. France actually signed a treaty, in March 1946, recognizing Vietnam as an independent part of the French Union, with its own government and army, financial and diplomatic control, and promising French evacuation within five years. Tacked on to the end of the treaty was a proviso permitting French troops back in Tonkin, to "protect nationals and their property."

According to Dr. Hammer, it is hard

to believe that the French intended to keep these promises; the colonials never agreed to the terms and they were never applied in Cochin China. Throughout a series of conferences the French hedged on the thorny question of the place of Cochin in a Vietnamese union; their action, finally invalidated the whole treaty. Cochin China was set up as an autonomous republic—under French authority.

After this initial double-cross the Vietnamese found many times that the French word could not be trusted. The Haiphong massacres, which touched off full-scale war in 1946, displayed the explosive tension on both sides. Yet for three years more Ho Chi Minh tried to negotiate with the French, pleading for peace and honorable recognition for his government; each time he met a stone wall of refusal. The record shows, Hammer claims, that the Northern government had no outside aid until 1950, after the end of the Chinese civil war. The Viet Minh then, and only then, announced its allegiance to the Stalinist camp. The French seized this golden opportunity for a declaration of the purity of their motives—they had all along been fighting a “war against Communism,” a statement that immediately perked up interest in the United States.

Dr. Hammer hits these facts hard; this was, she says, the turning of Vietnam's revolution, from this point the Vietnamese lost any possible chance of directing their national movement. Even more tragic, Ho Chi Minh's action was unnecessary; the duel pressure of world disapproval and financial strain would have forced France to give up the “dirty war,” as the Parisians termed it. Ostentatiously taking the Communist side in the world ideological conflict meant simply that the French had the backing of the U. S. in strengthening their grip on Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh and his northern colleagues were to blame, Hammer concludes, for this irrevocable decision that perverted the revolution.

The only trouble with this brief thesis is its irrelevancy. By Hammer's own account, the Stalinists had dominated the Republican government from its beginnings, and Ho Chi Minh's long and close affiliation with the Far Eastern branch of the Comintern had been absolutely established. Hammer had already written, too, that North Vietnam was feel-

ing the strain of the war, that relief had to be found from the French blockade and resulting famine, relief that obviously would not come from the West. It hardly seems surprising that the Viet Minh turned to the Russian and Chinese Stalinists; the shifting of Stalin's erratic Asian policy, at the end of the Chinese war, only presented the first opportunity. And any search for the basic responsibility in the Viet Minh's Stalinist slant would have to go farther back than 1950, back rather to Hammer's description of a half century of colonial rule systematically designed to eradicate any expression of native democratic development.

Back on firmer ground, Hammer relates the degeneration in South Vietnam that led directly to the disaster at Dien Bien Phu and the divisive Geneva truce agreements. The French puppet governments under Bao Dai never had a trace of popular support, never in fact extended control outside the large French cities. A succession of feeble administrations rose and fell in Saigon, some remarkable mostly for the amount of corruption involved, all of them isolated from the people. Besides the hostility of the predominantly Viet Minh countryside, five autonomous sects, states within the state with their own governments and armies, threatened the central capitol. And in spite of increasing U. S. pressure behind military operations, the war against the Viet Minh bogged down; Vietnamese soldiers and civilians alike viewed the whole effort with weary indifference, they saw little sense—or hope—in fighting for Western nations and Western concepts.

Hammer has no practical answers for the future of Vietnam, the few conclusions that she does venture are superficial and rather meaningless. She says, for example, “For Vietnam the only alternative to chaos is a position in Southeast Asia, not as a satellite of China . . . nor as a proving ground for any new form of Western Colonialism, but as a fully independent nation endowed with democratic institutions.” Independence and democracy, it goes almost without saying, are the absolute crucial necessities for a healthy Vietnam, but of the question of how the Vietnamese are to break loose from their opposing masters and establish a neutral and independent position, compar-

able perhaps to Burma or Ceylon or Indonesia, Dr. Hammer — like most Western analysts—has nothing explicit to say. The obvious dilemma is that Vietnam, caught in the grip of the power struggle, has never had the choice of a middle way; somehow, Hammer seems to feel, the Vietnamese must find that way by themselves.

Still, *Struggle for Indochina* is an important book, important for the insights it gives of the once dynamic Vietnamese,

and for its powerful indictment of Western colonialism. Hammer's invaluable service has been in tracing the continuity of Vietnam's revolt, from the earliest drive for freedom against overwhelming Chinese domination to fierce nationalist rebellion against French total tyranny, in a pattern that shows a recurring spark of energy breaking through long periods of stagnation—a pattern of hope in spite of apparent hopelessness.

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