

The New
INTERNATIONAL

American Communism:

**A Re-Examination
of the Past**

by Max Shachtman

- U. S. Foreign Policy in the Clouds
- The Crisis in American Education

Origins of the Venezuelan Revolt

by Juan Parao

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A Marxist Review

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American Communism:

A Re-Examination of the Past

The radical movement in the United States has been shattered by a cumulative crisis. If we define the radical movement, for the purposes of this review, as the organized expression of those who avow the goal of socialism, it would be an exaggeration if we said that it lies in utter ruin, but not if we said that every section of it has suffered a debacle.

The oldest of the organizations in this country, the Socialist Labor Party, leads a hermetically-sealed vegetable existence, uninfluenced by the world and without influence on it. The I.W.W. is nothing more than the dream of a gloried but irretrievable past. The principal traditional organization of socialism, the Socialist Party, which had well over 100,000 members almost fifty years ago—in 1912, to be exact—and still had over 100,000 members forty years ago, is reduced to a small regiment now trying again to rebuild the party into a significant movement. The Communist Party, which managed to build itself up in the Forties to a membership of almost 100,000 and a tremendous influence outside its immediate ranks, is now a wreck that is not only ridiculed but discredited and despised. The Trotskyist organization, after three decades of existence, remains a wing without a body, unable to fly, unable to land. Of the multiplicity of groups that broke away or were bro-

ken away from it in thirty years, only the Independent Socialist League, the *American Socialist* group and a subgroup exist, all the others having vanished without trace or regret. To complete the picture by adding the names of any other groups that exist would only make it more dismal.

Where does this picture present itself, and when? In the United States today. Practically every other capitalist country in the world has an influential and even a powerful socialist (or Communist) *movement*; in the United States, the most advanced of all the capitalist countries, the one materially ripest for socialist reorganization, there is none. Wherever a significant labor movement exists, there is also a socialist movement which finds in it its political nourishment and not only the historical bearer of its ideas. But not in the United States which now has the largest and most powerfully organized labor movement in the history of the world. Here, support for an organized socialist movement from trade unions embracing eighteen million men and women is next to zero. Here, the most militant and significant mass movement of that tenth of the population made up by the Negro people is unfolding without any serious socialist influence upon it.

These are the realities. They are bitter ones. The socialist worthy of the name must be ready and able to

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acknowledge even the most dismaying facts, to examine them with sober objectivity and the utmost of critical freedom, to reconsider and re-evaluate the past in the light of the present. There is no other way to decide on those steps which are necessary and possible for changing today's reality into a reality more favorable to the advancement of socialism.

To reconsider and re-evaluate the past does not automatically imply the necessity of rejecting and repudiating it. It does mean such a critical re-examination as makes it possible for those who have not been inundated by helplessness and hopelessness, for those who are both confident of the socialist future and determined to bring it closer, to choose from among the elements of the past. It should by now be a commonplace that much in the past of the socialist movement—of its theories, its policies, its conduct—has been proved faulty. But not everything—indeed, far from it—has proved to be sterile, fruitless, worthless. Two outstanding facts refute such a belief, if anyone seriously holds it: one is that before and during the first world war a significant socialist movement was built up in this country under the banner of the Socialist Party; and the other is that what appeared to millions to be a socialist movement was built up in this country in the Forties under the banner of the Communist Party.

We do not therefore believe for a moment that there is some divine law, or some law of nature, or some singular magic about the nature of American capitalism and its working class, that automatically exempts this country from the operation of those persistent forces that have built and sustained socialist movements everywhere else. That is not to say that American capitalism is identical with

European capitalism and must travel exactly the same road in exactly the same way. On the contrary: American capitalism is indeed *unique* and so it has been from its earliest days. It is indeed—to employ a once unjustly-scorned term—“exceptional,” even if within a definite and limiting framework. It can even be said that the distinctive national peculiarity of the historical development of American capitalism, and *therefore* of its working class, and *therefore* of the socialist movement and its problems, has never been fully or adequately thought out by the very socialists who possess the analytical instruments required for the task. This *fundamental* task is one of the most important and urgent ones to be performed by those concerned with the reconstruction of socialism in this country. To the extent that it is conscientiously performed, we will be armed with an understanding of the *objective conditions*, historical and contemporary, that created the barriers to American socialism in the past as well as of those that indicate its encouraging prospects for the future.

It is to these objective conditions that the Marxist assigns the primary and principal cause for the difficulties of the socialist movement in this country in the past and to its dispersal and feebleness today. To explain so tremendous a political phenomenon as the absence of a socialist movement in this country to the malevolence of Smith or the blunders of Jones or the crimes of Robinson, or even of many Smiths and Joneses and Robinsons, is ludicrous not only to a Marxist but can not be taken seriously by any intelligent political person. Only objective conditions, only the interaction of great social forces which no person or group of persons can arbitrarily determine, provide the basic explanation.

WITH THIS FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT always well in mind, the problem of the socialist movement here must nevertheless be examined in another aspect. The various theories, ideas, analyses, policies, tactics practised adopted by one or another section of the movement—what part did they play in contributing to or in averting its present sorry state? We cannot assign *everything* to objective conditions over which we have little or no control at any given moment, above all to the conditions of the historical past. The socialist movement has as its purpose not merely to understand conditions but to alter them. And while we cannot jump over our own heads, let alone over society as a whole, we can and must work out those policies best calculated under given conditions to achieve the socialist goal. The socialist movement is not primarily a theoretical movement but a political movement; or more exactly, it is a theoretical movement only to the extent required to become an effective political movement. Right there is where political mistakes and crimes of the past demand judgment and re-judgment. The judgments that concern us are not moral or personal, but political.

To reconsider the past of the movement from this standpoint is not, it cannot be emphasized too often, a substitute for the more fundamental problem referred to before. Be it understood that it is not within the purpose of these lines to deal with it. That is for another time and it is not a task for any one day or for any one person. These lines aim at treating only one aspect of the movement's problem: what has it itself done to help in the debacle? Even this question must be limited, on this occasion, to a deliberately one-sided treatment. No claim is made here of a rounded

consideration of all the forces involved.

The “one side” to be examined is the Communist Party. For this bias, there is more than a little justification. The Communist Party has been the dominant section of the radical movement in this country for forty years. In addition, the Communist Party is unique in that, among other things, it embraces within its own history a wider range of theories, policies and practices than any other organization avowing socialism has ever known. It has run the full gamut, up and back, from insurrectionism to parliamentary opportunism, from revolutionary trade-unionism to collaboration with the most conservative of trade-union officialdoms, from revolutionary boycottism in elections to support of the most conservative of capitalist candidates, from extreme opposition to war to extreme chauvinist support of war, from extreme or apparently extreme inner-party freedom to extreme bureaucratism—and everything imaginable in between. So that, even if there had been no other section of the socialist movement in existence during this period, the courses pursued by the C.P. alone would provide more than ample matter, and in more than ample variety, for reconsidering the past of American socialism.

Furthermore, most socialists who regard themselves as “left-wingers” or Marxists, look upon the C.P. as having been, if not at one time then at another, the historically-justified successor, with all its defects, to the S.P. as the authentic socialist movement in the country. In fact, some even propose that the reconstructed socialist movement of tomorrow must take its inspiration, if not its model, from the Communist Party in its “early days,” or its “best days.”

What then has the Communist Par-

ty contributed to the progress of American socialism, or to its retardation?

The answer to the question is necessarily based to a large extent upon hindsight. This is admitted without apology. Hindsight has the advantage of dealing with conditions established, known and tested in the flesh. And, after all, without hindsight, preferably judicious hindsight, foresight cannot be equipped with much wisdom. In arriving at the answer, the writer claims some advantage from direct personal participation, knowledge and experience in the Communist movements, both as supporter and then as opponent. Yet this advantage is not of overwhelming importance and certainly not indispensable; it merely helps. The documentation by itself should be enough for the critical student and analyst.

THE JOB OF examining it has just been vastly facilitated by an independent and invaluable study, *The Roots of American Communism*, by Theodore Draper.* It is a volume in the series on "Communism in American Life," under the general editorship of Clinton Rossiter, part of a project sponsored by the Fund for the Republic. It deals with the origins of the Communist Party in this country and carries the subject to the year 1923 when the "underground" party emerged again as a legal and public organization under the name of the Workers Party. (Another volume is promised soon which will bring the party's history up to the year 1945.)

Draper's work is an extraordinary success. Anyone who does not exhibit a thorough acquaintance with the material he has so ably assembled in this volume, deprives himself of the right, and certainly of the ability, to speak

*The Roots of Russian Communism, The Viking Press, New York. 395 pp. \$6.75.

seriously about the American Communist movement. There is nothing in existence to compare with it. The official histories manufactured by the Communist Party itself are notoriously untrustworthy, for the innermost nature of the Party guarantees the quality that it demands. It is the only party in the world whose history can be written only by ex-members or opponents. The conclusive proof of this fact, while not the aim of Draper's work but only a natural by-product, is one of the many merits of his book. It relegates to their proper places—if there is a proper place for them—police romances about the C.P. such as have been written by government spies like Jacob Spolansky or spicy confessions by ex-members of the Party like Ben Gitlow in which the facts groan under the burden of pushcart gossip and enough lubricious tales are told to excite the philistine's fantasy. Even such a serious work as James Oneal's *American Communism*, written thirty years ago and covering about the same period of time, is far surpassed by Draper's.

The author does not fall into the easy trap that awaits the historian who relies on documentation. He has gone through all the available written material of the period, most of which is extremely difficult to find, and checked it with exceptional scrupulousity. But he has also checked and cross-checked it, in turn, with personal interviews granted him by a number of the party leaders of the period who had worth-while information and opinions to offer, and the freedom to offer them. As a historian of a movement in which he did not actually live and work among the people he deals with and thereby actually know their thoughts and feelings (Draper's membership in the C.P. came at a distinctly later stage than the one covered in his book), he has achieved

a rare measure of success in recreating for himself and for the reader, the life and unfolding of the C.P. He shows a full sense of responsibility toward his subject; conscientiousness without pedantry; the enlightening warmth of understanding with no less of the mandatory critical spirit; and a complete freedom from the vinegary sneer-and-snarl with which so many appraisers of the early Communist movement approach its history.

It is not always possible to agree with the weight he ascribes to this or that element that played a role in the Communist movement. He attaches too great a significance to the part played in the early days by the members or leaders of the Lettish Federation of the Socialist Party which became the Lettish Federation of the Communist Party. It is perhaps a natural tendency in a historian to ascribe exaggerated importance to a phenomenon which he has rescued from unmerited obscurity. The same applies to the exceptional regard he manifests for Louis C. Fraina (known also as Lewis Corey when he reappeared publicly after leaving the Communist movement). Perhaps this is also a reaction against the attempts of the later leaders of the party to denigrate his name, if not to consign it to oblivion. Fortunately, these misjudgments, and some inaccuracies of other kinds, play no important part in the book and do not detract significantly from its value. Even more gratifying is the fact that, although the author is obviously not a Marxist and has a familiar bias against the Bolshevik revolution, his work remains first-rate.

It is not a mere heavy-handed, routine compilation of relevant and irrelevant facts. Draper exercises the historian's right (and obligation) to choose the facts that are important as well as relevant, to separate them

analytically, and than to assemble them into conclusions appropriate to his thesis. His thesis (the term is really not exact, in so far as it may suggest that the view obtrudes itself all over the book and that the facts are stretched and squeezed to fit it) is formed out of two related views:

The first is a denial of the

opinion that the American Communist movement was totally unrelated to the Socialist Left Wing of 1912. This view seems to minimize historical continuity. The Bolshevik revolution transformed the Left Wing, but it did not create a new one out of nothing. On the contrary, the leading roles were played by men and women who were prepared for them by past inclinations and experience. The Bolshevik revolution came to fulfill, not to destroy. The peculiar development of American Communism can be understood only in terms of the way in which the new Bolshevik influence impinged on American radical traditions. The interaction of the two was a long, painful, complex process. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that something new was born with the Bolshevik revolution. It was born precisely because the old Left Wing was famished for something new, different, more successful. But as with all newborn things, the flesh out of which it came was not new.

The second, including a re-statement of the first, comes at the very end of the study. It is its summary and the implied preface to the concluding volume to come. It refers to the aid given by Moscow—by the Communist International leaders—to the early American Communists to resolve fruitfully those problems of theory and tactics that they seemed less able to resolve by themselves:

In addition to all the other boons which Moscow held out to them—the reflected glory of the Russian Revolution, the international glamor of the Comintern, the desperately needed subsidies and other technical assistance—this last discovery of Moscow's usefulness was the most seductive and the most ruinous. . . . Something crucially important did hap-

pen to this movement in its infancy. It was transformed from a new expression of American radicalism to the American appendage of a Russian revolutionary power. Nothing else so important ever happened to it again.

If we were to restate this second view in our own terms, it would only be to put it more emphatically, and the rounded reasons for it will be set forth later on. Agreement with the first view, however, is not so simple a matter. It is stated so loosely and vaguely as to invite ambiguity. Every other sentence evokes strong disagreement; and the sentences in between permit agreement only with challenging reservations.

If the matter were only of academic historical importance, it would barely be worth the paper needed to discuss it. From the standpoint of present-day politics, it has even less importance: the Communist Party of 1957 has as much in common with the Bolsheviks of 1917, let alone the Socialist Left Wing of 1912, as dishwater has with well-water. But from the standpoint of the development of the early Communist movement and its consequences, the question does have instructive importance.

WHAT IS "PECULIAR" about the development of American Communism which "can be understood only in terms of the way in which the new Bolshevik influence impinged on American radical traditions," when the development of German (and French and British) Communism—substantially identical with the American—are likewise understandable "only in terms of the way in which the new Bolshevik influence impinged" on German (and French, and British) radical traditions? In the European countries, the "interaction" was an even longer, more painful and more complex process. There too the "Bolshevik revolution came to fulfill, not

to destroy," and surely not less so than in the United States.

There *was* a peculiarity about the early Communist movement in this country (one among several others, it may be noted), but it lies in precisely the other direction from that indicated by Draper. It was peculiar precisely to the extent that it was *not* related to the "Socialist Left Wing of 1912" or more generally to "American radical traditions." Draper is not altogether wrong in denying that the Communist movement was "totally unrelated" to the old Left Wing, for within very narrow limits the relationship is obvious; but he is quite wrong in his emphasis.

The difference may be pointed up by contrasting the German movement, for example, with the American—always with due respect, as the French say, for the difference in proportions. The first Communist Party in Germany, the Spartakusbund, could trace its origins clearly and unmistakably to the Left Wing of the Social Democracy and, theoretically and programmatically, to a traditional revolutionary Marxian position. Its leadership incarnated the continuity: Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, Klara Zetkin, even Karl Radek, as well as younger men like Paul Levi, Wilhelm Pieck, Heinrich Brandler, August Thalheimer. Correspondingly, the leaders of the Left Wing of the Independent Social-Democratic Party who won the majority of the organization at its Halle congress in 1920 for affiliation with the Third International and then merged it with the Spartacists to form the United Communist Party, represented prominent and undebatable continuity with the Left Wing positions they had occupied in the pre-war Social Democracy (there were and always will be individual and accidental exceptions).

The difference in the United States

is positively striking. Especially so if the reference is back to Draper's unhappily chosen "Socialist Left Wing of 1912." At the Indianapolis convention of the Socialist Party in 1912, the maximum number of delegates the loose, variegated Left Wing and its sympathizers could muster on the key division (Hillquit's proposal for Article II, Section 6 of the party constitution that provided for the expulsion of advocates of "sabotage," directed against members of the I.W.W. inside the Party) was 90, against the 191 who supported Hillquit. Less than ten per cent of the 90 delegates ever found their way to the Communist Left Wing or Parties in 1918-1919 or afterward; and of that fragment, only two minor figures ever played a role in the Communist leadership—C. E. Ruthenberg and Edward Lindgren. If you go back two years, to the 1910 convention in Chicago, there are not even half a dozen delegates out of the more than one hundred who ever joined the Communist movement or became leaders in it. Of those who dropped out of the Socialist Party after 1912 in anger over the adoption of the famous Section 6, we know of only one individual who rejoined it, supported the Left Wing in 1919, and became a prominent Communist leader, Earl Browder. Of Left Wingers who remained in the S.P. after 1912 and later joined the Communist Left Wing and the party (or rather, parties, for the split in the Socialist Party in 1919 simultaneously produced two of them, the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party), there were remarkably few. The Communist Labor Party convention had perhaps a dozen or two who came out of the old Socialist Left. Only a fraction of these stayed with the Communist movement. The Communist Party, completely dominated and overwhelmingly composed of the Slavic-language Federations, had even fewer.

The peak strength of the S.P., as well as of its Left Wing, was reached around 1912. The Left Wing had the support or sympathy of a good third of the Party. It was composed overwhelmingly of native-born, or at least English-speaking, members, who could count on foreign-language Federation support mainly from among the Finns—the "Red Finns"—in upper Michigan, in Minnesota, and generally in the Northwestern and Mountain states. Many Left Wingers quit the Party after 1912, but there was a resurgence of their spirit at the time of the St. Louis Emergency Convention of 1917 at which the famous militant anti-war manifesto was adopted.

How many of them came into the Communist movement? A sufficiently good guess can be made on the basis of the English-speaking membership of the two Communist Parties at the end of 1919, right after their founding and before they were driven underground by the "Red Raids" of Attorney-General Palmer. A generous estimate of the total membership of the two parties at that time would not greatly exceed 30,000. Of this figure, no more than ten percent and probably somewhat less was represented by the English-speaking membership. Of these a good 800 were members of the Michigan state organization (which later became the Proletarian Party), who soon withdrew from the C.P. They were no more Communist than were the people the old Socialist Party of Canada (or its inspirer, the S.P. of Great Britain) from which they took over their weird theories. Even of the very few old Socialist Left Wingers who joined the Communist Parties, we can think of only two who had attained national prominence in the pre-war S.P., L. E. Katterfeld, who once directed the Lyceum department of the S.P. national office (the speakers' bu-

reau) and Ruthenberg, the latter really only in 1917. And even of these two it cannot be said that either one of them was prominent in the intellectual or political leadership of the traditional Socialist Left Wing. (The name of Louis Boudin cannot be added, even though he was nationally and even internationally known, for while he supported the Left Wing, he steamed out of the convention of the Communist Labor Party and never joined it.) Most of the other leading Communist Left Wingers were barely known outside their own localities before the Bolshevik Revolution; many of them had no past at all to speak of in the socialist movement.

What had happened to the old Socialist Left? It nullified itself, came apart and lost its bearings before the Communist Left Wing came on the scene. That was inevitable. In so far as the multiplicity of strains that composed it could be called a Left Wing, it was characterized, positively, by a fervid revolutionary spirit and an uncompromising attachment to the principle of the class struggle. But in every other respect—theoretical, political and tactical—it had no cohesive platform that could be defended from the standpoint of Marxism in general, or that could stand up against the policies of the leadership that was gradually developed by and around Morris Hillquit, the political leader of the Party. The gnawing discontents of thousands of rank-and-file militants over the moderation of the dominant party policies rarely rose above the primitive radicalism, at one stage, of opposition to “reform” or “immediate” demands in the party program, and at a later stage, of support or sympathy for the aggressive syndicalism of the I.W.W. Against such radicalism, Hillquit and his comrades had fairly easy sailing, and understandably so. It did not take too long

to prove that the political focus of the Left Wing was not enough to hold it together, let alone move it forward. It sterilized its attachment to the basic principle of the socialist movement, the class struggle, by its sectarianism—that dread curse of every Left Wing in the history of radicalism in this country, and not this one alone.

When the United States entered the war (in 1917), the principal leaders of the Left Wing, the ones best known nationally, the ones who had done the main theoretical and political work of the Left Wing, collapsed almost to a man. They not only abandoned the Left Wing; they abandoned the Socialist Party altogether. Many of them joined with Sam Gompers in an organization to stimulate support of the war in labor and socialist circles. Some of them even went to the length of public agitation against Socialist Party candidates, and even called on the government to take police action against the party. Right-Wingers contributed their good share to the war-supporters who quit the party. But to the Left Wing, it was its own former leaders who counted, and that disastrously: William English Walling, Frank Bohn, A. M. Simons, Henry Slobodin, J. G. Phelps Stokes and Rose Pastor Stokes, Robert Rives La Monte—in a word, most of the prominent intellectual leaders of the Left Wing who had set the tone in its unofficial organ, the old *International Socialist Review*. In no other section of the Second International did its Left Wing suffer such a blow from its own leadership. In almost every country, there were individual cases of such extreme reversals: Hervé in France, Cunow in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, some Russian Bolsheviks in Paris, Hyndman in England. But in general the continuity of the European Left Wing was maintained. In the United States, it was almost

completely disrupted, at least so far as its principal traditional leadership was concerned. The effect upon the Left Wing here could not but be shattering. Its rank and file, without nationally-known and experienced leadership, was partly demoralized, largely disoriented. We need only recall that the famous St. Louis convention anti-war declaration was jointly produced and sponsored by C. E. Ruthenberg . . . Morris Hillquit . . . and Algernon Lee; and that the I.W.W., which valiantly pursued the class struggle on the economic field during the war and suffered from brutal repressions at the hands of the war mongers, remained so true to its syndicalist unconcern with “politics” and “the state” that it did not find it necessary to adopt a declaration against the war (or, to be sure, in support of the war).

What remained of the Left Wing had the task of reorienting and reassembling its ranks. It did not even make a serious attempt until the February, 1917, revolution in Russia startled the world and uplifted the spirits of all socialists, the Left Wingers in particular. Its most notable and authentic reappearance was marked by the publication of the first issue of *The Class Struggle*. Its editors were Louis B. Boudin, Louis C. Fraina and Ludwig Lore. Boudin was the only personal connection with the old Left Wing, but as already mentioned, he never joined the Communist movement. At bottom, he was an inflexible Kautskyan, whereas Hillquit was a flexible Kautskyan, a distinction so trivial as to generate in the former a throbbing animus toward the latter. Fraina, practically unknown in the party, had a brilliant but restless theoretical mind which never alighted on a definite theoretical position for longer than a year before flying to a radically different one. He was a per-

fect example of that familiar figure in the radical movement who swims like a fish in the sea of theoretical disputation and gasps like a fish on the sands of politics. Lore was beginning to attain prominence in the German Federation and the New York organization. He possessed a rich socialist culture, a far higher degree of political intelligence than any of the other Communist-leaders-to-be, an intellectual independence and critical faculties that distinguished him from all the others. These fatal gifts guaranteed his expulsion from the Communist Party after only a few years in its ranks.

TO READ THE FIRST, declarative, issue of *The Class Struggle* is to see how far removed it was from the old Left Wing and from the political issues that concerned it, and, on the other hand, how far it was from the Communist Left Wing that was soon but so unexpectedly to arise in the Socialist Party. It can also be seen that the Left Wing was not continuing but recommencing. It was unsure of its own foundations (its old ones had practically crumbled), and, as a definite tendency, all but isolated in the Party. The editors did not hesitate to proclaim unpleasant truths:

There is practically no independent Socialist thought in this country, and the Socialist ideas elaborated abroad usually reach us only as soulless and meaningless formulae and often as mere reflexes of old-world racial and nationalistic sympathies, animosities and struggles. . . .

The bulk of the Socialists of American stock, whom the currents of European Socialist thought have hardly reached, are steeped in . . . vulgar pro-ally-ism. . . .

Opposed to this is the offensive and degrading pro-Germanism of a large proportion of our membership and the party bureaucracy. . . .

There was no reference to any existing Left Wing in the party, but only

to saving the Party by revolutionizing "the concepts and modes of action of our movement." This meant no more than a rejection of the notion of "national defense," and a return to the class struggle and internationalism. Where indeed was the once powerful Left Wing? The position of "the bulk of the Socialists of American stock" has already been cited, and so has the position of the "pro-Germanism of a large proportion" of the other members and leaders. Of the foreign-language Federations of the Party, the Lettish alone was distinguished by a Left-Wing position. It was confined pretty much to Massachusetts and was virtually unknown elsewhere. Its inspiration was not the Bolshevik theories but the mystical abstractions of the Dutch radical sectarians, Pannekoek, Gorter, and their representative in this country, S. J. Rutgers (who exercised a tremendous but inevitably brief influence upon the volatile Fraïna). The Germans, under Lore's influence, were moving to the Left in a general way. In an even more general way, this was true of the South Slavs. But the Jewish Federation was moderate and even pro-war. The Polish Federation was pro-Pilsudski. The Finnish Federation, having lost the "Red Finns," was conservative and unobtrusive in Party affairs. The Russian Federation, formed only in 1915, was weak, unimportant, and overwhelmingly inclined to the Menshevik position—and not the Left Menshevik position, either. None of the other language groups of the Party was particularly marked by radicalism.

If, then, it is true, in the literal sense, that the Bolshevik Revolution "did not create a new [Left Wing] out of nothing," as Draper says, it is not true, or it is "misleadingly true," that the revolution "transformed the Left Wing"—if he is speaking, as he is, of

"the Socialist Left Wing of 1912." There was not enough of it left by 1917-1918 to be transformed into anything. It would be far truer to say: *the Bolshevik Revolution created the Communist Left Wing and its program and its leadership.*

From this fact it does not follow, as some epidermal thinkers have put it, that the ideas of the Revolution were "alien" and "unacclimatizable" to the American social soil. The same epidermal reasoning held for a long time that the importation of Marxian ideas in general by German immigrants a hundred years ago proved the incompatibility of these ideas with American problems. The reasoning is false, but the originational fact is not. It is with its consequences that we are concerned. By virtue of what we insist is "the fact," we can understand the "peculiar development" of American Communism which caused it to be transformed, *more easily and more rapidly* than any other Communist movement of importance, "from a new expression of American radicalism to the American appendage of a Russian revolutionary power." Draper's first "thesis" is wrong to the very extent that it makes such an understanding difficult.

THE COMMUNIST LEFT WING in this country was formed, swelled, led and dominated by the Slavic, primarily the Russian, and East European Federations of the Socialist Party. It did not come into existence as the natural product of militant rank-and-file revolt against a party leadership prosecuting the war in intimate collaboration with an imperialist government and steeped in chauvinism, as was the case in Germany with the Spartacists and then with the Independents. It was not the product of a movement of workers to the left of the traditional socialist party who found in its im-

perialist position an obstacle to the fight for their interests and ideals, as was the case in France with the Left Wing Socialists and their allies among the non-party syndicalists who jointly formed the Communist Party. (In the United States, the workers' movement that stood to the left of the Socialist Party was represented only by the I.W.W., which played, it is important to note, no role at all in the formation of the Communist Left Wing and the Parties founded by it.)

It came into existence in a fervently enthusiastic response to the victories of the two Russian revolutions in 1917, especially of the second. The response reached its highest intensity in the Slavic Federations, which experienced a hypertrophic growth surpassed only by the growth of self-esteem among their leaders, again, especially and primarily the Russians. Literally overnight, they became the leaders of the Left Wing with whose past struggles and traditions they had had nothing whatever to do. They stoked it, poured it, forged it, rolled it, cut it apart, stamped it, wrapped it up, sealed and labeled it and tied it in knots. The solemn and earnest Letts, authentic radicals of the day before, ceased forever after to play a leading role and were confined to providing the Left Wing with a solid bloc vote in the party dispute. The leadership was entirely in the hands of the "November Bolsheviks," the pashas of the Russian Federation, Hourwich, Stoklitsky, Tywerousky, Missin, Lunin, Ashkenudize and others. Only the mellowing influence of time allows us to speak of them gently as political babblers. Their like was never known to the American movement since the riotous days of Johann Most, from whom they differed only in lacking his talent and character. They scorned the superficial qualifications for socialist leadership: personal integrity,

attachment to principle, critical independence of thought, comradeship, serious study and analysis of problems of the movement, and above all the authentication of all these by years of positive experience in the political struggles of the working class and the struggles within the movement itself. None of these was in them. They relied instead on the more fundamental qualifications: their birth certificates, and the ability to read Russian in the original and translate it badly for "socialists of American stock" whom they enfeoffed. These entitled them to all the letters of mark and reprisal they needed, and they used them without wince or scruple.

And the others—the Left Wing "socialists of American stock?" It is hard even for their contemporary to recreate in his mind the nightmarish reality of the intellectual, political and organizational terror exercised over the entire Left Wing by the Russian Bashibazouks. In exchange for their position as the Russian Federation of the American Socialist Party, they wanted to establish here an American Federation of the Russian Party. worse, the Federationists knew "practically nothing and understood absolutely nothing about the history of the Bolshevik party, about its political and theoretical evolution, about the developments and conflicts in its course during the revolution itself or about the problems of its further unfoldment. If that is how it was with the Russians—and that is literally how it was—it is not hard to guess how it was with the native Left Wingers.

The latter, it goes without saying,

knew far more about American class realities and political problems than did the Federationists; indeed, it was hardly possible to know less. All their best political instincts and experience urged them on to create a movement that could function effectively for class-struggle socialism under American social conditions. They therefore rebelled against the rule of the Russians from the very beginning of the Communist Left Wing and throughout the early days of the Communist Parties. But their rebellion was caught in a triple trap and could not get out of it.

First, even though the native Left Wingers were not the continuators of the old Left Wing, they took over most of the negative, that is, the sectarian, traditions of the old Left Wing which were in turn the transmuted inheritance of impotent American agrarian radicalism: opposition to "immediate demands" and "reforms," hemi-semi-demi-opposition to parliamentary activity, opposition to the existing labor movement, the unrequited *amour passionnel* for the I.W.W., and radicalism of language which passed for radicalism of thought. The Russians had all of that—and more. Both groups looked upon the Bolshevik Revolution as the unquestionable, last and authoritative word, and believed, quite mistakenly, that it had come "to fulfill, not to destroy" these ideas. So the ground was taken from under any native Left Wing fight against the Russians on political or principled grounds. They were confined, and they confined themselves, to amending the Russians, changing a word here, modifying a thought there, but leaving the substance intact. They lived in trepidation of being denounced as "Mensheviks." After forty years some people still live like that.

Second, the Russians held the whip

hand by virtue of numbers. They dominated all the other by-now Left Wing language Federations and thereby the Left Wing as a whole. The votes of the Federation members were cast in bloc. The S.P. leadership was first to rue this discovery. The native Communists found it out for themselves a little later but no less ruefully. The native Communists had no access to the Federation membership; neither one could speak the other's language—and that in more than one sense. In the Left Wing, the language groups represented a good ninety percent of the strength, and that strength was almost entirely at the unrestricted disposal of the Russian Federation leaders. It is to this overwhelming majority that the S.P. administration had refused to bow. To prevent the Left Wing from capturing the party convention, the party national office, under the public inspiration of Hillquit, had suspended or expelled Left Wing organizations before the Chicago convention assembled in 1919. The violation of democratic procedure was unmistakable. So were the reckless provocations of the Left Wing. To this day, socialists of Left Wing inclinations denounce the 1919 leadership for its abuse of democratic procedure, and there is no lack of proof for the charge. It is ironical, however, that the day after the Chicago split, which produced the two competing Communist parties, the native Left Wingers, who were dominant in the Communist Labor Party, acted in substantially the same way as had the old S.P. administration. They refused to bow to the decided majority of the Communist movement, that is, to the Federation-ruled Communist Party which they had insisted on inflicting upon the S.P., but which they declined to inflict upon themselves.

This was true not only during the period when the Communists were

only the Left Wing of the S.P., although it was most true during that period. It was true even after the formal organization of the two Communist Parties, and during the several splits and partial re-unifications that followed. It was true, in painfully diminishing degree, until end-1922-beginning-1923, when the millstone of foreign-language-group domination was finally lifted from the neck of American Communism.

It is worth while noting that during the five years from 1918 to the end of 1922, what may be roughly called the "native Communists" were never really in the majority in the movement, were never really the decisive force in its leadership, and found it necessary to fight against a majority—a diminishing majority, but a majority—until the very end. They did not fight in strict accordance with the proprieties of democratic procedure. In this respect they followed essentially the same course that the S.P. leadership had pursued in its defense against the whole Left Wing in 1919. The condemnations of the Hillquit leadership for thwarting the will of the majority by bureaucratic measures were effective factional war-cries of the Left Wing in the 1919 fight. But the Communist movement itself resorted to substantially the same measures. The minority of native Communists, some of whom started by ignominious capitulations to the Federation statesmen—Ruthenberg and Frana were the prime examples—finally broke loose, one after another, and fought their way to the top by mechanical organizational maneuvers and devices of every sort; and expulsion of the majority of the membership was one of them. If, as someone said, the method of mass expulsions was invented by Hillquit as a solution to thorny party problems, it cer-

tainly was perfected in the later Communist movement.

With the third aspect of the "triple-trap," we are at the end of the key to an understanding of the "peculiar" development of American Communism.

The weakness in numbers of the native Communists, as compared with the language-Federation people, was only a reflection of something else. The Russians in the Left Wing enjoyed immense authority, as well as the power of numbers. That the basis for their claims to this authority was preposterous, even grotesque, is true, and not a single one of them proved his right to leadership of any kind or in any country when in the course of time they were subjected to reasonable tests. But the fact of their authority during the early period remains nevertheless.

The native Communists enjoyed no comparable authority. There were a few exceptions, but only a very few. All of them, even those who humbly dissolved their kneecaps before the Russians, were regarded by the latter with hostility or suspicion, at best with wary tolerance. Except for two or three already mentioned, none of them was known as an experienced national political leader with a political past as spokesman for the traditional Socialist Left or as a leader of workers outside the socialist movement. None of them, in a word, had the authority that such a record would invest him with. None of them had a "constituency" of followers from the older movement which would have been the natural complement and mark of this authority.

Had they really been the modernized representatives and continuation of the old Socialist Left, we would have another story to tell or read. The trouble was that, on the whole, they were not.

From the Socialist Party, as we have indicated, the new Left Wing got only a meager, unrepresentative, even accidental fragment, at least so far as the native old Left Wing was concerned.

From the I.W.W., which represented the most compact and extreme group of the broader pre-war Left Wing, the Communist movement got astonishingly little. Bill Haywood took out a card in the C.P. later, just before going to Moscow to die of heartbreak, but he played no part whatever in the American Communist movement, let alone in its leadership. Of the handful of other Wobblies who joined the C.P., Harrison George became a minor Party journalist, George Hardy and Charles Ashleigh were swallowed in the apparatus of the Profintern (Red International of Labor Unions), George Andreychine also went to the Profintern and was later murdered by the G.P.U. for supporting the Trotskyist opposition. Sam Hammarsmark ran a party book shop. Perhaps there was a handful of others whose names escape us, but they left no mark anywhere. Foster had long ago quit the I.W.W. and made a career in the A.F. of L.; his mark on the Communist movement was of course deep. The same goes for James P. Cannon, but he had dropped out of the I.W.W. during the war and, it seems, abandoned political activity for a while, to join the S.P. and simultaneously its Left Wing when the Bolshevik Revolution took place. But even he, known to the old Wobblies and highly esteemed by them, never had any success in recruiting one of them to the Communist movement. At one time he tried his very best with Vincent St. John, the real head of the I.W.W., whom he once idolized, but he didn't quite make it. The old warrior smiled skeptically and went off to prospect for gold in the West. He

tried repeatedly to win Elizabeth Gurley Flynn to the new party but in vain. She waited until it was completely corroded by Stalinism before joining it.

The Socialist Labor Party contributed even less to the Communist movements. Boris Reinstein joined the Comintern in Moscow, but he did not represent the S.L.P., was a minor figure in it in the first place, and was never in the American Communist movement. Caleb Harrison, also a minor figure, was made national secretary of the "legal" C.P. (the Workers Party) for a few minutes, and then vanished as unobtrusively as he had appeared. Fraina had of course been in the S.L.P. for a while, had even been a protege of De Leon, but he played no leading part in it. That is the maximum we can recall of the contribution the S.L.P. made to the Communist movement and its native wing.

The anarchists? Just about nothing. Robert Minor is the only name to remember. When he joined the Communist Party, it was a case of double jeopardy and double injustice—to himself and to the party. As an anarchist he had always believed that politics is a dirty business; he does not seem to have changed his belief after he joined the C.P. But—*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*.

The native Communists, then, had next to nobody of authority to resist and break the hammerlock of the Federation leaders. They first had to acquire this authority in political struggle inside the party—participation in the class struggle outside the party was altogether precluded by the very nature of the party at the time. This struggle they began, one after another and each according to his lights. But while they could make the Federationists give way a step here and a step there, they could not overcome them and the solid, stolid majority behind

them. Besides, time was pressing and the underground party (parties) was stifling and shriveling for lack of air. The native Communists (we are still using the term a little loosely) were unable to acquire the necessary authority and with it the strength to rid the movement from the verbiage of its ultra-radical dogmas and the dogmas of its ultra-radical verbiage, that is, to acquire it by their own efforts. They were imprisoned in the triple trap they had unwittingly sprung by the very way in which they had organized the Left Wing fight and split in the S.P. They now had their multiply-distilled revolutionary party. It was not only barren—it was a greater obstacle to the advancement of the socialist cause in the country than the austere critic of the Socialist Party had ever charged it with being.

IT DID GET OUT OF the trap nevertheless. After three years, four years, five years of existence as an independent movement, the native Communists acquired the necessary authority and leadership to begin reconstructing the party in the image of ideas they had once dared only to whisper but could now confidently proclaim. But, tragedy and disaster! They emerged from one trap only to plunge with glee into another that proved to be worse. In the old one they were restless and determined to break out. The new one they hailed enthusiastically. They welcomed it with relief and then with passion. Every party leader and group of leaders thereafter sought to pull the trap more snugly around him. The trap was "the Comintern."

The new, upcoming party leadership was *invested* with its authority and position by the Comintern. Once, twice, three times and then in routine repetition, "Moscow" intervened in the internal affairs of the American Party in behalf of the correct

course and against the wrong one. It supported and gave its prestige to the wiser and better leaders as against the less wise and less able. It freed the party from the ludicrous dogma of undergroundism by authorizing it to form a legal public organization. It authorized the legal party to adopt a program (at the end of 1921) which the unreconstructed undergroundists labelled, not unfairly, as a "prototype of the decadent Socialist Party." Had the Left Wing adopted that program as its own in 1918-1919 it is hardly conceivable that there would have been a serious fight in the S.P. over it, let alone a split. In all likelihood Hillquit would have "capitulated" to it cheerfully. If the new leadership of the Workers Party was aware of this profoundly significant fact, it gave no outward expression to it. It authorized the legal party to abandon the last remnant of anti-parliamentarism. It authorized it to abandon "revolutionary unionism" and to adopt a policy of working inside the A.F.L. It authorized it, later on, to promote and participate in the formation of a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

Not one of these ideas was contained in the program of the Left Wing or of the early Communist Parties—except in so far as the ideas were violently denounced. Not one of these ideas, or forward steps, was invented, as it were, by the Comintern. They were all well established in the old S.P. They were taken up again in their militant form by the native Communist leaders themselves. Yet, not one of these ideas could prevail in the party until authorized by the Comintern.

Little by little and one after the other, everybody in the Party, from the leaders down to the humblest rank and file members began to see the correctness of the Comintern's de-

cisions. Draper quotes from an article by Cannon, then chairman of the Workers Party, in reply to a criticism by Scott Nearing: "The fraternal union of native and foreign born workers in our party; realistic tactics adopted to the concrete situation in America; leadership of the movement, as a rule, in the hands of the native workers—that is the sound point of view finally adopted in our party. And who said the final word in favor of it? The 'Moscow Dictators'! We who have fought for a realistic party have found our best friend in 'Moscow.'" Cannon unquestionably expressed the exhilaration felt by almost the entire party. What he said was true, or so it seemed to be. But it was all an illusion. It assured, or at least helped to assure, the rapid stultification and degeneration of American Communism.

Nobody in the party saw the fatal flaw in the victory of "the sound point of view" and leadership, and one of the reasons why it was not seen was that the victory was, in and of itself, real.

It is a rule that can now be asserted (or reasserted) with the flatness of dogma: a working-class party cannot develop and fulfill its great mission unless it stands on its own feet, makes its own errors, where these are unavoidable, listens carefully to advice from good friends everywhere, heeds the direct and implied criticism of the working class itself but debates and decides its policies and its leadership freely, without coercion from within or from without. The Communist movement of the first few years at no time stood on its feet; it did not even touch the ground. Like Mohammed's coffin, it was suspended between heaven and earth, living in Russia without inhabiting it and inhabiting the United States without living in it. The prerequisite of all prerequisites for usefulness to socialism was to

stand on its feet. Because the Comintern, from 1921 to 1923, made it touch American soil, it was overcome with the toxic illusion that it was standing on its feet. It was not. It was standing only on the crutches rented to it by Moscow in full foreknowledge of the acquiescence of the Americans. Feet, like any other organ, wither and die from disuse. By learning, and with such gratitude! to rely entirely upon Moscow (whether it was the "good Moscow" or the "bad Moscow") for its policies and its leadership, the Communist movement lost its feet and then its head. It was not long before it ceased to have any value as a socialist movement. A head that cannot turn, lips that cannot speak, feet that cannot move of their own accord, are the necessary properties of a marionette. The lips may be made to speak words of wisdom, but just as easily to speak nonsense; the feet may be made to move forward, but just as easily to move backward; the head may smile or frown, be twisted to face behind or be removed altogether. It is all an illusion. Socialists can be turned into marionettes but no marionette is a socialist.

Countless times, Cannon, one of the best and in many respects the ablest political leader produced in the Communist movement, has told the story of his first delegation by the American Party to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922. Draper publishes it in part from notes supplied by Cannon and it is essentially corroborated by Max Bedacht who accompanied him to Moscow. Cannon was seeking support from the International for the American "liquidators," that is, those who proposed to establish an open, public, legal Communist party, to get out of the suffocating self-imposed underground existence, to free the party from the dead hand of the people who insisted

that illegality was an inviolable revolutionary principle.

It was the year 1922—not 1952. Cannon met a cold reception. One Comintern leader and functionary after another to whom he spoke and whose support he solicited, was either non-committal, evasive, cool or unfriendly. He was even assigned to an inferior hotel. Finally, in desperation, he enlisted the good offices of Max Eastman for an interview with Trotsky, who granted him an hour. An hour was enough. Trotsky's support was speedily assured, which was to be expected from any intelligent political person. "He said he would report the interview to the Russian Central Committee and that the American Commission would soon hear their opinion." Once Lenin's support was also obtained, everything changed! All the other Russian leaders came out sternly for the legal party, and so did the rest of the Comintern Executive and all the functionaries. The undergrounders were left without a single friend or spokesman. Cannon was promptly shifted to a more pleasant hotel. The legal party was as good as established: it had been authorized in Moscow.

Cannon has always told this story with relish and honest pride in the early Comintern. He could hardly have subjected it to a more biting criticism. The fate of the American Communist movement, on a problem whose solution was so simply and obviously indicated to any rational political individual, depended entirely on the availability of Trotsky for an interview, his agreement with the obvious necessity, Lenin's concordance, and the guaranteed rubber stamp of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. That made it a command to the American party with expulsion as the penalty for non-compliance.

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL and its Executive Committee were established with the grand aim of being "the general staff of the world revolution." This is not the place for an analysis of the Comintern. But this much can be said: The aim, to begin with, was only a hope. It soon became a myth and an illusion. It ended as a monstrosity. It was never a reality. Even before the triumph of Stalin, the Comintern and its Executive never organized or directed or led a revolution. It did organize or bear the responsibility for several disastrous *putsches*, in Germany, in Bulgaria, in Esthonia. The Executive Committee began to function as the authoritative leadership of the world Communist movement, but the limits of its authority were narrowly circumscribed, it never got beyond a beginning and it lasted for no more than two-three years.

The basic policies of the International and all its important sections were decided by five men, Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek and Bukharin. Within the general course they laid down the actual political, organizational and administrative direction of the Executive Committee was wielded by Zinoviev. Zinoviev was an extraordinarily gifted man in many ways and many fields, as much underrated after his removal from the post of Chairman of the Comintern as he was overrated while he held the post. But he was temperamentally and politically unfit to discharge the responsibilities assigned to him as well as those he arrogated to himself.

The Executive Committee became a farce, Zinoviev became increasingly the all-determining reality. He instituted the system of plenipotentiary emissaries to the various parties with full power to dictate policies and leaderships. He introduced the practice of wiping out established party

leaders and manufacturing synthetic ones out of whoever was handy among the subservient and the sycophantic. This technique he soon improved by ousting whole leaderships and imposing new ones by mere cablegram from Moscow and in utter disregard for the decisions of the membership of the party concerned. He established the system of deciding everything in Moscow, or through "Comintern representatives" to the affiliated parties, not only dictating what shall be the policy of the party (including the policy to be followed in some local strike five thousand miles away!) and who shall be its leadership, but who shall occupy this post in the party and who that one, including posts of local organizers.

Under Zinoviev's direction, the "general staff of the world revolution" did not confine itself to giving counsel on the basis of wider experience and knowledge, or to employing its great moral and political authority to persuade the members and leaders of the other parties. It substituted purely disciplinary dictates. The only rights which the respective party members and even leaders were soon left with, were to approve and obey. In comparison with the Zinoviev regime which was speedily duplicated in all the parties, the machine that led the Socialist Party in Hillquit's time was a paragon of democratism. Under the Comintern regime, first of Zinoviev and certainly of Stalin, it was absolutely impossible for the Communist Parties to develop an authentic, qualified, responsible leadership of their own—or to educate a membership capable of promoting the cause of socialism.

How illuminating and instructive it is, in this vital connection, to recall the wisdom of Lenin in the earlier days of the revolutionary movement. In December, 1906, Lenin wrote a

foreword to a pamphlet by Karl Kautsky on the driving forces and prospects of the Russian revolution. In reply to a questionnaire from Plekhanov, Kautsky had set down his views on some theoretical and political problems agitating the Russian Marxist movement. Lenin translated it, and published it in a Russian edition with an introduction of his own. It should be borne in mind that Lenin, at that time, hailed Kautsky as "the leader of the German revolutionary Social Social Democrats," as the man whom "the vanguard of the Russian working class has long known as *its* writer," and more of the same. In presenting his views, Kautsky had said, "Before the *Russian* comrades I nevertheless feel myself in the position of a *student* [*Lernenden*] when it is a matter of Russian affairs." On this score, Lenin, who was quite content with Kautsky's views on the controversial questions, makes the following observation:

This modesty is not the mendacious would-be-modesty of a "General" of the Social Democracy who first affects the air of a philistine only to end up by acting like a Bourbon. No, Kautsky confined himself *in actuality only* to answering those questions whose examination enable him to be of *assistance* to thinking Social Democrats of Russia in their independent examination of the concrete tasks and slogans of the day. Kautsky refused to play the role of the General who issues commands: right face or left face! He preferred to remain in the position of an outside but for that a reflective comrade who shows the ways and means by which we ourselves must seek an answer.

Toward the end of his foreword, Lenin adds:

In conclusion, a few words about "authorities." Marxists cannot adopt the familiar standpoint of the radical intellectuals who declare with pseudo-revolutionary abstractness: "No authorities."

No. The working class, which is conducting a difficult and obdurate fight

throughout the world for complete emancipation, needs authorities, naturally, however, only in the sense in which young workers need the experience of old *fighters* against oppression and exploitation, of fighters who have carried through many strikes and taken part in a number of revolutions, who have grown wise through revolutionary traditions and a broad political horizon. The authority of the international struggle of the proletariat is needed by the proletariat of every country. We need the authority of the theoretician of the international Social Democracy in order to become clear about the program and tactics of our party. But this authority naturally has nothing in common with the official authorities of bourgeois science and of police politics. This authority is the authority of a manysided fight in the common ranks of the international socialist army. Important as is this authority for the broadening of the horizon of the fighter, so inadmissible would it be in a workers' party to lay claim to deciding the practical and concrete questions of policy for the next period from the outside, from a distance. The collective mind of the advanced, class-conscious workers of every single country who are carrying on the direct struggle will always be the greatest authority in all these questions.

A year later, reviewing the work of the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International (1907), Lenin wrote:

The great importance of the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart lies precisely in this, that it signifies the final consolidation of the Second International and the transformation of the international Congresses into business-like sessions which have the greatest influence upon the character and direction of socialist activity in the entire world. Formally the decisions of the international Congresses are not binding upon the individual countries, yet their moral importance is so great that non-compliance with the decisions is in reality an exception. . . .

A few months after that (in March, 1908) in recommending the endorsement by the Russian party of the International's resolution on the trade-union question, he wrote:

We must always and everywhere advocate the drawing together between the trade unions and the socialist party of the working class; but [the question of] which party is the genuine socialist party or the genuine party of the working class in one country or another, in one nation or another—that is a question for itself, which is not decided by resolutions of international Congresses, but by the course of the struggle between the national parties.

Every word of Lenin, as well as the spirit imbuing the whole, is clear. It is correct. It was grossly violated in the Comintern under the regime established by Zinoviev which was, alas, not repudiated or corrected by Lenin. He had discarded his old and wise position; the Americans never even knew he had held it. The argument that the Third International had to be organized and to operate differently from the Second International, was quite correct, but only within limits. These limits were exceeded in the most reckless way before they could even be properly established. We now have forty years behind us. Life has settled all the arguments of 1917-1919.

Can anyone in his right mind imagine leaders of socialism like Lenin, Trotsky, Plekhanov, Martov, Karl Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Jaures, Guesde, Hardie, Debs, De Leon, Haywood—to name only a few that come quickly to the eye—racing back and forth between their countries and the seat of the Second International, appealing to its Executive to make the decision on what policy their parties should be commanded to adopt? Can you imagine them appearing before the Executive in the hope that its decision would appoint them and not someone else, to the leadership of their parties? Can you imagine the Executive sending a plenipotentiary emissary to the Russian party telling it how its leadership should be apportioned between the various factions,

and who should be party organizer of the Moscow district? And can you imagine what Lenin (and Plekhanov, and Martov, and Trotsky, and everybody else) would have said and done to the emissary? Can you imagine, in an earlier day, Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Adler, Lafargue, Vaillant or any of the others comporting themselves in this style toward Marx and Engels, who were not altogether inferior in stature to Zinoviev and his colleagues? The very questions sound grotesque.

These men were all authentic socialist leaders in their own right. They didn't start that way. They all began without experience and wisdom, and with native gifts that swelled with the rise of the movements they built. They were not appointed as leaders, like Walis were appointed by the Ottoman Porte for its subject provinces. They grew to the leadership of their parties in the only way that is worth a pinch of snuff, in the course of political struggle in the ranks of their parties and their class. It was the members who lifted them to their posts of eminence, and only by virtue of that fact did they enjoy the respect of the members.

But were not the leaders of the early Communist movement young, untutored and unpracticed, and needful of the wisdom of a collective leadership in the new International? That may be, but it is beside the point. Lenin was not born at the age of 50 with the owl of Minerva on his shoulder; neither were the others. There was no collective leadership in the Comintern, and the attempt to set it up never got off the ground. And if there had really been wisdom in Moscow, it would have systematically taught the leaders how to stand on their own feet, it would have offered the other parties aid and comfort, counsel and guidance, resolutions

backed by the moral authority which they enjoyed in the radical movement of the early days as no leaders had ever before enjoyed in the socialist movement. Instead, they established a "General" of the Communist movement who issued commands to the far corners of the earth—"right face or left face"—and who decided who is the leader and who is not. The membership, which was rallied to the Communist movement in rebellion against the bureaucratism prevalent in the Second International? The membership was treated like serfs of the manor. What other term is more appropriate?

Browder is elected to the party leadership by the totality of the membership, after having been appointed to it in the first place. A snap of the finger in Moscow in 1945, and Browder is not only out of the leadership but of the party as well, cursed, reviled, debased. Lovestone is elected to the party leadership by ninety percent of the membership. Off he goes to Moscow in 1929, for official investiture. A snap of the finger, and he is out of the leadership. He reminds the finger-snapper that he was elected by ninety percent of the members of his party and Moscow rolls on the floor laughing. In a matter of minutes, he is out of the party with a handful of followers—a hundred percent of the remaining Party members endorse everything and join in the chorus of vilification. Foster and Cannon get a good fifty-five percent of the membership and delegates to the 1925 convention and are all ready to take over the leadership from the defeated faction of Ruthenberg-Pepper-Lovestone. A trip to Moscow is not even necessary. Zinoviev sends a contemptuous cablegram to the convention which informs the American party that its majority means nothing to him, or to it, for the leadership must go instead to the

Ruthenberg faction. Any doubts on the meaning of the cablegram are promptly dispelled by Zinoviev's nuncio in Chicago who knows as much about the problems of the United States as you can fling through a needle's eye but who proceeds to decide who shall have what post and who shall do what and when and where. Every one of the party leaders, and alas, the party members, accepts this procedure.

It is hard to say who degraded himself more: the one who accepted it with delight or the one who accepted it with chagrin. They approved it heartily when it was done by Zinoviev to other parties; they had to approve it when the shoe was on their foot.

WAS IT "AS BAD" in the earlier days as it was in the later days. No, certainly not! Pathetic consolation! It was bad, wrong, insufferable and fatal from the day the notion was so eagerly accepted that the policies and leadership of the party here would be decided not "in the course of struggle" and not by democratic decision of the membership, but "from the outside, from a distance" and by "Generals," one or five. If this was not proved to the hilt years and years ago—that a respected and self-respecting leadership and a respected and self-respecting socialist movement cannot be established by that method—it will not be proved in another hundred years.

The Zinovievist system was resisted, to one degree or another, in the early days and by the early leaders of most of the European parties, a resistance that reached its height and its end when Zinoviev sought to bludgeon every party into uncritical support for the brutal, dishonest, reactionary campaign against Trotsky. Resistance came from leaders of the German party, of the French, the Italian, the Polish, the Czechoslovak, the Belgian,

the Spanish; all of them quickly paid the penalty. Zinoviev launched the notorious "Bolshevization" drive and the Comintern was good as done for, a few short years after its formation.

In only one of the important parties of the Comintern was there no resistance in the ranks or in the leadership, the American party. Lore was the single exception. He disliked the Zinoviev regime. He sympathized with Trotsky but when he tried to publish one of his writings which had already been published in Russia, the Central Committee of the Party un-animously prohibited him from doing so—this in 1924. He disliked the practice of scurrying to Moscow to be berated and abused and ordered to come to heel. Zinoviev ordered his head on the block, and all the other party leaders, who had only the day before begged for Lore's faction support, climbed over each other in shameless zeal to win Zinoviev's benediction by being the first to lower the guillotine's blade. The American party leadership in its entirety (again, except for Lore) accepted having its thinking, its deciding, and its selecting of leadership done for it by Zinoviev or whomsoever he selected to speak for him. If the Moscow decision deposed one of the leaders, it would not delight him but he would not think of resisting the decision, let alone the unconscionable and humiliating system by which the decision was reached and imposed upon the party. Nor would he think of rallying the support of the party membership against such a decision. His only thought was of what device he could employ, what contact he could make in Moscow, to cozen Zinoviev (later Bukharin or Stalin) into issuing a new and favorable ukaze.

THE "PECULIAR DEVELOPMENT" OF American Communism, as we have

tried to set it forth, was such—the completeness and eagerness with which it abandoned its self-reliance and self-development for the crutches provided by “the Comintern” was such—that it was the *only* important party in the International where no resistance was offered, no objection was raised, but on the contrary, firm, solid and unanimous support was given from the very start (once again, except for Lore) to the crushing of the Trotskyist Opposition in Russia and in the European parties. Not even a point of information was raised. The leadership blindly endorsed everything in the Bolshevik Revolution when it had only a vague and superficial knowledge of what had taken place and against what historical and political background it had occurred. Those who remember the effect of the revolution on the entire socialist movement of that time will find this understandable, and will not judge it harshly. But just as blindly did it endorse and support the beginning of the counterrevolution in Russia, about which it knew nothing at all, had no understanding at all, and sought none. This was inexcusable. All the leaders were abjectly prompt in voting against Trotsky with the foreknowledge that to do otherwise would jeopardize the prospects of winning Moscow’s support for their factional posts and controversies, which were so quickly to prove trivial and wretched in the light of the fundamental conflict that was wracking and ruining the Communist movement of the whole world.

Its “peculiar development” was such that in a party which was more hopelessly factionally ridden than any other in the world (except for the Hungarian), Zinoviev’s “Bolshevization” campaign was clamorously welcomed. In every other important party it met with resistance; in the

American party with absolutely none. Ruthenberg and Foster, Lovestone and Cannon, Pepper and Bittelman, Gitlow and Browder, each sought to outdo all the others in speech and in writing to “Bolshevize” the party, that is, to reduce it to a sodden pulp without mind, without soul, without character. At the very moment when the leaders of each faction were reaching for the jugular vein of the leaders of the other, they all loudly demanded “Bolshevization,” a party that prohibits factions (yes, yes, that prohibits factions!), a party that is monolithic with a discipline of iron (no softer metal would do)—and more and more of the same reactionary theology.

It did not take much longer before the party was saved and cleansed of factions and faction fighting and was converted to monolithism, the discipline of iron included. By the same token and in the same process it was converted into the greatest single obstacle to the development of a socialist movement in the United States. Draper is right, and even if we questioned his language, his essential thought is above question.

Something crucially important did happen to this movement in its infancy. It was transformed from a new expression of American radicalism to the American appendage of a Russian revolutionary power. Nothing else so important ever happened to it again.

ONE QUESTION THAT DRAPER does not deal with at all—except, perhaps, indirectly and above all in the form of the material he supplies for examining it, is this: Was the split itself justified, politically and historically? Was the formation of a separate and independent Left Wing (i.e., Communist) party correct, necessary, in the interests of the socialist movement? Was it right to plan, work for and construct a party consisting only of

Left Wingers, not merely one in which the Left Wing would seek to have its ideas and leadership prevail over the Right Wing by normal means but in which the Right Wing could have no place, from which it would be excluded in advance?

The problem embedded in these questions has plagued the radical movement in this country (although not here alone) for forty years. It plagues it to this day. It is a fundamental problem. If the all-important question of reconstructing an effective socialist movement in the United States is to be solved, this problem is the first one to be clarified. Indeed, unless it is clarified, no reunited socialist movement will be effective or even remain united. It will split and split and split and split. It will be permanently menaced by the kind of factional warfare that has no fruitful issue. It will inevitably resolve this condition by turning into a sterile, petrified object, a monolith crowned by an arch-bureaucratic apparatus.

Was the 1919 split and formation of an independent Communist Party historically justified?

If we simply compare the Communist Party today with the Left Wing of forty years ago which brought it into existence, the answer is clear and obvious and altogether beyond reasonable debate: No. Let us take the formal position of the present CP. It repudiates the idea that armed insurrection is the only road to a workers’ government; therewith it repudiates the *central* position which the Communist Left Wing held to be its basic distinction from the Socialist Party. It repudiates the idea that Soviets are the only form under which socialism can be established, and claims adherence to the parliamentary road to socialism; therewith it rejects another basic position of its founding

Left Wing. It has long ago rejected the theory and practice of anti-parliamentary, anti-electoral activity which the Left Wing foisted on itself forty years ago, and has indeed adopted a position on political action (support of Democratic Party candidates, theory of the “anti-monopoly peoples’ coalition”) which would have shaken the bones not only of its founding fathers but out of Hillquit and Victor Berger as well. It is strongly in favor of immediate demands and social and political reforms of all kinds, a position specifically and violently denounced by the Communist Left Wing as simon-pure Hillquitism, Menshevism and the like. It is stoutly in favor of working in the most conservative of trade unions, of “boring from within,” and the alliances it has made and still tries to make in the unions would have precipitated an epidemic of apoplexy in the Left Wing of 1919. It supported American, French and British imperialism during the second world war, and with a patriotic frenzy that would have made the extreme Right Wingers of the Socialist Party in 1917—not Hillquit and not even Berger, but John Spargo, William English Walling and Charles Edward Russell—blush purple. It disavows the dictatorship of the proletariat as its aim in a way that would have made Hillquit curl his lips in scorn. It has an internal party regime which makes Hillquit’s rule of the Socialist Party, which was so bitterly denounced by the Left Wing, a veritable paradise of party democracy. Its theoretical and intellectual-political level, is far below that of the socialist movement of 1917, and that was not too high.

On the basis of what the Communist movement stands for today in these respects, there would not only have been no split in the Socialist Party in 1919, but there would not

even have been a fight conducted by the Left Wing. In fact, there would have been no Left Wing. So, if we go by the resultant after forty years of experience, the split, and even the fight, in 1918-1919, proves to have been devoid of historical, theoretical, political or organizational justification. In all the important questions around which the old conflict revolved, the present CP acknowledges, not explicitly but nonetheless unmistakably, that even if the Hillquit leadership was not altogether right, the Left Wing on the other hand was altogether wrong. That conclusion, it appears to us, is inescapable.

But that comparison is unfair and misleading, it may and probably will be objected to by some. The present Communist Party is not a real Communist Party, it is Stalinized through and through. The authentic Communist movement was ravished and ruined by Stalinism.

We will grant the objection in the interests of a more thorough discussion of the question. We will take the Communist movement before it swallowed the poison of Stalinism.

If we consider the Communist Party at the very start, the claim for justification of the split has hardly a toe to stand on. Hillquit was far from right on every disputed question; but he was far closer to being right than were his Left Wing adversaries. A re-examination of the dispute as it stood at that time—provided it is an objective re-examination, which excludes considerations of pride and vanity, of self-righteousness and “honor”—establishes this as a fact. In any case, Hillquit’s leadership is a matter for another time and it is irrelevant to the question: was *the split* justified? The Left Wing was wrong on its estimate of the international situation, wrong on its estimate of the situation in the United States, wrong

on parliamentarism, wrong on the dogma of Soviets and armed insurrection as the only road to power under any and all circumstances, wrong on the I.W.W. and wrong on the A.F.L., wrong on tactics and wrong on party regime.

To argue that they were honest and sincere revolutionists, that they were irreducible enemies of capitalism and of any compromise with it—and this is true, unquestionably true—that they were right in standing on the fundamental principle of class-struggle socialism, is beside the point. Socialism has known ultra-leftists by the score who had these qualities, but they were nonetheless wrong and a paralyzing influence. Or to take a different case: the Stalinist faction in the Twenties was led and supported by men who also had these qualities, but they were nonetheless a pestilence to socialism. It is the political positions that decide.

But even if it is granted that the Left Wing was not only wrong on many questions, but that it was right on many others, the question still stands: On those questions or aspects of questions on which the Left Wing was *right* against the S.P. leadership, were the differences wide enough to be incompatible with membership in a common party, or so irreconcilable with common membership as to justify a split and a separate party for the Left Wing? That is the question. It would take a mighty courageous man to reply, after looking backward carefully, in the affirmative. For our part, the answer is an emphatic No.

We are aware that it may be said (indeed, it has often been said) that the real differences were not clearly evident in 1917-1919, but they were there in incipient form, potentially; and later developments (the test of time!) proved that the two tendencies were divided by an unbridgeable gulf. Even if that point be granted,

one and only one thing need be said: anyone who splits or justifies a split in the movement on the basis not of the differences as they exist but of what they may one day become, does not belong in politics.

Or if we take, finally, the Communist Party after it emerged from the underground and its ultra-radicalism, after the “sound point of view” was at last adopted, the case for justification of the split becomes not better but worse, and precisely because of the triumph of the “sound point of view.” The program and policies of the Workers Party (1922-1923) were immeasurably closer to the position of the Socialist Party than to the position of the Communist Left Wing of 1918-1919. The class struggle? Hillquit emphatically presented the class struggle as the basic principle of socialist thought and deed as late as 1921. The Bolshevik Revolution? As late as 1921, Hillquit argued that it was a proletarian revolution that established an authentic worker’s government. The dictatorship of the proletariat? The Workers Party no longer used that term, but in any case, the same Hillquit defended the dictatorship of the proletariat and denied that it was in conflict with democracy or socialism. The critique of capitalist parliamentarism? It is also to be found in Hillquit of 1921. The Communist International, with which the W.P. was secretly affiliated? There the difference was important, to be sure. The Communists were still, as they had been from the start, for uncritical and unconditional acceptance of the famous 21 conditions (there were actually 22, but no matter) for affiliation to the Comintern. Hillquit had stood, even after the split, for affiliation with reservations and the S.P. majority supported him. The American (and all other) Communists made a calamitous mistake

in blindly and completely, without any reservations, subordinating themselves to “the Comintern”—whether it was a hope, a myth or a monstrosity. There is not a single survivor of the early Communist movement in this country who would seriously propose to reconstitute the Comintern and its 21 conditions for affiliation, or anything comparable to them.

To say that the continuation of the split (that is, the maintenance of a separate Communist Party as the distinctive organization of Left Wing socialism) was justified because, even where the S.P. leaders said or wrote the same thing as the C.P. leaders, the latter really meant it and the others did not, is to leave the ground of socialist politics. We do not want to ignore or even to minimize the fact that there were differences, on those questions in which the two sides took avowedly different positions and even on those in which both said or seemed to say the same thing. Those differences existed, they were real and significant. We leave aside here the question of which position was correct, not because the question has no importance—quite the contrary—but because it is not, in our view, germane to the problem that concerns us, namely: granting the existence of the avowed differences; granting the fact that where both stood for the same policy formally, one took it more seriously, one emphasized it more heavily, one was more determined upon implementing it in practice, one was more aggressive and militant in carrying it out in life, and the like—were the divergences of such a nature as to justify and maintain a split? Was it politically impossible to contain the two tendencies in a single socialist party, given loyalty on both sides? We are not speaking, of course, of the Stalinist movement, but of the early Communist Left Wing and Com-

munist Party. Our answer to these questions is again an emphatic No!

Yet the split did take place and was perpetuated. Such a split cannot simply be explained by bad manners or stupidity or malice or personal ambition, even if all four are present in adequate quantity. The explanation must be sought in more fundamental considerations.

THE COMMUNIST LEFT WING and the parties that followed it have shifted from one extreme to another in a dozen political questions, tactical questions, even theoretical questions, in the course of their existence. But to one fundamental proposition they have unvaryingly clung. Where it was not explicit, it was clearly implicit. It is their basic justification for the organization of a party separate and distinct from the old socialist parties and hostile to them. This proposition, this theory, did not confine itself to explaining the reason for the crisis in the Social Democracy which exploded in 1914 and produced the capitulation of the Second International to the imperialist war. In this respect the theory was held by circles far wider than the Communists. It went further to justify the necessity and desirability for an independent and separate socialist (that is, Communist) party.

This theory was drilled into the deepest thinking of every Communist in the country from the beginning of the Left Wing and was inculcated into them even more thoroughly after the Comintern was formed. It is the theory that capitalist imperialism has divided the workers into two camps. On one side is the unskilled proletariat. On the other, the aristocracy of labor corrupted by a part of the super-profits exacted by the capitalist classes from their empires. The unskilled proletariat is the authentic

basis for a revolutionary socialist movement. The aristocracy of labor is more or less "bourgeoisified," is interested in preserving imperialist democracy and the preferential position it derives from it. Its authentic political representative is the old Social Democracy which has been taken over completely by a social-imperialist, counterrevolutionary ideology and leadership. Hence the need for a distinctive revolutionary party opposed to the Social Democracy.

In the United States, the theory was first elaborated by Louis C. Fraina, the theoretical leader of the Communist Left Wing, in the book he published a year after the Bolshevik Revolution, *Revolutionary Socialism*. Although it was published only in the name of the "Central Executive Committee of the Socialist Propaganda League," which was just going out of existence, the book was widely disseminated among all Left Wingers. An apprentice sectarian with a penchant for mysticism could hardly find a better model to study than the auto-hypnotic prose out of which Fraina wove his theoretical cosmography. In it were still contained swollen remnants of the theories of the Dutch radicals which he soon abandoned, but he already showed a substantial knowledge of Lenin's theories of the 1915-1918 period even if he presented them in his unique way. At all events, the book was the theoretical *vade mecum* of the Left Wing.

Fraina's analysis of class relations under imperialism has to be read twice, once to see it and again to believe what you see.

The old middle class?

It straggles along dependent upon finance capital, its miserable petty bourgeois soul bought and paid for by the master. And under these conditions, the remnants of the industrial *petite bourgeoisie* become a repulsively reactionary

factor, more imperialistic than imperialistic finance itself, where formerly pluming itself in the colors of freedom, democracy and even revolution!

The new middle class? Its

various elements are wholly dependent upon concentrated capital and its imperialistic manifestations. . . . This new middle class is thoroughly reactionary, although it develops a peculiar type of "liberal ideas."

A "certain category of ordinary skilled labor . . . clerks, stenographers, mechanics, etc?" They are

an adjunct of this new middle class . . . all of whom are dependent directly upon Imperialism and become its prophets in more or less conscious degree.

The "intellectual proletariat"? Fraina expounds:

A stage arrives when there is a real over-production of this class of workers. Temporarily, their imagination is intrigued by liberal social movements, and, occasionally, by Socialism. But inevitably, if gradually, their petty bourgeois souls scent the flesh-pots of Imperialism, and they become its prophets . . . in every imperialistic country, it is precisely these "workers of the brain" who manufacture and carry into the ranks of the workers the ideology and the enthusiasm of Imperialism. These intellectuals, which the older Socialism expected would become a mighty ally of the proletarian revolution, are a corrupt and corrupting social force.

"Radical and liberal social movements"? They

merge and develop into a new "progressivism." This progressivism is an ally of Imperialism, promotes it and is itself promoted by Imperialism. The liberal ideas and social reform program of progressivism proceed within limits which not only do not hamper Imperialism, but directly promote its growth and ascendancy.

The skilled workers?

Monopolistic finance-capital secures support for its imperialistic adventures among the other layers of the capitalist

class by a "distribution" of the profits of Imperialism; and this policy is extended to groups of skilled labor. Skilled labor . . . rejects the general class struggle against Capitalism, and acts as a caste the psychology and action of which are determined by the aspiration to absorb itself in the ruling system of things. The general process creates a reactionary mass. . . .

Therefore?

All social groups, except the industrial proletariat of unskilled labor, have become reactionary, are in a status where their interests are promoted by Imperialism, and are counter-revolutionary. . . . Non-proletarian groups can no longer be utilized in the struggle against dominant Capitalism: they are now an integral part of this Capitalism. . . . Unskilled labor . . . alone is the revolutionary class, as it alone represents the dominant factor in industry and is the carrier of the new social system of communist Socialism; all other classes or social groups are reactionary, decay, disappear, or become absorbed in the general reactionary mass of ruling class interests. [This passage alone indicates how much Fraina understood, a year after the Bolshevik Revolution, of the social forces and policies that assured its triumph; the Left Wing as a whole understood even less. M. S.]

Well, then, is it possible at least to organize the unskilled workers?

In terms of infinity, it may be conceivable that some day, somehow, the majority of the proletariat, or an overwhelming minority, may become organized into industrial unions under Capitalism. [Fraina was no dogmatist.] In terms of actual practice, this is inconceivable. The proletariat of unskilled labor, which alone may accept industrial unionism, is a class difficult to organize; its conditions of labor discourage organization. . . . The supremacy of the proletariat is determined by its action, and not by its organization.

But since the unskilled workers are in the minority, are hard to organize even into unions, and do not have even the possibility of finding allies among the middle classes, old and

new, among the intellectuals, among progressives and liberals, or even among the skilled workers, including clerks and stenographers, all of whom form a reactionary mass which is an integral part of capitalism, is there not a darkling edge to the prospects for the socialist movement and the socialist revolution? Not at all and not in the least!

The revolution is an act of a minority, at first; of the most class-conscious section of the industrial proletariat, which, in a test of electoral strength, would be a minority, but which, being a solid, industrially indispensable class, can disperse and defeat all other classes through the annihilation of the fraudulent democracy of the parliamentary system implied in the dictatorship of the proletariat, imposed upon society by means of revolutionary mass action.

That was the intellectual equipment with which the Left Wing began to replace the Socialist Party with a Communist Party.

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING that in Lenin's formulations, the eerie extravagances of Fraina are not to be found and could not be found. But in Lenin's own analysis of imperialism and the crisis of the Second International, the essential thought is unambiguous: imperialism divides the working class in two; the Social Democracy, basing itself upon the labor aristocracy, is now a petty-bourgeois party; the revolutionary socialists must separate themselves from it, form their own revolutionary socialist parties and unite them in a new, Third International. This thought lay at the foundation of the early Communist movement, the later Communist movement, of the Stalinist movement today (regardless of the contradictory political and practical conclusions they draw from it at different times), of the Trotskyist movement throughout most of its existence, and of other radical groupings of similar tradition.

Now, the relationship between the development of capitalist imperialism and the division in the working class, and the reflection of this relationship in the development of the socialist movement, did not originate with Lenin in 1915-1917. That is not his unique contribution to socialist thinking. Almost a hundred years ago (October 7, 1858), in his familiar letter to Marx, Engels wrote that "The English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy, and a bourgeois proletariat *as well as* a bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is, of course, to a certain extent justifiable." A quarter-century later (September 12, 1882), Engels wrote his equally familiar letter to Kautsky: "You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy? Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general. There is no workers' party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers merrily share the feast of England's monopoly of the colonies and the world market."

Engels held, it goes without saying, that the industrial proletariat brought and trained together in big industrial enterprises is potentially the most solid, most consistent, most revolutionary element in the foundation of a socialist movement. Marxists have always shared this conception and still do. But what is interesting is the fact that almost at the very moment that he was writing to Kautsky, Engels was agitating in the British labor press for a broad working class party and writing letters to friends to express his contempt for the "revolutionary Marxist" sects in England even though "they have accepted our theoretical program and so acquired a basis. . . ."

Another quarter-century later, Len-

in expressed fundamentally the same conception as Engels, only in a way that is even more to the point for the problem under consideration. In his article on the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International, written toward the end of 1907, he wrote:

Only the proletarian class, from whose work all of society lives, is capable of carrying through the social revolution. Now, however, the expanded colonial policy has created such a situation for the European proletariat *in part*, that society as a whole lives *not* from its labor but from the labor of colonial natives who are reduced almost to slaves. The English bourgeoisie, for example, extracts greater profits from the millions upon millions of the people of India and other colonies than it does from the English workers. Under such conditions there arises in certain countries a material, economic basis for the infection of their proletariat with colonial chauvinism. Naturally this can only be a passing phenomenon, but nevertheless the evil must be clearly recognized, its causes grasped, in order to be able to unite the proletariat of all countries in the struggle against such opportunism. This struggle will inevitably lead to victory, for the "privileged" nations constitute an ever smaller portion of the totality of the capitalist nations.

The nub of Lenin's thought, in 1907, is contained in the last two sentences. The evil of opportunism, which is the ideological and political reflection of the privileged position which the labor aristocracy is accorded out of the super-profits of imperialism, "naturally" can only be a passing phenomenon, and because the base of imperialism is ever narrowing, the victory in the fight against opportunism in the socialist movement is inevitable. That, we believe, was correct and it remains correct.

In the war period and afterward, Lenin changed his thought. Why? Victory over opportunism in the socialist movement had not proved to be inevitable; it was opportunism

which triumphed over revolutionary socialism. And since we were entering the epoch of world revolution (including the revolution of the colonies against imperialism, bear in mind), the opportunistically-conquered Social Democratic Parties could not be relied upon to lead the revolution, but only to oppose it. The revolutionary elements had to break out, constitute themselves independently, and assume the task of revolutionary leadership.

Lenin's drastic revision proved to be wrong in four important respects.

First, like all the Bolsheviki and all the Left Wingers throughout the world (and like many, many Right Wingers, for that matter), Lenin misjudged the speed of development of the crisis of capitalism and the maturing of the socialist revolution in Europe. Believing the revolutionary situation to be imminent on the Continent, desperate efforts were made to constitute independent revolutionary parties immediately that could utilize the situation for the triumph of socialism. Revolutionary parties and revolutionary leaderships cannot be constituted overnight. Revolutionary sects? Yes, any time of the day or night that a group of solemn minds is ready to announce itself to the indifferent world as The Revolutionary Party, like the seven tailors of Tooley Street who began their famous proclamation with "We, the people of England. . . ." Revolutionary *parties*, which can seriously count on the political support of masses? No. A few years later, the Bolsheviki (and therefore the Comintern) were obliged to recognize that they had misjudged the situation in Europe (to say nothing of the United States!).

There were, of course, many "revolutionary situations" in Europe throughout the Twenties and the Thirties. Nowhere did they lead to

socialist power. In some of these situations there were organizations that were considered revolutionary parties, free of control by the Right-Wing socialists, free of the membership of the Right-Wing socialist leaders, and also free of the membership and support of the workers who followed these leaders. In none of these situations were the revolutionary parties able to lead the workers to power. Merely to say, in one case, that the Social-Democratic leaders prevented the establishment of a socialist regime, or in another case, that the Stalinist leaders did the same, is true and important, but it explains remarkably little. It evades a posing and answering of the really important question: since the workers who follow these leaders are for socialism, how were the leaders able to prevent them from attaining it, especially when there were clear-cut revolutionists on the scene to tell these workers the truth and point out the right road? To reply that in all these revolutionary situations, the "revolutionary vanguard" was too weak in numbers to reach enough workers with the truth about the leaders, may or may not be true, but it does furnish the clue to the real answer.

The revolutionists had isolated themselves in separate organizations from the very workers whose support was indispensable for a socialist victory. A socialist movement of any serious nature cannot be established overnight; it cannot be established by arbitrary mechanical means; it cannot be established by decree. It cannot be established without the working class, and above all it cannot be established in head-on opposition to the existing movement of the working class. And above even that, it cannot be established by virtue of a universal formula applicable to all

countries, at all times and under all circumstances.

Second, Lenin did not properly relate that part of his theory which referred to the imminence of anti-imperialist revolutions of the colonial peoples with his theory of the triumph of opportunism in the socialist movement. If opportunism arose on the basis of the expansion of world imperialist power, then the colonial revolutions would destroy its economic foundations and therewith (sooner or later, allowing for the famous "cultural lag") the ideological and political strength of opportunism in the workers' movement.

One thing or the other: Either imperialism would succeed in maintaining its world power and thereby be in a position to sustain the dominance of opportunism in the working class. Or world revolution and with it the anti-imperialist revolution was a reality, at least in the broad sense, and the influence of socialist opportunism was speedily doomed in the working class.

In the first case, summoning the revolutionary wing out of the socialist movement could only emphasize its isolation from the mass of workers who were still inclined to opportunism and compromise with capitalism and who were because of that very fact unprepared to fight for socialist power. In the second case, by remaining inside the socialist movement, the revolutionary wing would be in a far more favorable position to influence and win to the fight for socialism the mass of workers who would be more and more inclined that way by the crisis of imperialism. Whichever case is chosen, the establishment of the absolutist principle that the Left Wing must break from the old socialist parties, set up its own party from which all Right Wingers and Centrists are excluded by statute, and that

this had to be done simultaneously and in all countries, proved to be wrong through and through.

Since we are trying to confine the examination, to as great an extent as the subject permits, to the United States, we will add: the application of this principle to the Socialist Party in this country, in 1917, or 1919, or 1921, or 1924 or after, was particularly wrong. It revealed such a lack of a sense of proportion, such an ignoring of the concrete reality, as to be fantastic.

Third, if an independent Left Wing party is needed because a revolutionary situation exists or is imminent, it is necessary to ask, first of all, what constitutes a revolutionary situation, not in some general way, but one in which the prospects for socialist victory are real and substantial? One of the most important symptoms of such a situation is that the great mass of workers (we are not even speaking of other social forces whom the workers must have as allies) is not only ready for a new regime but is increasingly hostile to anyone whose course would perpetuate the old one by means of a rotten compromise. Where this is not the case, then conditions are *not* really ripe for the direct fight for a socialist regime that promises success, whether it be a fight on the parliamentary plane where capitalism leaves the democratic road open to the working class, or a fight with arms in hand where a despotism leaves the workers no other choice. That is, a truly revolutionary situation is marked precisely by the rapid decline of the self-confidence, the influence and the power of compromisers of all kinds in the labor movement. But that is precisely when the Left Wing of the movement, if it is in the movement, has its best opportunities (IF its political course is correct and it represents the best interests

of the working class) to win the bulk of the workers.

If the conservative leadership of a united movement tries, under such circumstances, to gag and bind the radical wing, to deny it its elementary democratic rights inside the movement, to prevent it from advocating its views and winning support for them in a loyal manner, a new situation exists. That is essentially what the German "Majority Socialists" did during the first world war, not only with the Spartacist Left but also with the Center group of Haase, Ledebour, Kautsky and Bernstein. A split was inevitable and it occurred. Both the Left and the Center set up their own independent parties. But the responsibility for the split was clear and unmistakable in the eyes, not merely of doctrinaires, but of the socialist workers.

But for a Left Winger to take that outstanding example, even if he adds to it the conviction that it may, or surely will, be duplicated in such critical situations, and then draw the conclusion that long before such a situation occurs or is even on the distant horizon, he must abandon working as persuasively as he can for his views in a united socialist movement, is to make the kind of *salto mortale* in logic and in politics that has kept the Left Wing in mid-air, isolated and in ever-recurring crisis, for forty years. Nowhere does this apply more clearly than in the United States.

Fourth, Lenin was not, contrary to widespread opinion, a *putschist*, and the Bolshevik Revolution was not a *putsch*. But Lenin's revised theory invited *putschism*, that is, the armed attempt of a resolute minority to seize political power without the support of the majority of the people or even the majority of the working class, and in opposition to the majority. Let us see to what extent there was a relation between Lenin's new theory of the

party and the development of *putschist* ideas.

An independent party had to be formed not because, as was the case in the wartime German Social Democracy, the Right Wing refused to allow the Left Wing to remain in the party and to enjoy the democratic right to advance its views and seek to have them prevail. No, it did not matter if the Left Wing minority was allowed its rights or not. Could it not stay inside the united movement and try to win a majority for its position and leadership? Yes, according to Lenin and the Comintern. But only provided the same outcome was assured: the splitting of the party into two organizations. That is, either the Left Wing would leave the old party as a minority, set up its own party, and leave the majority under the control of the Right Wing; or the Left Wing could stay in the old party for a short time if it had the immediate prospect of winning the majority to its side, but as soon as it had control, it would have to expel the leaders of the Right Wing and of the Center. So it was nominated in the bond, plainly and aggressively in the famous 21 conditions. The trouble was that the Right Wing and Centrist leaders, even when a minority, still had the support and confidence of their followers, who numbered thousands, tens of thousands, and in some cases hundreds of thousands. And these followers would not remain in a party which expelled their leaders, not because of a violation of party discipline, but because of the views they held. Nevertheless, one way or the other, the split was demanded and assured, universally and uniformly. And from the Communist standpoint, the split meant the exclusion from the movement not only of the Social-Democratic leaders but in practical effect also of the *Social Democratic workers*.

Let us take Germany as an example.

It turned out there, from the day the Communist Party was formed in 1919 to the victory of Hitler, that the Social-Democratic workers of the Right or the Center constituted the vast majority, the Communist workers the much smaller minority. The refusal to remain in the same party with the Social-Democratic workers was tantamount to a declaration by the Communists that they did not need their support, even though they were for socialism in their own way. It was a declaration, in effect, that these workers could not be included in deciding the course toward the socialist revolution. To deny this on the ground that the Communist Party always urged the Social Democratic workers to join it, is positively absurd. If, as members of a united organization, you cannot get a given group of workers to abandon their leaders and their program in favor of yours, it is preposterous to believe that just because you split the organization and form a new one, the same group of workers will enter your ranks because they are urged to do so.

From the conception that the majority of the socialist workers are not needed (even, in a sense, not wanted) in the party which is to decide the policies to achieve the socialist revolution, not too far a jump was required to the conception that these workers are not needed to carry out the socialist revolution. The jump was facilitated by the theory that, essentially, these workers are corrupted economically and ideologically by the bourgeoisie to the point where they are opposed to the socialist revolution.

If the educational influence of the class struggle as it unfolds is not needed to persuade these workers of the correctness of our policies for a socialist revolution, perhaps it is not needed to persuade them before we can *act* for the socialist revolution. Our *action* will "electrify" them where our argu-

ments could not convince them. The revolution must be imposed on them—the rest will follow. Fundamentally, that is how the *putschist* spirit saturated the early German Communist movement.

The Spartacist uprising in 1919 was a *putsch*, undertaken against the pleadings and warnings of Rosa Luxemburg. It was one of several *putschist* attempts, all of them undertaken without the socialist workers, who were the great majority, and against them. The most disastrous attempt was the notorious "March Action" in 1921, organized by three Hungarian adventurers, Bela Kun, Mathias Rakosi and Josef Pogany (later known in this country as John Pepper), all emissaries of Zinoviev, with the support of the German leadership. It all but wrecked the German Communist movement and threatened to wreck the entire Communist International. Most of the important European parties were led by partisans or sympathizers of *putschism*, the Germans, the French, the Italians among them. The situation was so serious that at the Third Comintern Congress, Lenin, proclaiming himself pugnaciously as being "in the Right Wing at this Congress," virtually threatened to split the International if *putschism* and the *putschists* were not repudiated. Only the tremendous authority of Lenin and Trotsky (Zinoviev and Radek and Bukharin were to one degree or another friendly to the *putschists*) won the day for their view.

THE REMEDIES of the Third Congress and the Fourth Congress—"To the Masses!" and "United Front with the Social Democracy"—did not really get to the heart of the problem. No united front ever came into existence on any significant scale. On the whole, the socialist workers took the position: "The Communists want a 'united front' as

an instrument of the fundamental policy they have never disavowed, that is, to split and destroy our party which, with all our complaints about it, is nevertheless our party. Why should we lend ourselves to their maneuver?" To make matters worse, the Bolsheviks had by then adopted it as a principle that no other party but their own can be permitted to exist under the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the whole, the socialist workers, to say nothing of their leaders, felt: "Why should we agree to any policy which will facilitate the advent to power of the Communists? Once in power, they will not allow our party to exist either, and that is not an attractive prospect." Against this, the Communists had all sorts of arguments, but none that was effective.

The Third Congress (1921) told every Communist: revolution in the West is a distance away, perhaps a long distance. For success, the support of our program by the socialist masses is absolutely indispensable. It occurred to nobody even then that it might be ten and a hundred times easier to win this support in a united socialist movement than to win it for a party which openly proclaimed its intention to eliminate the socialist movement.

Lenin's theory of the independent revolutionary party and how to achieve it proved to be false for the Left Wing in the Western world at least. With the possible exception of Great Britain, it was nowhere more injurious to the cause of radical socialism in particular and of the socialist movement as a whole, than in the United States.

Only one significant attempt was ever made in Left Wing ranks, so far as we are aware, to reconsider Lenin's theory. It was undertaken by Trotsky in 1934. We are not referring merely to the advice he gave his followers to enter the Socialist Parties "as a tac-

tic." That policy is well known. Less well known is his more fundamental re-evaluation of the relationship between Left Wing socialists and the Social Democratic parties, which he warned his followers to stop approaching "with ready-made formulae of yesterday: 'reformism,' 'Second International,' 'political support of the bourgeoisie,'" and the like. But his re-evaluation was only a beginning, and it proved to be only tentative. He never developed it further, he never returned to it, he merely abandoned it and resumed the old position. Too bad. It would be worth while on another occasion to revert to his 1934 position, or half-position, in detail.

The "old position," stoutly proclaimed to this day, isolated and harmed the Trotskyist movement even more completely than the Communist movement out of which it came. In 1936 it had its first real opportunity to break out of this isolation, to advance its ideas, and at the same time to build a broad socialist movement. It adopted the decision, against the fierce opposition of the "Leninist" sectarians in its ranks, to enter the Socialist Party. In the Socialist Party, it helped to realize some of these opportunities with remarkable success, for the party as a whole and for its own ideas in particular. But the "old position" asserted itself in the end. It split from the S.P. (although the responsibility for that split is by no means a one-sided affair; both sides wanted it and worked for it), and reconstituted the independent revolutionary . . . sect. A few years later, Cannon published a book in which he found it appropriate to inform the radical public of the authentic Trotskyist view on the episode. It is worth citing only as an example of the conception of the revolutionary party and how to go about building it which entered the bloodstream of the Com-

munist Left Wing from 1918 onward.

Following the split, when he told Trotsky of the "pitiful state" of the S.P. after the Trotskyists were out of it, Trotsky "said that alone would have justified the entry into the organization even if we hadn't gained a single new member." Cannon continues:

Partly as a result of our experience in the Socialist Party and our fight in there, the Socialist Party was put on the side lines. This was a great achievement, because it was an obstacle in the path of building a revolutionary party. The problem is not merely one of building a revolutionary party, but of clearing obstacles from its path. Every other party is a rival. Every other party is an obstacle.

There you have a consummate expression of the orthodox malady that warped the Communist Left Wing and its offshoots for forty years. As he puts it down, it is a mite crude, perhaps, and a mite imprudent, perhaps, but then, prudence is not for the intrepid soul. It speaks out in blunt and shaggy language for the whole world to understand. What he himself never quite manages to understand is why, having spoken forthrightly, his amicable approaches to other organizations, the "rivals," are not so amicably reciprocated, for the perfectly ludicrous reason that they do not consider themselves obstacles, do not relish being cleared from anybody's path, and do not glow at the prospect of being reduced to a pitiful state.

THE THEORY OF THE independent revolutionary party dies hard. We do not for one second mean the idea of a working class socialist party completely independent of the capitalist class, of capitalist politics and capitalist ideas, with a program and activity based upon the principle of the class struggle. That theory does not die, and it should not die, for if it is not

kept alive socialism will never come to life. *Of all the positions adopted and maintained by the Communist Left Wing from the beginning, this and this one alone was and remains valid.* We do mean, however, the theory that *only* those who agree with the revolutionary position as defined and refined (and re-defined and re-refined) by any given group of comrades at any given time, can belong to the socialist movement, and all others are excluded for non-agreement. This is the theory we are talking about. And it is this theory which was the most important distinguishing mark of the Communist Left Wing from its real beginning (although not quite from its *very* beginning in 1917 in this country) and distinguishes it and all its ideological derivatives to this day.

(It is somewhat remarkable that this point does not appear to impinge upon Draper's studies at all. The point appears to us to be of decisive significance. It challenges the contention that the Communist Left Wing was a continuation of the traditional Socialist Left, for such a theory was alien to it. The old one fought the Right Wing, but never thought that it could not live with it in the same party—quite the contrary. Even the De Leonists never held or put forward this theory, for there was more than one attempt made on both sides to unite the S.L.P. and the S.P. The attempts were vain, only because of the way in which the S.L.P. insisted on the adoption of its point of view, but not because it contended that the socialist movement could not include both themselves and "the Hillquitites." The light of the tradition of the Socialist Left flickered in the new Communist Left for only a short while, and the new Left became really Communist only to the extent that it extinguished this light. They stopped fighting Hillquit for *leadership of the*

party, and began fighting for a party that would expel Hillquit, all his co-thinkers, and in consequence all their followers in the organization. The Left Wingers drew first, as we say in the West, but Hillquit got in the first shot. That is how it was. All stories about the 1919 split that do not center around this fact, belong with Grimm.)

The theory, including the mythology surrounding it, dies hard. Forty turbulent and instructive years have passed, and it is still difficult for many a sincere Left Winger to believe that it is possible to build and maintain a united socialist movement in which all tendencies—Right, Left, Center or anything in between or above—can coexist loyally and without the hair-suspended sword of split over their heads to paralyze the party as it paralyzed Damocles of Syracuse.

Do you really believe that after everything that the Right Wingers have done and shown themselves to be, Left Wingers can live and work with them in the same party for longer, at the most, than a minute?

Yes, and firmly. In the first place, the terms "Right" and "Left" as used in the past have acquired a mis-significance. The Stalinists are widely regarded as "Left," when to us they represent the extreme totalitarian Right Wing in the working class. That is only one example and there are many. In the second place, the firm "Yes" is valid only if you mean what we mean, namely, a united democratic socialist movement, in a double sense: That regardless of all other differences—on history, on theory, on tactics, on the road to socialism—there is clear agreement that socialism means the fullest achievement of democracy and that the socialist movement is committed to democratic means in attaining its goal and does not seek to impose it upon the working class or against the working class.

And in the sense that the party and everyone in it zealously respects full and equal democratic rights for all members and tendencies. The only cement that can assure the unity of a party in which there are differences of opinion on the best way to achieve a common end, is compounded of democracy and loyalty. No individual or group in the socialist movement has a right to demand more of any other individual or group: equal democratic rights accorded to all and loyalty to the party from all. Under these elementary conditions, a united socialist movement was possible in the past and is possible, and necessary, today.

—Have you really learned nothing from the history of the reformist movement?

Yes, we have tried to learn. But we have also tried to learn from the history of the Communist and Trotskyist and Stalinist movements, and in all their stages.

—Do you really mean that it is possible to remain in a party where, for example, the majority abandons the class struggle by voting for capitalist candidates, for example?

Yes, we do mean that, above all in the present stage of development of the working class movement and of our shattered socialist movement. If Lenin found it possible, and he was known as quite a radical, you can find it possible. When the Mensheviks in Russia proposed to vote under certain conditions for candidates of the Cadet Party (the party of bourgeois liberalism, very roughly the equivalent of the Northern Democrats here), Lenin called for “the most unrelenting ideological struggle” against them in the party (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were in one Social Democratic Party then) for abandoning the class struggle. But, he asked, “If Social Democrats permit blocs with the Ca-

dets—does this not require the complete rupture of organizational relations, that is the split? We believe that this is *not* the case, and all Bolsheviks think so. . . . Without getting nervous, like the intellectuals [Ahem!], we are therefore *duty-bound* to maintain the unity of the party now, whereby we place our reliance upon the steadfastness of the revolutionary proletariat, upon its sound class instinct.” But what if a local party organization, profiting from the permission to vote for Cadet candidates, decides to do so? “After a decision of the [local] bodies having jurisdiction, *all* of us who are party members *will act as one man*. The Bolshevik in Odessa must put a ballot with the name of the Cadet in the box, even if it makes him sick to do it. The Menshevik in Moscow must put in the box a ballot carrying only names of Social Democrats, even if his soul may yearn for the Cadets.”

—But that was in a different era and we live today in a revolutionary epoch, the situation was different, the problem was different! You can’t solve it by a quotation!

Lenin wrote that on December 6, 1906, when he believed that the revolutionary situation was still at hand, or at least imminent. With the rest, we could not agree more. Our problem is different, our situation is different. No problem can be solved by a quotation, from no matter how eminent an authority. That is why it is time to put an end to the practice of tightening the ever-handly screw-vise around every problem until it cracks and you have no problem and no solution.

THE ORGANIZATION AND maintenance of the Communist Party was a heavy mistake—and despite the bypaths we have felt obliged to take in the course of this analysis, we are writing pri-

marily, if not only, of the Communist movement in the United States, not only as an obligation to the book under review, but because the building of a movement in this country is and must remain our primary concern.

All energy must be concentrated upon the task of reconstructing the American socialist movement as a united democratic movement, and not in the image of the Communist Party at any stage of its development. It must base itself upon American soil, upon American social conditions as they really are, upon the American working class as it really is, upon the language as it is really spoken. That requires a great deal of learning and re-learning which is not achieved merely by the old “quotations,” the ones that apply as well as the ones that do not. The American C.P. lived in Russia, at first in the Russia of the Bolshevik Revolution and then in the Russia of the Stalinist counter-revolution. As Eastman once said about the early Communist movement, its face is so unvaryingly turned to Moscow that it leaves only the most unattractive part of its anatomy to be seen in this country.

It is entirely true that at one stage after another, the best of the American Communists tried with earnestness and intelligence and only a normal number of mistakes to convert it into an American movement with its roots in the American working class and its mind on American political problems, without forgetting that the United States is part of the world and that the American workers are part of the international working class. Ruthenberg tried, Cannon tried, Foster tried, Lovestone tried, Browder tried (even Pepper tried!), each in his own way. All of them were able and intelligent men who would be a blessing to a healthy socialist movement traveling on good rails and able to stimulate

their best qualities and bring them to flower. But they did not succeed. They could not. They did not understand why they failed.

We do not share the ludicrous theory that the present state of the socialist movement is due entirely to the Communists. This view has nothing to do with Marxism, or with any kind of objective political thinking. (Is the present state of the liberal movement due entirely to the Communists?) There were objective economic and political forces at work, historical forces as well, which pretty strictly delimited the possibilities for building a socialist movement at various stages of its development here. To study these forces and their effects is one of the most important tasks of socialists today, all the more important because it has been so badly neglected. But within the limits of what *was* possible, the share for the failure of the socialist movement in this country that falls upon the shoulders of the Communist movement was enormous and fundamental—the Communist movement before it was devastated by Stalinism and a thousand times more so of the Communist movement afterward.

Nor do we share the view that the Communist movement was always an “evil conspiracy” and that it had nothing to contribute and contributed nothing. That is not so at all. The Communists, both those we knew as comrades in the same movement and those we knew as opponents in a hostile movement, were sincere and devoted socialists and revolutionists. And they were good militants, with a capacity for fighting surpassed only by a readiness for sacrifice. They did not want a new despotism, but socialist freedom, as they understood it, alas. Their animus against the socialist movement was nourished to a large extent by its conservatism, its lack of

imagination and daring, its passivity and, at a later stage, by its own variety of sectarianism. Their personal qualities, so to speak, and we are writing here of their good ones, were not the whole of the story.

The Communists were the principal animators of the post-war movement in the trade unions in favor of industrial unionism, of amalgamating the craft unions, of organizing the unorganized workers, and many of them did magnificent work in all these fields. The main motor drive for the Labor Party movement in the ranks of unionists and farmers in the Twenties was provided by the Communists. They were the most active force in mobilizing the unemployed workers during the crisis for an improvement in their grim conditions. They were actually the first political organization in this country to take up seriously the Negro problem, to stimulate interest in it, to organize the Negroes themselves, to arouse support for them among whites, on a scale and with a courageous aggressiveness that no other political movement showed (we say political movement to make the distinction from such organizations as the N.A.A.C.P.) They provided many of the solid troops and organizers in the veritable revolution that produced the C.I.O. Under Browder they were the first organization that undertook to relate the fight for socialism in this country to the lushly rich tradition of progress and revolution of the American bourgeoisie, the American working class and the American Negroes. These are real contributions. They are not trifles.

Despite all the bitterness that just cannot be repressed at the thought of what this movement did to tens of thousands of first-rate militants who entered it with socialist idealism and were politically and morally eviscerated by it, it is furthest from our

thought to abuse or ridicule it. Our purpose is to understand it, as, we trust, we do. The importance of understanding is not to condemn, or for that matter, to fulfill the Christian obligation to forgive. We feel neither self-righteous piety nor maudlin condescension. We are re-examining not merely its past, but our past as well. The purpose of understanding the past is to learn.

But not less important than the need to acknowledge these precious contributions is to see this: *everything positive that the Communists did contribute to the cause of socialism in this country, could have been contributed just as well, with tenfold better results, with tenfold more effectiveness and durability, and with a hundredfold more assurance for shortcoming and error, if they had worked, as they could have done without serious difficulty, as an integral part of a broad, united socialist party.* Nobody would have prevented them doing it, nobody could have prevented them. The mountainous tragedy of the American Communists is that all their activities were more and more paralleled, interseeded and saturated with a virus that twisted and misshaped everything they accomplished, envenomed the organism and its achievements, and in the end brought a universal revulsion against the remains.

OUR CONCLUDING THOUGHT IS that we do not regard these lines as having dealt with *all* the significant problems of the American movement today, or with *all* the factors and currents that contributed to its enfeeblement and dispersal; and that we do not regard these lines on the limited aspect of the problem to which they have sought to confine themselves, as being the last word or the whole and ultimate truth, indivisible, insoluble and incontrovertible.

Socialist thought and policy can only be clarified in critical and loyal exchange. There is no other way and no one is likely to invent an improvement. We are making here our contribution to a discussion, in conformance with the principle that the needs of socialism must be supplied by each according to his ability. We await and invite the contributions of others, here or elsewhere. There will be enough of them that deserve earnest reflection. We are sure that the screech of the Daker hen will no longer be heard. And even if there should still be an amiable critic all

set to hurl a rebuttal with, as Heine wrote, "*jedes Wort ein Nachttopf, und kein leerer,*" that will not be too bad because for hygiene's sake we can always duck. But there should and surely will be fruitful contributions to the discussion from others. They need only show a concern for socialism to be welcome.

We want to purge the Marxian tendency in socialism of its primitive radicalism, of dogma and superstition, so that it can resume the place warranted for it. We want a socialist movement that works.

MAX SHACHTMAN

Notes of the Quarter:

U.S. Foreign Policy in the Clouds

THE KREMLIN AIMED at many targets when its scientists sent two satellites racing toward their orbits. There was the obvious military objective of establishing Russian military supremacy in the field of rocketry. But nearly as apparent and hardly less important were the political objectives: to undercut American foreign policy and disorient Washington's policy makers; to reduce further American prestige not only in the West and in the uncommitted areas but behind the Iron Curtain and within the troubled world Communist movement; to drive deeper the wedges in the already tenuous unity of the North Atlantic Treaty nations. That the Russians have established their military-scientific supremacy in rocketry, at least for the coming period, is now incontrovertible, and each day new evidence points up that in large measure they have succeeded in the political application of their technological achievement.

The simplistic and erroneous premise of American foreign policy for

more than a decade has been a smug assumption that in dealing with Russia one is dealing with an industrially backward nation whose technological advances, never truthfully and fully acknowledged, were almost entirely due to captured German scientists and pilfered American scientific secrets. This assumed Russian weakness encouraged the military approach of American statesmen: the first and most important task was to build a superior military machine in the West. Once this military force was in readiness, the U.S. would be in a position to settle its differences with the Russians. The latter, compelled by the overwhelming might of Western arms, would make concessions—perhaps even submit—to American interests.

The Russian Sputniks have exploded both the premise and conclusions contained in this military approach to Stalinist imperialism!

WASHINGTON'S RESPONSE TO SPUTNIK was not altogether coherent or con-

sistent. There was the element of demoralization bordering on panic when it was forced to concede that the Russians were ahead in the contest to conquer space and harness it to a military machine. It acknowledged, in effect, that the premises of its military oriented foreign policy were no longer valid. At the same time, Washington diplomats joined bluster and obtuseness to panic by refusing to adapt their foreign policy to the reality of a shifting relationship in the balance of world military and political forces. Before the December conference of NATO heads of government, both Eisenhower and Dulles reiterated their pre-Sputnik military emphasis: combat the Russian threat with more NATO divisions, establish missile bases in Western Europe as a deterrent to Russian aggression, and, above all, not to budge from a negative attitude toward the Kremlin's effective, albeit hypocritical, request (i.e. challenge) for a new summit conference. For Washington, as the saying goes, "the more things change, the more they remain the same."

But while Dulles relied on NATO and America's military supremacy to contain Communism, the Russian lead in intercontinental missiles caused Western Europe's faith in America as a military protector to sink to a new low. For a European nation to comply with the American request for missile bases meant one thing for certain: its military and economic centers would be zeroed in from Russian missile bases—if that was not already the case. This was coupled with the fear that the Russians could pour down new and more terrible weapons of total destruction. Europe, now, not only feared but overtly resented the primarily military posture. The repeated threat of "massive retaliation" — a phrase worthy of Dulles' genius—no longer held even the sem-

blance of an intelligent policy to counter the Russians. Such threats repeated often enough by both sides might, almost accidentally, slip into the nightmare of actuality.

THE PROBLEMS POSED BY Sputnik were not the only ones threatening the Western alliance. From its inception NATO was an uneasy alliance of governments held together by American influence and fear of the Russians. But external pressure and anxiety cannot permanently or effectively cement nations. Where the Russian bloc has the immediate advantage of appearing as a solid, united phalanx in its dealings with the West, the Western alliance is based on a large number of independent nations, each with its own distinctive interests coming to the fore and often in conflict with other NATO members. The Americans have one attitude toward German rearmament, the French have another; the French and English pursue one policy in the Middle East, the Americans another; the English tie up divisions in the colonial war against the Cypriots to the embarrassment of the Western world; France ties up the bulk of its military forces in a futile and bestial war in North Africa at the expense of NATO's military effectiveness, much to the discomfort of other NATO nations which recognize the French adventure as a political liability.

A further dilemma for the Western alliance is the over-all problem of basic NATO military strategy: are the military forces on the continent functioning as a "trip wire" which, upon attack, shall signal the unleashing of massive nuclear weapons, or are they part of a "shield" designed to prevent the occupation of Western Europe.

Even without Sputnik, then, the semi-annual meeting of NATO heads

of governments held in Paris would have been beset by the above among many other—problems, all tending to pull the alliance apart at its seams. But the Russian satellites posed new problems and exacerbated old ones. For the State Department, with typical illogic, it meant that its policy of preparing for massive retaliation was not only correct but that it was now imperative to dot the European continent with missile bases; for most of the Europeans the strategy of massive retaliation and missile bases took on a new and frightening meaning with Russian satellites passing overhead every 103 minutes. This was one reason European representatives, now disenchanted with America's capabilities, resisted the President at the conference.

The disaffection in Paris, in fact, was so widespread that the sole successful aftermath of the conference for the Americans was just in keeping NATO together—in body if not in soul. But the battered body of NATO managed to survive the conference, not through a resolution of internal disagreements and problems, but through compromise, ambiguities and evasion. The Americans were obliged to make certain formal concessions to a rising European sentiment that the Russian tactic of a summit conference cannot be answered with missile bases; and European statesmen who revealed grave misgivings over the fundamentally military orientation of NATO made verbal concessions to the American military approach.

THE ADVOCATES OF a limited war strategy, as opposed to massive retaliation, tried to adjust the military character of NATO so as to save Europe from complete devastation in the event of war and to prevent any incident from erupting into a full-scale nuclear conflict. This does not mean

that Adenauer and other European leaders are opposed to equipping NATO with atomic weapons; they have expressed neither moral nor military nor political reservations on this score. But they prefer to see NATO equipment limited to tactical atomic weapons—such as those used in Japan—as opposed to massive thermonuclear bombs. Presumably, if Europe is to be defended by armies equipped with tactical atomic weapons the Russians would be inhibited from hurling thermonuclear bombs on Europe capable of reducing the continent to ashes.

A fatal flaw in this approach is its assumption that between the United States and Russia there exists a tacit agreement to limit any possible conflict in Europe to weapons of limited destructiveness. The Kremlin, however, is not bound by any ties to NATO's limited war strategists; on the contrary, Khrushchev has made it clear in a number of interviews and speeches before the latest NATO conference that there can be no assurance that a future war would be limited to tactical atomic weapons. Moreover, this strategy raises further problems precisely because it proposes to limit any war, if there is to be a war, to Europe. While it may appear to be perfectly reasonable for Americans to propose to fight a war with weapons of less than thermonuclear capabilities in Europe, from the European point of view, such a war can hardly be called limited. Atomic weapons of the destructiveness of those used at Hiroshima would create an atomic wasteland. This would be an all-out war. It is only limited in the sense that the Russian and American mainlands would be spared the effects of such a holocaust. Such an understanding to conduct limited war, would appear to be a Russian and American

agreement to fight a future war only on European soil.

The entire debate on tactical atomic weapons versus thermonuclear preparations is as evasive as it is ghoulish: should Europe prepare for a thermonuclear war that could destroy millions of lives and literally melt giant cities, or should Europe prepare for a "limited" atomic war that might destroy fewer millions and which might leave standing a building here and a factory there? As a strategy to spare Europe from total destruction the proponents of limiting a future war to tactical atomic bombs have nothing to offer; a few "limited" atomic bombs can accomplish the work of a single thermonuclear weapon.

HOWEVER, THE IMPORTANCE of the debate between the limited war strategists and the massive retaliationists cannot be assessed solely on its face value. Beneath the objections of Adenauer and most European leaders toward the missile base program lies a deeper dissatisfaction with the sterile, negative political attitude of the State Department; above all, on the question of negotiating with the Russians. European statesmen can no longer delude themselves that by a show of military prowess the Russians can be stopped. And if Adenauer, even England's Macmillan, are uneasy over the traditional military approach, they began openly to manifest their uneasiness because of the tremendously powerful tide of opposition among the European masses to the bankrupt military approach of Washington. The people demand peace, not missile bases. They know from experience that the political and military menace of Stalinism cannot be contained in the old way. An arms race is not the answer; massive retaliation

is not a solution. And the continued refusal of the Americans to meet with the Russians in a summit conference only intensifies mass hostility toward a missile base answer to Communism. This mood of the people cannot be disregarded by those responsible for NATO policy. And German, French, English statesmen did not disregard it, but their acknowledgement of this mood took the form of rebuffing Eisenhower's demand for missile bases without explicitly breaking with the military premises of NATO.

Did we say the people's mood cannot be disregarded? That requires serious modification. It was totally disregarded by the State Department. To the politicians in Washington, there has been no effort to consider the sentiments of millions of Europeans. America's contempt for the pacific mood of the people was so great that some form of a rebuff became inevitable. The missile base program, according to Walter Lippmann "was such a crude miscalculation of European interests and feelings that it is no wonder the conference has shown such spectacular lack of confidence in American leadership."

The public rebuff of the U.S. by its allies at such a crucial juncture has been attributed to the uninvited guests who dominated the proceedings: Khrushchev and Bulganin who invaded the proceedings via a letter writing campaign. These letters emphasized three main points: that any war means all-out devastation; that any country which accepts U.S. missile bases runs the risk of nuclear destruction in case of war; and the door to negotiation is always open so that the outstanding difference can be discussed, if not settled, in a non-violent way.

Washington's initial reaction was

to reject the proposal for negotiation. The Eisenhower administration tried to dismiss it as a stale and limp rehash of old proposals previously rejected. It saw no reason why they should even be discussed at Paris. A few days before the conference began *Life* magazine carried an article by Dulles dismissing the idea of negotiations as worthless. Columnist Roscoe Drummond writing in the near house-organ of the Eisenhower administration, the N.Y. *Herald-Tribune*, went even further:

Moscow must believe that it is frightfully clever in timing this new effort to brainwash the will of NATO countries to stand together in the common defense for the moment when its fifteen heads of government are gathering to strengthen that will. My own conviction is that NATO will not be intimidated and that on the eve of the Paris meeting is the occasion when intimidation is least likely to succeed. . . . This is the greatest boon the Paris conference would have. It needs it. Moscow has helped provide it.

This is really an amazing opinion, as it came after days of dispatches from European capitols reporting widespread popular sentiment behind the idea of negotiations. Incredible as it may seem now, Dulles and Eisenhower went to Paris with the belief that they could push through the missile base program against this popular mood. The remoteness of this proposal was soon demonstrated when Chancellor Adenauer refused to agree to missile bases for Germany, but, instead, threw the door open for a new round of negotiations. It was the only way he could avoid being completely isolated from popular support inside his own country. Not only were the Social Democrats calling for a new round of talks, but also the German Party which is part of Adenauer's coalition as well as large sections of the Christian Democrats. Even Prime

Minister Macmillan who, up to the very eve of the conference, was speaking out against new talks had to reverse himself. When the conference got under way, the U.S. was isolated. NATO was saved, however, from extinction by the compromise: European agreement, in principle, that missile bases should be established in Europe but without an concrete commitment on when to do so; American agreement to keep open the possibility of a summit conference with Russia by accepting the principle of a meeting of Foreign Ministers of all the world powers.

What moved public opinion in Western Europe was not the fear that the U.S. would not come to the aid of any of its allies in the event of war, but rather the fear of the consequences of such assistance. The impasse of NATO and U.S. foreign policy is that it cannot combat the apprehensions over Russian military and political power except in such a way as to give rise to an even greater fear of nuclear devastation. Caught on the horns of this dilemma, NATO is in a *cul de sac*. When a widespread concern develops that the political and military consequences of an alliance lead nowhere or worse, then that alliance is in serious danger of total collapse. Along with Macmillan and most other European heads of state, Adenauer recognized that to save NATO, it was necessary to take this step backward—negotiate—in order to prepare the groundwork for the military build-up tomorrow. Not one of them believes it possible to arrive at any sort of agreement with the Russians over anything of importance, but they need to placate this popular sentiment, to prove once again that negotiations are, if not impossible, then fruitless, and thus create the basis for a new build-up. Since the missiles

which the U.S. is anxious for Western Europe to accept will not be ready for at least a year, this has become the essence of conservative wisdom. The *Herald-Tribune* summed up this conservative strategy and paid tribute to its leading protagonist in an editorial:

His [Adenauer's] own shrewd canny game is now quite clear. Beset as he is at home by millions fearful of accepting rocket bases, he seeks to parley with the Soviets during the period while NATO military experts are preparing the logical case and plan for massing rockets. If by that time the Soviets have again proved enemies to peace and disarmament, as doubtless they will, the old Chancellor will be able to say: 'Men cry peace but there is no peace. Can you imagine any people being so stupid as not to defend themselves by doing what the best generals in the world tell them is necessary?' He will then have an airtight case for missiles.

In sum there are still more ways than one of skinning a cat.

Dulles' arguments against any negotiations at this time must have been only semi-comprehensible to conservatives like Adenauer, and Macmillan. The initial reaction in Washington which labeled the sentiment to negotiate as "neutralist and defeatist" can only be ascribed to the essentially provincial character of American statesmanship even at the point where the U.S. is the leading power and spokesman of the capitalist world. This backwardness is a political factor which cannot be ignored in any analysis of the actions of U.S. policy makers. Although the dispute between the internationalist and isolationist wings of the bourgeoisie has long since been fought and decided, the statecraft which ought to accompany America's position as a world power is missing as an element in its political character. On this occasion it is the failure to understand that at this juncture of the cold war, negoti-

ations are the precondition for armament.

The demand for negotiations, however, has become irresistible. It comes from almost every quarter, and even John Foster Dulles has been swept along unwillingly by the tide. From opposition to summit meetings as being more harmful than meaningful, to a position (at the NATO meeting) in favor of discussions between the foreign ministers, Dulles now has been forced to agree to such a conference based on the barest of prior discussion, that is, without a meeting of foreign ministers. No one could indefinitely fight in the face of world wide pressures the seemingly simple proposition: the U.S. and Russia should sit down and negotiate. The history of the post-war decade, for all its evidence of irreconcilable differences between the rival imperialist blocs, cannot be counterposed to the fear of the consequences of doing nothing.

However, as long as the alternative is just to negotiate, the struggle will remain whether Washington or Moscow will best be able to manipulate public opinion to its own interest. The U.S. will tend to present maximalist proposals designed to make negotiations as difficult as possible. Given the built-in military bias of U.S. foreign policy anything seemingly as innocuous as a non-aggression treaty will tend to erode the sense of military urgency and political support for large scale arms budgets. Russia will tend to present minimal proposals with maximalist objectives designed to sap the political will of the enemy. The difference is not that the Kremlin has a built-in desire for peace and Washington a ravenous appetite for war. But each side has different means to pursue its imperialist objectives. Time after time, Moscow has man-

aged to come out on top in the propaganda duels because it has made its military policy an adjunct of its political strategy while Washington has made its political policy an adjunct of its military strategy.

The problem is not one of for or against negotiations. To make any change in U.S. foreign policy conditional upon a possible agreement with the Kremlin is to play into the hands of those who see no other alternative than the continuation of the arms race and the discredited policy of negotiations through strength. The initiative must come from the American people to put into effect a program

of disengagement from Germany and withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Continent. The danger today is not only that Khrushchev and Bulganin will seduce all of Western Europe with their "peace" offensive. The danger also exists that Dulles and Eisenhower, abetted by Adenauer and Macmillan, will manipulate the sentiment for peace, as expressed by the demand for negotiation, into a justification for the same old military arms race once they can demonstrate that negotiations with the Russians can lead nowhere.

SAM BOTTONE

Notes of the Quarter:

The Crisis in American Education

Sputniks I and II, the irrefutable proof of Russia's tremendous scientific and technological advances, have brought about in the United States some strange and very instructive things, not the least of which was the sudden interest, a few weeks ago, of the Eisenhower Administration in certain aspects of the U. S. educational system. This high-level evaluation of our schools was, admittedly, a hasty operation, cut short by more pressing governmental duties—such as the planning of new billions of dollars of "defense" spending—but while it lasted it provided a fascinating view of the inner workings of U. S. officialdom.

The Administration's concern in education was real enough; the nation had become painfully aware that Russian progress in the rocket race had a great deal to do with the fact that they were mass-producing the scientists essential to their war machine—while we were not. There was even a made-in-the-USA documentation of the ef-

iciency of Soviet methods. The United States Office of Education had published a report, entitled *Education in the USSR*, which underlined the rigorous training in science and mathematics, the demand for individual excellence in school performance, the high quality of teaching on all levels in Russia. By U. S. comparative statistics, the Russians were far ahead in turning out scientists and engineers. Even beyond the first necessity of quieting public dismay at these facts, the government was faced with a serious situation, with serious implications for future success in the competition of the cold—or a hot—war.

The trouble was, though, that Administration spokesmen couldn't get close to the problem without revealing a raft of contributing issues—which officially did not exist. There were rumblings from private education authorities of deeper faults in the American school system than a mere neglect of science and math, reports of the

mediocre quality of many schools and colleges, of the national shortage of good teachers, of the lack of incentives for exceptional students, of the prohibitive cost of higher education. But to acknowledge the existence of these things, to publicly admit their truth, might further upset people, might bring a logical demand for improvement and reform.

Amazingly, it was a top member, no less, of the Eisenhower team who beautifully illustrated the dangers involved in tangling with reality. Speaking in Chicago on November 2 before a conference on scientific education, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Marion B. Folsom was actually blunt in his critical comparison of Russian and American educational methods. His exact words are worth recording; referring to the opportunities offered the talented in Russia, the Secretary said: "The most qualified Russian high school graduates — about thirty percent — are offered free higher education, and all but the weakest students are actually paid for going to college." He applied this to the U.S. situation, "It disturbs me greatly that the best estimates available indicate that about one-third of the top quarter of our high school graduates do not now go on to college. This is a serious national waste . . . it tends to limit opportunity for higher education to those who are relatively wealthy."

What was this? A plea for subsidy for needy students, or a suggestion of some system of federal selection of qualified youths? A tactic admission of the hardships caused by the spiraling costs of college education? Official recognition of actual conditions would be heartening indeed to children barred by poverty from any thought of higher education, and to students and parents recently advised to "go into debt" to pay for college expenses cur-

rently averaging \$2000 per year.

Turning to the reports of the prestige position of teachers in the USSR, Folsom compared the American situation:

It doesn't do much good . . . to provide quality graduate study facilities and fellowships for potential teachers if what lies beyond graduate school is social and economic disappointment. It is nothing short of a national disgrace that we are discouraging people who want to teach by offering salaries that are far below the level justified by their training. . . .

In a sense, however, low salaries for college teachers are simply a reflection of a more fundamental fault—the lack of respect accorded to teaching by the public. A society that has become preoccupied with action has, I am afraid, tended to neglect those whose function is somewhat more remote from the arena of activity. The task of reestablishing the college professor as a key figure in our society, worthy of society's high regard and reward, is a task that requires more than raising salaries. . . .

This was strong stuff, venturing far beyond the assigned task of providing more scientists for "national defense." It could be, in fact, potential dynamite. Who, among the members of the Team, would care to change, or even evaluate, the traditional role of the intellectual in the capitalist society? (Besides, such a foray might conceivably reveal the disastrous toll of McCarthyism on the professorial population—and nobody wanted to bring up *that* subject.)

Folsom's plain talk, his unprecedented critical attitude, was obviously out of line. From the rarified atmosphere where official speeches are written came more typical pronouncements, cutting off the rough edges of criticism, soothing public uneasiness, and in effect burying the whole disturbing subject. In his mid-November speech in Oklahoma, Eisenhower set the tone with a positive approach: there was really nothing wrong with

American educational methods, the President said, for deficiencies, if they existed, were merely a matter of a temporary lack of emphasis on scientific study. All we needed was a "system of nation wide testing of high school students; a system of incentives for high aptitude students to pursue scientific or professional studies; a program to stimulate good quality teaching of mathematics and science; provision of more laboratory facilities and measures, including fellowships, to increase the output of qualified teachers." And if the responsibility for developing this fine-sounding formula was vague, so it was intended to be.

With the discussion back on safe ground, good Eisenhower Republicans—or, for that matter, Democrats—hastened to support these words From On High. The *New York Times*, in its enthusiasm, hailed the President's speech as a "New Look at Schools." And in Washington, Commissioner of Education Lawrence G. Derthick assured himself a headline with the sweeping statement that education, in this best of all possible countries, was the best in the world. Some adjustments to new situations might be necessary, Derthick added, but in his view the President's speech, which presented a "many sided program for education," covered the essential modifications.

And Marion B. Folsom? Not surprisingly, his recantation was immediate and complete. Of course, said Folsom, he had not advocated change; there would be no imitation of the Russian system, for to do so would be "tragic to mankind." (Translation: All hail the glory of "free enterprise!" In this system the state never subsidizes students; private corporations buy them.) The Russian advance, continued Folsom, "had been achieved by the sacrifice of freedom of choice for the individual student and by in-

jecting dictatorial requirements of political conformity which are totally alien to our free way of life." (Observe: When against his own better judgment a Russian capitulates to the demands of ideological cant, it is "political conformity"; in a similar situation, an American is exercising his "freedom of choice" in our "free way of life.") American education, Folsom concluded, would continue to stress the development of "broadly educated men who have the intellectual ability and the moral conviction to make those difficult and often unpopular decisions that determine the course of mankind's advance." (Interesting statement, that; too bad Secretary Folsom himself lacked the intellectual ability and the moral conviction to continue in an unpopular examination of the real faults in American education.)

With unanimity restored in its ranks, the Administration has submitted an education bill to Congress, a program that restates the points made in Eisenhower's November speech. The bill asks for an "emergency" program, for federal assistance to scientific study, and for governmental encouragement of potential scientists and science teachers through a limited number of scholarships. And the passage of even this modest request, in a Congress concentrating on defense demands and monumental military appropriations, is, according to the opinions of congressional leaders of both parties, extremely "doubtful." Thus the furor has died down, the pressure is off, the crisis has passed, and education in the U. S. continues as before. But the fizzle of the "New Look at Schools" has not been entirely wasted; for the critical observer it offers still another picture of the patent phoniness of the Eisenhower Administration.

FRANCES WRIGHT

Origins of the Venezuelan Revolt

Background of a Heroic Struggle for Freedom

The following article by Juan Parao was written a few days before the dictatorial regime of General Marcos Perez Jimenez was overthrown—a momentous event predicted with prophetic insight by the author. The beginning of Jimenez' end occurred when the Venezuelan dictator tried to "legalize" his tottering regime by a rigged plebiscite on December 15. The plebiscite boomeranged and touched off, on New Year's Day, a revolt by Air Force officers backed by some Army units. This uprising was swiftly repressed, but not the widespread, and irrepressible hatred for a regime which, in the words of a New York TIMES columnist, "implanted a pattern of terror seldom matched in the Hemisphere."

Perez Jimenez reshuffled his cabinet to give the military greater voice in domestic affairs, but the revolutionary populace could not be pacified. Anti-Jimenez protests continued. On January 13, the new Defense Minister was forced to flee the country after another attempt to oust Jimenez. A series of student demonstrations ensued, momentarily suppressed by police action.

The following weekend the Junta Patriotica—consisting of all opposition Venezuelan parties—issued a call for a general strike. On Tuesday morning the church bells in Caracas sounded the signal for the general strike and the people responded. Huge crowds massed in the streets shouting "Down with tyranny!" and the fighting with police and army units began. The next day the army went over to the revolution. Perez Jimenez could crush the revolt of the military officers, but not a revolt by an entire, aroused nation.

Comrade Juan Parao, a Venezuelan socialist, is a left-wing activist in Venezuela's leading political party, the Accion Democratica. He has written a detailed and stirring account of the actual revolutionary events published in LABOR ACTION of February 24 and March 10, 1958.

In the summer of 1957 some Venezuelan liberals entertained a faint hope that the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship might be willing to "fade away" and hand over the power to a conservative democrat like Dr. Rafael Caldera of the C.O.P.E.Y. (Christian Democratic Party). The groundlessness of that hope became obvious as soon as Caldera announced his willingness to run as an opposition candidate. Caldera was jailed and C.O.P.E.Y.—the last political party which until then was allowed a theoretical existence—was outlawed. Pérez Jiménez proclaimed that the "New National Ideal" in whose name he is ruling is incompatible with the existence of any political parties whatsoever. The "New National Ideal" means, according to the ideological

hacks of the dictatorship, "the union of the great Venezuelan family in a common task of national construction, undisturbed by party strife, demagoguery and politicking."

The plebiscite which confirmed the continuation of Pérez Jiménez' rule was prepared painstakingly. On November 4, Minister of the Interior Valenilla Lanz appeared before a joint session of both houses of Congress and read the Executive's proposal for an electoral statute: the election would be a mere plebiscite, with no opposition candidates. Every citizen, male and female, above 18 years of age, and also all foreigners who had resided in the country for more than two years, would vote "yes" or "no" on the question of Pérez Jiménez serving as president for another term.

All electoral propaganda was to be strictly forbidden.

Within hours of the presentation of this bill, all State Governors, Prefects and Civil Chiefs (township representatives of the central government) went into action. They sent prepared statements, endorsing the electoral bill and praising the "genius" Pérez Jiménez, to every business firm, professional association, rural community and association of foreign residents within their jurisdiction, with strict orders that the paper be signed by every member or employee of these organizations. The collected "statements of support," "petitions," and "enthusiastic manifestoes" were published in all major newspapers. For several weeks, page after page of these newspapers was filled by thousands of signatures. Approximately 400,000 to 500,000 Venezuelans were thus forced to sign statements in favor of the dictator's "re-election." A refusal to sign on the part of a capitalist would have meant financial ruin. Refusal on the part of a worker or office worker would have meant immediate arrest.

The students of the University of Caracas and of various secondary schools were the only ones to organize large-scale demonstrations, protesting against the "electoral" law. Special riot squads of the National Guard (military police) broke up the demonstrations, wounded and arrested a number of students, and then invaded the University buildings, destroying class rooms, laboratories and libraries in an unprecedented outburst of vandalism. In addition to the students' protest, a "Patriotic Junta," representing different classes and parties, spread illegal leaflets, urging the population to protest against the "elections."

In order to understand the social nature of the Venezuelan dictatorship

and to reach conclusions regarding future perspectives, it is necessary to cast a brief look at Venezuelan economic and political history, and also at the history of the present regime itself.

THE SPANISH CONQUERORS who invaded the Venezuelan wilderness in the early sixteenth century were attracted by two economic factors: gold and land. The young merchant class of Spain and of the Empire lusted for the former, while impoverished nobles, dispossessed by rising commercial capitalism, arrived in the new world to conquer territorial fields. The gold-seekers represented the relatively more progressive element among the *conquistadores*, and among them the Spanish kings recruited their colonial administrators and supervisors. The land-seekers, who established plantations in the South American colonies, constituted a feudal, anti-centralist element. The planters' feudalist hostility towards the mercantilist-capitalist monarchy was to explode into open rebellion at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

It should be pointed out that the feudal system became rooted less strongly in Venezuela than in other provinces of the Spanish Empire. In Venezuela there were no relatively advanced agricultural natives on whom the conquerors could impose feudal rule directly (as in Mexico or Peru). The pre-agricultural Indians of Venezuela proved incapable of efficient slave labor, and African Negroes had to be imported to work in the gold mines and on the coffee, cocoa and sugar plantations. Aside from the Negro slaves, the Spanish colonists ruled over a serf class which was mostly composed of *mestizos*, instead of being purely Indian as in Mexico or Peru. Only a part of the cultivated land in Venezuela became

feudal; much of the country's agriculture consisted—and still consists today—of tiny plots of land cultivated mainly for direct consumption by primitive, semi-nomadic independent peasants. Thus the backwardness of the country rendered direct and immediate feudalism impossible, and made the importation of foreign slaves necessary. The capitalist nature of the slave trade forced the colonists to adopt more flexible and modern economic methods than those of classic feudalism. At the same time, the sparsity of the population and the abundance of fertile land in the wilderness enabled at least half of the Venezuelan peasants to remain outside the feudal relationship and to practice a pre-historic type of free agriculture.

Nevertheless, when the Creoles (native-born people of Spanish descent) declared their independence from Spain in 1811, theirs was basically the revolt of a feudal landowning class against a Spain which until that time had been forcing them into the framework of its monopolistic mercantilism. The Creole's first uprising was at least half reactionary: the freedom of trade which the Republicans demanded was the freedom to exploit their slaves and serfs without restraints imposed by royal law. The serfs and artisans not only did not follow the republican movement in 1811-1812, but actually turned against it and crushed it bloodily, sensing quite correctly that the Napoleon-influenced Spain of that time was more likely to protect their human rights than was the Creole squierarchy. Only after the defeat of the first republican uprising did the towering personality of Simon Bolivar begin to dominate events. Bolivar, a Creole aristocrat himself, but deeply imbued with the ideas of the French revolution, understood that Latin American independence

could only be achieved by the broad masses, in the name of democracy. By one of those acts of free will of which men have been capable at all times, Bolivar broke out of the framework of his own class. He compelled the frightened and demoralized Creole aristocracy to proclaim the abolition of slavery and the equality of all citizens in 1815. The peasant masses, led by the guerilla general, J. A. Paez, came to the aid of the Republic, chased the Spanish army out of Venezuela, moved on into Colombia, and joined with the revolutionary forces there. Bolivar, torn between democracy and aristocracy, ignored the peasants' half-conscious leanings toward a social revolution and led his men southward across the Andes, in one of the most far-flung and titanic military campaigns ever undertaken. He liberated Ecuador and Peru, then hastened back to Venezuela, proclaimed the Republic of Greater Colombia (Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador) and called on all nations of the Western hemisphere to establish a Pan-American Union which was to be the nucleus of a future union of free republics of the world. But while the Liberator was battling the royalists in Ecuador and dreaming of universal justice amidst the glaciers of the Chimborazo, the Creole feudalists, wealthy and secure in their new role of furnishers of agricultural goods to Britain, reorganized the liberated provinces in their own way. Democratic radicalism was repressed: slavery was preserved despite Bolivar's decrees; the new republics disintegrated into groups of squabbling warlords' domains.

The Venezuelan landlord class was divided into Conservatives and Liberals. The former party was composed of the wealthiest feudal lords, while the latter represented the smaller landowners and the merchants. The peas-

ants and artisans supported the Liberal Party sporadically, but remained politically passive at most times. Constant deadlocks between Conservatives and Liberals rendered the feudal class incapable of parliamentary-democratic self-government. Lower-class chieftains and warlords rose to power as dictators of the country, basing themselves on their army, and exacting tribute from both the Conservatives and the Liberal oligarchy. Many of these dictators rose to power on the crest of democratic waves, but inevitably degenerated into reactionary despots after a few years. The former guerrilla general José Antonio Paez, the brothers Monagas and the efficient though megalomaniac "civilizing autocrat" Guzman Blanco were the most important among the post-Bolivarian dictators.

In the fifties of the nineteenth century, Venezuela was torn by a bloody civil war. The Liberals decreed the definite abolition of slavery and called on the people to support them against the Conservative upper oligarchy. The popular response frightened the Liberal squierarchy, who had not intended to start a revolution. Under the leadership of the peasant general Ezequiel Zamora, the serfs and former slaves arose, massacred a considerable portion of the ruling class—which in its turn slaughtered many thousands of peasants—and burned down half the country's plantations and lordly mansions. But the revolution fizzled out; neither Zamora nor any of his followers had a clear political consciousness; decimated by slaughter, famine and pestilence, the Venezuelan peasant-artisan class fell back under the political and economic domination of the squierarchy.

The economic disasters resulting from the civil war brought Venezuela under the creditor rule of Britain, France and the United States. Euro-

pean and North American imperialism struggled for control of the Venezuelan market during the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century. When European powers sent warships to blockade the Venezuelan coast in 1903, the United States, armed with the Monroe doctrine and the Big Stick, energetically bade them to depart. North American mining companies (gold and asphalt) obtained sizeable concessions in Venezuela. But the Venezuelan agrarian ruling class, under the government of presidents Crespo and Castro, made use of the imperialist rivalry to prevent the predominant economic penetration of any one foreign power.

In 1909 oil was discovered in western Venezuela. Shortly afterwards, the warlord Juan Vicente Gomez overthrew the government and became president. He ruled as an absolute dictator for twenty-seven years, granting unlimited concessions to foreign oil companies. The establishment of oil camps produced an exodus of peasants from the agricultural lands toward the wells and land ceased to be primarily a means of production to become an object of speculation. Soon not only all industrial goods but also most foodstuffs had to be imported from abroad. A new class of importers and agents of foreign firms, composed partly of foreigners and partly of members of the native oligarchy, developed swiftly.

Through the growth of the oil industry and of import-export firms, a native proletariat was born. Many tens of thousands of landless and jobless peasants and agricultural workers moved to the oil concessions and to the industrial centers. A network of highways was built—mostly by chain gangs of convicted criminals or political prisoners, who died by the thousands in the process. The great feudal lords, who were holding both the economic

and the political power in the interior of the country, were curbed by Gomez, who killed or imprisoned some of them, confiscated their immense estates and placed his own henchmen in political control of the provinces. He thus transformed pure feudalism into a commercial and capitalist dominated, centrally controlled feudalism. In a way, he played the same role which the absolute monarchs of the sixteenth century played in Europe, except for the fact that he was not working simply for a native commercial oligarchy but also—and even primarily—for foreign imperialism. Inasmuch as Venezuela had become absolutely dependent on the export of a single product—oil—and inasmuch as the dominant economic power—the United States—was in a position to dictate any terms to her, she was a colony, as dependent as she had been at the time of the Spanish domination.

THE TRANSFORMATION of a part of the oligarchy into a commercial and capitalist class, and the growth of a proletariat, produced important psychological phenomena among the educated groups. A generation of liberal and radical intellectuals grew up during Gomez' long reign. A series of conspiracies against the dictator failed, partly because the revolutionary intellectuals had not yet learned to seek mass support. Gomez repressed the conspiratorial activities with the utmost bestiality—he hanged his enemies by their testicles, or stifled them in their own excrements—and a whole generation of revolutionaries was forced into temporary exile, to other Latin American countries, or to Europe. Venezuela's finest men of letters—Romulo Gallegos, Andrés Eloy Blanco, Rufino Blanco Fombona—belonged to that generation. So did the men who later were to become the leaders of her modern political parties—Jovito Vil-

alba, Gustavo Machado, Rafael Caldera, Romulo Betancourt. Sociologically, these men were sons of the small squierarchy—the old middle class. In their thought and action they expressed the stirrings of the small landowners, small merchants, native manufacturers—and ultimately of the workers and peasants—against the Gomez'-led feudal-commercial oligarchy and against the rule of foreign capital.

In exile, party programs were elaborated. Four main opposition parties appeared: the nationalist-democratic Republican Democratic Union (U.R.D.) led by Jovito Villalba; the semi-Marxist workers and peasant party Democratic Action (A.D.) led by Romulo Betancourt; the Venezuelan Communist Party (P.C.V.) led by Gustavo Machado. In 1936, the three left-wing groups joined together into a Popular Union, with a militant anti-fascist and anti-feudalist program.

At the beginning of 1936, Gomez died. His Minister of War, General Eleazar Lopez Contreras, assumed the presidential powers. He allowed the people to hold the streets for several days, to liberate the political prisoners and to lynch the worst among the Gomezist hoodlums. Then he dispersed them with only moderate bloodshed, and established a sort of human Gomezism in the place of bestial Gomezism. He allowed the political exiles to return to Venezuela, but refused to grant them the right to agitate freely. Whenever they did, he scolded them like a father and sent them to jail for a few weeks.

During Lopez Contreras' rule, Democratic Action and the Communist Party were active among the oil and transport workers, and trade-unions were formed. Lopez refused to give the unions legal recognition, and jailed some of the leaders.

From the death of Bolivar to the presidency of Lopez Contreras, the

general pattern of Venezuelan government was thus the following: the feudal-commercial oligarchy, divided into a purely feudal Conservative upper crust and a Liberal lower half, was unable to exercise its class rule directly. A succession of military dictatorships rose to power, with the army keeping the balance between the feudal aristocracy and the small landlords and merchants. From the beginning of the twentieth century, the imperialist influence of the United States superseded the difference between Conservatives and Liberals, and the army became the preserver of a *modus vivendi* between foreign capital and the native oligarchy.

It should be noted that the dictators and army leaders were usually from the Andes. Time after time, the mountaineers swept down on the strife-torn plains and established their military dictatorships, "reconciling" the different factions within the oligarchy by brute force. From the rise of Gomez on, leadership of the army became practically hereditary within Andean families and clans.

In 1940, Lopez Contreras handed the presidency over to his Minister of War: Isaias Medina Angarita. When Congress elected Medina to be Lopez Contreras' successor as political chief of the ruling oligarchy and of the nation, the Popular Union presented the novelist Romulo Gallegos as opposition candidate for the presidency. But the Stalin-Hitler pact had caused dissensions within the Popular Union. While the Communists and the democratic nationalists of Jovito Villalba took a bitterly anti-North American and anti-British stand, and advocated neutrality in the war, Democratic Action chose the position of international social-democracy in supporting the Allied Powers as the lesser evil against fascism. The personality of Gallegos,

however, won the support of all these groups.

In 1941, after the invasion of the Soviet Union and the entry of the United States into the war, the political situation in Venezuela changed drastically. The invasion of Russia caused the Communists to proclaim their wholehearted support of the Allied war aims. They thus adopted the same position as Democratic Action. The Medina government was moved by Pearl Harbor to expel all Nazis and to place Venezuela completely at the disposal of the Allied Powers for the struggle against the Axis. In so doing, Medina was supported by the Left, and members of the Popular Union entered the government.

The war brought extraordinary prosperity to Venezuela. Commerce flourished and expanded; native light industries were founded; the native bourgeoisie and a new petty bourgeoisie, increased by a considerable inflow of anti-fascist refugees from Europe, gained rapidly in importance; the proletariat grew and became more insistent in its demands. Under the stimulus of international anti-fascism and of the economic upsurge of the young commercial and industrial middle class inside Venezuela, Medina, supported by the Left, began to apply progressive policies. While increased oil exports enriched both the feudal-commercial and the bourgeois middle class, the Venezuelan government declared the trade unions legal and granted them the right to bargain collectively and to strike. It made American and British oil companies raise their tax and royalties payments to 40 per cent of the total profits. The increased government revenue was used for progressive public works. Slums were cleared and low-cost housing units built; schools and hospitals mushroomed; an advanced social security system with free medical care,

unemployment insurance and maternity and old-age pensions was introduced. A new labor code established collective bargaining, minimum wages, maximum hours, industrial health and safety controls, compulsory bonuses, labor courts, generous indemnization for dismissals, etc. On the political level, freedom of action for all non-fascist parties was established.

The Medina government was not a formal democracy in the parliamentary sense, but it was extremely democratic in content. The reactionary militarists, who had constituted the main influence on the presidency at the time of Gomez and Lopez Contreras, were evicted from responsible posts; Medina surrounded himself with democratic civilians. Trade union representatives and leaders of all democratic political groups had ready access to him. The will of the organized bourgeoisie and of the working class was at least partly expressed by this government.

The Medina government constituted a transition between feudal-oligarchic and bourgeois-democratic rule. Slowly the democratic influence in it was growing. The anti-fascist climate of the times, and the fact that a part of the feudal aristocracy was modernizing itself and taking up capitalist activities helped to stimulate democratic development. Eventually a new party was constituted, the Venezuelan Democratic Party, with Medina at its head. This party included most of the former groups of the Popular Union, with the exception of Democratic Action, which kept its autonomy and acted as a loyal opposition.

By 1945, DEMOCRATIC ACTION felt that Venezuela was ripe for more than a transition to bourgeois democracy. The democratic transformation of Venezuela could not be carried to its completion by the bourgeoisie itself,

under a political leadership which was still partly Andean-militarist. Only the working class, peasantry and petty bourgeois (small businessmen, professional men, students, etc.) could carry out the program of bourgeois democracy and at the same time lay the basis for socialism. Democratic Action never expressed this line of thinking in Marxist or even simply in sociological terms, but its program very definitely stated that complete political democracy, a land reform, anti-imperialist measures tending towards the economic independence of the country, drastic social reforms and trade union rule should lead the nation toward the establishment of a "native" form of socialism. The program of Democratic Action was very similar to that of the Revolutionary Party in the Mexican revolution and to that of A.P.R.A. in Peru. Democratic Action's membership was recruited mostly among the working class (including white collar workers) and partly among intellectuals and small businessmen. The party was influential in the trade unions.

The fact that Democratic Action was a two class party, representing both the lower middleclass struggle against the upper bourgeois and the feudal oligarchy, and the working class struggle against capitalism in general, was reflected in ideological differences among the party's leaders. The Secretary-General of the party, Romulo Betancourt, a former Communist who had turned violently anti-Stalinist, had a position comparable to that of European social-democrats. He was an implacable enemy of feudalism and of militarism on the one hand and of Stalinism on the other. At the same time, however, he underestimated the dangers resulting from United States imperialism. He advocated a social struggle inside Venezuela against the upper classes, forgetting to some extent that in a semi-colonial

country social movements must be linked to a struggle against national servitude. He believed that North American imperialism could be overcome through reasonable negotiations with U. S. liberals. At the same time he was intransigent, and through his dogmatism antagonized the sections of the labor movement who were under Stalinist influence, as well as independent leftists who would have liked to give critical support to A.D. if allowed the chance.

At the other extreme, Democratic Action included a group which considered the struggle against imperialism to be the first and main task, and felt that the national industry, threatened by the importation of foreign merchandise, should be supported and strengthened. This group was willing to consider temporary and limited alliances with the C.P. and with the middle-class nationalist Republican Democratic Union.

Betancourt represented the labor wing of Democratic Action insofar as he advocated an immediate struggle against native as well as foreign capital, and at the same time he represented a section of the small importers, who were anti-feudalist but closely linked to foreign capital and opposed nationalist economic measures.

The thoroughly anti-imperialist wing of the party—including the writer Romulo Gallegos—represented the revolt of the working class and of small manufacturers not only against the local exploiters but against the whole international imperialist system which rendered local exploitation inevitable. Betancourt seemed to have the most revolutionary position at first sight, but actually his program implied action within the framework of a "reformed" imperialism, while the anti-imperialist wing—which we shall henceforth call the left wing—advocated a revolution against imperialism

as a whole, including the nationalization of the oil industry, creation and protection of native industries under economic planning, and a strictly neutralist position internationally.

While Democratic Action felt that the Medina regime was unable to bring about real democracy in Venezuela, another group of men also opposed the government bitterly: the young army officers. On the one hand, they represented the resentment of the new bourgeoisie against the feudal aristocracy. On the other hand, they were moved by the purely professional ambition to reinstate the army in the position it had enjoyed at the time of the early dictators: arbiter between different classes and interest groups. Inasmuch as the army in its role of "arbiter" has always tended eventually to lean toward the most reactionary class, no Latin American military coup d'Etat can be truly progressive. Any civil government, no matter how rightist, offers a better chance for a democratic development than a military government. Any movement which strengthens the power of the army is filled with implications that are ultimately reactionary. In spite of this, in October 1945 Democratic Action reached an agreement with the young officers of the army for the overthrow of the Medina government.

MANY ASPECTS of the "October revolution" remain obscure. Democratic Action was undoubtedly sincere in its desire to establish a regime which would lead the country toward a form of socialism. On the other hand, the Medina government continued working in a progressive direction. Plans had just been drafted for a new agreement in the oil industry, which would give the Venezuelan government 50 per cent of the total oil profits in the form of taxes and royalties. The United States was worried about the

fact that Medina continued to be supported by the Stalinists. The cold war was about to start. Inside Democratic Action, the pro-United States wing headed by Romulo Betancourt was in the majority. Even though Democratic Action showed revolutionary tendencies, the United States may have felt that it was a bulwark against Communism. In any event, the State Department granted *de jure* recognition to the revolutionary Democratic Action government almost immediately.

The overthrow of the Medina government (October 18-20, 1945) was the work of the army forces led by the young officers and of armed civilians belonging to Democratic Action. Bloody fighting took place in Caracas and other cities for two to three days. Houses and estates belonging to notorious reactionaries were looted and sometimes burned. The role of the Democratic Action militias was important both in defeating the Medinist police and security guard troops, and in preserving law and order after the fighting was over. The militia was instructed by the revolutionary government to disband and to hand over its arms after the end of the fighting. The monopoly of armed might was thus retained by the army. Democratic Action mistakenly believed that the dismissal of the reactionary generals and colonels from the army sufficed to make the country safe for democracy.

The labor-middle class revolutionary junta headed by Romulo Betancourt decreed a number of progressive measures: it put the 50-50 agreement with the oil companies into the practice; it extended and improved social security and the labor legislation introducing compulsory profit-sharing and the establishment of works councils; it drew up plans for a sweeping land reform (which was never carried out); it granted full freedom of action and expression to all political groups;

it curbed the power of the church and reduced the privileges of religious schools; it built hospitals and schools, undertook a large campaign against malaria, tuberculosis and venereal diseases, organized rural education programs and anti-illiteracy campaigns. Most important of all, the junta completely cleared the administration of reactionaries, Gomezists and Andean oligarchs, and placed revolutionary members of the popular classes in all leading positions. At the same time, Democratic Action awakened the working class and the peasantry to political consciousness and activity, through the holding of mass meetings and rallies throughout the country. This latter aspect of Democratic Action's activities frightened and enraged the oilgarchy and bourgeoisie—including even the nationalist radicals of the U.R.D.—more than any other. Before 1945 most political struggles had only involved the oligarchy and upper bourgeoisie. Democratic Action brought the working masses to play an active historical role, and therein lies its greatest merit.

Through elections based on direct and universal suffrage (for the first time in Venezuelan history), a Constituent Assembly was elected. The following parties were represented in this Assembly: Democratic Action (with an absolute majority), the Communist Party, the Republican Democratic Union (middle-class nationalist) and a right-wing opposition party: C.O.P.E.Y. (Christian-Democratic). Although the opposition loudly complained about Democratic Action's "demagoguery," everyone tacitly agreed that the elections to the Constituent Assembly had been fair and honest.

The constitution which was elaborated by this Assembly reflected the ideas held in common by Democratic Action, the Communist Party and, to a lesser extent, the U.R.D. It was one

of the most progressive democratic charters ever established, similar, in many ways, to the Mexican constitution.

Under Democratic Action leadership, the trade union movement grew mightily. A new trade union federation was founded: the Federation of Venezuelan Workers. Unfortunately, this resulted in a split in the labor movement: the Communist-influenced unions refused to join the Federation. Eventually the Federation joined the I.C.F.T.U., thus broadening the gap between itself and the unions which remained loyal to the C.T.A.L. (Latin American section of the W.F.T.U.). The leadership of the Communist-led unions was divided as a consequence of a split within the Communist Party. A group of dissident Communists founded a group called the Proletarian Revolutionary Party, which was labelled "Trotskyite" by the orthodox Stalinists. Although the P.R.P. undoubtedly had Trotskyists in its ranks, its orientation was essentially syndicalist, i.e., it preached direct action, preferably violent, and the general strike, and refused to participate in parliamentary politics. The P.R.P. obtained control of one of the two transport workers' unions. The other transport workers' union was led by Democratic Action and belonged to the Federation. The oil workers also were divided into two unions, with Democratic Action controlling the larger, and the Stalinists the smaller of the two.

As the trade-union movement grew in strength, strikes broke out in all industries. Production decreased sharply in some branches, foreign capital threatened to desert the country, and the upper classes gave forth a shout of alarm.

IN DECEMBER 1947, elections were held for a constitutional government to succeed the revolutionary junta. The

novelist Romulo Gallegos, Democratic Action's candidate, was elected president of the Republic. The C.P. and U.R.D. asked to be allowed to participate in the government but Gallegos, carried to power by an absolute majority of the electorate, formed a homogenous Democratic Action cabinet.

Although Gallegos was president, it was common knowledge that the party apparatus, and therefore the administrative machinery of the country, were thoroughly controlled by Romulo Betancourt. Gallegos himself disagreed with Betancourt in many respects. Gallegos belonged to the intransigently anti-imperialist wing of party, and looked with some misgivings at Betancourt's strong sympathies with the United States. Betancourt had carried out, among other things, a project establishing a 50-50 partnership between the Venezuelan government and Mr. Nelson Rockefeller for the establishment of a "Venezuela Basic Economy Corporation," intended to stimulate the growth of native industries and the development of agriculture. Democratic Action's left wing agreed with the Communists and with the Republican Democratic Union in that Mr. Rockefeller's interest in Venezuela was not an unmitigated blessing, but out of party solidarity refrained from saying so loudly. In any event, Betancourt's influence in the party and the government remained so preponderant, as against that of the left wing, that people commonly referred to the Party Secretary as "Big Romulo" and to President Gallegos as "Little Romulo."

During this period, right-wing groups, often linked to C.O.P.E.Y., conspired to overthrow the government. A military putsch was crushed in the city of Valencia. Other conspiracies were discovered. A number of right-wingers were arrested, but released again after some time. At the

same time, ninety-five per cent of the press was anti-governmental, attacking Democratic Action either from the Right or from the Stalinist viewpoint.

During the first months of 1948, social unrest grew more and more intense. Whole sectors of industry and commerce were paralyzed by strikes; clashes between workers and police were frequent. Democratic Action's constantly growing working-class membership began to demand the nationalization of basic industries, including oil, and for the immediate application of the land reform. Betancourt continued, however, to hesitate between the right and the left, verbally backing the workers but refusing to take up a revolutionary and anti-imperialist course of action. The oil companies wished for Democratic Action's downfall; the United States government worried about the growth of all sorts of Marxist influences in Venezuela; the Church screamed about godlessness and spread ridiculous rumors to the effect that Democratic Action was drawing up plans for the hanging of all priests and the raping of all nuns. The same bourgeois and anti-feudal officers who had supported Democratic Action in 1945 now decided that "the uneducated masses are getting out of hand" and got ready for a coup d'Etat.

The most varied sources of information agree in that United States officials seem to have had a hand in the preparation of the coup d'Etat. While this cannot be proved, it is obvious that the oil companies and the American government had the strongest reasons to hope for the stemming of the rising proletarian-peasant tide. On the other hand, it should be remembered that United States exporters had every reason to be satisfied with the Venezuelan situation. Venezuelan social unrest, unsupported by any progressive, socialist-oriented intervention on the part of the government, harmed the

native manufacturers, prevented the expansion of national industrial production, and made large-scale imports of foreign finished goods more necessary than ever. Perhaps this explains why certain North American magazines, which reflect the opinion of big business, were and still are remarkably friendly toward Betancourt: while a section of the American bourgeoisie was interested in overthrowing Democratic Action, another section was well pleased with the Venezuelan disorder.

When it was already too late, Betancourt finally decided to take up the revolutionary course of action for which the party's left wing had been calling for a long time. To defend the regime against an army coup, he began feverishly to distribute arms among the workers, students and Spanish Republican immigrants. But the army was ready; the Left was weakened and disorganized by its internal dissensions, and at the end of November 1948, Democratic Action was overthrown without a fight.

A MILITARY JUNTA composed of three colonels (who had been majors or captains in 1945) took over the administration of the country. The members of this triumvirate were: Colonel Carlos Delgado Chalbaud, Colonel Llovera Paez and Colonel Marcos Perez Jimenez. Delgado Chalbaud was president of the junta.

The junta immediately dissolved and crushed Democratic Action and jailed all leaders of the Federation of Venezuelan Workers. The Communist Party was allowed to continue its existence and to publish its newspaper for more than a year after the military coup. The Venezuelan bourgeoisie, whom the military junta represented, knew perfectly well that Democratic Action, with its tremendous influence on the masses, was far more dangerous than the Communist Party, which was

smaller, and whose immediate program did *not* advocate revolutionary policies but only nationalist resistance against North American influence. The Communist Party was finally outlawed in 1950. It is interesting to note that the working class leaders of the C.P. were all sent to concentration camps or killed, while the leaders of bourgeois origin were sent off into exile in a rather leisurely way.

The small, noisy and ineffective P.R.P. was allowed to continue its existence for a few months after the outlawing of the C.P.; then it disappeared also.

Government henchmen were placed at the head of the trade unions and strikes were made illegal in practice, though not in theory. The progressive social legislation created by Medina and by Democratic Action was preserved, however, and continued to be enforced in most cases.

Political prisoners (their number varying at different moments between 1,000 and 7,000) were sent to concentration camps in the wilds of Venezuelan Guiana. The worst concentration camp was established on the swampy, malaria-ridden island of Guasina in the Orinoco delta. Many political prisoners—particularly those of working class extraction—died as a consequence of disease, undernourishment, blows and tortures. Some were shot "while trying to escape."

All important administrative positions were occupied by army officers, who established a regime of unprecedented corruption, thievery and administrative blackmail.

The military regime was backed by two groups: the national bourgeoisie (native manufacturers and landowners) and United States imperialism with its native commercial agents and other hirelings. Balancing itself between these two groups, whose interests were contradictory but who were

united by a common fear of the working class and the small peasants, the army was able to profit from both. The native manufacturers were made to pay exorbitant bribes in return for protective tariffs, while foreign capital was forced to accept national protective regulations and to share the profits with Venezuelan investors and the army, in return for a guarantee against strikes or nationalizations.

It should be emphasized that the Venezuelan national bourgeoisie is in no way a revolutionary class. It is identical with the old feudal oligarchy. Like Japan, Venezuela has taken up capitalism, not through the destruction of feudalism by a bourgeois revolution, but through the peaceful transformation of feudal into capitalist property. The feudal landlord has bought a factory—that is all. There has been no structural transformation of society. The native capitalists of middle class origin did not remain a separate class; they were absorbed by the modernized oligarchy.

On the military junta, Carlos Delgado Chalbaud represented the most moderate and liberal tendency. He was an honest man personally, and sincerely believed in an eventual return to bourgeois democracy—a liberal regime from which the non-bourgeois parties would be excluded. He deplored corruption and failed to understand that corruption was the very reason for existence of army rule. In 1952 he was assassinated.

Suspiciously enough, the killers were shot by the police, so that they were unable to testify in court. Pérez Jiménez has been suspected of organizing the assassination himself, in order to get rid of his rival for absolute power. It seems more likely that he did not participate in this sinister affair actively, but that he knew about the plan, allowed the assassination to take place, and then destroyed the evi-

dence of his passive connivance.

As soon as Delgado Chalbaud was dead, Pérez Jiménez announced that elections would be held in the near future.

UNDER THE IMPETUS of colossal oil exports, the accumulation of native capital had made great progress in Venezuela between 1948 and 1953. The native manufacturing and investing bourgeoisie clamored for a larger and larger place in the economic world. While Delgado Chalbaud had leaned to the side of foreign capital, Pérez Jiménez was more sympathetic with the native bourgeoisie, and more disposed to intensify nationalist economic measures. The United States government did not view Pérez Jiménez' personality with pleasure, and both internal and external interests thus pushed the dictator to permit opposition candidates to run against him in the 1953 elections.

The two opposition parties which still existed were the Republican Democratic Union, which put up Dr. Jovito Villalba as presidential candidate, and the C.O.P.E.Y., with the candidature of Dr. Rafael Caldera. The C.O.P.E.Y. had shrunk to a tiny group of idealistic Christian-Democrats. The bulk of the party's former rightist membership had deserted and joined Pérez Jiménez' "Independent Electoral Front."

Villalba was supported by all democratic and radical elements in the country. Democratic Action and the Communist Party, through their illegal resistance groups inside Venezuela, exhorted the masses to vote for the U.D.R. Bourgeois as he was, Villalba suddenly found himself to be the leader of the working class and the lower middle class. He campaigned radically, advocating the nationalization of the oil industry, a land reform and the expulsion of for-

eign capitalists and strike-breakers. He rejected Pérez Jiménez' offer of an electoral alliance.

The people elected the Republican Democratic Union to power with an overwhelming majority.

Alarmed, the United States government made it known to Pérez Jiménez that it fully supported him as against Villalba's "communists." Heartened by this North American endorsement, Pérez Jiménez carried out a second coup d'Etat. He arrested Villalba and put him on a plane to Mexico. He dissolved the Republican Democratic Union, imposed a strict censorship on the press, and published faked "election results" which gave him a large majority. He also imposed on the people, by decree, the senators, representatives and even municipal councillors who were to govern them for the next few years.

He had shown the United States how essential he was as a bastion against proletarian-peasant revolution. In return for the service he rendered the imperialists by keeping the workers down and by safeguarding the interests of the oil industry, he was now free to work for the native bourgeoisie and to intensify his program of economic nationalism.

Through ever more severe protective tariffs he made it unprofitable for foreign firms to export finished goods to Venezuela. Henceforth, in order not to lose the Venezuelan market, they had to invest capital inside Venezuela and set up subsidiary factories in partnership with Venezuelan capital. From 1953 on, the industrialization of Venezuela thus made gigantic progress. In a process of "decolonization," the country ceased to be a mere supplier of raw material and market for finished goods, to become an investment market. The native bourgeoisie thus won a large share in investment fields which had been closed to

it formerly. Nevertheless the great majority of capital invested in Venezuela continues to be foreign, so that basically Venezuela is still dependent on the good or bad will of foreign interests.

The Pérez Jiménez government furthermore encouraged the development and diversification of agriculture. For the first time since the end of the nineteenth century, Venezuela became, by 1956, self-sufficient in all the most important food products.

The national bourgeoisie and the foreign investors need healthy and technically advanced workers, and the military government has accomplished a gigantic task of slum clearance, construction of low-cost housing units, construction of schools, almost total elimination of malaria and syphilis. Within ten years the Venezuelan people, which was one of the most diseaseridden on earth, has come to be healthy. The level of nutrition remains low, but the natural growth of the population, as a consequence of the reduction of child mortality, is soaring. (2.3% in 1956).

These constructive works, like the destructive ones, are being carried out with bourgeois-military brutality. The workers are placed in the huge, modern, impersonal government apartment buildings by force, without having the slightest say in the matter. Technical progress, made necessary by the rise of the national bourgeoisie, is forced down the people's throats, and any independent action or thought on the part of the working class is repressed with the greatest ruthlessness. The shadow of fear—fear of the secret police, the security guard and the concentration camp hangs very visibly and individually over everyone. Furthermore, the health and housing programs do not make up for the fact that prices and profits are rising steadily while wages

remain stationary or almost so. The working class' relative share in the total national income has been reduced.

TO SUM UP, we can say that Venezuelan history has been that of struggles between rival groups within the feudal and semi-feudal oligarchy. From 1909 on, the contradictions between foreign imperialism and native manufacturing interests was added to the conflicts within the country. The people (workers, peasants, lower middle class) participated in politics only sporadically, supporting the more liberal among the ruling class groups, but failing to rise to the level of independent action. The army was, and still is, the arbiter between large and small feudalists, and between imperialism and native capital. And, above all, it carries out the traditional army task of defending the oligarchy against the urban and rural poor, against the vast, still undifferentiated masses, within which the industrial worker, the peasant and the small shopkeeper are still allies in a common struggle.

Which political groups represent the best potentialities for a revolutionary struggle tending in the general direction of socialism?

C.O.P.E.Y. is negligible. It represents merely a few idealistic and conscience-stricken members of the oligarchy itself.

The Republican Democratic Union is unreliable. It is bourgeois and anti-Marxist. It represents the new middle class (liberal professions, small native manufacturers). It wants a national capitalism, independent of foreign imperialism. Sincere as its anti-imperialism may be, it is destined to be caught between the real adversaries—the oligarchy and the workers and peasants. Forced to choose sides between these major antagonists, it will ultimately choose the side of reaction.

Its present attitude, even in exile, shows that it is terrified at the idea of a social revolution of the masses. It wishes to replace the military dictatorship by a "good," middle class, nationalist dictatorship. It blames Democratic Action for "stirring up the good but barbarian masses which are not yet ready for full self-government."

The Communist Party is also unreliable. It consistently places nationalism first and social revolution last. It wishes to fight for national economic independence on the basis of a union of several classes, including the section of the national bourgeoisie which is not linked up with foreign capital. The rank and file members of the party are heroic, devoted, incorruptible, truly revolutionary. Some of the leaders are admirable too. But the party's dependence on Russia, its tendency to import read-made foreign formulas to deal with a specifically Venezuelan situation, its sectarianism and intolerance, its undemocratic and hierarchical organization, its readiness for long-term cooperation with upper-class nationalists—all these are negative factors. Furthermore, the elections of 1947 showed that the CP enjoyed the support of only a rather small section of the workers, peasants and of the lower middle class.

That leaves Democratic Action. The party is far from perfect. The Betancourt group has dangerous bureaucratic and sectarian tendencies, and at the same time it is over-ready for compromise with imperialism. The left-wing of the party is subjectively admirable but lacks a clear program on the basis of which it could neutralize the personal influence and the political line of Betancourt. But, in spite of this, it is the only party which is a true, native outgrowth of the exploited classes. It had the confidence of the masses and could win

it again. It has resistance groups within Venezuela and remains in touch with the people.

Venezuelan independent revolutionary socialists in exile should work in Democratic Action. They should combine the struggle for a Marxist education of the party members with a practical struggle against the bureaucratic methods and policies of the Betancourt leadership. Inside Venezuela, they should try to join the illegal party. If this is not possible, they should establish their own illegal groups, formulate their programs and be ready to join Democratic Action individually or in groups, whenever it may become possible to do so.

Struggle for democracy within the party, Marxist education, strengthening of the anti-imperialist, "third camp" tendency: these are the tasks which Venezuelan independent socialists should undertake within the ranks of Democratic Action.

WHAT CAN BE DONE at present and in the near future?

The main weakness of the dictatorship is the discontent of the oligarchy itself.

The Venezuelan bourgeoisie has to pay a heavy price for the military protection it enjoys: from the traffic cops to the president of the country, every group in the national administration collects bribes. To avoid a fine for improper parking, one pays a bribe of 20 bolivares (US \$6); to obtain an identification paper without waiting all day, one pays 40 bolivares (\$12); to obtain a government contract for the construction of twenty apartment buildings, one pays a bribe of 3.35 million bolivares (\$1 million). Furthermore, a bourgeois goes to jail as easily as a worker—free speech is impossible even for the wealthiest oligarch. And in the last place it is a

fact that the oligarchy includes sensitive men and women who detest the corruption, cruelty and obscene "new rich" attitude of the ruling gang on moral grounds—though they detest the "communist mob-rule" of Democratic Action even more.

Large sections of the oligarchy long for a decent, dignified, humane, civilian semi-democracy. The cynicism with which the December "elections" have been prepared, the obscenity with which governmental smut sheets like "La Prensa" smear the exiled opposition leaders (the dictatorship tries to discredit its enemies by implying that they are all homosexuals)—these things have helped to stir up bourgeois and oligarchic resentment against the infamous little fat man whom journalistic hacks call "the eagle from the Andes."

The political parties in exile are in tacit agreement on the following issue: the immediate and most urgent task is the overthrow of the dictatorship and its replacement by a civilian parliamentary government, no matter how conservative such a government may be. For the moment, the liberal sections of the bourgeoisie and the Left can and must work together for the accomplishment of that first, basic task. This understanding has been expressed in the illegal, anti-governmental pre-election propaganda of the "Patriotic Committee" (Junta patriótica). The Junta patriótica, which spread leaflets calling for free elections, represented the opposition of members of all classes against Pérez Jiménez.*

In the same way, the student riots, which brought about the violation of the University grounds and buildings by the security guard, were carried out by students pledging allegiance to all parties, from C.O.P.E.Y. to Democratic Action and the CP.

The socialist Left, working in or

with Democratic Action, has two general tasks:

(1) Bring about a union of all anti-dictatorial forces, including those of the liberal bourgeoisie, to overthrow the Pérez Jiménez government, in tactical cooperation with the liberal members of the army itself;

(2) At the same time, carry out an intensive political campaign among the working class. If the working class can be brought to take an active part in the overthrow of the dictatorship, and to stand as an independent social and political force as soon as the first liberating task has been done, the democratic struggle can then be pushed on into a more advanced phase.

The fulfilment of the first task—overthrow of the dictatorship and re-establishment of bourgeois democracy—may come about very soon. The preparation of the second task—-independent class action of the workers and peasants—will require much patience, courage, devotion and, unfortunately, time.

Juan Parao

MAGAZINE CHRONICLE

Hook Goes Soft On Gomulka

The Fall 1957 issue of *Partisan Review* contained a long, serious and highly interesting article by Sidney Hook entitled "Socialism and Liberation."

There are so many remarkable things about Hook's article that it is impossible to treat them fully in the brief space of this column. But let me

take two points to give an idea of the intellectual flux which is taking place in the mind of a man who, for almost a decade, has symbolized a "hard" (heedless of many of the civil liberties aspects of the problem) anti-Communism.

For one thing, Hook views changes in contemporary Communism *primarily* in terms of shifts in ideology and in doing so he quite often seems to lapse into a strange methodology. For another, this very approach leads him to an estimate of Gomulka which is, to say the least, surprising in its softness and optimism. Indeed, at times one hears all kinds of echoes of Isaac Deutcher in Hook's piece—which is something we had hardly been prepared for, given his past writings.

For Hook, the destruction of the Hungarian Revolution rules out the possibility of a sudden, internal transformation of the Communist world. Consequently, "The only realistic perspective in the next historical period—short of a revolution or civil war within the Soviet Union itself—is, it seems to me, liberation by evolution. I mean by this the gradual transformation, within the ideological tradition of Marxism-Leninism, of the totalitarian system of Communism in satellite countries into a liberation culture. . . ." Two points need comment here. The first is that Hook is concentrating upon the satellite countries *in isolation from* Russian developments. That is, he is mooting the really central issue, which is the spread of the anti-Communist revolution into the heartland of Communism itself, into Russia. We now know that the Hungarian and Polish events left their mark upon Russian society, indeed that their impact penetrated China and was one of the reasons for Mao's famous speech of February, 1957. Posing the question as Hook

does, seeking to anticipate the fate of an isolated and unassisted anti-Communist revolution in one satellite, is simply a way of foreclosing the possibility of any significant internal development. (Can we forget, for instance, that Warsaw was the match which lit the powder-keg in Budapest?)

This is not to come out in favor of a sterile "revolutionism," to predict that always and at every moment the Russian people are on the verge of an uprising. But it is to say that the question cannot be viewed in isolation—or rather, that if you do, you will be forced, like Sidney Hook, to see hope in a "gradual transformation, within the ideological tradition of Marxism-Leninism. . . ."

But the second thing which must be noted about Hook's opening premise is of greater methodological interest: it is his emphasis upon change "within the *ideological* tradition of Marxism-Leninism." (My emphasis) This shows up most sharply in his analysis of Gomulka. For example: ". . . when Gomulka proclaims that 'the best definition of the social contents inherent in the idea of socialism is contained in the definition that socialism is a social system which abolishes the exploitation and oppression of man by man,' . . . these pronouncements constitute a more radical revision of traditional Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism than do Titoism and Maoism. Its sweep is as radical as Ockham's intellectual transformation of Aristotle. For it follows at once from this conception of socialism that it is absent in the Soviet Union and the alleged people's democracies. . . ."

Such an approach is truly remarkable, for it is based upon Hook taking Gomulka *at his word*. There is no analysis of the Polish leader's balancing between the Natolinist right wing and the revolutionary left. Rather,

there are sweeping conclusions drawn from the words themselves. Almost at random, I picked a Stalin pamphlet from my book case and turned up with this: "What is the principal merit of the socialist method of industrialization? It is that it unites the interests of industrialization with the interests of the basic mass of the labouring population, that it does not impoverish the masses but improves their living standards. . . ." It is from a speech delivered against the Opposition in 1926, and these *words* are, of course, the cover for a line of action which was to be their direct contradiction.

What is most surprising is that Hook himself has given ample evidence that he understands this point. Why then this change? The answer is, I think, related to the first point. Hook has no perspective of decisive mass revolutionary action within the satellites because he takes the satellites singly, he abstracts them from their relation to Russia and the rest of the world. Once having done this, his hope for change must then be directed toward the bureaucracy itself, or rather, toward the intellectuals. "Even without war and foreign intervention, even without violent revolution, the *intellectual elite* of all Communist countries will produce in each generation, and in every social group or class, critical spirits nurtured on the ideals of freedom expressed in the classics of Marxism. . . ." (my emphasis) Fine. That is, of course, true and we have had ample evidence of it. But when does this transformation inside the intellectual elite become *politically operative*, i.e. at what point does it constitute a significant threat to the ruling class (which will always put its Hairichs in jail and tell its Dudinstevs how to write books)? Clearly the answer is, when the spirit which is most artic-

ulate, most conscious among the intellectuals, pervades the people and develops into action.

Without that action, without the support of the masses of people, the intellectuals may "constitute a permanent opposition to cultural and political tyranny" as Hook affirms. But will they provide a way for the transformation of the society? Will Hairich, unaided by the German working class, change Ulbricht? Hook does not face this question, because he has ruled out the possibility of really answering them. Instead, he has become . . . soft on Gomulka, soft on Kardelj, overly anxious to find change in the bureaucracy, overly optimistic.

In all of this, it is, of course, impossible to assume the attitude of *having* the answer. The development of the struggle against Communism within the Communist world is an agonizing, zig zag thing. But once one rules out the most fundamental dynamic of that transformation, the action of the workers and farmers, of the people united against tyranny, there are only two political choices: "liberation" through the armed intervention of the West; "gradual transformation" through an inexplicable process in the Communist world itself. The first alternative presupposes risking the destruction of humankind; the second, a Communist ruling class remarkably susceptible to abstractions and unmindful of class position. It is strange to find Sidney Hook, in this article, tending toward the second choice.

MICHAEL HARRINGTON

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT LABOR? by *Harry W. Laidler and James Myers*. John Day, 1957. 301 pp. \$4.75.

Some people know no more about union labor than what they learn from the man who repairs their plumbing. For this great middle class, the authors present an elementary textbook-type work for easy reading. Laidler is executive director emeritus of the League for Industrial Democracy and once a frequent socialist candidate for public office; Myers is industrial relations secretary of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. Unionism is painstakingly described so as to stimulate maximum appreciation for its aims; occasionally, it is admonished to make improvements.

In some detail and with obvious sympathy they describe various plans for labor-management cooperation and mutual understanding; in these schemes they see a constant trend toward co-determination in industry leading increasingly toward an extension of "democratic ownership" in industry. Their own views are best summarized in this paragraph:

It is imperative that the saving princi-

ple of democracy shall find expression not only in political life but in labor relations and in economic systems . . . the extent of participation in the ownership and management of economic enterprise by the common people, in one form or another, is at once a final test of democracy in industry, and one of the surest guarantees that industry will be run primarily for the service of all and not for the profit and prestige of the few.

Socialism, it could be added, is nothing more than the complete and consistent application of this principle: the extension of democracy into industry.

But our authors seem convinced that the road to democracy in industry runs through the harmonious collaboration of the owners of industry and their employees. We suggest a simple democratic device to test this thesis. In politics, every man gets one vote and everyone agrees that such a system is fair enough: apply that principle, then, in industry. Let every worker have one complete vote and no less while every manager gets one vote and no more in running industry. I am afraid that even the most ardent employer advocate of cooperation would shrink away in horror at such "subversive" democracy demonstrating that industrial democracy must be wrested away from capital by labor.

BEN HALL

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