

**WORKERS OF THE WORLD
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the new International

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BOOK REVIEWS

APRIL
1936

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AN ORGAN OF REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

(With which is merged *Labor Action*)

A BI-MONTHLY ORGAN OF REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM
OFFICIAL THEORETICAL ORGAN OF THE WORKERS PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

Published bi-monthly by the New International Publishing Company, 55 East Eleventh Street, New York, N. Y.
Subscription rates: \$1.50 per year; \$1.00 for seven months. Canada and Abroad: \$1.75 per year. Entered as Second Class matter January 26, 1935, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

VOLUME III

NO. 2 (Whole No. 14)

APRIL 1936

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JOHN WEST

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The Record of the League

THE events which have followed the remilitarization of the Rhineland serve once more to underline the political rôle of the League of Nations. The sudden "reversals" in the policies of the chief League members are startling only to those whose business it is to nourish illusions, and to deceive the masses as to the real character of the world in which we live. In the eyes of Marxists—who know that the League is only the instrument of the dominant imperialist member-states, and that, consequently, in the present crisis the League has run true to form in reflecting consistently the imperialist contradictions—there are no grounds for surprise.

Last autumn Great Britain, that noble defender of the rights of subject peoples, and brave bulwark of the "forces of peace", demanded League sanctions against Italy for Italy's shocking and barbarous adventure in Africa. France—because, no doubt, of the influence of fascist-minded secret agents—objected; but reluctantly went along in the end; meanwhile taking care that sanctions never became serious enough to burden Italy unduly. Italy, also a League member, did, of course, just what she intended in the first place.

Today, France, grown overnight to new stature in the defense of peace, the rights of man, and European culture

against the threat of Nazi terror, demands League sanctions against Hitler. And Great Britain, now doubtless reverting to the control of some bloody-minded Germanophile banker, objects—for the reason, naturally, that sanctions against Hitler would "endanger peace" instead of furthering it. Italy sits back and laughs, realizing that she is now in a perfect position to drive a splendid African bargain.

And Ethiopia—who is, it is often forgotten—also a sovereign member-state of the League? For eight months of 1935 (i.e., until the end of the Ethiopian rainy season) Ethiopia was prevented from preparing for war because of the necessity for preserving a correct legal position in the eyes of the League. As soon as the rains stopped, the League stepped aside, and Italy's military campaign began. Now the rainy season is again approaching. The mechanized Italian troops will be unable to move; but the Ethiopian warriors would be able to carry on an effective guerilla warfare, vastly inconvenient to Badoglio and Graziani. So the League is getting ready to approve an armistice: that is, to outlaw military operations on the part of Ethiopia as soon as the start of the rainy season throws the military balance a good distance in Ethiopia's favor.

An enviable year's record for Geneva's

dove of peace!

What treacherous and fatal nonsense it is, this "struggle for peace". British imperialism needs to protect its lines of communication, but is trying to placate Germany on the Continent; French imperialism fears Germany on the Continent, and seeks to maintain the Continental *status quo*, but is not interested in Eastern Africa and wants Italy's aid on the Continent. That is the meaning of their "peace" policies. Italian imperialism requires new areas of exploitation, and finds no way of getting them except by armed conquest. All these nations use the League simply as a field for maneuvers, and for aiding in deceiving the masses about the true nature of imperialism. Even for this task the League is rapidly losing all value; and there are indications that the great powers are more openly returning to the form of the pre-1914 type of alliances.

This reversion might well prove an advantage. It will at least aid in making clearer that the struggle against imperialist war is not the hypocritical "struggle for peace"—that is, for the maintenance of the imperialist *status quo*—but the revolutionary struggle for socialism; and that this struggle is designed not to uphold the sacredness of national boundaries and robber-treaties, but to overthrow imperialism and to achieve international workers' power.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

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Will Roosevelt Be Re-elected?

IN AN article written last summer for THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, I remarked that Roosevelt would be re-elected in November, 1936, unless the business upturn were greatly broadened and deepened. This remark aroused many queries and a number of protests. How, it was argued, would this follow? Why would a big increase of prosperity hurt Roosevelt? Just the opposite would seem more logical. If Roosevelt brings back good times, then a grateful people should be anxious to reward and keep him. And, certainly, this would seem more fair and just. Indeed, Roosevelt supporters such as the liberal New York *Evening Post* are indignant these days at the ingratitude of bankers and industrialists. As the *Post* points out in bewilderment, the higher the profits mount, the more viciously does finance-capital rail against its benefactor in the White House.

Politics, however, proceeds according to political and not according to moral laws.

During these first months of this election year, the attack against Roosevelt has reached new and almost lyric heights. The sins of mankind—so Hearst and the Liberty League, Hoover and Sloan and Chester and Smith and Mills inform us—are now concentrated in Washington. Chaos and disaster poise to alight on the day of Roosevelt's re-election. "Public relations counsels" find a rich market for their most extravagant adjectives. *The Literary Digest* and skillfully weighted statistical polls show us in detail that the policies of the New Deal are repudiated by three-fourths of the population, and by all honest men. The balloons of the candidates for Republican nomination bob one another into the political sky.

What are we to make of all this? How do things really stand with Roosevelt?

It must be kept in mind that Marxists analyze political problems from the point of view of the dynamics of class relationships, not by meaningless statistics and questions asked of country editors. The Marxian method of analysis applies no less adequately to the present than to every other major political problem.

II.

Let us consider to begin with the situation in the United States during the winter of 1932-33, the period of Roosevelt's election campaign, his election and inauguration. This was the low point of the worst cyclical depression so far experienced by capitalism. The crisis was international in scope, and specially characterized as a movement in the decline of capitalism as a whole—that is, as part of the now permanent general crisis of capitalism—rather than a temporary recession in the advance of capitalism as a whole. In this country, unemployment had reached the undreamed of figures of nearly 18 millions. Profits had all but disappeared—in fact, industry as a whole was probably operating at a loss. Wages were drastically down. Prices of all commodities were tremendously deflated. Competition for the narrowed market had reached a stage of unbridled anarchy, which was further exaggerating the deflationary process. Bankruptcies were widespread and increasing. The whole banking system had reached a condition of nervous instability, and was in fact on the edge of total collapse. The enormous weight of capital debt, expanded in the boom times, was

hanging over the market, in part artificially maintained against liquidation by the R.F.C. loans; and the federal and state debts were rapidly mounting.

These material conditions, naturally, provoked their response in the consciousness of the citizens. Fear was widespread. Roosevelt, with his usual sensitiveness to popular moods, summed this up aptly in his inaugural address: "The only thing we have to fear," he said, "is fear itself." There was a general feeling of disorientation and helplessness. As usual, to all except Marxists, the natural functioning of the capitalist economy in crisis appeared to all classes of the people as the blind working of unalterable law, against which the plans of men are helpless. Unrest was slowly growing.

The attitude of the various sections of the population can be more specifically defined:

(1) The bourgeoisie proper was genuinely frightened. Many of them feared the breakdown of the system which sustained them. For several years, after 1929, they had kept up their courage by the whistlings of their agents in the Hoover Administration: they had told each other that bad times would soon be over, that the corner would be soon reached, that nothing unusual had happened. But after nearly four years, the indices were still hurtling downward, and the whistlings no longer sounded convincing. They and their spokesmen had no solution to offer to bring back the lost profits, and knew they had none. Thus they were ready to grasp at any that came along.

(2) The farmers were discouraged, and also resentful. It is interesting to remember that the first important outbreaks of "direct action" involved farmers (in Northwestern New York, Wisconsin, Iowa, etc.) and not workers—though, of course, these were sporadic and soon slipped out of sight when industrial strikes began. The farmers saw the solution to their problems in the raising of prices of commodities, the lowering of taxes and mortgage burdens, and in direct subsidies.

(3) Among the middle classes generally, fear was everywhere. They were completely confused and disoriented. Before them were the ghosts of proletarianization and unemployment taking on flesh and blood. Their formerly "privileged" position—as compared with the workers—was being rudely undermined. Unlike certain sections of the farmers, however, the middle classes generally were not so much resentful as merely bewildered. When the middle classes are not only afraid and disoriented, but also resentful, the ground has become ripe for Fascism. But the time for this has not yet come.

Above all it is important to understand that in 1932-33 the middle classes had lost confidence in their former leaders—the finance capitalists and their avowed spokesmen. And this they had done not merely because times were so bad for the middle classes, but in large part because the finance capitalists had temporarily lost confidence in themselves. The middle classes, being unable to formulate an independent program of their own, or to furnish independent leadership, must always follow another as leader. And they will not follow unless the leader is himself assured and confident, and looks like a winner.

(4) The unemployed were largely defeatist in their attitude, and in some measure resentful. They asked primarily for a small pitance of relief, and to a lesser extent for jobs.

(5) The proletariat was completely disoriented, both because of the absence of revolutionary leadership and because of the active presence of a corrupt and reactionary leadership. The workers were beginning to stir and mutter, and the turmoil of mass struggle lay ahead. They saw no political solution to their problems; but they were turning toward direct action as a means for gaining their most immediate needs.

Roosevelt was the Lochinvar sent as the answer to these conditions and these attitudes. He swung triumphantly into office with the fundamental program of tiding capitalism over the depths of the crisis, of using the state on a scale unprecedented in this country to supplement the "natural forces" of the economic cycle working for the upturn. Thus, on the economic scene, he quickly formulated his answers to the crucial difficulties. The deflationary trend was reversed by inflationary measures: cessation of the free gold market, silver manipulation, lowering of the gold content of the dollar. The banking structure was revived by the Bank Holiday, the liquidation of the weakest banks, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and government loans. The N.R.A. gave industry a breathing space from the excessive price-cutting and too anarchic competition. Government loans, and spending, relief and public works, "primed the pump".

However, the economic measures were not enough to tide capitalism over. There was also a political and ideological task to perform. The problems raised by the consciousness and attitudes of the various sections of the population had to be met. This is the peculiar business of politicians, and not so clearly understood by the bourgeoisie proper.

Roosevelt's pre-election speeches, the *form* and *wording* of his program were designed to answer just these problems. And, drawing heavily from the United States Populist tradition, from liberalism and social-democracy, they did so remarkably well. It is worth while noticing how the form of his program affected the various sections:

(1) Roosevelt appeared on the surface as the champion of "the people" and the sworn enemy of the big bourgeoisie. He lashed out (verbally) at the Tories and the money-changers. In ringing words he sounded the clarion. In spite of this, at the beginning there was little consistent opposition to Roosevelt from the bourgeoisie. For one thing, they were too worried, and felt they had to take a chance. Besides, they knew that they could control the basic direction of his régime, and they therefore concentrated their efforts (successfully) on getting their own desires written into the new "business legislation". Certain groups of the bourgeoisie, particularly those in already unionized industries, were actively in favor of the Administration.

(2) The farmers were delighted with the fine old Jeffersonian phrases with which Roosevelt's speeches were well larded. And they were more substantially delighted with the actual economic benefits to themselves which Roosevelt engineered: higher prices for their crops, mortgage relief, and direct subsidies.

(3) The middle classes were on the heights. In Roosevelt they saw themselves reflected—not their actual confused and frightened selves, but their hopes and dreams. Confidence sprung up again. Here were just the kind of hazy, grandiose generalities to warm the cockles of a middle-class heart. Here was indeed a new leader, sure, firm, smiling and friendly. And here was a New Life to be had just for the asking. They jumped gayly onto the bandwagon.

(4) The unemployed, too, got for a time at least new hope to replace their defeatism. This sounded like good stuff, these prom-

ises for the Forgotten Man. And relief conditions were in fact improved. CWA, PWA, and CCC were at any rate better than Hoover.

(5) The proletariat was tied to the White House through the trade union bureaucracy. The ambiguous Section 7A, while left vague enough to fulfill the requirements of Roosevelt's basic economic program, also met the ideological need of permitting Roosevelt to appear as labor's President.

Thus, for a while, the magician Roosevelt did appear as all things to all men.

It is necessary to say a word about the relation of Roosevelt to Fascism. In 1933 the *Daily Worker* assured us that Roosevelt was a Fascist—though now it is the opposition to Roosevelt (the Supreme Court and Hearst and the Liberty League) which the *Daily Worker* recognizes as the "true" Fascists. Of course, Roosevelt was not and is not fascist. He and his program are a kind of distorted amalgam of liberalism, Populism, and social-democracy in theory, and even, in part, in practise. Where possible, Roosevelt uses the methods of class collaboration, not of direct class tyranny.

Nevertheless, during the decline of capitalism, the capitalist attempt to solve a deep crisis tends necessarily along fascist lines. In this case, the crisis was not deep and long enough, either economically on the one hand, or socially and politically on the other, to require Fascism itself. But because of this tendency in the decline of capitalism, the Roosevelt program and methods were a kind of pale foreshadowing of Fascism, a faint metaphor of what is to come.

Fascism, like the Roosevelt program, has a muddled middle-class appeal, building its ideology out of the dreams and despairs of the middle classes. And many Fascists are quite as "sincere" as Roosevelt. Under Roosevelt, especially in the first two years, there occurred an unprecedented concentration of power in the Executive branch of the government and a correlative weakening of the legislative—again, on a large scale, characteristic of Fascism. The code authorities of the N.R.A., with their attempt to sustain prices through the intervention of the state, are also analogous to the methods of Fascism. So, too, with the extension of state influence in and operation of "business"—investments in banking, railroads, industry. Likewise, in the various labor boards, the automobile code, etc., there is a foreshadowing of compulsory arbitration.

It must always be remembered that Fascism is *veiled* not open reaction. It begins as a mass movement, not as an open offensive of finance-capital, and is only later taken over by finance-capital. In this Roosevelt and his program are instructive for the future.

III.

During the last eighteen months the political meaning of the Roosevelt régime has greatly altered, because of the fact that basic economic and social conditions have greatly altered. The central development is, naturally, the upturn in the business cycle, which, after two minor spurts in 1933 and 1934, is now in a major swing. The upturn is marked above all by the return of profits—some of them remarkably enough to the highest level in history, and many to the 1930 level. The stock market has soared. Prices, after a sharp recovery in 1933-34, have for the most part continued up, though more slowly, and have been approximately level during the past year. (Wages, after a considerable rise in 1933-34 (though only a slight rise in real wages) are remaining about stationary, with a slight increase in hours since the invalidation of the N.R.A. Unemployment has decreased about 5 millions since Roosevelt took office, but has changed little during the past year.

The forces for the upturn were substantially in operation by the beginning of 1935. Consequently, at that time Roosevelt had to alter his course. Instead of appearing as the stirring leader of the 74th Congress (as he had been of the 73rd), he had to act as brake; and, by his pseudo-Social-Security Act and the W.P.A., he forestalled any serious effort at more genuine social security, public works or large-scale relief. Nevertheless, at the end of the first session of the 74th Congress, he reconsolidated his *formal* "left" position by championing the Utilities Bill, the Neutrality Act, and the "Soak the Rich" Tax Bill. This he did in order to cut the ground from under the feet of the opposition to the bourgeois and reformist left, and thus to prevent the growth of a major third party movement.

In the autumn of 1935 he announced "the breathing spell" for business, to mark his recognition of the end of the New Deal in fact—that is, the end of the emergency measures to save capitalism in the given crisis—and to make a bid to retain some of his slipping big bourgeois support. The Supreme Court, by invalidating the N.R.A., A.A.A., Railroad Pensions Act, etc., was assigned the task of publicly burying the emergency measures. With the upturn of the business cycle, they have finished their purpose.

If we turn to the relation of Roosevelt to his opponents, we find that to his opponents on his right he has given the substance of their demands: that is, he has done his part in recovering profits. On this basis he, quite "reasonably", asks for their votes. But they, ungrateful, get more and more abusive, invigorated by the blood of profits. They want a more direct instrument than Roosevelt.

To his left he has given lavishly of the words and phrases it looks for. He keeps the slogans and the demagoguery, as in his annual message in January—now pure demagoguery, since they were designed for the depths of the crisis, not for the upturn. By this means he has made a serious third party in 1936 impossible: it could not be sufficiently differentiated from Roosevelt. During 1935 the third party movement collapsed; and its impossibility was definitively sealed by the U.M.W.A.'s endorsement of Roosevelt.

If we look at the election year lineup in terms of the attitude of the social groups, we find:

(1) The bourgeoisie are again confident. Profits are miraculously returned. They are again impatient of state restraint: the ropes which helped them out of the hole have become shackles. It seems to them that the country is headed back to the good old days. They wish to run along in the uncurbed race for profits. They feel now able to handle labor alone, and toss aside the possible ultimate social consequences. Thus, on the whole, the bourgeoisie is anti-Roosevelt. Some, with special interests, still stick with him. And much of the bourgeois opposition is no doubt largely bluff. They find in "intransigent" and loud opposition the easiest way to put the screws on Roosevelt when he kicks a bit. And Roosevelt, in the face of the opposition, naturally "concedes" still more. In any case, it must be kept in mind that Roosevelt through the state fundamentally represents them since he upholds and maintains the basic interests and the social structure on which they rest; and, more particularly, he prepares carefully and ably for the war which they expect to open up mighty new markets. This the intelligent among the bourgeoisie clearly understand, and no doubt some even of the "opponents'" votes will go to Roosevelt in the secrecy of the ballot box.

(2) Large sections of the farmers (with the decided exceptions of the share-croppers and the poorest tenants) are considerably better off than in 1933. The reasons for this are various, including the drought and the dust storms, for which Roosevelt cannot plausibly take credit; but in part they are undoubtedly the Roosevelt farm measures. The majority of the farmers may be expected to

stay with Roosevelt. Many are affected by the anti-Roosevelt agitation; but the Republicans offer no farm program at all.

(3) The middle classes generally (exclusive of the farmers) are not so much better off than in 1933, though their condition has to some extent improved. But the crucial point with reference to the middle classes is that their faith in their old leaders—in finance-capital—has been revived. It has revived in large part because the faith of the old leaders in themselves has revived, because they are once again confident. As usual, the middle classes go toward what looks to them like the leader. It is entirely false that to win the middle classes a "middle-class appeal" must be made, on the basis of a "middle-class program". The middle classes answer to the voice of a master who sounds like a master. Roosevelt, mirroring in his phrases a middle-class mind, loses his appeal precisely because he makes, now, so many apologies and "concessions". The old note rings hollow. The Liberty League is less compromising. It says in effect to the middle classes: tag along with me if you know what is good for you, because I really run things, and I intend to run them my way. (It would be well if working class politicians could learn this lesson in the ways of the middle classes.) In November, therefore, the majority of the middle classes will probably vote *against* Roosevelt; and still more "prosperity" will only increase the adverse majority, since it will increase the strength and confidence of the bourgeoisie.

(4) The unemployed know from experience the fakery of Roosevelt's relief program. For this reason, some of the unemployed are turning against Roosevelt. But most (when they are not disfranchised) will vote for Roosevelt on the lesser evil principle, since the Republicans offer even less.

(5) The proletariat is on the whole better off than in 1933, though not much better off. But in spite of the revelation of the Roosevelt program in practise as thoroughly anti-working class, the treachery of the trade union bureaucracy, the fatal policy of the communist party and the vacillating policy of the socialist party during this period, ensure that a substantial majority of the working class will go to Roosevelt. This could not have been shown more decisively than by the unanimous endorsement of Roosevelt by the U.M.W.A. Convention. However paradoxical it may seem, the solidest support for Roosevelt will be drawn from the proletariat.

On the basis of the above survey, I conclude that Roosevelt will be re-elected in November, by a majority probably less than in 1932, but still considerable.

IV.

What, then, should be the broad strategy of Marxists for this election year?

Many tendencies in the labor movement, led by the communist party, hold that this is the year for a mighty Labor or Farmer-Labor party campaign. Some of them believe, or pretend to believe, that a national Farmer-Labor ticket in 1936 is realistically possible; others—many socialists, for example, that it is not possible in 1936, but that nevertheless the Farmer-Labor campaign should be carried on for its educational value and to prepare for the future.

Both conceptions are entirely incorrect. We have already seen that a genuine Labor or Farmer-Labor party, including the bulk of the organized labor movement, in 1936 is impossible; it is blocked by Roosevelt's political strategy. A fake Labor party is still, indeed, possible, cooked up by bureaucratic and opportunistic maneuvers: and it should be noticed that any kind of Labor party campaign, even one of the most "genuine" sort, plays into the hands of those who would like a fake Labor party, either this year or in the future.

It is not my intention to enter into the general "theory" of the Labor party. The main considerations are well enough known by Marxists: that a Labor party is hopelessly reformist, and thus unable to defend the interests of the working class, we know; that in actuality it offers no protection whatever against either war or Fascism, we know; we know that, in the decline of capitalism, a Labor party cannot win even any important temporary concessions from the bourgeoisie; and we know also that the whole ideology of the Labor party blurs the central and decisive question: what class holds state power? We know also that in this country the Labor party movement connects up with the traditional Populist and Progressive tradition, and thus loses even its nominal class base.

The present question, however, is not one of general theory, but of the concrete meaning of the Labor party campaign in 1936. And, concretely, we must conclude that the Labor party campaign this year plays directly into the hands of Roosevelt—that is, into the hands of finance-capital. The Labor and Farmer-Labor campaign, particularly in its Stalinist version, utilizes the very same ideology as Roosevelt. Nothing could have made this clearer than Roosevelt's Annual Message to Congress. Ninety percent of this message might have appeared unchanged in the *Daily Worker*—even the same rhetorical devices. Roosevelt declared himself "unequivocally" for strong neutrality measures; against Fascist tyrannies; against war; against the Tories; against unscrupulous financiers; against Wall Street; against invasion of the people's rights by the courts; for the common man; for—a "people's government" (in just those words). On what possible grounds could Roosevelt be kept out of the People's Front?

The Farmer-Labor advocates, especially the Stalinists, now join with the Administration spokesmen in attacking the Liberty League as "Fascist" (as I have pointed out, for the communist party it was once Roosevelt who was Fascist). This is entirely false and extremely dangerous. The Liberty League is simply old-fashioned reactionary. Naturally, the present backers of the Liberty League will some day be supporting a Fascist movement in this country. But they will be *hidden*, not on the front pages, as they now are in stories about the Liberty League. Fascism simply does not work

this way. And Fascism is built out of crisis and depression; not out of an upturn, when the middle classes are on the whole pleased with the Tories. Actually, Roosevelt is closer to Fascism than the Liberty League, though we have seen that he is not Fascist. It is he who, like Fascism, represents "veiled" reaction. Making purely reformist distinctions between "friendly" and "unfriendly" sections of the ruling class (backers of Roosevelt and backers of the Liberty League), and friendly and unfriendly organs of the capitalist state (Congress, the people's representative, and the Supreme Court, representative of Wall Street) plays directly into the hands of the future Fascist developments.

Because, then, of the incidence of their political ideology, we shall see that many of the "boldest" supporters of the Farmer-Labor campaign now, in November will line up the votes for Roosevelt. It is not excluded that the communist party itself—especially if the Far Eastern crisis deepens—will declare for Roosevelt.

No. In 1936 it is the business of Marxists to understand that this election year is an opportune time to build—not reformist—but revolutionary ideas, to strengthen vastly the revolutionary movement in this country. It is a year for Marxists to redouble their participation in independent working-class actions. In this, good beginnings have already been made in 1936. And direct struggle is the most educational of all schools for the masses of the workers. Perhaps in November they will still vote for Roosevelt; but if they have participated in direct struggles, properly led, they will be far along politically.

And this election year is a splendid year for a mighty educational campaign: not against the Liberty League or Wall Street or the Supreme Court or Roosevelt, but against the capitalist state; and not for a reformist party to take governmental office as a handmaiden of capitalism, but for a party to overthrow the state. It is a splendid year, that is to say, for a campaign for the revolutionary party, for utilizing the ferment of the election year and the war crisis and the labor struggles for the forging of the revolutionary leadership of the American working class.

John WEST

The People's Front in France

THE CENTER of gravity of the international class struggle is today located in France. There too the democratic constitutional form of government has begun to shake, the governments have a continually briefer term of life, parliament falls into increasing discredit, the number of unemployed rises from month to month, the steadily deepening agrarian crisis threatens countless peasants with ruin, despair spreads among the urban petty bourgeois strata—to all of which is being added the frightful pressure of the immediate war danger. The masses are seeking a way out they enter into movements, mass demonstrations, strikes. Armed disputes, guerrilla battles between Fascists and sections of the labor movement have left their mark on the inner-political picture of France for the last two years. All these are unmistakable signs of the fact that the period of the stable, "pacifist", constitutional-democratic development of France has finally passed. Ever more threateningly is the French nation confronted with the Either-Or: the smashing of capitalism, the victory of the revolutionary proletariat and the establishment of its dictatorship, thereby opening a new chain of revolutions in Europe, or the victory of the extreme reaction in its most horrible, revolting form, the victory over the labor movement and all democracy of those sections

of the petty bourgeoisie and the slum proletariat which have been infuriated to the utmost, who are most decayed—a victory whose fruits fall into the lap of monopoly capitalism and which flings back the entire nation to the ideological state of despotic barbarism, a victory which strengthens the existence of the already functioning Fascist states and draws other lands into its orbit (Belgium, Holland, Spain, Switzerland).

The serious observer of French politics, who desires the victory of the French proletariat, is therefore faced with answering the following questions: Is the French proletariat conscious of the import of this decisive struggle: Are its organizations pursuing such a policy which would make a victory probable? Have the French workers' parties drawn the lessons of the terrible proletarian defeats of the last decade? Numerous are the voices which reply affirmatively by referring to the "People's Front". For does not this People's Front realize not only the proletarian united front, but also the united front of the proletariat with the petty bourgeoisie? Let us therefore see what is actually involved in this "People's Front" which can already look back upon more than a year's history.

The French People's Front is composed of the (parliamentarily) strongest bourgeois party, the Radical Socialists, the socialist and communist parties, plus the trade unions and a number of small Left wing bourgeois groupings. The Radical party deserves, at the outset, a more detailed consideration, for its essence reflects the whole People's Front. The Radical Socialist party proclaims itself the heir of the Great French Revolution, and so it is in the sense that it has always loyally served the class of the bourgeoisie and its state which emerged victoriously from this revolution. Only, times have meanwhile changed, and with them also people. The bourgeoisie which fought against oppressive feudalism and absolutism became, many generations ago, the oppressive imperialist bourgeoisie. And whom doesn't the French bourgeoisie oppress! Indonesians, Arabs, Berbers, Riff Kabyls, Negroes, Indians, etc., as well as proletarians and the lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie of the country itself, are given a taste of the harsh fist of the victor of 1789. In harmony with the altered character of the bourgeoisie, the Radical party has become one of its most corrupt instruments of domination. The party, by means of its verbose glorification of the Great Revolution in economically peaceful times, did have its hands above all on the petty bourgeois and the peasant, yet without representing the present-day or the future interests of the lower layers of these classes. That is why the latter inexorably developed an antagonism towards it during the crisis.

Let us outline here in a few strokes the recent history of the Radical party. During the World War, its lust for annexation knew no bounds. Not even the demand for the withdrawal from the left bank of the Rhine sufficed for it. It signed the Versailles Treaty with a complete sense of responsibility, and at the beginning, it likewise supported the policy of the occupation of the Ruhr. In 1925 it was a Radical government which conducted the shameful colonial war in Morocco and the present "Radical" government of Sarraut is giving the insurrectionary people of Syria doses of grapeshot. The domestic rôle of the Radicals is no less glorious. The same Sarraut was Minister of the Interior in the Doumergue cabinet after the miserable capitulation of the likewise Radical Daladier government to the Fascist stroke on February 6, 1934. On February 9, several thousand communist workers rallied in Paris for a counter-demonstration; M. Sarraut's police fired into their ranks; results, five dead. And M. Paganon, the "Radical" Minister of the Interior of the Laval government followed in Sarraut's footsteps: more workers' blood was shed by the Radicals in Brest and Toulon in the Summer of 1935. It has come to the point where the party is involved in virtually all the corruption scandals of the Third Republic, which constitute the perennial agitational material of the Fascists and royalists against the parliamentary system. That was the case as far back as the end of the last century. In a letter to Kautsky, Engels wrote on January 28, 1889: "The Radicals, in their haste to get into the government, have made themselves the slaves of opportunism and corruption and thereby fairly nurtured Boulangerism." Things are no better to this day; they have grown worse, as the Stavisky affair, above all, plainly showed.

The increasingly profound crisis is confronted by the Radical government members with the methods of capitalism: radical wage and salary reductions, enormous rise in direct and indirect taxes, hitting the lower strata primarily. At the same time, the military apparatus swallows up increasingly vast sums of money. The little man consequently feels himself betrayed by the Radicals (and rightly so). He seeks a new way out. Thence the swelling of the ranks of the *Croix de Feu* and other Fascist societies, thence also the communist election successes. If, recently, this process has been weakened or, more correctly, has taken place mainly to the

benefit of the Right, then it is precisely a result of the People's Front policy which once more elevates the Radicals on the shield of the nation.

Before the outbreak of the present crisis, the so-called "Left Cartel" existed in France, the parliamentary coöperation of the Radicals and the socialists. One of the effects of the crisis was the belief among the socialists that they could no longer submit to the policy of the Radicals. In order not to lose contact with the proletarian masses, the socialists called off the alliance with the Radicals and even parted with their own Right wing—the so-called Neos—who held firmly to the alliance. The S.F.I.O. oriented towards the proletarian united front. Meanwhile the Comintern buried the theory of social-Fascism, and the united front came into being. However, it soon became clear that the C.P.F., under the command of the degenerated Soviet bureaucracy, had not accomplished a turn to Leninism but to ultra-opportunism. Encirclement by Hitler Germany and Japan compelled the Soviet Union to look about for foreign allies. It found one, along the lines already prescribed by Czarist foreign policy, in the French General Staff, which is interested in preserving the *status quo* created by the Versailles Treaty—so favorable to French imperialism—which fears Hitler's lust for vengeance, and is therefore likewise for restoring the constellation of 1914.¹ Upon the French communists fell the task of making this alliance popular among the French people. Towards this end it had to extend the united front to the Radicals. In the beginning, only the Left wing of the Radicals understood what new possibilities were opened up for liberalism by such a policy, whereas the Right wing continued to deem a collaboration with the communists, on the basis of their past, as "disreputable". Recently, however, this wing also has convinced itself of the "sincerity" of the patriotic turn of the communists. The recently held congress of the Radical party almost unanimously accepted the People's Front. Covered by communist authority, the socialists are also taking the road back—and not without a sigh of relief, for they had been treading shifting ground. In the People's Front, the old republican Cartel—expanded by a communist tail—celebrates a happy primordial existence. This is the People's Front and its real content.

The foreign political program of the People's Front consists in the propagation of the Franco-Russian alliance and the promotion of the "system of collective security pacts" (the expression "military alliance" is generally forbidden nowadays) within the "framework of the League of Nations". The French social democrats and communists have just voted in the French parliament for the ratification of the Franco-Russian military pact, thereby assuming the obligation to march on the side of the French bourgeoisie for the preservation of the French Empire in a coming war—if it fulfills the pre-conditions of the pact. Lenin once combatted—even though he was himself an irreconcilable opponent of the Versailles peace conditions—the National-Bolshevism of Laufenberg and comrades, who considered a "united front" of the German proletariat with the German bourgeoisie permissible in the struggle

¹ There is no question, in the French-Soviet alliance, of a policy which the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie "imposes" upon the bourgeoisie, as many theoreticians would have it. This policy has its advocates in the furthest circles of finance capital and of the extreme Right. The big financier, Mercier, former commander of the Fascist

Croix de Feu, took a trip to the Soviet Union and declared, on his return, in a lecture to the Polytechnical School: "France must declare, in close and complete accord with England that she will resist any attack upon the Soviet Union, strengthen the League of Nations and reinforce the bonds with the Little Entente and Austria."

against the Versailles peace. The C.P.G. later liquidated these teachings and competed with Hitler in the struggle against the "shameful peace of Versailles". And today the C.P.F. concludes an alliance with its bourgeoisie for the defense of the *status quo* of Versailles!

Such foreign political aims bring obligations. And not the least reason why the French bourgeoisie follows this policy is that it hopes, by means of it, to keep the proletariat off its neck.² Clémenceau would not have dared to dream that his successors would succeed in playing the October Revolution against the proletarian revolution in France! To be sure, this required tremendous reactionary changes in the Soviet Union itself, the Soviet Union of Lenin and Trotsky first had to become the Soviet Union of Stalin-Napoleon and his marshals.

But let us look a little closer into the domestic political activity of the People's Front. The world public first paid it attention on July 14 of last year, the French national holiday, when a committee composed of Radicals, socialists and "communists" summoned the masses to demonstrate; when the three party leaders, Daladier, Blum and Cachin, led the demonstration arm in arm; when the tricolor waved for the first time in a workers' demonstration, and when M. Duclos, general secretary of the C.P.F., intoned the *Marseillaise* on the *Place de la République*. Shortly thereafter occurred those events which made the true character of the People's Front even plainer. We refer to the spontaneous strikes, demonstrations and struggles in Brest and Toulon. Involved in this was the first spontaneous resistance of the proletarian masses to the hunger-decrees of the Laval-Herriot government. In order not to lose lightly the favor of the Radicals, sworn supporters of private property in the means of production, the Stalinists and socialists bluntly declared the resistance of the proletariat to be a Fascist provocation. And thus may the whole content of the People's Front policy be defined: subservience of the workers' parties to the Radicals. This subservience reached its low point in the vote given the Sarraut government, which is not even a purely Radical government, but one which includes such outspokenly Right wing bourgeois forces as Flandin, the Minister of War, General Maurin, the member of the Board of Directors of the Schneider-Creusot munitions works, etc.

Naturally, this policy has another side. It is not so easy to bring the proletarian masses under the leadership of the Radicals. For the S.P., and above all for the C.P., the essential task is therefore the duping of the masses into the belief that their policy is in harmony with the teachings of Marx and Lenin, that they continue to pursue the goal of the proletarian revolution. Were they to liquidate Marxism in words as well as in practise (which is what the Neo-Socialists proposed in their time), the masses would quit the C.P. and the S.P. and build themselves a new party. But by that the Blums, Cachins and Thorezes would lose all their value both for the French bourgeoisie and for Stalin-Bonaparte, who uses them as payments. That is why they clothe their treacherous policy towards the bourgeoisie in formulæ taken from the vocabu-

lary of Leninism, even combat "Millerandism" (coalition government) in words, and seek in the works of Marx and Lenin for any quotation that they can tear from its context and give a patriotic content.

It would lead too far afield to pillory here all the distortions of Leninism. Especially, of course, must Lenin's writing against the ultra-Leftists, the "infantile maladies", serve to justify opportunism. Even at the periphery of our own organization, voices have risen to express the idea that there is a contradiction between our rejection of the People's Front policy in France and our proposal to support the Evangelical churches and the Catholic church in Germany against Nazi totality-barbarism. Let us answer both the Stalinists and our own doubting "friends" with one single quotation from the *Infantile Malady*:

"Everything depends upon whether one understands how to apply this tactic [of the united front and of veering] for the raising and not for the lowering of the *general* level of proletarian class consciousness, of the revolutionary spirit, of the capacity to fight and win."

On July 14, 1935 there were only isolated Tricolors in the demonstration parade of the People's Front, and the red flag predominated by far. In the People's Front demonstration of February 16, 1936, on the contrary, the police of Sarraut—as he himself reported proudly to the Chamber—counted 450-500 Tricolors. The *lowering* of the general class consciousness by the tactic of the People's Front expresses itself here in the proportional relationship to the increasing of Tricolors. As for the church struggle in Germany, contrariwise, it is a task of the revolutionists to support every resistance to the totality-barbarism of the Fascists and thereby to raise the general level of the revolutionary spirit and the capacity to struggle. Whoever does not understand how to apply the Lenin quotation adduced here, has not yet learned the A B C of revolutionary politics.

It has even occurred to the German S.A.P. to quote the shade of Lenin of 1905 in favor of the admissibility of the People's Front. In an article on the People's Front, *Neue Front* wrote at the beginning of October, 1935:

"The first question that rises in this connection is whether such an alliance, such a fighting community with parts of the bourgeoisie, is at all possible and admissible from the principled revolutionary standpoint. We affirm this and thereby solidarize ourselves with what the Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership put forth as far back [!] as 1905-1906 on the admissibility and the limitations of such alliances."

One could not jump around more unscrupulously and criminally with the heritage of Lenin. In 1905, Lenin shared the general conception that Russia was on the eve of a great bourgeois revolution. Contrary to the Mensheviks, however, who concluded from this conception that the proletariat should leave the leadership of this revolution to the liberal bourgeoisie, Lenin was of the opinion that only the proletariat, in league with the revolutionary peasantry, could solve the tasks of the bourgeois revolution. That is why he condemned sharply any marching together with the radical bourgeoisie (this is just the question over which the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks split), but by means of the formula "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" he held open the door to an accord with the peasant Social Revolutionists, whose program was the bourgeois agrarian revolution. Let it be borne in mind that the Russian liberals were at that time still under the knout of the Czar and in spite of this Lenin categorically rejected any alliances with them. The French Radicals of today, on the other hand, who have everything in common with the liberals and nothing in common with the peasant-terroristic Social Revolutionists and who,

² Flandin, the national-liberal foreign minister of the Sarraut government, seeks to explain to the extreme Right wing the change of the communists in the following words: "But if accidentally . . . a closer community of views and in action on the plane of foreign policy and for the preservation of peace in Europe between France which is, despite all, the heir of the Rev-

olution of 1789 [Applause from the Left and the extreme Left] and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, leads the leaders and members of the communist party to a patriotic conception and action of national solidarity, then I do not believe, gentlemen, that you will be the last to felicitate yourselves." (Flandin, speech in the Chamber, Feb. 25, 1936.)

in contrast to the latter, base themselves upon an agrarian revolution effected some 150 years ago, are the representatives of French colonial oppression. But the S.A.P. nevertheless does not fail to adduce the position of Lenin in 1905 (which was, moreover, thrown to the junk pile in his April 1917 theses) as a motivation for the People's Front policy. It can be seen from this example that the S.A.P. has as much in common with Leninism as quack-healing has with scientific medicine.

But back to the People's Front, as it lives and breathes in France today. The decisive question is: what perspective does it have, does it at all want to conquer power and if so, in what way and how does it aim to employ it? The People's Front has a majority in the present French parliament, which will probably be increased after the coming elections. What, then, is more logical than that it should form the government? Do not the "communists" too place themselves on the foundation of the bourgeois state in France, don't they demand of it the dissolution of the Fascist organizations, don't they make themselves the defenders of the security of the state in the "program of the People's Front"—a miserable document which does not even dare demand the immediate abolition of the Laval emergency decrees and which proposes a . . . parliamentary investigation commission for the colonies? Now, if the present bourgeois state can wipe out Fascism, if this phenomenon can be eliminated without eliminating its cause—capitalism, and petty bourgeois misery engendered by its crisis—and if this is the avowed purpose of the People's Front, then why don't the communists participate in the government? After all, it is to be expected that the laws against the Fascists would be applied more resolutely by People's Front ministers than by Right wing bourgeois ministers, who are half- or whole-hearted allies of the Fascists. This conclusion was indeed drawn in the last ministerial crisis by the social democrats, who declared themselves ready to form a government in the event that the communists also participated. Yet the communists refused, and they suddenly raised against Blum, the socialist leader, the accusation of "Millerandism", of class-collaboration! "Respect for the principles of traditional socialism demands the rejection of participation in the government," declares Duclos, in *l'Humanité*, who is suddenly concerned with traditional socialism but not with the proletarian revolution. What is this to mean? The communists, who boast every day of being the initiators of the People's Front, the communists, who still speak of their Radical "friends" in *l'Humanité*, the communists, who give their votes in the Chamber to Sarraut (when Sarraut put the question of confidence for the first time, the communists abstained from voting; the second time—after the Fascist assault on Leon Blum—they were already voting for Sarraut), these communists suddenly accuse the social democrats—who have never been ought but Millerandists—of Millerandism! Ah, but these gentlemen are masters of deceit! They know that, in ministerial positions, they will be unable to go any further than the Radicals, i.e., the bourgeoisie, permit them to go, that they will be unable to realize a single proletarian demand, that they will not even be able to dissolve the Fascist leagues in reality—and not merely on paper. They therefore postpone the taking over of power by the People's Front in accordance with the formula coined by Dimitroff at the Seventh Congress (which gained the applause of the S.A.P., moreover) with regard to the time: "When the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie is already sufficiently disorganized and paralyzed so that the bourgeoisie is incapable of preventing the formation of a government of struggle against reaction and Fascism." Since the days of Marx and Engels, but above all since Lenin's time, it has always been taken for granted by communists that a disorganization and paralyzing of the bourgeois state appa-

ratus is the signal for the armed uprising of the proletariat. But in the era of Stalin-Dimitroff-Thorez, all the formulæ out of the vocabulary of Leninism acquire a positively treacherous content. How is the bourgeois state apparatus to be disorganized and paralyzed if the People's Front policy of the workers' parties renounces any attack upon this state apparatus? If the communists for the sake of the friendship between the General Staff and Moscow, give up all propaganda in the army? If the workers' parties most resolutely resist the arming of the proletariat and stab in the back any strike that breaks out on the pretext that it is a "Fascist provocation"? In reality, the Dimitroff formula—which is chewed and re-chewed by the journalists of *l'Humanité* in one form or another—conceals the greatest betrayal imaginable, the betrayal of the German social democracy in 1918-1919. That is, should proletarian mass uprisings occur despite the treacherous policy of the S.P. and C.P., which would paralyze the bourgeois state apparatus, then the "communists", together with the social democrats and the bourgeois Radicals would form the "People's Front government" in order to save the state apparatus and to restore "law and order".

The objection will be raised by those who let themselves be blinded by the election successes of the People's Front: All this may be true, yet the People's Front is preventing the victory of Fascism in France. This is an illusion which Marx characterized as "parliamentary cretinism". The successes of the People's Front are sham successes in the truest sense of the word. If the People's Front has at its disposal nothing but ballots and empty fists, the Fascists, on the other hand, are not so naïve. Here you find revolvers, carbines, machine guns, and even flying squadrons. Colonel la Rocque is preparing the civil war in the most modern style. The *Croix de Feu* already represents a tremendous civil war force. And while the workers' parties abandon all agitation in the army, the Fascists do not abandon their agitation among the officers. Let the People's Front wallow in its sham successes, let it succumb to the illusion that the bourgeois state will cut off one of its own legs—the Fascist civil war troops—but the Fascists are preparing for their hour. And the workers, doped by the People's Front tactic, will confront them without arms or defense. In great social crises, disputed questions are no longer settled with ballots, but with cannons, machine guns and airplanes. The bourgeoisie and the Fascists are preparing for this dispute, while the S.F.I.O. and the C.P.F. are disarming the proletariat by their People's Front policy. The end can only be a catastrophe.

Fortunately, a force is rising in France which sees this picture clearly before its eyes. The Bolshevik-Leninist group and the Revolutionary Socialist Youth which is closely connected with it, are conducting a sharp struggle against the policy of class fraternization, against the alliance with the Radicals, for the formation of proletarian unity committees (Soviets), for preparing the general strike, for the arming of the proletariat, for the building up of a new revolutionary party. They have at their disposal today but a few thousand organized supporters. But their ranks are consolidating daily. Closely connected with the masses, they are fighting *inside* the People's Front against the *policy* of the People's Front. In the demonstration of February 16, they were the only ones who poured a drop of wormwood into the toasting goblet of the government head, Sarraut. Their slogan was: "Down with the Sarraut government!" The latter complained about it in parliament and *l'Humanité*, loyal to the régime, characterized our comrades as "provocateurs".

The fate of France—which means of Europe, under present conditions—depends for the next decade upon whether this vanguard, the French section of the Fourth International, will succeed

in bringing decisive masses under its influence in time, and in giving a different turn to events. Never has history put before a small vanguard, dependent exclusively upon its own strength, a more tremendous and harder task.

We German emigrants have still another word to say about the French situation. At the 8th Congress of the French C.P. which took place a few weeks ago, Thorez—whose secretaries are apparently busy digging up Marx and Lenin quotations that can be abused in a patriotic spirit—quoted the concluding sentence from Marx's criticism of Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie*:

"If all the internal conditions are fulfilled, the day of the German resurrection will be heralded by the crowing of the Gallic cock."

Let us answer Thorez that we—like the Bolsheviks who decisively

rejected the aid of the Hohenzollerns, offered by traitors à la Scheidemann, in the struggle against Czarism—renounce the aid of French imperialism in the struggle against Hitler barbarism. Should our French comrades, however, succeed in leading the French proletariat to victory, in establishing the new Commune, then the quotation from Marx again acquires its deep revolutionary sense, then the crowing of the Gallic cock will herald the resurrection day of German freedom. And above the ruins of the Hitler Realm and of French imperialism will rise the red banner of the Fourth International.

Walter HELD

COPENHAGEN, March 4, 1936.

What Is this Business Revival?

THE UPTURN in the economic cycle is now unmistakable.

Since about the middle of 1933 the business indices began to show a rise; some sharp fluctuations followed, but on a whole this period records an almost continuous upward trend. This revival is not experienced by the United States alone; it is world wide. As a matter of fact, the statistics of industrial production gains place several countries ahead of the United States, ranging somewhat in the following order: Japan, the Scandinavian countries, Italy and Great Britain. Insofar, however, as the perspectives of world economy are concerned, the question of recovery in the United States is of major importance.

The crisis was world wide in its nature and in its devastating effects, although not uniform in its manifestations in the various countries. Similarly, the present trends toward recovery are of a universal character. No more proof than this is needed to verify the fact that the business cycle still continues as the "normal" mechanism of capitalist development. Still, it cannot assure anticipations of new prosperity peaks emerging in their alluring splendor on the road ahead. Such assurances are not to be found in the present economic trends.

The World War upset many previously accepted calculations; it destroyed the "normalcy" of the regular upward and downward movements in industry and finance, and interrupted the course established by the requirements of world economy. Now, in spite of a number of difficulties and artificial barriers, world economy again proves its powerful reality. And again, the dominant position occupied by the American sector within this general world framework stands out more clearly. Even in the question of applying Sanctions against Italy, the League of Nations' powers found occasion to bewail the futility of actions not participated in by the United States. Notions of national seclusion and permanent economic self-sufficiency have suffered shipwreck more than once. In their place we have, as an established fact, the universal interdependence of nations, threatened once again—to be sure—with a major interruption, with a new world war. And the further extension of the present business revival will be most seriously affected by such a perspective. War preparations account today in a large measure for the wheels of industry being set into motion in a number of countries. This lends a profound emphasis to the capitalist nature of the recovery so far attained. In the case of an imminent major conflict for the redivision of the world, there can be no doubt that the course of the economic trends will again smash all calculations.

The lowest point of the crisis seems to have been reached about the early part of 1933. Now, with the end of 1935, the exuberant

reports appear: In the United States production of steel ingots reached the largest volume last year since 1930. Automobile production is the largest since 1929. Railroad freight traffic is the heaviest in five years, or since 1930. Electrical power production last year set an all-time high record, surpassing even 1929. Farm income last year, as estimated by the government, was the largest since 1931. At the end of 1935 bank deposits in all national banks mounted above 24 billion dollars, or about the same as the all-time high record reached on Dec. 31, 1928. Wholesale commodity prices were in an uptrend throughout the world, and in the United States the index has been raised from the low level of 52 ruling in 1932 to remain stabilized at approximately 80 throughout the last year. Industrial corporation profits, as calculated by the National City Bank, were the highest since 1930. Stocks were at highest levels since 1931; that was also true of corporation bond averages. Since June, 1932, the low point in the stock market, the market valuation of listed stocks on the New York Stock Exchange has risen from \$15,633,000,000 to more than \$43,000,000,000.

Undeniably, these are signs pointing toward recovery. But, in quoting the above figures, and for that matter, in quoting any figures of economic development, it should be borne in mind that the figures of the various statistical agencies differ and it is well nigh impossible, in the space allotted, to give the source in every instance. On the whole, however, the differences do not upset the general trend, and that holds true also for the figures showing the reverse side of the recovery medal. Turning to this reverse side we find that a further perusal of reports bring out the dreadfully, monstrous contrast of labor's position, when compared to that of capital, in this general picture.

In practically all major respects the ravages of the crisis continue to pursue the masses of the exploited with unmitigated relentlessness. Thus, in face of the crushing weight of unemployment, a survey made by the A. F. of L. finds that from Jan., 1935 to Dec., 1935, the average working week of employed industrial workers had increased from 38½ to 40½ hours. Since 1929 the productivity of labor, measured per man-hour, is estimated to have increased 25% or more, (some estimates place this figure as high as 40%), or as it is stated by the same survey covering last year alone, the workers in industry increased their output 14% with a gain in employment of only 4%. In this difference of 10% is reflected the increased productivity by longer working-hours, by speed-up devices and by introduction of labor saving machinery. The A. F. of L. survey further maintains that between July and December alone hourly wages dropped from 56.8 to 55.9 cents. Looking at the general trend of the working class standard of

living we get perhaps the most clear picture from a composite index presented by the New York Federal Reserve Bank. Its estimate shows a comparison of increase of cost of living for industrial workers to gains of real wages for labor in manufacturing industry. The trend of the cost of living was: 1933 plus 5.6, 1934 plus 4.3, 1935 plus 3.3; the trend of real wages was: 1933 plus 9.1, 1934 plus 3.1 and 1935 minus 1.5.

Real wages, however, can be estimated only for workers who have jobs. What has become of the working class standard of living when measured on the basis of the large percentage of the workers still remaining unemployed and subsisting either on the dole or on the meager returns from relief work? No composite index ventures to give such estimates. And a picture of the actual condition could be drawn only when the real meaning of the enormous numbers, who search in vain for jobs, is fully comprehended. In regard to this situation the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us that while in 1935 the total employment in manufacturing industries, and the total payrolls, averaged over the twelve months, were higher than in any year since 1930, employment was still 22% lower than in 1929; weekly payrolls were 36% lower. At the end of 1935, according to A. F. of L. estimates, which are generally accepted as reliable, and certainly cannot be said to err on the side of exaggeration, the unemployed army numbered still not less than 11,401,000. During January and February, 1936, these ranks were further swelled to a total of more than twelve and a half million. Nearly 20,000,000 people have still nothing else to depend upon for their subsistence than their small relief rations. And now the chief New Dealers further estimate that, on the basis of present industrial efficiency, a return to the 1929 production level would still leave 20% employable workers without jobs. Turned into simple figures, this would mean between 8 and 10 million unemployed under conditions of the highest prosperity peak ever known in the United States.

The main reason for this condition must be sought in the fact that in the general process of capitalist production the capitalization of surplus-values created by labor and appropriated by the exploiters does not proceed along the lines of an equal proportion between constant capital and variable capital. Constant capital grows more rapidly, and the disproportion to which this gives rise increases with greater strides than the growth of the total capital that is set into motion. Thanks to the growing application of machine technique the need for living labor diminishes relatively and the number of employed workers decline compared to the total capital investment.

So long as a certain rate of expansion of industry can be maintained, as for example in the period between the Civil War and the World War, when industrial expansion is claimed to have averaged about 5% per annum, each new expansion would create new employment possibilities. However, during the last couple of decades this rate of expansion began to decline. Correspondingly the relative decrease in the number of workers employed tended to become transformed into an absolute decrease of the number of workers necessary to the process of production. In one concrete instance this is already borne out through a report put out by the National Industrial Conference Board which shows from May to June, last year, industrial production increased 1% while unemployment simultaneously increased 1½%. There may have been, during this particular month, certain auxiliary factors which contributed to this result; nevertheless the illustration shows the general trend.

It is clear that new and profound changes have taken place in American national economy during the recent years. The question of recovery, and of a possible subsequent prosperity, can therefore not be answered merely by referring to past analogies. Before the

present epoch each turn in the business cycle from its crisis phase witnessed new and unparalleled expansion of industry, of finance and of the markets. A mighty field for capital investment and for utilization of natural resources was available within the borders of the forty-eight states. From the time of the Civil War each industrial upswing became epitomized by new expansion of railroad transportation. The boom following the World War saw a particular extension of automotive transportation. And so commonly accepted is the idea that new industries can continue to emerge, and to expand sufficiently, to take off the constantly developing oversupply of human labor, that bourgeois economists indulge in speculation about where these industries are to be found. At the present time this speculation has proven futile. Not only is there no such magic industry in sight, but the present recovery phase has not been due to any new expansion of industry or due to any newly found markets. Still the tendencies of the business revival are unmistakable, but it is essential to understand their real nature.

Before the economic upturn could be assured it was necessary for capitalism to restore confidence in the continuity of the process of reproduction. And since the realization of surplus-values provides the only inducement to what is popularly called the possibility of profitable investments the necessary steps are taken in that direction. It was accomplished essentially by raising the rate of exploitation of labor. Economies of various kinds were instituted in industry to lower the cost of production, beginning with a low wage level, extending to the lengthening of working hours and increasing the speed-up of labor and of machine technique. Efforts were made to effect a rise of commodity prices and to stabilize the price level in order to stimulate the profit incentive. Credits were expanded, outstanding capital values liquidated and stock capital increased. These are among the well known capitalist methods of revival. However, in this instance the process could not be set into motion entirely on its own accord. It needed the assistance of state intervention.

This state intervention assumed two main forms. On the one side were the measures of regulation of industry and finance and on the other the large scale government spending by way of subsidy to corporate enterprise and expenditures for relief purposes. In both of these aspects the state intervention was of primary importance as an early impulse to the business revival. Moreover, it fitted admirably into the whole pattern of capitalist revival. Let us attempt to trace its course: First the banking holiday of March, 1933, wrote finis to almost 10,000 "feeble" banks. Many of these banks had served as the main support of a number of small industrial and commercial enterprises, which also went under, through bankruptcies, etc., and the elimination of all these "weak" structures paved the way for further consolidation. The devaluation of the dollar was followed by an uptrend in commodity prices, which brought new returns on surplus-values produced and provided a beginning for new capital investments. Through the passage of the Monetary Act of January, 1934, whereby the dollar was stabilized at 59.06 cents gold, the sharp fluctuations of the inflation process came to a stop and a new impulse was provided. Shortly before this the NRA emerged. Despite its labor relations provisions, so much detested by most of the big employers, the NRA became a bridge for them to cross over toward the business revival, before they burned it behind them. This illustrates once again, clearly and precisely, the dialectics of capitalist production. Capitalism held on to the measures of the NRA when it was hardest hit by the rough seas of depression, but once the safe shores were reached, its demise served as a greater impulse to renew the untrammelled competition for profits. Freed from the restraints of the labor relations provisions, the big employers lost no time in

lengthening working hours, slashing wages and speeding up labor and machine technique in order to lower the cost of production. It would, of course, be an exaggeration to say that these various measures of state intervention have been responsible for the degree of recovery attained. The New Dealers like to present their case in this manner, but such a contention cannot stand up. The main significance of these measures lies in the manner in which they served to aid effectively the general process of capitalist revival.

The second form of state intervention, the government spending for the priming of the pump, deserves special notice. Funds were allotted not only for relief purposes, but industry and finance was actually put on the dole. Corporate enterprise received its share through the enormous loans advanced by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which since its inception under President Hoover has mounted up to the stupendous sum of approximately eight billion dollars. This is almost double the amount spent for unemployment relief. During the crisis, however, loan capital performs the function of paying for previously contracted obligations to meet interests and amortization requirements. The loans advanced in that period went almost exclusively toward the sustenance of corporate enterprise, toward the liquidation of outstanding capital values and they were not turned into productive capital. For the major part of the R.F.C. activities this is the case, and while capitalism naturally considers this to be an important prerequisite to an upturn, this aspect of government spending could only later become a direct spur toward the business revival. Out of the magnificent paper values created by the R.F.C. loans the banks alone received not less than 555 million dollars for which they issued brand new preferred stocks. The railroad magnates received from the R.F.C. between 550 and 600 million dollars, most of which was also cashed in by the financiers in payment of interests and maturities, for during the years 1932, 1933 and 1934, according to the Railway Association's reports, the annual expenditures for maintenance of way were on an average \$510,000,000 less than in 1929, a decrease of 59½%, and \$585,000,000 less for maintenance of equipment, a percentage decrease of 48½. Owing to this the increased net operating income lifts the railroad magnates "out of the red"; but the steel corporations still complain that buying for railroad equipment was extremely light in 1935.

State intervention undoubtedly had its most far reaching consequences in relation to agriculture. In turn the increased purchasing power in the agricultural regions—which is indisputable—constitutes one of the important pillars in the present business revival. But this fact alone also illustrates one of its serious weaknesses owing to the purely temporary nature of farm "recovery" arising in the midst of a general and protracted agricultural crisis. Industry has attained an overwhelming preponderance in the United States, as compared to agriculture, and the benefits of the increased purchasing power in the farm belts have gone primarily into production of consumable goods, outside of what went directly to the banks in payment of interests and principals on farm mortgages. And what holds true for industry applies also to agriculture—the methods pursued in attaining economic improvements have been typically capitalist in their nature.

In order to work off the huge "oversupply" of agricultural products so that the price structure could be strengthened, the Rooseveltian program proceeded by deliberate design to restrict acreage of cultivation, plowing under crops, slaughtering pigs and cattle together with outright government buying of wheat and cotton at prices above the world market level. In return for this restriction of acreage and wanton destruction a subsidy went to the farm regions on the allotment plan, mainly to the well-to-do farmers, and paid out of a processing tax, derived from the higher prices to the

consumers, collected by this unique method of check-off on increased consumer's prices through the packing house corporations and the wheat, cotton and tobacco merchants. As a result, the huge "carry over" of wheat, whose rise from 128,000,000 bushels in 1929 to 383,000,000 in 1932 had cut down seriously on merchant's profits, was reduced to 152,000,000. Gross income for farm products, as estimated by the Agricultural Department, increased from \$5,337,000,000 in 1932 to \$7,800,000,000 in 1935. Farm operating cost was increased only by a half billion dollars. The index of average per unit purchasing power of the farmers, which fell from a standard of 100 in July, 1929, to 57 in February 1933, stood at 92 in November, 1935. Naturally this increase in farmers' purchasing power, although definitely temporary in its nature, became one of the main-springs in the present business revival. It stimulated the profit incentive in industry and finance, not the least of which was the return of the hundreds of millions of dollars of the impounded processing taxes to the agricultural products and packing house corporations with the demise of the A.A.A. Agriculture, however, is becoming ever more subordinated to industry and finance and it experiences an upturn without its chronic instability and crisis being solved. Its further development is the more closely bound up with the question of recovery of American national economy as a whole.

As a result of all these developments, beginning with the very first steps taken in the direction of creating the possibility of profitable investments, industrial production began its upward movement. While this is not yet so strongly marked in heavy industry the general trend is clearly visible. The steel industry, from its lowest point in 1932, in which its total output was only one fourth of its 1929 total, passed last year at 50% of capacity production. Not less than 25% of the steel output of last year went into automobile production, the highest proportion ever reached by the automobile industry. As could be expected, a certain part of the steel output went into the farm implement industry to satisfy the increased demand on the farms made possible by the processing tax subsidy. But a more lasting foundation for business stability, say the steel manufacturers, requires a resumption of such activities as railroad construction and equipment, pipe lines, water mains, power plants, building, industrial plant rehabilitations, machinery replacements, highway construction, etc. Even the automobile manufacturers, who report gleefully their juicy profit increases, complain that most of the motor vehicle buying, since the beginning of the business revival, was of the replacement order type. Foreign markets absorbed 565,000 motor vehicles out of the total of more than four million produced in 1935. Both figures represent a substantial gain over those of the lowest depression years; but the replacement character of this increase in production is attested by the fact that the total motor vehicles registered for operation in 1935 were still more than half a million units under the peak achieved in 1930. The owners of this industry, among the most prosperous since the business revival, are worried about the problem of new expansion.

What stands out on the whole with ever more marked clarity in this present business revival is the fact that it is primarily due to government spending, most directly affecting consumption goods industries. This the bankers and the corporate interests recognize to be an "unfortunate" weakness that can be offset only by serious movements in the capital goods industries. At the same time they look askance to the enormous cost of government, to the unbalanced federal budget and to the mounting national deficits which have taken a jump since 1930 of \$14,000,000,000. These financiers are worried about future heavy taxation. They point to the fact that the administration's promises of rigid economy and drastic

reduction of government expenditures have brought the exact opposite results. In 1934 the taxes, municipal, county, state and federal, brought a total revenue of approximately \$9,500,000,000 while the total cost of local, state and national government had mounted to \$15,500,000,000. This latter figure was about four billion dollars above the 1929 cost of government. The federal government is therefore compelled to go in for constantly heavier borrowings.

For obvious reasons the financiers and the big industrialists want a stop put to any further state intervention insofar as this implies regulations of industry, provisions of labor relations and heavy relief expenditures for the unemployed. Continued subsidy to industry they will insist upon and let the government take the risk; but insofar as heavy relief expenditures are concerned, they fear the loss of a ready-made, cheap labor market. On the side of the already accomplished credit expansion, the ever increasing liquidity of money capital together with the continuing decline in the interest rate drive straight ahead toward a new credit boom bound for the blue sky of the financiers' heaven—easy money will be available for borrowing purposes to stimulate the capital goods industries. New inflation will be in prospect as this boom starts on its merry course toward a new crash. Meanwhile replacements of obsolescent machinery will begin in earnest and the installment of more efficient high-speed equipment will further reduce the physical cost of production. We shall again witness an acceleration of the process of accumulation of capital and a sharpening of the contradictions of capitalist production, because such a development again reduces relatively the number of workers necessary to the process of production. Such is the inevitable course of an economic system, whose present recovery phase can be characterized only as a capitalist recovery in which the masses do not participate.

Finance capital has already strengthened its grip on the levers of production and distribution. Profits and dividends rise in every field of activity. There is no reason why the replacements in industry, and to a certain extent new construction, should not permit it a further considerable economic advance. However, it is not likely that this advance can extend to the point of changing the present decline in the rate of expansion of industry. Such a question depends now entirely upon the problem of redivision of the world and on the ability of American capitalism to reduce the ration in world economy of its rival powers. Foreign trade, according to figures compiled by the Department of Commerce, shows an increase in export for the last fiscal year, over the preceding year of nearly 8%. The favorable balance of export over imports, amounting to a total of \$335,000,000, records a gain over the year before. But, as reported by the League of Nations Review of World Trade, America's share in international trade, which during 1929 represented 13.84%, had in 1934 dropped to 9.53%. Moreover, the position of the United States as a creditor nation still meets certain obstacles by the defaults in payments and by the difficulties still in the way of favorable foreign investments. For this reason a large portion of the government relief expenditures went to new armament constructions under the pretentious name of allotments for public works. And for this reason also the new budget of military and naval expenditures has reached the stupendous sum of one billion dollars.

American capitalism is now experiencing a business revival without having appreciably reduced the tremendous unemployment and with the permanency of the unemployed army definitely established. A concrete illustration will easily remove even the slightest doubts on this score. Taking as our base the year 1935, we find by far the greatest economic advance of any one single year since the lowest point of the crisis. But who? which class benefited from

this advance? This is for us the important question, and it is the only way to pose it if it is to make sense.

The answer to this question is given conclusively by facts and figures. Standard Statistics, for instance, points out that the profits of 237 large industrial corporations exceeded 1934 by 48%, and it adds the following significant comment: "In the first eleven months of 1935 there were 1,220 favorable dividend changes by important companies, including increases, extras, resurrections and initial payments. One compilation places total dividend payments for the period at \$2,999,000,000." Contrasted to these amazing gains figures available for industries employing 13,800,000 workers show that the drop in hourly wages from July to December from 56.8 to 55.9 cents represents a total loss of buying power amounting to \$5,354,000 per week for these workers. Obviously this downward trend can only be further accelerated by the W.P.A. system of reduced wage rates. And yet, this tells only a small part of the story. When we turn to the unemployment statistics once more the frightful conditions of the working class as a whole, contrasted to the gains of capitalism, become so much more glaring. The A. F. of L. monthly bulletin now announces that total unemployment in February this year stood at 12,550,000 compared to 12,764,000 in February of 1935. Could more decisive proof of the permanency of unemployment be found? During a year of 48% gains in profits and an increase in the volume of industrial production, as presented by the Federal Reserve Board's index, of about 15%, the unemployed army remains practically stationary. To visualize in their entirety the frightful consequences of such a situation one must turn to a perspective filled with inevitable furious class conflicts of record breaking magnitude.

The main reason for this crying disproportion between the actual growth of production and the failure to reduce the number of unemployed is, as mentioned before, the increased application of machine technique and diminishing number of workers employed compared to the total capital investments. For a practical illustration of this fact out of real life, the automobile industry, which is typical of the present revival, furnishes a very clear example. General Motors corporation net profits last year amounted to \$167,226,510, against \$94,769,131 in 1934, a gain of 76.4%. The corporation's payrolls last year reached a total of \$323,030,599, compared with \$263,204,225 in 1934, a gain of 22.7%. The total number of workers employed by the corporation last year was 211,712, against 191,157 in 1934, a gain of only 10.8%. In these figures we have a graphic illustration: Net profits increased 76.4%, total payrolls increased 22.7%, largely accounted for by an average increase in working hours of 11%, while employment increased only 10.8%. However, when we examine further into a few practical details of the typical disproportions of capitalist production cited above, the growing application of machine technique and its displacement of human labor becomes a great deal clearer. These examples we take from a report submitted by Leon Henderson, who headed Roosevelt's N.I.R.B. committee to investigate the automotive industry. Among other things he states: In 1930, 250 men finished 100 motor blocks in a unit of time. Now 19 men finish 250 blocks in the same time. In 1929, the labor cost of one manufacturer's door was \$4.00. In 1935 it was 15 cents. Since 1929, body framing has dropped from \$3.00 to 30 cents in labor cost, hand finishing from \$3.00 to 20 cents and trimming from \$12.00 to \$4.00. When used full time, an automatic buffer in a hardware plant can displace 150 men. A new photoelectric inspecting machine dispenses with 10 to 20 human inspectors.

Of course, the automotive industry is not the only example of this labor displacing process. In the steel industry the increased efficiency of machine technique similarly takes its toll. The modern

continuous strip-sheet steel mill, twenty-one hundred feet in length, with 32,000 H.P. of connected motors is rolling sheet steel, ninety-six inches wide, at the rate of 760 feet each minute. A few men on the control bridge tend the switches of this automatic giant of the steel industry, eliminating in each case hundreds of men formerly employed.

Even the most frightfully exploited section of the United States population, the Southern share croppers, are not exempted from the advance of the labor displacing machine technique. Plucking by hand the snowy cotton from the cotton balls is arduous toil and seldom does a man average more than hundred pounds in eight hours. That was yesterday. Now a newly invented cotton picker, propelled by an ordinary farm tractor, can pick the cotton from two rows simultaneously and accomplish approximately 3,000 pounds of picked cotton in eight hours. Many more and similar examples could be adduced from the development of capitalist production to illustrate the fact that in this process as a whole excess capital exists alongside of an excess of population and that they are conditioned on one another.

These trends of economic development have not remained without effect upon the working class movement. History has repeated itself. Usually, almost from the inception of the American labor movement, its course of development would follow lines parallel-

ling the rise and fall of the economic cycle. In times of greatest industrial advance, when capitalism reaped the benefits of its prosperity and the cost of living rose, labor, determined to maintain its standard of living, engaged in strikes, sometimes political in character, to gain this end. Today the American working class again battles to maintain its standard of living. The strike movements have shown a steady rise in volume, in militancy and in determination since the lowest point of the crisis. In 1932 there were only 808 strikes involving a total of 242,826 workers. In 1933 the strike movements rose to a total of 1,562, involving 812,137 workers; in 1934 to 1,742 strikes, involving 1,353,912 workers and in 1935 the total estimated strikes were 1,819 involving 1,128,000 workers.

More significant, however, than the growing number of strikes and the growing number of workers involved is the general character of these struggles, linked up, as they are, with a growing consciousness of the need of union organization. Some important lessons from the crisis have penetrated the broad layers of the labor movement and are beginning to bear fruit. The conditions for union organization are favorable and this coming period may witness the beginnings toward the creation of a class movement of the American workers.

Arne SWABECK

The Function of the New Deal

A Criticism and a Reply

DEAR Sirs:

I have just read "American Intellectuals and the Crisis", by George Novak, in your February issue. I seldom protest against misrepresentation in critical discussion, but this is such a flagrant case that I cannot overlook it. It is even worse than the review of *The Coming American Revolution* which was printed in the *New Masses*.

The trick of distorting the position of an author by quoting a single passage without its context is an old one; the most charitable interpretation in this case is that the writer never read the book, but picked up the quotation elsewhere.

When I said that the dependence of the New Deal on "the forefront of the white collar workers, the productive professions" gave us a foretaste of a shift in class power, and that these professions have a superior competence in matters of technique and social theory, I was contrasting them, of course, not with the industrial workers or any claimants to the rôle of the forefront of the proletariat, but with the owners of industry, the finance capitalists and their political representatives. The entire burden of the book is that the white-collar workers (including the professions) and the industrial workers suffer from the same evils and must unite to remove them.

Mr. Novack is 100 percent wrong in saying that "George Soule and the *New Republics* saw in the professional kitchen cabinet the brain which they had called for not long before." I stated exactly the contrary both in the *New Republic* and in *The Coming American Revolution*—the main conclusion from which is that the New Deal is not social-economic planning and that no such attempt can succeed under capitalism.

Very truly yours,
George SOULE

* * *

Dear Comrades:

I would like first to deal with the personal questions raised by Mr. Soule. Let me assure him that I had no intention of misrepresenting his views in order to score a point. Such cheap trickery may be the stock-in-trade of the *New Masses* but it should have no place in a Marxian magazine like THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. The best theoreticians of our movement always endeavored to acquire a thorough knowledge of their opponent's views; to characterize them correctly in their criticism; and to distinguish the precise shade of opinion they represented.

If I am guilty of falsification in this instance, it was not, as Mr. Soule suggests, because I relied upon second-hand sources for my information. The *New Republic* under Mr. Soule's editorship was my political nursemaid. Ever since we parted political company a few years ago, I have closely followed the progress of Mr. Soule's opinions as they appeared in its pages. Before writing my article, I carefully read his book twice, and read it again upon receiving his letter. After due consideration, I cannot see that I have misrepresented his views or need to alter my interpretation of them. I believe that I have faithfully reflected his views, and that his wrath is not directed at me but at the reflection of his former features in the glass.

Since we are completely at loggerheads, the reader will have to decide for himself between us. Perhaps it will help clarify the issues involved if I amplify my cursory treatment of Mr. Soule's political development in the light of his objections.

Mr. Soule's first complaint is that I have distorted his attitude toward the Brain Trust by tearing a single passage from its context. Let us then consider the entire section from which the quotation is taken and see whether I have misinterpreted his meaning. In this discussion of the character and accomplishments of the Brain Trust, Mr. Soule undertakes to defend them against the critics of the extreme Right and the extreme Left. Both the reac-

tionaries, he says, who regarded the Brain Trusters as Bolshevik conspirators attempting to impose socialism on an unsuspecting people, and the Stalinists, who saw them as an instrument of a capitalist plot to establish a Fascist dictatorship, were wrong. The Brain Trust was in fact neither the one thing nor the other.

What then, according to Mr. Soule, was it? It was a completely confused and heterogeneous group of well-meaning people with different qualifications, backgrounds, interests and ideas, who were constantly at cross-purposes, not only with each other, but with the dominant forces in the Roosevelt régime. In this respect it reflected the main features of the administration itself. "Whatever the result, the administration was not a purposeful unit which had as its goal the strengthening of capitalism. There were within it Right and Left wings; it was a battleground between opposite interests and opinions."

Mr. Soule forgets to mention the important fact that all the conflicts of opinion and interests within the administration revolved around the methods of reforming the structure of capitalism; all were agreed on the necessity of saving it from ruin. The big bankers and industrialists wanted it reconstructed in their interests; the Brain Trusters in the interests of the middle classes. A short struggle took place between the two forces which ended in the utter rout of the liberal intellectuals.

What did Mr. Soule conclude from this? "This sort of endeavor may [!] have the weakness of liberalism; its lack of well-defined plan or method and its belief that fundamentally diverse interests may be made to coöperate may [!] lead to a temporary victory of the old order." This was written when the New Deal was over a year old and it was possible to determine its direction and assay its results. Mr. Soule is still reluctant to admit that this is precisely what had happened, although the facts keep forcing him to that conclusion.

If the above statements of Mr. Soule had been more positively expressed and more firmly based upon a Marxian analysis of the failure of the Brain Trust, it would coincide with the substance of our criticism—before the fact. We did not believe with the Stalinists that the combined actions of the Brain Trust, or even of the Roosevelt administration, constituted "a calculated plot to bring upon the triumph of reaction". As Marxists we were not concerned with the conscious motives of these politicians, but with the political content and direction of their policies. The liberal intellectuals who set themselves up as presidential advisors may have been, as Mr. Soule is careful to point out, "deeply sincere". But he fails to explain that they were also, and more significantly, completely muddle-headed and powerless to reform capitalism except in the interests of their masters. For all the books they had read and written, for all the bright ideas in their heads, they just didn't know what they were doing nor what they were struggling against.

Like gallant Don Quixotes, they armed themselves with wooden swords and set out to capture the capitalist state. Instead of overthrowing the owners of that citadel, the ogres of monopoly capital, they were themselves overthrown by them and made their captives. Instead of securing control of the government, they were from beginning to end controlled by it. They became, willy-nilly, first the catspaws, and finally the victims, of social forces much too powerful for them to conquer or outwit.

Mr. Soule played the part of Sancho Panza to these Don Quixotes. While they plunged into the fray in Washington, he stayed on the sidelines in New York, offering his friends advice through the pages of the *New Republic*, warning them of dangers, of the manœuvres of their enemies, etc. While he was dubious of

the outcome of the conflict, he believed—and, above all, hoped against hope—that the Brain Trust would be victorious. Alas, it was not to be. They were ingloriously vanquished.

Then again, like Sancho, in *The Coming American Revolution*, Mr. Soule held the basin in which they could wash their wounds and drop their tears. Do not be too harsh upon these unhappy warriors, he pleads at the end of this apology for the Brain Trust. "To condemn it as an unconscious cabal is to miss the chance for education which it presents. It is to falsify its place in history. It is to forgo the opportunity to mobilize opinion and action about the fundamental questions which the New Deal dramatizes."

We do not wish to forego any opportunities for political education. But what, to a Marxist, is the lesson to be learned from the experience of the Brain Trust? Precisely this, that it provided a minor demonstration of the truth of the Marxian axiom that all attempts to use the machinery of the bourgeois state to combat capitalism is Utopian in character and reactionary in its results. All efforts to reform the capitalist state from within instead of smashing it from without with the organized might of the revolutionary working class—whether by liberal reformists, socialists, or Stalinists—are doomed to failure. In this alone lies the political and historical significance of the Brain Trust.

Mr. Soule, however, sees much more in it than this, and what he sees is wrong and exceedingly dangerous in its implications. The New Deal, he contends, "gave us a foretaste of a shift in class power toward the forefront of the white-collar workers and the productive professions". I pointed out in my original article that it indicated nothing of the sort. At most, it indicated how the agents of monopoly capital will use such deluded petty bourgeois intellectuals in similar emergencies in the future, when, let us say, war or Fascism is on the order of the day.

The only way to prevent a recurrence of the fiasco is to understand clearly how and why the Brain Trust came to grief. Mr. Soule, in this book at least, had not yet done so. He attempts to palliate the miserable rôle of the Brain Trust on the ground that "they mobilized opinion and action about the fundamental questions which the New Deal dramatizes". This is utterly false. Instead of helping to mobilize the only effective opinion and action around the questions of security, peace, a better life confronting the American masses, which would be revolutionary labor opinion and action, these gentlemen completely obscured them by their policies of class coöperation. They fostered illusions in the minds of the masses about the real character of the Roosevelt régime by lending it a liberal complexion; they helped screen the drive of the monopoly capitalists to impose their starvation program upon the people. Such New Deal intellectuals as Leo Wolman even became direct agents of finance capital, helping it strangle strike after strike by fake arbitration. No amount of soft-soapng can wash them clean of this dirty work.

Mr. Soule believes that such people "have a superior competence in matters of technique and social theory". I cannot, in this connection, share his high regard for their political competence. He will doubtless himself today admit that in this case their technique was childish and their social theory unsound. He objects, however, that he was comparing them, not to the vanguard of the industrial workers, but to the political representatives of finance capital. Still, our estimates are diametrically opposed. Mr. Soule, in my opinion, grossly exaggerates the political intelligence of his liberal friends and underrates the capacities of our mutual enemy.

What do the facts prove? Both groups marched on Washington at the beginning of the Roosevelt Revolution. The owners of industry knew exactly what they wanted from the Democratic adminis-

tration and they managed in large measure to get it. Cravath, De Giersdorf, Swaine and Wood, the lawyers of the U. S. Steel Corporation, to take a single instance, drafted the code for the steel industry in their own offices and had it adopted by the N.R.A. The Brain Trusters, on the other hand, also outlined their fancy schemes and then saw them ignored, shelved, wrecked or eviscerated. Why shouldn't monopoly capital get what it needs, loans from the R.F.C., codes from the N.R.A., and what not? Isn't the government theirs? All "the forefront of the productive professional workers" could have expected to get in the end was the backside of the administration, which had sooner or later to turn its face toward its master.

* * *

Mr. Soule also complains that I misrepresented his views in regard to social planning under capitalism and the New Deal. The main conclusion of his writings in the *New Republic* and in *The Coming American Revolution* is, he says, "that the New Deal is not social-economic planning and that no such attempt can succeed under capitalism".

I am glad to have Mr. Soule confirm the fact that he no longer believes social planning to be possible under capitalism. But he neglects to state that such was not always his position during the period under consideration.

In tracing the political development of Mr. Soule and the body of liberal opinion he represented, I took two main points of reference: his article entitled "National Planning: The Problem of Creating a Brain for Our Economy," which appeared in the *New Republic* of March 4, 1931, and his book, *The Coming American Revolution*, published in June 1934. The first was written before Roosevelt's nomination; the second after the New Deal had been in operation over a year.

During that time Mr. Soule's position on the possibility of social planning under capitalism underwent a critical transformation, passing through three distinct phases, corresponding to three different stages in the objective political situation. In March, 1931, Mr. Soule believed—with certain doubts and reservations proper to his liberal position—that social planning was not only possible under capitalism, but even under a Republican or Democratic administration. The question that chiefly concerned him was whether the progressives he addressed himself to should take the lead in the movement. He was not very confident that the experiment would succeed, but he thought it might be put over, and, in any case, was worth trying.

In answering expected objections, he expressed himself as follows: "Progressives ought to be perfectly clear about their relationship to proposals of this sort. Such proposals are being made, and will continue to be made, whether we favor them or not. *They might, just conceivably, be put into practise by Republicans, or Democrats, or big industrialists.*" (My emphasis. G.N.)

Covering himself against criticism from the Left, he then stated: "The second objection will come from those who regard any proposal to set up control before the establishment of socialism either as a step toward a fascist dictatorship or as a muddle-headed liberal proposal for amelioration which cannot possibly work. The primary objective, they will say, in tones and emphasis varying according to the speaker, is to establish the power of the workers, or to abolish private ownership of the means of production, or to do away with the profit motive. The primary agency of change, they will declare, is the class struggle, whether in the economic or political realm. Nothing can be done so long as those who stand to gain either from lack of planning, or from planning solely in private interest, are in positions of power.

"I should not be greatly surprised if this prediction turned out to be correct. But it will not be accepted, in advance of trial, by many of those who must now be relied upon to support and carry out the planning and control. It is therefore more useful, for the time being, to regard such statements neither as true or untrue, but as hypotheses which may be tested only by experiment—or, if you prefer, as conclusions which can have a general force only as the result of social experience.

"In any case," he concluded, "there must be a body of opinion, or a group, or a party, which not only wants master planning but also has a clear idea of what it wants that planning to do, and is prepared to carry its program against opposition." (My emphasis. G. N.)

I have deliberately quoted at length so that Mr. Soule's position is presented without distortion. The reader should remember that Mr. Soule is a very cautious thinker, who invariably hedges about his statements with many qualifications, which not only make it difficult to determine his exact position but which also leave him the possibility of moving in two opposite directions. Despite his doubts and reservations, his attitude toward the problem of social planning under capitalism is clear. His approach was completely pragmatic. "Let us attempt the experiment; it may well prove to be impossible; but even if it fails, the experience will have been educative."

Two years later to a day the Roosevelt Revolution began. Here was a perfect laboratory for the experiment. Equipped with ideas gathered in large part from such sources as the *New Republic*, the Brain Trusters entered the administration, eager to put their plans into practise. Mr. Soule recognized some of the difficulties in their way but on the whole his attitude was one of critical coöperation. He was willing to extend a limited line of credit to the Roosevelt regime while his liberal friends were prominent in the enterprise. He backed them, and through them the administration, on a thousand-to-one chance that they might, "just conceivably", put over their policies and wrest control of the national corporation from the conservatives.

After a period of suspended judgment while he followed the progress of their struggle, he declared a vote of non-confidence in the New Deal and withdrew his qualified support; and delivered the following verdict: "The Roosevelt Revolution has come and gone; the noble experiment of the Brain Trusters has failed; the possibilities presented for the reconstruction of American society have been squandered; social planning is impossible under capitalism."

I do not know at what precise point Mr. Soule changed his mind and finally arrived at the conclusion that the New Deal experiment in social planning had given a negative result. That does not much matter. It is only necessary to recognize that he had shifted his position three times in three years before he became convinced that social planning was impossible under capitalism.

The Coming American Revolution was his funeral sermon over the grave of the New Deal. The text of his oration is: "The Roosevelt Revolution is dead; our hopes for liberal reform from monopoly capital lie buried with it; but let us not despair, fellow liberals and white-collar workers. We have the coming American Revolution to look forward to, which we will lead together with the industrial workers."

This is as it should be. The middle classes can play no independent political rôle in modern capitalist society. Having been rebuffed and disappointed by the capitalist régime, Mr. Soule advises liberals to turn towards the working class and conclude a political alliance with them. But the progressives will no more lead the one than the other—except to disaster.

The Coming American Revolution contains much perspicacious criticism of the New Deal together with mournful expressions of regret at its failure. But it is still full of liberal illusions and errors. For example, in the closing pages, Mr. Soule asks why the Roosevelt Revolution 'was not a real revolution. He answers in part in this fashion: "One of the principal reasons why it was not a revolution was that neither the President nor his advisers nor the people in general were *mentally* prepared to exercise real power over industry. They handed the system back to the old rulers, with enough help so that they were able to carry on." (My emphasis. G.N.)

This remarkably revealing passage casts a glaring light on Mr. Soule's position. He first implies that if the President, his advisers or "the people in general" had had the advantages of a correct education (possibly through reading the *New Republic* and following its advice) they might have been able to effect a social revolution. This is absurd and dangerous doctrine.

For the fact of the matter is, as Mr. Soule himself states, "they handed the system back to the old rulers, with enough help so that they were able to carry on." This is the old, old story reenacted a hundred times on the historical stage since the war in other countries under various forms and circumstances. The German social democrats passed the power over to Brüning who handed it over to Hitler; MacDonold placed the power in Baldwin's hands; Daladier bowed before Doumergue, and, like all liberal reformist governments, whatever their social basis or political form, the Roosevelt régime "handed the system back to the old rulers".

Again this was no surprise to the Marxists who remember the teachings of Lenin: "The economy of capitalist society is such that the ruling power can only be capital or the proletariat which overthrows it. Other forces there are none in the economics of this society." (*Works*, Vol. XVI, p. 217.) With the aid of the scientific methods of analysis and the wealth of historical experience at their disposal, the Marxists could predict that such would be the outcome of Roosevelt's policies and guide themselves and their followers accordingly.

Mr. Soule, however, is not a Marxist but a liberal. He could not say categorically that Roosevelt must act (consciously or unconsciously, it matters not) on all major questions as the agent of monopoly capital. He allowed himself to be momentarily deceived by the demagogic utterances Roosevelt was compelled to make in order to obtain the political support and trust of the workers and the middle classes. He had to learn by bitter experience what Marxists could have told him in advance. It is to his credit that he never adopted an uncritical attitude toward the Roosevelt administration and that he soon recognized its reactionary character. In this respect he compares favorably with many of his fellow liberals, and that is why I characterized him as a "hard-headed liberal" in my original article.

In his capacity as a liberal journalist, Mr. Soule speaks, quite consciously, as his letter suggests, for the most progressive section of the middle classes, the liberal intellectuals who constitute the vanguard of the professional and white-collar workers. In 1931 he formulated their faith in social planning as a means of reforming capitalism; in 1933 he expressed their hopes in the success of the Brain Trust; in 1934 he voiced their disillusion with the New Deal. Today in company with his fellow editors on the *New Republic* he is advocating another political program for these same people, the program of the "People's Front". I intend to deal with this question elsewhere. It suffices to state here that all the teachings of Marxism and all the historical experience of this century inform us that this particular panacea, which Mr. Soule has borrowed from the Stalinists, is as Utopian in character and can only be as reactionary in its outcome as such earlier experiments in liberal reformism, and even more disastrous in its consequences than their former belief in the possibility of social planning under capitalism.

* * *

I should like to end, as I began, on a personal note. Despite my irreconcilable opposition to Mr. Soule's ideas, I have in common with many others a high regard for his intellectual abilities. He has shown himself to be one of the most realistic and honest of the leaders of liberal thought in the United States. Until recently he has not allowed himself to become infected with the poison of Stalinism. Today, however, he finds himself in the same bed with them. Politics indeed makes strange bedfellows! The *rapprochement* is not of his making; he, as before, remains a pragmatist in philosophy; an institutionalist in economics; a progressive in politics. He remains true to the liberal faith; it is the Communist party that has gone over to his position.

In the past five years not a few liberal intellectuals have taken the road leading from liberalism to Marxism—and the procession is by no means ended. I, for one, would like to see Mr. Soule at the head of that procession. There exists a great historical precedent for such an action in the case of Franz Mehring, whose biography of Marx has just been published here. Until middle life Mehring was an intellectual opponent of Marxism and a political enemy of the German social democratic party. After having become convinced of the correctness of Marxism, he changed sides; became a member of the social democracy; and one of the outstanding Marxists. I hope the day will come when Mr. Soule decides to follow in Mehring's footsteps. To join the People's Front of the Stalinists, however, is to travel in the opposite direction. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, we must continue to combat and expose his false and dangerous ideas and clearly distinguish our banner from his.

George NOVACK

NEW YORK, Feb. 26, 1936

Marx and Feuerbach

THROUGHOUT the preceding studies the relationship between Marx and Feuerbach has received peripheral mention. In the following pages I wish to examine this relationship more closely, particularly the advance which Marx's work represented, according to his own conception, over Feuerbach. The foregoing has already made clear, I hope, that Marx, in the decisive years between 1841 and 1844, was a Feuerbachian—to be sure, with critical reservations. *Die Heilige Familie* was written in behalf of the philosophy of "real humanism"—phrase directly out of Feuerbach. In the unpublished papers of 1844, which appeared

under the title of *Philosophische-ökonomische Fragmenten* (in the *Gesamtausgabe*, Abt. I, Ed. 3, pp. 33-172) the Feuerbachian influence is even more perceptible.¹ And in the very manuscript in which he definitely breaks with Feuerbach, *die deutsche Ideologie*

¹ Consider such a typical passage as: "A consistently carried out naturalism or humanism distinguishes itself from idealism as well as materialism and at the same time unifies what is

true in both. We can also see that only naturalism is capable of grasping the acts of world history." (*Gesamtausgabe*, Abt. I, Bd. 3, p. 160.)

(1845-1846), we find a warm defense of Feuerbach against the attacks made upon him by Bruno Bauer and Max Stirner. Feuerbachian elements, not to mention characteristic modes of expression, abound even in the maturest works of Marx. Like Feuerbach, Marx calls for a reconstruction of philosophy as a method of approaching the practical problems of men. Like Feuerbach, he regards human beings in their empirical social contexts as the carriers of the cultural process. Like Feuerbach, he explains the false traditional conceptions of the world in terms of fetishistic expressions of activities unconsciously engaged in at different times and periods.

What fundamentally separates Marx from Feuerbach is his *historical* approach and his *concrete* analysis of those factors of social life which appear in Feuerbach only as abstractions. Another way of putting this is to say that Marx differs from Feuerbach even where he adopts Feuerbachian principles in the stress he places upon the dialectical method and the concrete application he makes of it. On several occasions he specifically reproaches Feuerbach for his lack of dialectic and goes so far as to attribute to him a share of the responsibility for the neglect by contemporaries of the *rational* kernel of Hegel's method.² Feuerbach had simply repudiated Hegel's philosophy without attempting to disengage Hegel's methodological insights from his systematic errors. Marx himself died before he could write the materialistic dialectic in which he had planned to criticize, in immanent detail, the logic of Hegel. But the methodology of his work as well as his explicit criticisms of Feuerbach suffice to provide the main outlines of his philosophy. Since Marx's criticism of Feuerbach preceded his own constructive achievements, they are of greater importance in tracing the development of Marx's thought.

The real significance of Marx's criticism of Feuerbach has not been adequately grasped by the overwhelming majority of his zealous and "orthodox" disciples. They have failed to understand Marx because to most of them the philosophy of Feuerbach has been a sealed book. Here as well as in other important works of Marx the very language used will mislead the reader unacquainted with the technical jargon of those whom Marx criticized. Because I believe that Marx's critical theses on Feuerbach represent *in nuce* a turning point in the history of philosophy, I propose to adopt a method of exposition which may strike the reader as pedantic but which will at least put him in a position where he can control my interpretations by the text of Marx's remarks. Instead of giving a discursive description of Marx's views, I shall draw upon relevant passages from *die deutsche Ideologie*.

Thesis I.:

"The chief defect of all previous materialism—including Feuerbach's—is that the object, reality, sensibility, is conceived only in the form of the object or as conception, but not as human sensory activity, practice (*Praxis*) not subjectively. That is why it happened that the *active* side [of the object], in opposition to materialism, was developed by idealism—but only abstractly, for idealism, naturally, does not know real, sensory activity as such. Feuerbach wants to recognize sensory objects which are really differentiated from objects of thought, but he does not conceive human activity itself as an objective activity. Consequently in the *Essence of Christianity*, he regards only the theoretical attitude as the truly human one, while practise is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-Jewish form. Hence he does not grasp the significance of "revolutionary", of practical-critical, activity"

There are two different points made by Marx here which must be noted and clarified. The first is Marx's criticism against all

materialisms from Democritus to Feuerbach; the second, is his criticism of the attempted Feuerbachian solution of the difficulty which Feuerbach in common with all other materialists faces. The first raises the question to what extent the mind, or since Marx, like Feuerbach, does not separate the mind from the body—to what extent *man* is active in knowing. The second presents the distinctively Marxian conception of *Praxis*.

Marx was a close student of ancient and modern materialism. His dissertation concerned itself with the difference between the Epicurean and the Democritean philosophies of nature. He was at home, as his short excursion in *die Heilige Familie* into the history of materialism shows, with modern materialisms. He could trace down to its finest nuances the influence of Cartesian rationalism and Locke's empiricism upon French medical theory out of which the materialistic sensationalism of the Encyclopædists developed. He followed with keen interest the progress of the biological sciences in the 19th century. In all of these philosophies he finds one fundamental defect, an inability to explain the facts of perception and knowledge—in short, of *meaningful* consciousness.

No matter what form traditional materialism took, it explained not only the composition of man's body but the contents of his mind as resultant effects of elements and energies streaming into him from without. The human mind was conceived as passive and plastic. Even where, as in Locke, the mind was endowed with certain powers by which it combined the original ideas derived from without, there was no adequate recognition of the part which human beings played in reacting upon, altering, and transforming their environment. Since materialism, operating with a simple cause-effect relationship, could not account for the redirecive activity of man, it could not account for the actualities of human thinking and its practical fruits. At most it pictured thinking as a private, subcutaneous reflection upon what had already happened, an incandescent after-glow—beautiful, perhaps, in design and color, but absolutely impotent to affect the course of things.

The corrective to this "scientific" way of explaining mind away came not from the materialists themselves but from the idealists. Despite the fantastic and, literally construed, unintelligible constructions of the German idealists from Kant to Hegel, their great contribution was their insight into the essential *activity* of mind. Here is no place to repeat the arguments of Marx against the vagaries of all idealistic schools but it must be remembered that when he broke with idealism, it was not in order to return to the simple materialism which made thinking appear to be either unnecessary or miraculous, but to provide a materialistic basis for the genuine discoveries the idealists made in their analysis of consciousness. That is why both Marx and Engels regarded themselves as the heirs of whatever was sound in the classic German philosophic tradition. Stripped of all distorting elements the contribution of idealism consists in the illumination it sheds upon the relation between the acts of consciousness and the *contents* of consciousness. Not only the simplest thought but even the simplest perception cannot be plausibly explained as an effect of a mechanical impulse, for the very description of the mechanical impulse as an object of knowledge presupposes some active subject who approaches it with *this* category rather than *that*, with a whole set of values, assumptions, memories and anticipations which, whatever their origin, *now* contribute to what is seen and thought. The idealists saw correctly that in what-was-given-to-knowledge something was involved about the subject-to-which-it-was-given. Their errors arise out of attempts to deduce the very existence and character of the given from the activity of mind, and from the fatal step by which the relatively autonomous activity of mind

² Letter to Engels, Jan. 11, Bd. 4, p. 10.)
1868. (*Gesamtausgabe*, Abt. III,

became transformed into absolute independence of complex material conditions.

In mythological form, Hegel had described in his *Phänomenologie des Geists* and *Logik*, the way in which objects and subjects were reconstituted in an interacting process whose constituent elements were *materials*, furnished by nature and previous history, and *activities*, resulting from the psycho-physical powers of man in some historical context. In mythological form, I repeat, because the whole process was supposed to have transpired in a timeless divine Subject. Feuerbach had riddled the conception of a divine Subject by showing that in so far as the predicates of the divine Subject were meaningful, they were nothing more than representations of the powers of the human mind, expressed in the language of metaphor and hyperbole. The secret of the growth of the divine Subject of self-consciousness was declared to be nothing more than the development of the mind of man. But Feuerbach's abstract conception of man and his disregard of the historical factors conditioning the emergence of the human mind led him to a blank confrontation of nature and man which generated the same insoluble problems that had plagued earlier materialists. They had wrestled with the antithesis between "things and consciousness," and ended in a blind alley because they could not get any process started between the two except by dissolving the latter into the former. Feuerbach, despite the overtones of natural piety in his writings, began by contraposing "man and nature," too. When he projected his solution of the opposition, he oscillated between an unbridged dualism, the natural and the human, and a reduction of the natural to a form of human sensibility.

Both materialists and idealists had taken as the pre-suppositions of their philosophy a relatively fixed element—matter in the one case, the subject in the other—to serve as a starting point for the development observable in nature, man and society. Marx's own starting point was not presuppositionless. But since he was attempting not to deduce history but to discover the rhythms of its flow, he avoided introducing as an explanatory principle abstractions which had no empirical function, and which could not be vindicated by observing the ways in which human beings actually behaved. "The presuppositions with which we begin," he writes in *die deutsche Ideologie*, "are not arbitrary; they are not dogmas. They are real presuppositions from which we can abstract ourselves only in imagination. They are individuals as they actually are, their actions, and their material conditions of life—those which they find at hand as well as those which their own activity produces. These presuppositions are observable in purely empirical fashion." (*Gesamtausgabe*, Abt. I, Bd. 5, p. 10.) Feuerbach, too, had said that man was the presupposition of his philosophy. But what kind of man? "Essential man"—not men as they existed here and now, in city and country, in high estate or low—but man as such, *realiter*, a kind of man in which "a band of scrofulous, work-worn, starving men" were equal to all other men, a type of man in the light of whose meaning all historical differences between individuals, groups, and classes were superficial accidents. Marx, too, starts with human beings but with human beings understood "not in a fantastic fixity and completeness, but in their real, empirical, perceptual process of development. As soon as their active life process is described, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts, as it still is among abstract empiricists, or an imaginary activity of imaginary subjects as among the idealists" (*Ibid.*, p. 16).

To say that human beings must be the starting point of any attempt to understand history, is to say that human *needs* must constitute the starting point of all inquiry. Again, not the abstract needs of Feuerbach but the primary needs of production, repro-

duction, communication. The gratification of these needs requires the discovery of instruments which are partly the cause and partly the result of an increasingly pervasive division of labor in social life. But the very processes of gratifying *old* needs gives rise to *new* needs,—technological, psychological, and spiritual. The movement of history is not imposed from without by the creative fiat of an Absolute Mind nor is it the result of a dynamic urge within matter. It develops out of the redirecive activity of human beings trying to meet their natural and social needs. Human history may be viewed as a process in which new needs are created as a result of material changes instituted to fulfill the old. According to Marx, the whole of theoretical culture, including science, arises either directly or indirectly as an answer to some social want or lack. The change in the character and quality of human needs including the means of gratifying them, is the keynote not merely to historical change but to the changes of human nature.

The concrete needs of men is the true middle term for Marx between nature and history. The *possibility* of having needs and satisfying them, that which makes men *need-ful* creatures, has its explanation in the physical environment of men and the biological structure of his body. The specific forms through which these needs both of the senses and the mind are gratified, as well as the development of these needs, are attributable to man's social organization. The interaction between physical conditions and social organization is history. Philosophies themselves are critical historical activities which arise to fill some social need,³ prevail among those groups that recognize them as a justification of their way of life, and systematize the unconscious principles and prejudices by which men attempt to direct life. Men, conditioned as they are by their environment, can change that environment or preserve it, because human activity, including thought, is an objective activity having objective effects.

Surely, the critical reader will protest, is not a great deal of this already contained in Feuerbach's philosophy? Does not Marx's thought reduce itself to a filling in of details in a position whose chief outlines were laid down by Feuerbach? This brings us to the more specific criticism which Marx makes against Feuerbach's theory of practise (*Praxis*).

The last two sentences of the first gloss on Feuerbach contrast Feuerbach's contemplative or purely theoretical attitude towards life with Marx's "critical, practical" standpoint. They also contrast Feuerbach's "dirty Jewish"⁴ conception of practise with what Marx regards as a true one. For purposes of exposition these two contrasts may be discussed independently. The first very briefly, for it arises again in a subsequent thesis.

In rejecting Feuerbach's identification of the theoretical attitude with the human attitude, Marx is criticizing him not so much for his inadequate materialism as for his vestigial idealism. It is one thing to overcome the idealistic hypostasis of different phases of temporal activity by demanding a return to the facts of experience. It is quite another to carry out the necessary reform and be faithful in the analysis to one's own program. Feuerbach,

³ "The real content of all epoch-making systems are the needs of the time in which they arise. At the basis of each system there lies the whole previous development of a nation and the historical forms of class relationships with their political, moral, philosophical and other consequences." (*Gesamtausgabe*, Abt. I, Bd. 5, p. 445.)

⁴ Although Marx was free of anti-Semitic prejudice, he un-

fortunately was not over sensitive to using the term "Jew", often with unsavory adjectives, as an epithet of abuse. It is a vicious form of idolatry to defend his practice as L. Rudas seems to do by indirection in his preface to the recent English translation of Engels' *Feuerbach* (Marxist Library, Vol. XV, International Publishers, 1935, p. 12).

because of his unhistorical and abstract conception of man, needs, object, community and communism, sins against his own program and relapses into idealism. He holds up against the existing order an ideal of what man should be, of man as he could have been at any time and any place, of the essential man. Since this ideal is not related to the concrete needs of men in the concrete social situations in which they find themselves, it can provide no leverage with which to change the existing state of affairs. Unable to make a practise, a revolutionary and revolutionizing practise, of his ideal—Feuerbach makes a religion of it. Indeed, for Marx, the religious attitude consists in the belief in, or worship of, unhistorical abstractions. All thought, all conceptions, arise as generalizations of concrete modes of response to specific historical situations. When they are taken as eternally valid, independently of the possibility of their application to fresh situations, men become victimized by the creations and discoveries of their own minds. Whether they are aware of it or not, they become Platonists, supernaturalists, behind whose backs the world continues in its accustomed way. In Marx's eyes, the whole theoretical tradition of Western European philosophy with its apotheosis of Reason, its conception that thought has an underived and independent history, its identification of theoretical activity with divine activity, and when divinity was no longer fashionable, with the "highest" type of human activity—all this represented a religious pattern of behavior. This was the ground for his contention that the Young-Hegelians, despite their world shattering phrases and militant atheism, were religious, and that the battles they fought were sectarian episodes in a common religious tradition which they shared with their opponents.

True, Feuerbach never lost sight of human *Praxis* and its influence upon the development of culture. But precisely because of his abstractions, he could not grasp, maintains Marx, the true *Praxis*. Feuerbach takes the general form of human *Praxis* to be the same as the kind of *Praxis* he examined in his *Wesen der Christenthums*. There, he points out that religion, too, has a *Praxis* stemming from the needs of the heart. Its motives were practical, its instruments, prayer and miracle; its character, a cosmic egoism which assumed that the world could be compelled to gratify human desires. Feuerbach was openly disdainful of the narrow practicability concealed in the finery and tinsel of religious ritual. The ritual, imagery and belief of historic religions in his eyes represented a gratification in fancy of what could not be secured in reality, a sublimated expression of the animal needs and animal fears of man. The positive religion of the worship of man through love of one another which Feuerbach put in the place of traditional religion was free from religious *Praxis*. It was enlightened by science and socialism, both very vaguely conceived. In place of the egoism animating the wish to make the world over to *our* heart's desire, he set up an unselfishness whose pleasant duty it is to love one's neighbors to the very death. In place of the miracle and prayer which are the common resort of fearful souls in distress, he defended the ennobling conception of the universality of law, of the eternity of scientific objects, of a cosmic democracy in which all things are equally important—or unimportant. At times Feuerbach seems to oppose to the degraded practicality of man a kind of Spinozistic intellectual love of God. But running through all of his descriptions of the highest form of theoretical knowledge is the belief that man is truly human only when like God he views things *sub specie aeternitatis*. The very fact that man conceived God as an eternal knower was indirect testimony of the value he placed upon the thinking life—for the attributes of God are but the idealized attributes of men.

Marx opposed Feuerbach's conceptions both of theory and

practise. A theory was a guide to action; practise, the specific activities which had to be carried out to test the theory. Practise (*Praxis*) was something much wider than practicality. It was selective behavior. Its character was not given by personal interests which might or might not have been present but by the skills and techniques, the living traditions and modes of procedure which man brings to whatever he sees and does. *Praxis* could not be contrasted with science, for science has a *Praxis*, too. The scientific objects which the scientist studies are essentially related to the practises of scientists. These in turn are related to the basic practises of the culture which supports science. Marx rarely discusses science without underscoring the influence of modern commerce and industry upon its development. Marx's theory of the *Praxis* could explain what all other philosophers recognized but which they could not begin to account for, without writing fairy-tales, *viz.*, *how knowledge could give power*. For Marx knowledge gives power by virtue of the activities it sets up in transforming things in behalf of social needs. The meaning of any theory is ultimately to be found not in what men say but in what it leads them to do or leave undone. Actual or possible *Praxis* is not only the locus of meaning but also the test of truth. This point is expressed in Marx's second thesis.

Thesis II:

"The question whether human thought can achieve objective truth is not a question of theory but a *practical* question. In practise [*Praxis*] man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality, power and this-sidedness of his thought. The dispute concerning the reality or unreality of thought—which is isolated from practise [*Praxis*—is a purely *scholastic* question."

To the modern reader these sentences suggest pragmatism but in view of the multiple ambiguity of this term it is advisable to avoid its use and to search more directly for Marx's meaning. Marx here equates the real and the true, the unreal with the false. Reality cannot therefore in this connection mean existence, since false ideas exist as well as true, Reality has the sense of the "actually" or "genuinely" true, that which is established to be "really" true in the face of critical inquiry and doubt. For idealism, the truth of any idea consists in its coherence with other ideas. Inasmuch as existence was essentially ideal it was possible to discover the truth, although not the whole truth (that was accessible only to Absolute Mind) by developing consistently the logical implications of any meaningful sentence. It is obvious that such a theory of truth could never submit to control by empirical fact, for in the first place, according to its assumptions, there were no "empirical" facts but only logical necessities. Secondly, granting the "appearance" of empirical fact there was no way of telling which of a number of equally consistent theories was true without going outside of the systems of coherent propositions. For example, on what grounds could the consistently developed propositions of a paranoiac be rejected for a more plausible account? Thirdly, since the idealists assumed with Hegel that truth can only be found in the whole, knowledge of everything *must* be relevant to knowledge of anything else. Numerous other paradoxical consequences flow from this theory which need not be developed here. They can all be deduced from the difficulties mentioned.

Materialism, strictly speaking, did not and could not develop a theory of truth. The very existence of ideas constituted a difficulty which it originally tried to answer by regarding ideas as a tenuous kind of matter, and later, as sense-impressions of varying degrees of complexity resulting from the bombardment of material particles on sensitive nerve-endings. But how could ideas derived in such a way be characterized as true or false? The standard formula which was invoked, *viz.*, that a true idea was one which "agreed"

or "corresponded" with its object, raised just as baffling problems. The proper meaning of correspondence presupposed a qualitative identity between the entities corresponding with each other, as e.g., the correspondence between a yard-stick and some other standard measure, or a picture and an original. But what could this common element be? Material? This would mean that ideas would have to be of the same stuff as things. A palpable absurdity! Ideal? The materiality of the world would disappear, and we would be back to Hegel and the coherence theory of truth.

Usually the materialist shifted the problem so that it became a question of what *caused* ideas. But the difficulties could not be evaded—in fact they were multiplied. False ideas have causes as well as true ideas. What criterion, then, enabled us to distinguish between the two? Further, if ideas are effects, then the question suggests itself what is it that is known, their causes of ideas or the non-material effects themselves? Here, at least two answers were possible. The causes might be known or the effects might be known. If the causes were known, the truth could not consist in an "agreement" between the causes and effects, for causes do not at all have to be like effects, any more than unripe apples necessarily have to resemble the cramps produced by eating them. Some other theory of truth would have to account for the facts of knowledge. If only effects were known, that is to say, if the ideas produced by the molecular agitation of the nervous system, were objects of knowledge, the implications were even more startling. How could effects (ideas) be compared with their causes (things), since according to the supposition of the case, all that our knowledge of causes (things) could consist in was the possession of their effects (ideas). What assurance have we, then, on this view that there *are* causes of our ideas? To call ideas "effects" of things is question-begging. We are aware of ideas as mental *events*. They may not be caused at all, or if caused, they may be caused by other mental events, and not at all by things. The indecisiveness of the materialist's theory of truth leads either to the subjective idealism of Berkeley, *viz.*, only ideas are objects of knowledge, and what we call things or matter is merely a complex of ideas—or to the skepticism of Hume, *viz.*, only ideas are objects of knowledge and there is no telling whether they are caused by something which is not an idea.

Marx's conception of truth cut under all of these theories. We have seen in a previous study why he rejected subjective idealism as represented by Bruno Bauer. It could not begin to account for the compulsive features of experience. Its solipsism was not only a theoretical *reductio ad absurdum*, and inconsistent at that, but it mocked the efforts of the working class to liberate itself from poverty and degradation by asserting that these were nothing else than their private constructions. Traditional materialism, although congenial to Marx in its social intent, was muddled both in its theory and practise. By professing to see in all human history and activity nothing but a special case of universal physical categories, and in human thought a mere resultant of mechanical or chemical influences, it made unintelligible the *redirective* judgments of the revolutionist whose primary aim was to transform the world. Not that Marx was unaware that a great many materialists had been revolutionists and had urged their revolutionary proposals in the name of materialism. In *die Heilige Familie* he describes the almost obvious connections which exist between a philosophical theory that explains men's ignorance, criminality, etc., in terms of their conditions and the gospel of socialism which seeks to eliminate the social factors which make for inhumanity. But in *die deutsche Ideologie* he raises two allied questions concerning the theoretical and practical adequacy of this socially enlightened materialism. They concern the possibility of justifying on the materialist view, judgments of value about conditions; and explaining how, if men are completely determined by their environment, they can change that environ-

ment. These problems are the subject of the next thesis. But it is clear that in the practical judgments Marx made as a revolutionist, e.g., if certain actions were performed, certain desirable consequences would follow, we have a conspicuous illustration of a type of judgment whose truth could never be established by the idealistic or traditional materialistic theories.

When Marx says that any dispute about the truth or falsity of a judgment which is isolated from *Praxis* is a scholastic question, he is saying that such questions cannot be answered in principle, that in short, they are no genuine questions at all. The truth of *any* theory depends upon whether or not the actual consequences which flow from the *Praxis* initiated to test the theory are such that they realize the predicted consequences. In other words, for Marx all genuine questions are scientifically determinable even though for a variety of reasons we may never know the answer to some of them. Since all judgments are hypotheses, the expectations which enter into the process of discovering the truth about them are not the personal and private expectations of the individual thinker but the public and verifiable expectations which logically flow from the hypotheses entertained. What a man wants to believe is relevant only to *what* he believes but not to its truth. There is no will to believe in Marx but a will to action in order to test belief and get additional grounds for further action if necessary. What takes place as a result of practise is not a relevant consequence of the theory unless the conditions involved in the meaning of the theory are met. The defeat of the Paris Commune is not a refutation of Marx's theory of the way political power is to be conquered because the objective conditions presupposed by that theory were absent when the political *Praxis* occurred.

The continual admonitions of Marx and Engels—and of Lenin and Trotsky, too—that their theories were not to be taken as dogmas—admonitions more honored in the breach than in the observance by most of their reputed followers—warn against accepting beliefs as if they were fixed truths, truths which *must* be realized independently of the results of *Praxis*. What *must* be, come what may, expresses a *resolution* of the pious believer, not a scientific prediction which depends upon many factors including what the predictor himself does.

Marx did not live to develop the *implications* of his scientific theory of truth. That is not a ground for denying that he held it. Not only do his glosses on Feuerbach and other writings⁵ declare its principal features, but his cardinal doctrines of the class struggle and historical materialism demand it. Part of the reason why Marx did not state it in more precise and detailed form is to be found in his belief that a theory of truth, like any method, is to be judged by the concrete applications made of it. And when it is recalled that Marx wrote not to achieve absolute theoretical clarity but to guide the action of the working class, and that in the light of contemporary standards of analytic rigor almost every field of 19th century thought, including many technical disciplines, fall short of *verbal* accuracy, only an unhistorical literary prudery will demand that he be judged by our own standards of expression and not by the intent, spirit and fundamental sense of his doctrines.

Thesis III:

"The materialistic doctrine that men are the products of circumstances and education, and that changed men are therefore the products of other circumstances and a changed education, forgets that circumstances are changed by men, and that the educator must

⁵ Particularly his first draft of an introduction to his *Critique of Political Economy*, reprinted as an appendix to the English

translation. This manuscript is of the first importance for the consideration of Marx's methodology.

himself be educated. Consequently materialism necessarily leads to a division of society into two parts, of which one is elevated above society (e.g., in Robert Owen).

"The coincidence of the transformation of circumstances and of human activity can only be conceived and rationally understood as revolutionizing practise (*Praxis*)."

This gloss is directed against some contemporary forms of Utopian socialism which despite their materialistic approach to natural phenomena relapsed into idealism in their social and historical theory. The Utopian varieties which were not materialistic in their natural theory, i.e., which were consistently idealistic, are not under discussion. Marx raises the question about Utopian socialism here because he considers Feuerbach to belong to this school. In *die deutsche Ideologie* he specifically says of Feuerbach that "in so far as he is a materialist, history does not exist for him, and in so far as he treats of history, he is no materialist" (*loc. cit.*, p. 34). In addition, it was crucial for Marx to differentiate clearly between his own realistic theories of social struggle and those of an influential group which professed to have the same ideal goals in view.

Every simple theory of the causal dependence of mind upon matter encounters difficulties just as soon as it hitches that theory to some program of reform or revolution. For a program presupposes a plan which is *not yet* realized and suggests methods of changing the social world, based upon the causal dependencies established by science, which have *not yet* been adopted. If every idea or program is a reflection of the existing world, and is *only* that, how can human action be intelligently guided by some ideal which is yet to be, which outruns existence and lights up a possible path for its future development? *After* history has run its course, by looking away from the multitude of occasions on which the consequences of human activity have had a redirecting influence on the stream of events, it is easy to argue that human ideals were nothing but passive, mirror-like reflections of antecedent realities—even though analysis discloses such a mode of speech to be metaphysical nonsense. But when human beings are faced by real alternatives of action—i.e., alternatives both of which cannot be realized although both may be attempted, it is impossible to hold that human ideals are "images". At those moments they are so obviously plans of action!

The Utopian socialists could explain how the state of affairs which they deplored came about. They could also explain why such a state of affairs did not appear deprecative to others. But they could not explain in the slightest their own ideals of social reform. They appeared to themselves as if they were outside of the social process—as if they were historical mutants whose fertilizing ideas would revolutionize the existing order. Other people's philosophy was determined by circumstances and education but not their own philosophy. And in fact how could it be on their simple materialistic assumptions since their circumstances and conditions were quite similar to those who disagreed with them? That is why Marx properly points out that this mixture of socialism and materialism leads to a belief in a division of society into two parts—one of common-run people whose ideas are simply determined by circumstances and education, the other of choice Utopian spirits who are elevated above society and social laws, the rare gifts of the gods to an errant humanity. The cult of leadership among the Utopian groups, their assumption that they could appeal to any social class, from paupers to princes, for support of their ideals, their belief in a cure-all for every evil including natural stupidity—all flowed from the view that the keys to salvation were in the possession of a handful of right-thinking men—call them saints or scientists or philosophers or social engineers, as you please.

Since it followed from their own doctrines that there was nothing

which determined their social ideals, it seemed plausible to the materialistic Utopians that there was no reason why these ideals could not have been embodied in practise at any time, except for chance or ignorance. Some of the Utopians of the 19th century actually defended this view and sketched accounts of what the history would have been if their ideas had prevailed at an earlier time. But most of them, refusing to surrender the rigorous determinism involved in their physical materialism, transferred the determinism to an ideal or conceptual plane. In Hegelian fashion, none the less vicious for being unconscious, they explained the succession of historical ideals as moments in an unending development of Mind. The life history of ideals became the life history of society. In *die deutsche Ideologie* Marx calls attention to the process by which men like Stirner, for whom Feuerbach was not materialistic enough, ended up by embracing the philosophy of history of absolute idealism. The process, as described by Marx, consists of three steps:

a) Dominant historical ideals are cut loose from the complex of social conditions and needs of the dominant classes. "Therewith the domination of these ideals or illusions in history is proclaimed."

b) Since certain ideals are connected with others both organically and temporally an *order* of development is introduced of which the different ideals are successive phases.

c) To avoid the appearance of mysticism suggested by the notion of an immanent development of ideals, *certain individuals* are regarded as the carriers of these ideals. These are "the thinkers, ideologists and philosophers" who are conceived as "the makers of history". "Therewith all materialistic elements have been eliminated from history and one can give free reign to his speculative fancy." (*Ibid.*, p. 39.)

We have already seen how Marx conceived of the interacting processes between nature, society and man. The development of the forces of production gives rise to new needs. In the struggle to achieve these needs, ideals and principles are forged to guide activity looking towards a transformation of society. These ideals "express" the needs of the groups or classes who rally around them as standards, "express" them in the sense that they are *outgrowths* not reflections of material conditions of need. The struggle to achieve institutional change produces changes in those who participate in the struggles. The *Praxis* of trying to bring about a new social order, not abstract doctrine, educates the workers. No messiah can assure them of anything save that which they can win for themselves. Marx's great insights that human beings cannot change the world without changing themselves, and that the actual social struggles, under certain conditions, is the best school for acquiring an education in social realities are not isolated thoughts but organically connected with his materialistic theory of history—a theory which in his *die deutsche Ideologie* he develops in greater detail than he does in any other writing. In a chapter of the section on Feuerbach, entitled by Marx himself, "Concerning the Production of Consciousness" he writes of his theory of history:

"This philosophy of history rests upon the development of the real process of production, taking in fact its point of departure from the material production of immediate life, tracing the forms of social intercourse bound up and produced by this mode of production and conceiving civic society in its various stages as the foundation of the whole of history. It also describes civic society in its actions as state power and explains the origins and developing processes of the whole of its various theoretical creations and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, morality, etc. In this way it presents the situation in its totality (and therefore the reciprocal interactions between the various factors upon each other). In any given period this philosophy of history as distinct from the

idealist conception does not seek for some category but remains continually upon real historical *ground* explaining not practice out of ideas but the formation of ideas out of material practice. In this way it reaches the conclusion that all existing forms and products of consciousness can be resolved not through mental criticism, or by being dissolved into 'self-consciousness' or transformed into 'apparitions', 'ghosts', etc., but only through the practical overthrow of the real social relations out of which these idealistic fantasies have developed. It is not criticism but revolution which is the driving force of history—as well as of religion, philosophy and every other theory. This philosophy of history shows that history does not find its end by disappearing into 'self-consciousness' or becoming 'spirit of our spirit' but that at every stage it is confronted by a material result, a sum of productive forces, an historically created relation to nature and of individuals to each other, which every generation inherits from its predecessors. This mass of productive forces of forms of capital and of circumstances, on the one hand, is modified by the new generation, and on the other hand, prescribes to the new generation its own conditions of life, accounting for its special character and determinate development—showing that circumstances make men as much as men make circumstances. This sum of productive forces, capitals and forms of social intercourse which every individual and every generation finds as something given, is the real source of what philosophers have represented as "substance" and "the essence of man", the real source of what they have hypostasized or struggled against, and whose effects and influences upon the development of men have not in the least been affected by the revolt of the philosophers of "self-consciousness" and "the ego" against it. These given conditions of life of the different generations also decide whether or not the periodically recurring revolutionary upheavals of history are strong enough to overthrow the basis of the existing order. Where these material elements of a total revolution, i. e., on the one hand, the existing productive forces, and on the other, the creation of a revolutionary mass rebelling not merely against individual conditions of existing society but against the whole 'production of life' itself, the 'total activity', upon which society is based—where these are not present, then it is immaterial for practical development, as the history of communism proves, whether or not the *idea* of this revolution be proclaimed a hundred times over." (*Gesamtausgabe*, Abt. I, Bd. 5, pp. 27-28.)

Thesis IV:

"Feuerbach takes his point of departure from the fact of religious self-alienation, from the splitting up of the world into a religious, imaginary world and a real one. His achievement consists in dissolving the religious world and revealing its secular foundations. He overlooks the fact, however, that after completing this work the chief thing stills remains to be accomplished. The fact that the secular foundation lifts itself above itself and fixates itself as an independent empire beyond the clouds can only be truly explained in terms of the internal division and contradictions of this secular foundation. The latter must first be understood in its contradictions and then through the elimination of the contradictions practically revolutionized. For example, once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family it must be theoretically criticized and practically transformed."

This thesis together with VI and VII contains the main points of Marx's criticism of Feuerbach's psychology of religion. Feuerbach had found the essence of religion to be rooted in the human feelings of dependence upon the external forces of the natural and social world, and the chief agencies in the compensatory expression of emotional frustration to be ritual mythology and theology.

Grant, says Marx, that wherever religion is present, it has the characteristic features Feuerbach selects for emphasis. But as an explanation of religious thought and behavior Feuerbach's theory is inadequate because it is too abstract. It leaves totally unexplained the historical *diversity* in religious phenomena and contents itself with a mechanical table of needs which different kinds of religion fulfill. For example, if in any religion there prevails a belief in a God who created the world out of nothing, this expresses, according to Feuerbach, the irrational needs of man's nature. "He defies nothing but his own irrationality." (*Wesen des Christenthums*, Eng. trans. p. 83.) If, on the other hand, we find in any religion a belief in the eternity of the world, then the rational needs of man's nature are asserting themselves. But Feuerbach never descended from these vague generalities to explain why one, rather than the other of these beliefs, was accepted at any given time. Nor did he ask whether these needs are always invariant in man—and if not, what determines their appearance and disappearance. Supposing further that we grant a fixed need for, or tendency towards irrational expression. Off-hand one can think of a thousand different irrational beliefs, aside from a belief in the creation of the world out of nothing, which could satisfy all the conditions of man's irrational nature. Why, then, *this* particular kind of irrational belief and not others?

It is here that Marx's own psychology of religion comes into view. Religion is not born of a natural, tragic split within the human breast. The real forces impelling men to find satisfaction in some dreamy empire where they enjoy the uncontested power denied them in this life, are not merely psychological but social. The source of religion is to be sought in the antagonisms between the way men actually produce and the traditional, social, legal and moral forms under which that production is carried on—or between the new needs generated in the course of their social *Praxis* and the old needs which give rise to and yet are in opposition to the new needs. From these antagonisms results the fragmentation of experience, the absence of unified control of the collective lot, the worship of the abstractions which express the needs of yesterday, the contrast between an everyday self and an ideal holiday self—all of which constitutes the cultus and theology of religion. Religion, according to Marx, is to be construed from the real condition of man's empirical life and not from his essence. And if these conditions are such that they generate certain kinds of emotional conflicts and theoretical illusions, then these illusions and conflicts must be removed by removing that which gives rise to them.

Here again it must be pointed out that Marx is making predictions and not establishing anything by definition. It remains to be seen whether the emotional conflicts and theoretical illusions associated with religion will disappear with the transformation of the economic order which, according to Marx's hypothesis, is responsible only for the ways in which these conflicts and illusions are expressed but for their very existence.

The same is true as far as the existence of the state in a classless society is concerned. Only a religious attitude and not a scientific philosophy can assure us that the state is *destined* to "whither away". So it may, in name! But the real question is whether any new social conflicts will arise, necessitating the existence of separate bodies of armed men standing over against the community as a whole to enforce special interests. This cannot be settled by definition.

If Feuerbach claimed to have discovered the secret of theology in anthropology, Marx sought to transform anthropology into realistic sociology. Feuerbach had shown the religious world to

be illusory; Marx asks however: "How does it come about that these illusions arise?" (Abt. I, Bd. 5, p. 215.) Neither Marx nor any of his orthodox followers have worked out detailed analyses of the great religions of the past from the standpoint of historical materialism. Some interesting attempts to uncover the social contradictions at the basis of religious constructions have been made by men like E. Bernstein, Max Weber, E. Troelsch and R. H. Tawney, but not strictly along Marxian lines. In this field as in so many others, a casual phrase of Marx's, penned in 1843 when he was still a Feuerbachian, has been substituted for his considered philosophy. Marx's sentence, "Religion is the opium of the people", has itself acted like opium upon the minds of his followers who have repeated it as if it constituted all that can be said on the subject. If religion were the opium of the people, the necessary precondition of all criticism would be the awakening of the people from their drugged slumbers. This is precisely the position which Marx criticized when he argued against B. Bauer, Stirner, Feuerbach and others that the political and social movement of the working class must not be explicitly or programmatically anti-religious. Such a movement, according to Marx must in the first instance be directed against the milieu whose social antagonisms are eased through the cultural opium dispensed by those classes which control the means of production, education and communication.

Thesis V.

"Feuerbach, not satisfied with abstract thinking, appeals to *sensory thinking* [*Anschauung*]; but he does not conceive sensibility as practical, human-sensory, activity."

This links up with the point made in Thesis I. That Marx regards it as important is indicated by the fact that he returns to it in several different ways in *die deutsche Ideologie*, where Feuerbach is criticized for not grasping the sense object (*sinnliche Gegenstand*) as a sensory activity (*sinnliche Tätigkeit*). Here again, Marx's historical sense asserts itself against formalism in a twofold way. To the idealistic identification of reality with thought, Feuerbach had countered with the identification of reality with sensibility or sensation. Feuerbach's description of the nature of sensation was no more empirical than the idealistic description of the nature of thought. The latter overlooked the historical materials which were the prior condition of effective thinking, the former overlooked the elements of selective activity determining the concrete character of sensation. For Marx sensations were not merely experienced effects of things acting upon the body, they were effects of an interaction between an *active* body and the things surrounding it. The sensations which appear to be passively experienced to a large degree depend for their frequency, their specific context, and even their relative intensity upon where the body looks and listens—in short upon where the body *attends* as well as upon what it attends. In fact this is the differential characteristic between living and non-living things, preëminently present in man because of his more highly developed nervous system and intelligence.

In *die deutsche Ideologie* Marx goes even further and shows that sensation has not only a biologically selective dimension but a *social* dimension. Given the "same" environment, defined as the co-presence of a number of different things or actions in a fixed physical area, it is well known that subjects drawn from different cultures will "see" different things and interpret them differently. Tradition, education, language, and all the other aspects of culture intertwined with the basic mode of production influence what seem to be purely biological reactions. This in fact differentiates the biological reactions of man from those of

other living beings. Man's hunger, for example, is a natural phenomenon but the ways in which he gratifies his hunger and the character of what he regards as food are social facts. Through social organization man is continually modifying his primary natural environment, reducing its rôle to that of a pure limiting condition. Through social organization, particularly industry, Marx asserts, the *given* can sometimes be explained as well as the ways in which the given is *taken*. If you want certainty, Feuerbach had preached in one of the phases of his philosophy, open your eyes and grasp the given as an immediate, natural datum, e. g., that cherry tree over there. What met one's eyes, Marx retorted, was likely to be not a god-given eternal fact of nature but a socially mediated object.

"He [Feuerbach] does not see that the sensory world which surrounds him is not something immediately given from eternity, something always the same, but the product of industry and the social situation, in the sense that it is an historical product, the result of the activity of a whole series of generations, each one standing on the shoulders of those preceding it, developing previous industry and forms of social intercourse, and changing their social order in accordance with changed needs. Even the objects of the simplest 'sensory certainty' are given through social development, industry and commercial relations. The cherry tree like almost all fruit trees was transplanted to our zone, as is well known, through *commerce*; it was only *by virtue* of this action of a determinate society at a determinate time that it was given to 'the sensory certainty' of Feuerbach." (*Gesamtausgabe*, Abt. I, Bd. 5, p. 33.)

Marx adds immediately that this historical approach converts every "profound" philosophical question into a simple question of empirical fact. The question of the possibility of this or that piece of knowledge, of the reliability of our perceptions, of things as they are and as they appear to be are all to be answered in terms of biology, psychology or history. A valid implication of Marx's position would be that psychology is either the study of animal behavior or social behavior. In so far as human reactions are isolated from a social context and correlated with various external stimuli we are analyzing animal behavior—we are in the realm of physiological psychology.

Thesis VI.

"Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human. But the essence of man is not an abstraction residing in each single individual. In its reality it is the whole of social relationships.

"Feuerbach, who does not enter upon the criticism of this real essence, is consequently compelled:

1) to abstract from the historical process and to fixate the religious feeling as something self-contained, and to presuppose an abstract—*isolated*—human individual.

"2) to conceive the essence of man only as 'the species', as an inner, inarticulate, *natural* tie, binding many individuals together." *Thesis VII.*

"Feuerbach does not therefore see that the 'religious feeling' is itself a *social product*, and that the abstract individual whom he analyzes belongs in reality to a specific form of society."

The above glosses develop the argument made in Thesis IV. They deny that religion and the religious experience are primary *natural* facts about man. Until recently this was the assumption made by most armchair theorists of the origin of religion. Religion for one is an expression of a direct natural fear, socially unmediated, of unseen powers and uncontrollable forces. For others, it is an attempt to placate spiritual beings whose presence is suggested by phenomena of dreams and psychic illusion. For Schleiernacher, it is the feeling of absolute dependence upon the cosmic ineffable whole.

For Feuerbach it is the projection of an experienced need. All of these theories imply that man is a religious creature in the same sense as he is a food, clothing and shelter-seeking creature. They all assert that at the very least a common denominator can be found in all religious theory and practice which expresses its essential characteristic, and which remains invariant throughout its varying historic forms. Now for the purposes of identification, Marx would never dream of denying that religious behavior must exhibit certain properties enabling investigation to differentiate it from other forms of behavior. But he does not look for these properties in the characters of individual religious belief or action. Believing that religion arises as a set of doctrines and practises whenever society has reached a certain stage in the division of labor, he tries to locate its specific character in the social functions which it fulfills. The defining trait of religion, as developed by Feuerbach and other philosophers of religion, was a generalization of one historical expression of "religious feeling". It was true that many contemporaries of Feuerbach would recognize his psychological analysis as an accurate account of their religious experience. But from Marx's point of view, a more adequate explanation of their religious experience would be found by analyzing the concrete social situation out of which this religious experience developed. It could hardly be claimed that the religious experience of a 19th century citizen of France or Germany was the same as the religious experience of a Greek or Roman citizen. So great is the pervasive character of the totality of social relations which give "the tone" to a culture, that Marx felt justified in claiming that there is a greater difference between ancient religion and ancient politics, art, or any other phase of ancient culture.

Strictly speaking, for Marx there is no history of religion as such but only a history of the cultures of which religions are fragmentary aspects. To erect a definition of religion on the basis of one of its historic expressions, is to assume that there is a religious sentiment as such with which man is naturally endowed and which can be studied in its pure form once its accidental social and historical expressions are sloughed off.

The VIth thesis restates in a few terse sentences the criticism which Marx passed upon Stirner. The "individual", whose psyche Feuerbach probed so deeply, is a rather late and complex product of society. No social phenomena, therefore, can be explained in terms of any of the traits imputed to individuals as creatures of *nature*. Feuerbach realized the impossibility of ever deriving consciousness of the existence of oneself from individual behavior. There is no *Ich* which is not the necessary complement of *Du*. But the social bond between the self and others was conceived on the plane of grammar and common emotion—both of which, according to Marx, already presupposed a common social world of production. Where Feuerbach strives to make the social bond between men concrete, he falls back upon the biological facts of interdependence and reproduction. For Marx the social bond between human beings—a bond which makes their differences as well as their agreements intelligible—is the totality of social relations. If one must speak of the "essence of man", one must find it in man's civilization—material and ideal—and not in biology.

Thesis VIII.

"Social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practise and in the understanding of this practise."

Here we have a heuristic principle of the first importance. It guided Marx in all of his own work. It served as the acid test of the meaning of the theories he opposed. It denies both the existence

of insoluble problems and of mystical solution to problems.

The disparity between what human beings do and the explanations they offer to themselves and others of what they do, is a striking phenomenon in all social life. Even the history of science appears, from one point of view, to be a continuous effort to substitute more exact descriptions of what man sees and does, for less exact descriptions. Several reasons may be offered for this lag in our understanding. First of all, the body acts in some decisive way long before thought can strike a trial-balance of all factors involved. Secondly, "new" discoveries are made and "new" techniques developed while the "old" principles still exercise their sway. And since for anything to be intelligible, it must at least impart a sense of "the familiar", the traditional principles are retained for explanatory purposes, at the cost of slighting the distinctively novel features of experience. In due course, the novel becomes familiar and principles are reformulated, but by that time the situation demands still further clarification and refinement of expression. Thirdly, the social context of theories and practises is lost sight of, and ideas are treated as if they were independent entities, irrelevant to the needs and interests of their proponents. The problems of why ideas and theories arise when they do, why they prevail, and why they develop a life so different from that planned for them by their authors—become mysteries or, more accurately, give rise to mystical solutions.

Marx was primarily interested in the effect which the neglect of social context had upon obscuring the relation between theory and practise. This social context was understood in its broadest terms and included not only the immediate social needs which influenced the direction and development of scientific research but the social habits of thought and action involved in communication. According to Marx, the basic criteria of intelligibility presupposed a common activity in a common world. Somewhere along the line in every theory, a determinate form of behavior exemplified its meaning. The alleged independence of the so-called non-existential sciences is due to a failure to relate their fundamental concepts to the concrete situations and concrete activities out of which they grow and to which they must in some form or another be applied. Were Marx alive today he would trace the flights to mysticism induced by recent work in modern physics to the fundamental methodological error of directly comparing the refined hypothetical results of theory with the crude data of experience. In the light of his genial insight, he would urge scientists to examine their conclusions in terms of the operations and practises necessary to achieve them, and to set forth the meaning of their theories as prescriptive guides to specific action.

IX. "The highest point which can be reached by *contemplative materialism*, i. e., materialism which cannot grasp the fact that sensibility is a practical activity, is the point of view of single individuals in 'civic society'."

X. "The standpoint of the old materialism is 'civic society'; the standpoint of the new materialism is *human* society or socialized humanity."

The key to the meaning of these theses lies in the phrase "civic society" (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), the title of the second section of the third part of Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie*. The mistranslation of the phrase as "bourgeois" or "capitalist" society by some "Marxists" makes nonsense of the passage, for materialism is older than capitalism and is not always the official philosophy of bourgeois society. Some who have recognized the reference to Hegel have assumed that Hegel is being charged with a kind of contemplative materialism, forgetting that the culmination of the Hegelian social philosophy is the doctrine of the State in which the abstract rights,

the individualism, the conflicts and compromises of sovereignty between different social groups, all flowing from the nature of civic society, are transcended. It is the Hegelian philosophy and not contemplative materialism which represents for Marx the highest philosophical expression of capitalism. It is significant that the last ideological defence of developed capitalism is everywhere a variation of Hegel's social and political philosophy, particularly his theory of *die Korporation* which serves as the transition in the *Rechtsphilosophie* to the nature of the state.

It is clear then that the meaning of Marx in these theses does not lie on the surface. We must ask what Hegel meant by "civic society", why Marx associates the theory and practise of civic society with contemplative materialism and why the new materialism is declared to be the philosophy of a truly *human* society.

Civic society in Hegel is the complex of organized social ties which knot individuals together by the cords of self-interest. The individual in such a society is himself a system (*Ganzes*) of needs or wants, some of which are an expression of natural necessity, some a result of arbitrary choice. He regards himself, or the fulfillment of his needs, as his sole end, and all other individuals as necessary means to his self-expression. His social and political philosophy is individualism, which assumes that everyone else is by nature self-seeking and free. Whatever social and governmental constraints exist are external to the minds and feelings of those who abide by them. They are compromises which are made necessary by the conflict of activities in the collective pursuit of individual gratifications.

According to Marx traditional materialism could only conceive of human consciousness as a passive form of sensation. Sensation was a property of human bodies which arose whenever they were subjected to the impacts of other things and bodies. Mind together with all intellectual processes, like memory and generalization, is sensation modified and organized in such a way as to increase or diminish the basic feelings of pleasure and pain. The natural tendency of all bodies despite their oral behavior is to preserve themselves, and more concretely, to pursue their own self-interest. This was supposed to be a deduction justified, according to some materialists, by the laws of mechanics. The gratification of self-interest is the source of all duty to one's self and to one's fellow-man.

The completest expression of the materialistic "self-interest" theory of human activity in the eyes of Marx was the philosophy of Bentham. In *die deutsche Ideologie* Bentham's views are submitted to close analysis and the basic assumptions of utilitarianism are rejected. "Interest" as conceived by Bentham—"whose nose", says Marx, "must first have an interest before it makes up its mind to smell" (*Gesamtausgabe*, Abt. I., Bd. 5, p. 192)—is declared to be a needless third term introduced between human beings and the manner in which they live their life. The reason, however, why all natural impulses are first related to some imaginary interest is that a peculiar set of social relationships has made it impossible to gratify natural desires directly or to lose oneself into activities for their own sake. The existence of a social and economic order in which production is dependent upon a market, upon "free" laborers, upon the expectation of profit, affects every human relationship within it. Everything is vain in such a culture except the "useful". But to have utility means to be exploitable. The rule of "live and let live" makes way for the maxim "exploit or be exploited." The objective expression of this utility is money in which is represented the value of all things, human beings and social relations." (*Ibid.*, p. 388.)

Marx admits the progressive rôle which the theory of utilitarian-

ism played in helping to clear the ground of feudal anachronisms. In stressing the importance of the *mutual* exploitation of one another through competitive effort, a common attack was made by the bourgeoisie on the *institutional* exploitations of feudalism—political, patriarchal and religious—which prevented free scope for the development of commercial and competitive talents. At no time however did the utilitarians apply their criteria of moral validity to the institutions of capitalism and their consequences. Criticism was directed only against those vestiges of an earlier social period which restricted the field of "personal exploitation". Whereas in France the theory of utilitarianism assumed "a moral form" in England its content rapidly became more and more economic. The special forms which the division of labor took were justified as the expressions of and contributions to social utility. Variations in market exchanges resulting from competition were equated to each other by the use of a least common denominator of relative utilities whose values established themselves only *post hoc*, i. e., after the exchanges were made. The result was, said Marx, that "its economic content gradually transformed the theory of utility into a pure apologia of the existing order, into a proof that under given conditions the present relations of human beings to each other represent the best and most useful relations possible. All subsequent modern economic theory carries the same character" (*Ibid*, Abt. I, Bd. 5, p. 392).

The standpoint of the old materialism is the standpoint of civic society because it is "atomic". It assumes that each individual organism is a god-given independent whole with private pains, pleasures and interests. Existing social arrangements are explained as contractual obligations to which each individual commits himself out of his own interest. The standpoint of the new materialism is the standpoint of the *human* society because in emphasizing the historical and cultural determinants of private experience it claims that what any man is must be explained, so to speak, in terms of what all men are. But what all men are must be inferred from what they do, from the institutional conditions under which they do it, and the historical forces which have moulded and are reshaping these conditions. This is another way of establishing the truth that the nature of man is therefore not a biological fact but a social one. The organizing relations and traditions of society are not something put on and off by individuals; they enter deeply into what appears at first glance as immediate reactions of the single organism. The theorists of an atomistic, civic society were aware that the consequences of the private pursuit of private interest rarely squared with the expectations of pain and pleasure entertained by the overwhelming mass of citizens. They either explained the discrepancy as the result in each case of false calculation or they sought refuge in a mystical conception of a pre-established harmony operating in invisible ways to bring about an undefined social welfare. Marx's conception of man pointed to the necessity of a direct collective control of all social institutions which influenced man. Such a control presupposes a theory of social interest which in a human society must give meaning and content to private interest. "Socialized humanity" on Marx's view does not destroy individuality; it modifies its form, enriches its content and makes it a value accessible to all. In a similar way, Marx expected all values whose expressions are frustrated by class interests in a class society to take on new forms and content.

XI. "Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world differently: the point is, however, to *change* it.

This oft-quoted remark evidently continues a line of criticism begun in *die deutsche Ideologie*. Marx had pointed out that the

Young Hegelians despite their "world-shattering phrases" were doing nothing more than rebaptizing the world as they found it with a new set of distinctions. Feuerbach, too, was not chary of using radical phraseology. But since he, like the others, sought the key to social change in the alteration of a personal attitude, in a generalization of the feeling of love already implicit in much of common-day behavior, Marx refused to take him at his revolutionary word. For all his talk about man, humanity and communism, Feuerbach never investigated what the social conditions of men were, to what extent the qualities of humanity which he regarded as "essential to the species" were historical, and what program of action his communism laid upon him. In Feuerbach's eyes, as we have already seen, the concrete differences between a group of healthy men and a mass of "scrofulous, overworked men fainting with hunger" are less important than the common characteristics which they share as members of an ideally defined human species. Since his abstract materialism does not come to grips with the specific causes which produce differentiations in the human species, Marx argues that Feuerbach cannot do justice to the historical elements in culture. The latter are precisely the factors which must serve as points of leverage in social change. Where Feuerbach does pay fleeting attention to historical situations, particularly in religion, he tries to find the key to them in presumably invariant patterns of human feeling and behavior.

In reading Feuerbach one cannot help sensing the illusionism which pervades his writings. He writes as if the demonstration of a truth were itself a proof that the truth would prevail, as if to have exposed an error were tantamount to passing a sentence of doom upon it. Stressing feeling as he does, he nevertheless pays little attention to the *social* sources of feeling. Despite his criticism of the superficial rationalism which explains all conduct in terms of consciously entertained ideas, he himself relapses into that very position when he expects institutional changes to be effected by his analysis. At times he strikes a different note as when he reflects upon the outcome of the German revolution of 1848. But he always returns to his rationalistic faith. His pathetic trust that the future of atheism belongs to America where the absence of feudal traditions makes human beings more accessible to argument, is a case in point. His friend Kapp who had been in America and had some first-hand experience with American piety hastened to disillusion him but Feuerbach clung to his comforting belief to the end of his days. (*Cf.*, L. Feuerbach, *Briefwechsel und Nachlass*, Bd. 2, p. 7.)

A more conspicuous illustration of Feuerbach's illusionism is his characterization of himself as a communist. His grounds for such bold language, which later contributed to bringing down on him a visitation from the police and a thorough house-searching, were philological rather than political. In a review of Max Stirner's book which makes merry over Feuerbach's religion of humanity and the inconsistencies between his method and conclusions, Feuerbach attempts to fix the character of his philosophy in the following words:

Feuerbach is neither materialist, idealist or a believer in the philosophy of identity. Well, then, what is he? He is in thought as in deed, in spirit as in flesh, in essence as in feeling—*man*; or rather, since for him the essence of man is given only in society, communal man, communist". (*S. W.* 1, Bd. I, 342)

Marx seized upon this passage as epitomizing the confusion and limitation of Feuerbach's thought. A term whose meaning in use refers to allegiance to a specific political organization is converted

into a purely abstract category. The abstract category expresses in an abstract way the commonplace that human beings find each other necessary to one another's existence. Nothing is said about the specific forms this necessary relation to each other can take and the relative justification, at definite historical periods, of one form rather than others. Finally, the whole purport of Feuerbach's description is to bring to consciousness an existing fact, whereas "the real communist aims at the revolutionizing of the existing order" (*Gesamtausgabe*, Abt. I, Bd. 5, p. 31). The point of Marx's impatience with Feuerbach's failure to concretize his descriptions and to distinguish between the historical and natural elements in his analysis becomes clearer. If the existing facts about the relations of men to each other are natural, or in Feuerbach's language, are essential to the nature of man, then it is nonsense to talk about revolutionizing them.

Marx admits that Feuerbach has gone as far as a pure theoretician or philosopher, in the traditional sense, can go without ceasing to be a theoretician or philosopher. For practice, on every conception of philosophy except Marx's own, is a foreign element in philosophy. It involves decision, conflict, an element of partisanship in behalf of one among a number of possible alternatives. The kind of philosophy Marx called for and which his own activity illustrated, involved not merely risking an idea but risking one's whole person in carrying it out. Without an attempt at carrying out ideas, philosophy becomes a mere playing with possibilities unrelated to the quest for truth and the furtherance of the good life which have always been its professed objectives. In a dim way Feuerbach, too, had realized this. But his false conception of the nature of practice led him to confine the philosophical activity to thinking about ideas. Confronting the simple, and even on his own view, the artificial dichotomy between passionless thought and thoughtless passion or activity, he identifies philosophy with passionless thought, i. e., thought unrelated to practice. His whole way of phrasing the alternative reveals not only patent inconsistencies with his other doctrines but a failure of nerve in realizing his own call for the reconstruction of philosophy. He writes of the relation between reason and passion in history as follows:

"Reason writes history but passion makes it. Everything new therefore is an injustice against the old. . . . One can think without doing an injustice to anyone, without inflicting pain upon any one, for thoughts do not go further than one's own head. But one cannot act without setting one's whole body into motion, without running up against obstacles on all sides, without wounding even against one's will." (*S. W.* 1, Bd. 2, p. 408)

Marx rejects the disjunction as being neither exhaustive nor exclusive. It is true that there is no action without a violation of some right or interest. It is not true that such action need be blind, uninformed by theory or reason. It is true that one can think without acting directly but it is not true that no injustice is thereby done. For existing injustices are tolerated and remain unaltered. Philosophical activity may be conceived as action in behalf of values and interests which have been criticized by knowledge and reason. The very fact that philosophy is an activity in a world of space, time and incompatible interests, makes it clear that its goals cannot be absolute truth or absolute justice. But the fact that action is thoughtful makes it possible to achieve beliefs which are *truer*; the fact that thought leads to action makes it possible to achieve a world which is *more just*.

This, I believe, is the sense of Marx's final thesis on Feuerbach.

Sidney HOOK

Archives of the Revolution

DOCUMENTS OF THE HISTORY AND THEORY OF THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

Letters on the Chinese Revolution

I

TROTSKY'S FIRST LETTER TO PREOBRAZHENSKY

Pravda prints in several installments an extensive article entitled, "The Significance and Lessons of the Canton Insurrection". This article is truly remarkable both for the invaluable, substantiated and first-hand information it contains as well as for its lucid exposition of contradictions and confusion of a principled nature.

It begins with an evaluation of the social nature of the revolution itself. As we all know, it is a bourgeois-democratic, a workers' and peasants' revolution. Yesterday it was supposed to unfold under the banner of the Kuo Min Tang—today it unfolds against the Kuo Min Tang.

But according to the author's appraisal, the character of the revolution, and even the entire official policy, remains bourgeois-democratic. We turn next to the chapter that deals with the policy of the Soviet power. Here we find stated that: "in the interests of the workers, the Canton Soviet issued decrees establishing. . . workers' control of production, effecting this control through factory committees [and] . . . nationalization of large-scale industry, transports and banks".

It goes on to enumerate the following measures: "the confiscation of all the apartments of the big bourgeoisie for the use of the toilers . . .".

Thus the workers were in power in Canton, through their Soviets. Actually the entire power was in the hands of the communist party, i. e., the party of the proletariat. The program included not only the confiscation of whatever feudal estates still exist in China; not only the workers' control of production, but also the nationalization of large-scale industry, banks and transport, as well as the confiscation of bourgeois apartments, and all their property for the use of the toilers. The question arises, if *such* are the methods of a bourgeois revolution, then what should the socialist revolution look like in China? What other class would do the overthrowing and by what sort of different measures? We observe that given a real development of the revolution, the formula of a bourgeois-democratic, a workers' and peasants' revolution applied to China in the present period, on the given stage of its development, proved to be a hollow fiction, a bagatelle. Those who insisted upon this formula prior to the Canton insurrection, and above all those who insist on it now, after this insurrection, are repeating (under different conditions) the principled mistake committed by Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov and the rest in the year 1917. An objection may be raised that the agrarian revolution in China has not been solved as yet! True. But neither was it solved in our own coun-

try prior to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In our country it was not the bourgeois-democratic but the proletarian socialist revolution that achieved the agrarian revolution which, moreover, was far more deep-going than the one that is possible in China, in view of the historical conditions of the Chinese system of land ownership. It may be said that China has not matured for the socialist revolution as yet. But that would be an abstract and a lifeless manner of posing the question. Was Russia, then, if taken by itself, ripe for socialism? Russia was ripe for the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only method of solving all national problems; but so far as socialist development is concerned, the latter, proceeding from the economic and cultural conditions of a country, is indissolubly bound up with the entire future development of the world revolution. This applies in whole and in part to China as well. If eight or ten months ago this was a forecast (rather belated, at that), then today it is an irrefutable deduction from the experience of the Canton uprising. It would be erroneous to argue that the Canton uprising was an adventure by and large, and that the actual class relations were reflected in it in a distorted form.

In the first place, the author of the above-mentioned article does not at all consider the Canton insurrection as an adventure, but as an entirely lawful stage in the development of the Chinese revolution. The general official point of view is: to combine the appraisal of the revolution as bourgeois-democratic with an approval of the program of action of the Canton government. But even from the standpoint of appraising the Canton insurrection as a *putsch*, one could not arrive at the conclusion that the formula of the bourgeois-democratic revolution is viable. The insurrection was obviously untimely. It was But the class forces and the programs that inevitably flow from them were disclosed by the insurrection in all their lawfulness. *The best proof of this is: that it was possible and necessary to foresee in advance the relation of forces that was laid bare by the Canton insurrection. And this was foreseen.*

This question is most closely bound up with the paramount question of the Kuo Min Tang. Incidentally, the author of the article relates, with assumed satisfaction, that one of the fighting slogans of the Canton overturn was the cry: "Down with the Kuo Min Tang!" The banners and insignia of the Kuo Min Tang were torn down and trampled underfoot. But only recently, even after the "betrayal" of Chiang Kai-shek, and after the "betrayal" of Wang Chin-wei, we heard solemn vows that: "We will not surrender the banner of the Kuo Min Tang!" Oh, these sorry revolutionists! . . .

The workers of Canton outlawed the Kuo Min Tang party, *proclaiming all its tendencies illegal*. What does this imply? It implies that for the solution of the fundamental national tasks, not only the big but also the petty bourgeoisie could not put forward such a force as would enable the party of the proletariat to solve jointly with it the tasks of the "bourgeois democratic revolution". But "*we*" are overlooking the many millions peasantry and the agrarian revolution. . . . A pitiable objection. . . . For the key to the entire situation lies precisely in the fact that the task of conquering the peasant movement falls upon the proletariat, i. e., directly upon the communist party; and this task cannot be solved in reality differently than it was solved by the Canton workers, i. e., in the shape of the dictatorship of the proletariat whose methods from the very outset grow over inevitably into socialist methods. Conversely, the general fate of these methods, as well as of the dictatorship as a whole, is decided in the last analysis by the course of world development, which naturally does not exclude but on the contrary presupposes a correct policy on the part of the proletarian dictatorship, that consists of strengthening and developing the alliance between the workers and peasants, and of an all-sided adaptation to national conditions, on the one hand, and to the course of world development, on the other. To play with the formula of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, after the experience of the Canton insurrection, is to march against the Chinese October, for without a correct general political orientation, revolutionary uprisings cannot be victorious, no matter how heroic and self-sacrificing they may be.

To be sure, the Chinese revolution has "passed into a new and higher phase"—but this is correct not in the sense that it will begin surging upward tomorrow or the next day, but in the sense that it has revealed the hollowness of the slogan of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Engels said that a party which misses a favorable situation and suffers a defeat as a result, turns into a nonentity. This applies to the Chinese party as well. The defeat of the Chinese revolution is not a bit smaller than the defeat in Germany in 1923. Of course, we must understand the reference to "nonentity" in a sensible way. Many things bespeak the fact that the next period in China will be a period of revolutionary reflux, a slow process of assimilating the lessons of the cruelest defeats, and consequently, the weakening of the direct influence of the communist party. Thence flows the necessity for the latter to draw profound conclusions in all questions of principles and tactics. And this is impossible without an open and all-sided discussion of all the fatal mistakes perpetrated hitherto.

Of course this activity must not turn into the activity of self-isolation. It is necessary to keep a firm hand on the pulse of the working class in order not to commit a mistake in estimating the tempo, and not only to identify a new mounting wave, but also to prepare for it in time.

* * *

II

THE REPLY OF PREOBRAZHENSKY.

I consider your raising the Chinese question inopportune. Why so? Because, according to all indications, the Chinese revolution is in a stage of reflux. We have plenty of time before a new upsurge. During this time we will have ample opportunity for a fundamental study of Chinese history, its economic life at present, the relation of classes, and the dynamics of the development of the entire country. As you know, there never was unanimity among us on the Chinese question. Neither Radek, Smilga nor myself are of an age to change our views under the influence of new arguments in politics (all the more so, under the influence of repeating old ones). Our views can be influenced only by new facts of decisive importance. If the Canton insurrection was an adventure—and it was undoubtedly that, i.e., it was not an undertaking that grew out of the mass movement—then how can *such* an undertaking create a new situation, a starting point for new experience and a reevaluation of all former conceptions? It is impermissible to consider the Canton insurrection as an adventure, and at the same time try to strip another hide from this ox for such a reevaluation.

I candidly confess that to all outward appearances I emerged defeated out of my controversy with you on the Chinese question (I think it was either early or in the middle of November 1927) but I was not convinced. I have pondered these themes more than once subsequently, but my conclusion still remains the same: you are wrong. Here are my views in brief.

Your position is strong only in its external impressiveness, only in its schematic simplicity and clarity, but it is not viable. The analogy with the course of our revolutions speaks not for you but against you. We had an unsuccessful bourgeois revolution in 1905. Despite the fact that the bourgeoisie even at that time had revealed itself to be a counter-revolutionary force (during the December uprising), our party oriented the proletariat towards a new *bourgeois-democratic revolution*, as a necessary stage in the future struggle for socialism, under a new relation of forces. Was Lenin right or wrong when, even back in 1915-1916, i.e., after advancing the slogan of turning the imperialist war into a civil war, he considered it necessary for Russia, during the first stage, to orient towards the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and not the dictatorship of the proletariat; while he deemed puerile the position of Bukharin and Pyatakov (who spoke of advancing the slogan of a direct socialist revolution). I think Lenin was right. And it was only *after* the bourgeois-democratic revolution was achieved, but not completed, in February, that Lenin advanced the slogan of dictatorship for the proletariat, the

slogan of revolution which must, *en route*, complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and pass on to the socialist reconstruction of society. Meanwhile, both of the Chinese revolutions have not yet given us what we obtained from February alone, neither in the sense of material conquests, nor, what is more important, in the sense of creating the conditions for the organization of workers' and peasants' soviets on a mass scale, something we obtained immediately after the downfall of Czarism. On the other hand, I do not believe that in China today, any sort of movement is secured in the bourgeois direction along evolutionary lines, as the peaceful withering away of feudal remnants was secured in Germany after the unsuccessful revolution in 1848. My summary: China still faces a colossal, bitter and protracted struggle for such elementary things as the national unification of China, let alone the colossal problem of the agrarian bourgeois-democratic revolution. It is impossible to say today whether the Chinese petty bourgeoisie will be able to create any sort of parties analogous to our S.R.s, or whether such parties will be created by the Right wing communists who split off and so on. One thing alone is clear. The hegemony of the future movement still belongs to the proletariat, but the social content of the first stage of the future third Chinese revolution cannot be characterized as a socialist overturn. You will hardly be able to show, if we are always to resort to analogies, that the present situation in China is the stage between February and October, only extended over a period of years. There has been no February in China, the movement was smashed on the *threshold to February*, although in some things matters progressed even beyond February (the counter-revolutionary spirit of the entire big and middle bourgeoisie, of the kulaks and mercantile capital). Your fundamental error lies in the fact that you determine the character of a revolution on the basis of who makes it, which class, i.e., by the effective subject, while you seem to assign secondary importance to the objective social content of the process. The November revolution in Germany was not made by the bourgeoisie, but no one considers this revolution as proletarian. The revolution of 1789 was brought to its completion by the petty bourgeoisie but no one has characterized the Great French Revolution as a petty bourgeois revolution. The Chinese revolution will be led from its outset by the proletariat and it will exact payment for this from the very beginning, but notwithstanding this fact, the first stage of this revolution will remain a stage of the bourgeois-democratic overturn, while the composition of the functioning and state organized forces will remain that of—the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

One word on your remark about ignoring the "many-millioned peasantry and the agrarian revolution". You refer to it as a "pitiable objection", and add "Zinoviev" in brackets. You could have hardly forgotten that both Radek and myself have raised this objection to you. I am not opposed to sharp attacks in principled polemics between friends but I am opposed to being ambushed together with Radek under

the pseudonym Zinoviev. We are quite able to engage in battle under our own honorably acquired names.

I have a very urgent request to make of you, Leo Davidovich: if you write a reply in refutation and send it to our entire exile commune, have my letter on China typed and sent out, too. But in general, as I have already remarked, I am not in favor of a discussion on this question at this time. Nor do I consider our differences as essential, i.e., we have always been unanimous on what the Chinese C.P. should do in practice, at the present time and when a new upswing takes place in the revolution.

TROTSKY'S REPLY TO PREOBRAZHENSKY

Your letter was also 22 days in transit. It is difficult to discuss vital questions under such conditions, and in my opinion the Chinese question belongs among the most vital ones, because the struggle is still unfolding in China, the partisan armies are in the field, and an armed insurrection has been placed on the agenda, as you no doubt know from the resolution of the last plenum of the E.C.C.II.

To begin, I want to reply to a minor but aggravating point. You say that I needlessly polemize against you under the pseudonym of Zinoviev. In this you are entirely mistaken. I believe, incidentally, that the misunderstanding arose as a result of the irregular mail delivery. I wrote about the Canton affair at a time when I was apprised of the famous letter of the two musketeers [Zinoviev and Kamenev], in addition to this, reports came from Moscow that they had been supplied with secretaries in order to expose "Trotskyism". I felt certain that Zinoviev would publish several of my letters on the Chinese question in which I set out to prove that in no case would there be such a special epoch in the Chinese revolution as an epoch of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, because incomparably fewer preconditions exist there than in our own country, and as experience, and not theory, has already shown us, the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry as such failed to materialize in our own country. Thus, my entire letter was written with a view to the past and future "exposures" on the part of Zinoviev. In referring to the charge of *ignoring the peasantry*, I did not for a moment forget certain of our disputes on China—but I had no reason whatever to put in your lips this banal charge against me: for you, I trust, recognize that it is possible, without in the least ignoring the 'peasantry' to arrive at a conclusion that the only road for solving the peasant question lies through the dictatorship of the proletariat. So that you, my dear E. A.—please do not take offense at a hunter's simile—assume gratuitously the rôle of a startled hare who concludes that the rifle is being aimed at him when the pursuit follows a totally different track.

I came to the opinion that there would not be any democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in China from the time the Wuhan government was first formed. I based myself precisely upon the analysis of the most fundamental social facts, and not upon the manner in which they were refracted politically, which, as is

well known, often assumes peculiar forms, since, in this sphere, factors of a secondary order enter, including national tradition. I became convinced that the basic social facts have already cleared the road for themselves through all the peculiarities of political superstructures, when the Wuhan shipwreck destroyed utterly the legend of the Left Kuo Min Tang, allegedly, embracing nine-tenths of the entire Kuo Min Tang. In 1924-1925, it was almost an accepted commonplace that the Kuo Min Tang is a workers' and peasants' party. This party "unexpectedly" proved to be bourgeois-capitalist. Then another version was created, that the latter was only a "summit", but that the genuine Kuo Min Tang, nine-tenths of the Kuo Min Tang, is a revolutionary peasant party. Once again, it turned out "unexpectedly" that the Left Kuo Min Tang, in whole and in part, proceeded to smash the peasant movement which, as is well known, has great traditions in China and its own traditional organizational forms that became widespread during these years. That is why, when you write in the spirit of absolute abstraction that "it is impossible to say today whether the Chinese petty bourgeoisie will be able to create any sort of parties analogous to our S.R.s, or whether such parties will be created by the Right wing communists who split off, etc.", I reply to this argument from "the theory of improbabilities" as follows: in the first place, even were the S.R.s to be created, there would not at all follow from this any dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, precisely as none followed in our own country, despite immeasurably more favorable conditions; secondly, instead of *guessing* whether the petty bourgeoisie is capable in the future—i.e., with the further aggravation of class relations—of playing a greater or lesser independent rôle (suppose a piece of wood suddenly fires a bullet?), one should rather ask why did the petty bourgeoisie prove *incapable* of playing such a rôle in the recent past, when it had at its disposal the most favorable conditions: the communist party was driven into the Kuo Min Tang, the latter was declared a workers' and peasants' party, it was supported by the entire authority of the Communist International and the U.S.S.R., the peasant movement was far-flung and sought for leadership, the intelligentsia was widely mobilized since 1919, etc., etc.

You write that China still faces the "colossal problem of the agrarian bourgeois-democratic revolution". To Lenin, this was the root of the question. Lenin pointed out that the peasantry even as *an estate* is capable of playing a revolutionary rôle in the struggle against the *estate of the landed nobility*, and the bureaucracy indissolubly linked up with the latter, crowned by the Czarist autocracy. On the subsequent stage, says Lenin, the kulaks will break with the workers, and together with them a considerable section of the middle peasants, but this will take place already during the transition to the proletarian revolution, as an integral part of the international revolution. But how do matters stand in China? China has no landed nobility; no peasant estate, fused by community of interests against the landlords. The agrarian revo-

lution in China is aimed *against the urban and rural bourgeoisie*. Radek has stressed this often—even Bukharin has half-understood this now. In this lies the gist of the matter!

You write that "the social content of the first stage of the future third Chinese revolution cannot be characterized as a socialist overturn". But we run the risk here of falling into Bukharinistic scholasticism, and of occupying ourselves with splitting hairs over terminology, instead of a living characterization of the dialectic process. What was the content of our revolution from October 1917 to July '918? We left the mills and factories in the hands of the capitalists, confining ourselves to workers' control; we expropriated the landed estates and put through the petty bourgeois S.R. program of the socialization of land; and to crown it all, during this period, we had a co-participant in power in the form of the Left S.R.s. One could say with complete justification that "the social content of the first stage of the October revolution cannot be characterized as a socialist overturn". I believe it was Yakovlev and several other Red professors who spilled a great deal of sophistry over this. Lenin said that we completed the bourgeois revolution *en route*. But the Chinese revolution (the "third") will have to begin the drive against the kulak at its very first stages; it will have to expropriate the concessions of foreign capitalists, for, without this, there cannot be any unification of China in the sense of a genuine state sovereignty in economics and politics. In other words, the very first stage of the third Chinese revolution will be less bourgeois in content than the first stage of the October revolution.

On the other hand, the Canton events (as earlier Chinese events, etc.) demonstrated that the "national" bourgeoisie, too, having behind it Hong-Kong, foreign advisers and foreign cruisers, assumes such a position in relation to the slightest independent movement of workers and peasants as renders workers' control of production even less likely than was the case among us. In all probability we shall have to expropriate mills and factories, of any size, at the very first moments of the "third Chinese revolution".

To be sure, you propose simply to set aside the evidence of the Canton uprising. You say: "since" the Canton insurrection was an adventure—i.e., not an undertaking that grew out of a mass movement—therefore "how can *such* an undertaking create a new situation? . . .". Now, you yourself know that it is entirely impermissible thus to simplify the question. I would be the last person to argue against the fact that there were elements of adventurism in the Canton uprising. But to picture the Canton events as some sort of hocus-pocus from which no conclusions flow is an over-simplified attempt at *evading* the analysis of the actual content of the Canton experience. Wherein did adventurism lie? In the fact that the leadership, striving to cover up its past sins, monstrosly forced the course of events, and caused a miscarriage. The mass movement existed, but it was inadequate and immature. It is wrong to think that

presumably a miscarriage can teach us nothing about the maternal organism and the process of gestation. The enormous and theoretically decisive significance of the Canton events for the fundamental questions of the Chinese revolution lies precisely in the fact that we have here—"thanks to" the adventure (yes! of course!—what happens so rarely in history and politics: *virtually a laboratory experiment on a gigantic scale*). We paid very dearly for it, but that is all the less reason to wave its lessons aside.

The conditions for the experiment were almost "chemically pure". All the previously adopted resolutions had set down, sealed and canonized, just like two times two equals four, that the revolution is bourgeois-agrarian, that only those "who leap over stages" could babble about the dictatorship of the proletariat based upon an alliance with the peasant poor, who compose 80 percent of the Chinese peasantry, etc., etc. The last convention of the communist party of China met under this banner. A special representative of the Comintern, comrade N., was present. We were told that the new C.E.C. of the Chinese C.P. was above all suspicious. During this time, the campaign against so-called Trotskyism attained the wildest tempo, in China as well. Yet, on the very threshold of the Canton events, the C.E.C. of the Chinese C.P. adopted, in the words of *Pravda*, a resolution declaring that the *Chinese revolution had assumed a "permanent" character*. Moreover, the representative of the Comintern, comrade N. held the same position. Under the "permanent" character of the revolution we must here understand the following: face to face with the supremely responsible practical task (though it was posed prematurely) the Chinese communists and even the representative of the Comintern, after taking into account the entire past experience and, as it were, all the political assets, drew the conclusion that only the workers led by the communists could lead the peasants against the agrarians (the urban and rural bourgeoisie); and that only the dictatorship of the proletariat based on an alliance with the hundreds of millions of peasant poor could ensue from such a victorious struggle. Just as during the Paris Commune, which also had in it elements of a laboratory experiment (for the uprising took place there in a single city isolated from the rest of the country) the Proudhonists and Blanquists had to resort to steps directly contrary to their own doctrines, and thus (according to Marx) revealed all the more clearly the actual logic of class relations—so in Canton, too, the leaders, who were stuffed to the ears with prejudices against the bogie of the "permanent revolution", once they set to work, proved guilty of committing this original permanent sin from their very first steps. What happened, then, to the previous antitoxin of Martinovism that had been injected in bovine and asinine doses? Oh no! If this were *only* an adventure, i.e., a sort of hocus-pocus, showing nothing and proving nothing, then this adventure would have assumed the image and likeness of its creators. But no! This adventure came in contact with the earth, it was fed by the juices of real (though

immature) mass movements and relations; and it was on this account that the said "adventure" seized its own creators by the scruff, impolitely picked them up, shook them in the air, and then deposited them on their heads, tapping their skulls, for firmness' sake, against the Chinese pavements. . . . As the latest resolutions and the latest article on this subject testify, these said "creators" are still standing on their heads, "permanently" dancing with their feet in the air.

It is ludicrous and impermissible to say that it is "inopportune" to draw conclusions from living events which every worker-revolutionist must think out to the end. At the time of the Ho-Lun - Ye-Tin uprising I wanted to pose openly the question that in view of the consummation of the Kuo Min Tang cycle of development, only the vanguard of the proletariat could aspire to power. This would presuppose a new standpoint for it, a new self-appraisal on its part—after a reevaluation of the objective situation—and this very thing would have excluded such an adventurist approach to the situation as: "We'll bide our time in a little corner, the mouzhik will come to our assistance by starting things, and somebody will somehow seize power and do something." At that time, certain comrades said to me, "It is inopportune to raise these questions now in connection with Ho-Lun who apparently has been crushed already." I did not at all tend to overestimate Ho-Lun's uprising; I did consider, nevertheless, that it was the last signal in favor of the necessity to review the orientation in the Chinese revolution. Had these questions been *opportunistly* posed at that time, then, perhaps, the ideological authors of the Canton adventure might have been compelled to think things over, and the Chinese party might not have been so ruthlessly destroyed; and if not, then in the light of our prognosis and our warning, the Canton events would have entered as a weighty lesson into the consciousness of hundreds and thousands, as for example, did Radek's warning about Chiang Kai-shek, on the eve of the Shanghai *coup d'état*. No, the propitious time has passed. I do not know when the Chinese revolution will revive. But we must realize whatever time remains at our disposal entirely for preparation and, moreover, on the basis of the fresh track of events.

You write that it is necessary to study the history of China, its economic life, statistical data, etc. Nobody can object to this (unless this is intended as an argument to postpone the question to doomsday). In my own justification, however, I must say that since my arrival in Alma-Ata I have occupied myself only with China (India, Polynesia, etc., for comparative study). Of course more gaps remains than completely covered places, but I must say nevertheless that in all the new (for myself) books I am reading, I find even today nothing new in principle. But the chief point still remains—the *confirmation of our prognoses by experience*—first in relation to the Kuo Min Tang as a whole, then in relation to the "Left" Kuo Min Tang and the Wuhan government and, finally, in relation to the "deposit" on the third revolution, in the shape of the Canton uprising.

That is why I consider that there cannot be any postponement.

Two final questions:

You ask: Was Lenin right when during the war he defended against Bukharin the idea that Russia was still facing a bourgeois revolution? Yes, he was right, the Bukharin formulation was schematic and scholastic, i.e., it represented the self-same caricature of the permanent revolution that Bukharin tries to ascribe to me now. But there is also another side to this same question: was Lenin right when against Stalin, Rykov, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Frunze, Kalinin, Tomsky, etc., etc. (let alone all the Lyadovs), he advanced his April theses? Was he right when against Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Miliutin, etc., etc., he defended the seizure of power by the proletariat? You know better than I that had Lenin failed to reach Petrograd in April 1917, there would have been no October revolution. Up to February 1917, the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry was historically progressive; after the February overturn the same slogan—of Stalin, Kamenev and the rest—became a reactionary slogan.

From April to May 1927 I supported the slogan of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry for China (more correctly, I concurred with this slogan) inasmuch as the social forces had not as yet passed their political verdict, although the situation in China was immeasurably less propitious for this slogan than in Russia: after this verdict was passed by a colossal historical action (the experience of Wuhan) the slogan of democratic dictatorship becomes a reactionary force and will lead inevitably either to opportunism or adventurism.

You further argue that for the October leap we had the February running start. That is correct. If, even at the beginning of the Northern expedition, we had begun to build Soviets in the "emancipated" regions (and the masses were striving for that), we would have obtained the necessary running start, would have disintegrated the armies of the enemies, obtained *our own* army and we would have assumed power—if not in the whole of China at once, then in a very considerable section of it. At present, of course, the revolution is on the decline. The babbling of the light-minded scribblers about the fact that the revolution is on the verge of a new upswing, inasmuch as, in China, if you please, countless executions are taking place and a cruel commercial and industrial crisis is raging—this is criminal idiocy. After three greatest defeats the crisis does not arouse but on the contrary oppresses the proletariat, while the executions are destroying the politically weakened party. We have entered the period of reflux. What will provide the impulse for a new mounting wave? Or to put it differently: what conditions will provide the necessary running start for the proletarian vanguard at the head of the workers' and peasant masses? This I do not know. The future will show whether only external processes will suffice or an impulse from without will be necessary. I am willing to allow that the first stage of the movement may repeat in an abridged

and a changed form the stages of the revolution that we have already passed (for example, some new parody of the "all-national front" against Chang Tso-Lin); but this first phase will perhaps suffice only in order to enable the communist party to advance and proclaim to the popular masses its "April theses", i.e., its program and strategy of the conquest of power by the proletariat. If, however, we enter into the new upswing, which will unfold with an incomparably more rapid tempo than in the past, with a schema of a "democratic dictatorship" that is already outworn today, then one could stake his head beforehand that in China very many Lyadovs will be found, but hardly a Lenin in order to effect (against all the Lyadovs) the tactical rearming of the party, on the day after the revolutionary flip.

* * *

IV.

TROTSKY'S THIRD LETTER TO PREOBRAZHENSKY

Dear E. A.:

Received your airmail letter yesterday. Thus, all the letters have arrived. The last letter took 16 days in transit, i.e., six days less than ordinary mail. Two days ago I sent you a detailed answer to your objections on the Chinese revolution. But on awakening this morning I recalled that I had failed (apparently) to reply to the argument you deem most important, as I understand it. You write:

"Your basic error lies in the fact that you determine the character of a revolution on the basis of who makes it, which class, i.e., by the effective subject, while you seem to assign secondary importance to the objective social content of the process."

Then you go on to adduce as examples the November revolution in Germany, the 1789 revolution in France, and the future Chinese revolution.

This argument is in essence only a "sociological" generalization (to use Johnsonian terminology) of all your other concrete economic and historical views. But I want also to reply to your views in their generalized sociological formulation, for in so doing the "fundamental error" (on your part and not mine) stands out most clearly.

How to characterize a revolution? By the class which achieves it or by the social content lodged in it? There is a theoretical trap lodged in counterposing the former to the latter in such a general form. The Jacobin period of the French Revolution was of course the period of petty bourgeois dictatorship, in addition to which, the petty bourgeoisie—in complete harmony with its "sociological nature"—cleared the way for the big bourgeoisie. The November revolution in Germany was the beginning of the proletarian revolution but it was checked at its very first steps by the petty bourgeois leadership, and succeeded only in achieving a few things unfulfilled by the bourgeois revolution. What are we to call the November revolution: bourgeois or proletarian? Both the former and the latter would be incorrect. The place of the October revolution will be determined when we both give the *mechanics* of this revolution and determine its results. There will be no

contradiction in this case between the mechanics (understanding under it, of course, not only the motive force but also the leadership) and the results: both the former and the latter are "sociologically" indeterminate in character. I take the liberty to put the question to you: what would you call the Hungarian revolution of 1919? You will say: *proletarian*. Why? Didn't the social "content" of the Hungarian revolution prove to be capitalist! You will reply: this is the social content of the counter-revolution. Correct. Apply this now to China. The "social content" under the dictatorship of the proletariat (based on an alliance with the peasantry) can remain during a certain period of time not socialist *as yet*, but the road to bourgeois development from the dictatorship of the proletariat can lead only through counter-revolution. For this reason, so far as the social content is concerned, it is necessary to say: "We shall wait and see."

The gist of the matter lies precisely in the fact that although the political mechanics of the revolution depends in the *last analysis* upon an economic base (not only national but international) it cannot, however, be deduced with abstract logic from this economic base. In the first place, the base itself is very contradictory and its "maturity" does not allow of bald statistical determination; secondly, the economic base as well as the political situation must be approached not in the national but in the international framework, taking into account the dialectic action and reaction between the national and the international; thirdly, the class struggle and its political expression, unfolding on the economic foundations, also have their own imperious logic of development, which cannot be leaped over. When Lenin said in April 1917 that only the dictatorship of the proletariat could save Russia from disintegration and doom, Sukhanov (the most consistent opponent) refuted him with two fundamental arguments: 1) the social content of the bourgeois revolution has not yet been achieved; 2) Russia had not yet matured economically for a socialist revolution. And what was Lenin's answer? Whether or not Russia has matured is something that "we shall wait and see"; this cannot be determined statistically; this will be determined by the trend of events and, moreover, only on an international scale. But, said Lenin, independently of how this social content will be determined in the end, at the present moment, today, there is no other road to the salvation of the country—from famine, war and enslavement—except through the seizure of power by the proletariat.

That is precisely what we must say now in relation to China. First of all, it is incorrect to allege that the agrarian revolution composes the basic content of the present historical struggle. In what must this agrarian revolution consist? The universal partition of the land? But there have been several such universal partitions in Chinese history. And then the development always returned to "its proper orbit". The agrarian revolution is the destruction of the Chinese landlords and Chinese functionaries. But the national unification of China and its economic sovereignty imply its emancipation from *world imperialism*, for

which China remains the most important safety valve against the collapse of European and, tomorrow, of American capitalism. The agrarian overturn in China *without* national unification and tariff autonomy (in essence: monopoly of foreign trade) would not open any way out or any perspectives for China. This is what pre-determines the gigantic sweep and the monstrous sharpness of the struggle facing China—today, after the experience already undergone by all the participants. What then should a Chinese communist say to himself under these conditions? Can he really proceed to reason as follows: the social content of the Chinese revolution can only be bourgeois (as proved by such and such charts). Therefore we must not pose ourselves the task of the dictatorship of the proletariat; the social content prescribes, in the most extreme case, a coalition dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. But for a coalition (in question here, of course, is a *political* coalition, and not a "socialist" alliance of classes) a partner is needed. Moscow taught me that the Kuo Min Tang is such a partner. However, no Left Kuo Min Tang materialized. What to do? Obviously, there only remains for

me, a Chinese communist, to console myself with the idea that "it is impossible to say today whether the Chinese petty bourgeoisie will be able to create any sort of parties" . . . or whether it will not. Suppose it suddenly does?

A Chinese communist who reasons along such a prescription would cut the throat of the Chinese revolution.

Least of all, of course, is it a question here of summoning the Communist party of China to an immediate insurrection for the seizure of power. The tempo depends entirely upon the circumstances. The task lies in seeing to it that the communist party is permeated through and through with the conviction that the third Chinese revolution can come to a triumphant conclusion only with the dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of the communist party. Moreover, it is necessary to understand this leadership not "in a general" sense, but in the sense of the direct wielding of complete revolutionary power. And so far as the tempo with which we shall have to build socialism in China is concerned, this—"we shall wait and see".

Leon TROTSKY

BOOKS

Silone the Modern

Writers who have come to take a revolutionary political position pose again and again the problem of relating their non-political insights to their new revolutionary standpoint. There was the famous quarrel about propaganda and its bearing on literature, a quarrel which propagated endless discussions on several continents. How much of a break with the past of literature must a revolutionary writer make? was the fundamental question. Such a question it goes without saying cannot be solved by discussions, but only by a creative act. Ignazio Silone is one of the few revolutionary writers who have made a creative act. In the two books of Silone published to date, *Fontamara* and *Mr. Aristotle*, the necessities of literary vision and the necessity of a propagandist attack on the bourgeoisie, which most writers felt as contradictory, appear as one necessity, as one movement of thought, as one direction. One is tempted to describe Silone's solution in too simple terms, to say: his hatred of Fascism makes him a great story-teller.

But how much of a break with the past of literature has Silone made?

Now the great moments of bourgeois literature are dominated by the notion that an individual can achieve freedom within the framework of capitalist society if endowed with a sufficient amount of genius. One of the many corollaries of this point of view is that only men of genius deserve to be free. There have been many variants on the specific type of genius the individual was asked to develop in order to liberate himself. In a sense every great literary work of the past thirty years was an experiment in yet another type of genius. If an individual were only brutal enough, Chris-

tian enough, rational enough, individual enough, sexual enough (this, the value hymned by D. H. Lawrence, finally involved the negation of the Individual in the Couple), mystical enough, he could be free. These varying programs for the salvation of the individual are in one respect the same program, since all are agreed that without genius freedom is impossible,—genius in sex or genius in reasonableness, but in any case, genius. No great bourgeois writer of the twentieth century has differed on this point, nobody lied and held out hope to mediocrity, though the genius-program was sometimes stated in an equivocal form. Thomas Mann, for instance, seems to hold that mediocrity is a necessary element in the synthesis of a free man with his society. Actually Mann is interested in the challenge of mediocrity to genius, in mediocrity as a sort of moral mask which genius finds it necessary to wear at times in order to live in harmony with the generalized mediocrity of social relations, and again, in mediocrity as the temptation of genius, which genius deliberately undergoes only to become more profound and genius-like than ever. The problem is still the same: the freedom of the individual. And the methodology of liberation: genius.

The point of view I have described has gone through many mutations. Its contemporary adherents are of much lower stature than the adherents of its past. No new types of genius are being proposed as solutions. The old types are simply defended by commentators. The view has lost its old capacity to instigate, to experiment, but nevertheless continues to influence non-revolutionary writers, and lives, too, a kind of subterranean, half-conscious life in the works of many writers who have gone over to the revolution.

Ignazio Silone has made a complete break with this point of view. The ideas that organize the events in *Fontamara* and *Mr. Aristotle* are the concepts of revolutionary Marxism. Freedom is for Silone the problem of the group, and it is to be attained by concerted action, and by the proper revolutionary tactic which in turn evolves from the experience of the group. A group of anti-Fascists in Silone's story "The Trap", is destroyed because one of them, for considerations of personal honor, spares the life of a Fascist spy who has fallen into his hands. The substitution of the group for the individual as the center of the problem and of tactic for genius as the means of solution separate Silone from the bourgeois past of literature. And what differentiates him from other revolutionary writers is the absoluteness with which this judgment organizes his experience. While Malraux hesitates between Nietzsche and Lenin and records his hesitations in a trembling prose, Silone, certain of his judgments, orders his insights, polishes his style, and produces a new, objective art.

To be modern in art often means to contradict the styles of the immediate past with the style of an earlier past. Silone is outside naturalism and symbolism, the two dominant tendencies of bourgeois literature. His method of narration is closer to the methods of dramatic poetry and the popular fable than to the methods of the bourgeois novel. Of the ponderous paraphernalia of naturalism, the realistic landscape, colloquial modes of speech recorded for their own sake, detailed biographies of the characters from birth until their entrance into action, psychological minutiae—of all the endless stock in trade of meaningless verisimilitude there is as little in Silone as there is of the old genius-ideology. The characters of *Fontamara* are located and defined by the type of torment which afflicts them. This torment is engineered by the historical process. Their problems are the problems of the Italian peasant under Fascism. *Fontamara* itself is not an actual place but a poetical place like Hell, segmented off into different zones of pain. There is nothing picturesque, unique about its landscape,—it has no local color. Geography, as in the oldest tradition of poetry, is here a function of meaning. We know almost nothing about the characters but the laws of their response to the action of the Fascist gangs against them. Most of the Fontamarans do not know what is to be done and their pathos is adjusted to their ignorance. Berado, who learns what must be done, cannot any more than they escape destruction; bringing pain and death upon himself with full deliberation, he enters into a sort of higher circle of Hell bounded by the ignorance and helplessness of his comrades. "A Trip to Paris" in *Mr. Aristotle* is the story of a dream, the dream of a young Fontamaran who attempts to escape the common fate of a Fontamaran farmer which he identifies with "corn-meal mush". This dream suggests the methods of the surrealists: a series of monstrous images and complicated and absurd events torment the half-starved, half-asleep Benjamin as he lies in the baggage car of the Rome-Paris express. But the mad images in Benjamin's dream are more like the

images in the famous dream of Jacob than like those of the surrealists. The images in Benjamin's dream are monstrous, but it is monstrous to live in a world of "corn-meal mush"; through the dream of one individual we get an exact picture of the desires of the Fontamaran youth. Exaggeration is in the service of the exact.

As Silone's art weaves together the older methods of imaginative simplification with the most modern interpretation of social processes, so it represents also a weaving of the values of naïve and sophisticated art. It is naïve art in that almost all of the characters are naïve. But it is a sophisticated art in that the problems of the characters are problems of tactics. What they need is knowledge. Their drama is a drama of knowledge and their ignorance is a historical fate. They try to learn, try to find out what they must do and the development of their understanding is a succession of blows on the mouth. Perhaps it is because Silone conceives the problems of these ignorant peasants as indivisible from the problems of intellectuals, organizers and theoreticians of freedom that he is able to achieve so complete an identification with them. His characters, unlike the primitive types of such modern novelists as Lawrence, Anderson and Hemingway are not suffering or exultant landscapes outside the processes of rational thought. As the revolutionary relates himself to the masses through intellectual clarification of their problems, so the ruses of Silone's peasants, ineffectual efforts in the proper direction, relate them to the ruses of the working class formulated in Marxian theory and to all the intellectual artifices of humanity.

Lionel ABEL

In Justification of Stalinism

"THE SOVIET UNION AND WORLD PROBLEMS." Harris Foundation Lectures—1935.

It has become less and less difficult, hardly even embarrassing, as the course of the Stalinist régime in the Soviet Union has become clear to the enlightened bourgeoisie, for university round-table discussions to be devoted to the Soviet Union. We can guarantee that no professor, no gentleman of the professional or business world need fear the ruffling of his feelings by any crudeness in touch or approach to this delicate problem on the part of such understanding and sympathetic interpreters as Ambassador Troyanovsky, Chairman Boyeff, Correspondent Romm and Professors Kuhn and Graham. Unlike jewellers who polish off the rough edges and facets of a diamond to bring out its fire and lustre, these disseminators of culture use their technique to dim the intensity and brilliance of the October Revolution. The greatest world problem today is the problem of the transformation of capitalism into socialism, the problem of the international proletarian revolution and the relation of the Soviet Union to the world proletariat. In the perfunctory factual reports strung together in this book, not a hint is given that such a problem exists or that there is still a class struggle being

waged. Rather the entire emphasis is laid on the juridical aspects of things, on the Stalin-Litvinov foreign policy, and on the question of nationalities in the Soviet Union.

The basic "principles" of the diplomacy of Stalin are stated with becoming clarity. The "struggle for peace", that is, for the maintenance of the *status quo*, the entry into the League of Nations, the Franco-Soviet pact are all traced to the theory of socialism in one country. The peaceful coexistence of a workers' state and of the surrounding world of capitalist states was premised on this utopian theory. Stalin felt compelled to adopt this anti-Marxian "principle" in order to maintain power. The bureaucracy, with its Bonapartist pinnacle, became the regulator not only of the internal relations between workers and peasants in the workers' state, but also of the antagonism between the workers' state and world imperialism. In the process of regulating this inevitable antagonism between two fundamentally opposed economic and social systems, Stalin met reaction half way by crushing those instruments and organs which tied the Soviet Union firmly to the world proletariat and hence to world revolution. To the world working class Stalin assigned only one rôle—the policing of the borders of Russia to defend the Soviet Union against attack. But fearing to trust the workers with even this rôle, Stalin turns to the "friendly" imperialists for mutual defense against the "unfriendly" ones. These facts are, of course, not stated in such precise terms by the Troyanovskys and Romms, but are not difficult to gather even in their guarded versions. Troyanovsky, who was a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Mensheviks during the October Revolution, makes it a point here as elsewhere, to link up the present policies of the Stalinists with those of Kerensky and the Mensheviks. Stalin is the continuator of Lenin—and Kerensky!

The treatment of the problem of nationalities in the Soviet Union is the best part of the book. Not, however, in the sense of portraying the tremendous rôle of national revolutions as one main stream flowing into and merging with the October Revolution, but as an indication of the completely democratic foundations of the Soviets and their freedom from the bourgeois taint of colonial exploitation. Nowhere was national oppression so intense, so bitter as under the Great Russian ruling class of the Czarist period. This was due to the backwardness of Russia and to the meagerness of the peasant economic foundation for the greedy exploitation by the feudal nobility and the landowners. It was the great contribution of Lenin to the strategy of revolution to have realized that the only way for the workers to gain the complete confidence of the oppressed nations was by the incorporation in the Bolshevik program of the complete self-determination of each nationality, even to the point of separating from Russia, the oppressor nation. It was this policy of the Soviets that actually kept the two hundred or more nationalities of Russia together in a federated socialist republic, pursuing the same socialist aims under different national forms. From the address

of Stalin on the national question, reproduced in the appendix, one would hardly gather that Stalin the Georgian had endorsed the Menshevik point of view on this question just before October—a view which played the game of the Great Russian bourgeoisie in their attempt to keep in their clutches the exploited nations. The cultivation of the feelings of national patriotism in Russia at the present time are merely the recrudescences of Stalin's old point of view. The Stalinist bureaucracy, relying more and more on a privileged and consciously fostered section of the working class, a stratum that is being imbued with feelings of superiority to the great mass of toilers, menaces the entire Soviet system. It creates the forces and the milieu that can prove fatal to the very existence of the workers' state. It is to be expected, therefore, that Stalinism cannot help but have a corroding influence on the relation between the Soviets and the nations forming part of the Union. The danger of the restoration of capitalism inherent in the Bonapartist régime, includes the danger of the restoration of national oppression. A workers' state can allow the completest freedom for national cultural development. In an imperialist epoch, a restored bourgeois state would by its very nature reestablish national and colonial exploitation.

The Harris lectures will not help to an understanding of the present phases of the class struggle, in or out of the Soviet Union. They form part of a vast literature of Stalinist justification, which means Stalinist prevarication and perversions of truth. It is necessary to refute the false and poisonous views presented in such books.

Jack WEBER

Soaring Aloft

THEORY OF FLIGHT. By Muriel Rukeyser, Yale University Press: 86 pp.

Hart Crane in his endeavor to forge a symbol out of the American Soil, selected as his metaphysical "items" the famed windjammer, Cutty Sark, the Bridge, the Tunnel, and a sailor song, the Rose of Stamboul, all these items having a connecting link with tradition, a common sequence and continuity, picking up the cultural lag from Melville and Whitman: the sea and the soil. Muriel Rukeyser, accepting this continuity, sails aloft from the Cutty Sark of Crane, to a mightier symbol, that of the clear air and the Wright brothers who created the flying machine, a swifter and more complex symbol, based on greater hazards and more dangerous than the whaling ships of Melville. In this sense of continuity, like Sandburg and for the moment MacLeish an acceptance is granted. Language like events and conditions are altered and renewed from a common source: the basic source of cultural life, the proletariat. Not that the proletariat itself creates this culture, it does not, but it is the soil from which this culture takes its roots and blooms.

Like Auden, Rukeyser, bids farewell to a heritage which, while it cannot be erased

from the cells of memory, nevertheless must be cut off: "I have left forever house and maternal river given up sitting in that private tomb, quitted that land, that house, that velvet room. Frontiers admitted me to a growing country I carry the proofs of my birth and my mind's reasons but reckon with their struggle and their seasons."

MacKnight Black in his book of poems, *Machinery*, spoke as lovingly, and as cryptically of gears and pistons as Rukeyser does of all the elements in her *Theory of Flight*, the land below, people walking, the strike down there, death, night flight, etc. Yet a greater sense of beauty comes from her personal poems; then her lyrical images burst out—and are not held in check by artificial aesthetic tapes. In her sweep from the loftiness of the Plane, the focus is sometimes a series of blurs, the appraisals of the earth below—too much of a blot. In her poem, *The Tunnel*, the major portion of which is extremely beautiful, one runs across such bad lines, as, "The street is long, with a sprinkling of ashcans; panhandlers begin to forage among banana-peels and cardboard boxes". I am sure this does not heighten the aesthetic, social or imagistic experience of the reader: it is at best a bastardized series of words.

In an effort to simplify the complexities of style, to break down the mediums, Rukeyser, like Auden and the English group, have happened on more complex and more elaborate planes of intellectual flight. Were the would-be readers trained (*the masses*) in the reading and writing of poetry at this present date—there would be no sense in being critical. But those who are writing for the "revolution" should take into consideration that their audience is not or should not be entirely composed of professional aestheticians or the literary portion of the revolutionary movement they might even consider the much talked of *masses*.

Theory of Flight, a bit posed in the air here and there, is nevertheless a powerful roaring plane, at times swooping and taking dives, an occasional missing in the feed, but on the whole fit for a transcontinental journey if enough gas is taken along. Unlike the majority of the New Masses poets, Rukeyser has more than sincerity to guide her, more than emotion alone, but ideas and the capacity to write a long and sustained poem.

Harry ROSKOLENKIER

The Press

A NEST OF RATTLESNAKES

[Under the above heading, Editor Charles Angoff writes in *The American Spectator* (April 1936) in a refreshingly different tone from that employed by most of the radical intellectuals at the present time:]


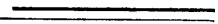
The united front movement has many excellent things about it, but some of its ideology leaves us in doubt, especially that part which differentiates between *good* democracies and *bad* Fascist states. Liberals, progressives, and radicals are asked to "coöperate" with all democracies and to shun all Fascist governments. We agree that

Fascists should be shunned, but we see little reason for falling headlong in love with any and all democracies simply because they happen to be democracies.

Good democracies, it seems to us, are often as bad as *bad* Fascist states. It was the good democracies that plunged the world into the World War and that have been the curse of Europe ever since. Viscount Grey and Raymond Poincaré, champions of democracy, were as much enemies of society in their day as Mussolini and Hitler are now. True enough, they wore evening clothes instead of black and brown shirts, but they played the same dirty game. Their successors have been no better. They have been worse. It was the governments of the Lavals, Herriots, MacDonalds, and Baldwins who were the first to come to the aid of Mussolini and Hitler. It is English and French gold that has kept these two gangsters going, and that gold, to come nearer home, was in large part supplied by New York banks, most of whose directors are such vociferous defenders of democracy at dinners of the American Liberty League.

Without the aid of French gold and the French Army, the Fascist régimes of Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia could not last a day. Hitler and Mussolini are dangerous to the peace of the world, but the major European democracies are no less dangerous. They are just as greedy for conquest. They are just as nefarious in their diplomacy. And they are arming at least as heavily. France, in fact, is more heavily armed than Germany, and we have a feeling that if all the facts were known we would find that our own armaments could stack up very well beside those of France.

"Coöperating" with such democracies thus becomes a mockery. They robbed all of Africa. They are trying to steal most of Asia. They are making inroads into South America. They started the World War and then inflicted the Versailles Treaty upon the world. They have worked hand in glove with Hitler and Mussolini. How on earth can you "coöperate" with such a nest of rattlesnakes?

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