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Erich Muehsam on Soviets

How Soviets Can Prevent Dictatorship



Workers' Party of U.S.

A New Brand of Opportunism?



Socialism Versus State Ownership

Socialism Redefined

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The Paris Commune

Like any other great event the Paris Commune takes on added significance with the passing of time. The larger perspectives afforded by more than half a century of class struggles, the tragic experience of our time enable us to see much clearer the importance of this crucial event, planted as it was at the juncture of two epochs. We can now read its meaning not only in terms of revolutionary strategy, but of the general drift toward catastrophe revealed by the last turn of events. And unlike the pre-war Socialists to whom the defeat of the Paris Commune was only a temporary set-back, of limited historical efficacy we feel that we still live under the shadow of those tragic events, the true dimensions of which were not fully realized half a century ago.

That the pre-war Socialist movement could not see that very clearly was due not only to the lack of sufficiently wide perspectives. It wasn't only that the Socialists of that epoch were still too close to the events of the Paris Commune to be able to gauge accurately their far-reaching import. That in itself would have been rectified in the course of time. The flattened out historical vision of the majority of Socialists of that period was due much more to the shrinking of the revolutionary spirit, to the rejection of the revolutionary traditions of the Paris Commune. Following the defeat of the latter, the Socialist movement began to turn its back upon the wider aims and larger perspectives of the Socialist ideal, and it was in accordance with the petty, reformist spirit that prevailed then that the lessons of the Paris Commune came to be interpreted. Its true character -- that of an abortive Social Revolution of a definite libertarian trend-- was utterly forgotten, and though engraved in such unmistakable manner that even its enemies had to acknowledge the great significance thereof -- it became gradually dissolved in the vapid interpretation which a degenerate socialist movement succeeded in fastening upon the Paris Commune. In such an interpretation the latter shrunk to the proportions of a premature socialist experiment, an untoward incident which merely cleared the road for the triumph of parliamentary socialism.

Then came the turbulent period of wars and social upheavals. The basic historic pattern of the Paris Commune was repeated on a much larger scale, and in the light of the new experience the significance of the events of 1871 began to take on a deeper hue. The Paris Commune became an object lesson in revolutionary dynamics, laying bare the working of social forces at the point of highest tension, revealing their inevitable drive toward a revolutionary climax. The patronizing attitude toward the Paris Commune as a premature outbreak was gone. It was the inevitable character of those events that came to be stressed, the elemental sweep of historic forces shaping those events into a great popular revolution, hurling it with all its terrific impact against the established institutions of modern society. And that this incomparably profounder view of the Paris Commune came to prevail now was in itself due in no small measure to the deeper insight into the nature of revolutionary upheavals afforded by the experience of the post-war years.

With all that there lingered about this evaluation of the Paris Commune much of the cheap optimism of the older period, of the kind which refuses to see the tragic implications of great revolutionary defeats. The fatalistic idea of an almost automatic forward march of the socialist movement was still firmly planted in the minds of many, leading to an underestimation of the effects of the defeat of the Paris Commune. Such effects were not local in their nature they were not confined to a temporary reaction in the political life of France, but became the determining factor of the downward course of European history, the full working out of which was revealed only by the last events of Germany.

For if the Paris Commune came as the revolutionary culmination of the creative stirrings of an entire epoch, the frustration of such could not but cast its darkest shadow over the subsequent period of European history. This showed itself in the check placed upon the great revolutionary ferment going on then in most of the countries of Europe, which, though not being outspokenly socialist in character, would inevitably assume such nature when given full development. And one of the most hopeful movements frustrated

by that tragic defeat was the revolutionary trend towards a federalized Europe, instead of which the military, imperialist state became the dominant factor of European life. Of still greater significance was the transfer of the spiritual hegemony from the libertarian revolutionary socialism of France to the philistine, visionless authoritarian socialism of Germany. The triumph of the latter, made possible by the tragic defeat of the Paris Commune, signified the beginning of the retreat of revolutionary forces before the onset of barbarism, culminating in the shameful surrender of the labor movement.

It took more than half a century to bring out the full implications of the defeat of the great revolutionary upheaval of 1871. The triumphant sweep of reactionary forces of fascism is nothing but the low point reached by the historic pendulum, the downward sweep of which has a much wider range than the post-war... Great was the promise held out by the first attempt at a social revolution, but of no less significance was its defeat -- such is the tragic lesson of the Paris Commune taught to us by our own tragic period.

S-X

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K R O N S T A D T

In 1921, the Revolutionary Government of Russia celebrated the anniversary of the Paris Commune in the same manner that the reactionary government of Thiers' had done fifty years earlier. The Red Army, under orders of Lenin, Trotsky & Co., slaughtered thousands of revolutionary proletarians of Kronstadt. They did this in the name of the revolution. Only four years previously Trotsky had declared that it was necessary "to strengthen the Petrograd Soviet against the Central Executive Committee

"We must gain for the Petrograd Soviet the complete independence of its organization, its protection, and its political functioning".

The Kronstadt sailors fought for this independence of the Soviets from the party. Lenin and Trotsky battled to destroy this independence --for party rule. The Russian Revolution at this time distinctly showed that it had embarked upon a backward course. Today, Trotsky foams at the degeneracy of a Stalinist dictatorship and asks for world sympathy for his persecuted Russian followers.

An Analysis of the Workers Party

THE pamphlet, "Declaration of Principles and Constitution of the Workers Party of the U.S.", presents the theoretical approach of the new party to the problems of the American proletariat. The new party modestly assures the workers that it is the only party fit to lead them to victory.

Speaking of the Third International (Comintern) and its sections the party declares that, "The adoption of a nationalist and therefore non-revolutionary theory and practice, associated with the abandonment of the principle of workers democracy is the 'root cause' of their decline and degeneration". They further maintain that the remedy for this deplorable condition is a return to the basic principles of the Comintern, as laid down by Lenin and Trotsky.

An analysis, however, of the principles and structure of the Comintern, as expounded in the first four congresses, shows that workers democracy was non-existent (we are referring only to the Comintern; democracy did exist for a short time in the soviets during the initial period of the revolution), that the very structure of the Comintern made no provisions for it. The "decline and degeneration" of the communist movement, the "non-revolutionary theory and practice", is not the "root cause" of, but the INEVITABLE RESULT of these principles and structure.

From the very beginning the principle of party omnipotence was woven into the structure of the Comintern. The constitution is based upon rigid centralization; all power is concentrated in a small circle of bureaucrats, who possess the power to dictate to any section of the Comintern. The bureaucrats can reverse at will any and all decisions of the membership. Through the "Red International of Labor Unions" (Profintern), the Comintern tried to dominate and subjugate the labor movement of the world to the dictatorship of a political party. The I.W.W. was told to disband and join the A.F. of L. Long established and powerful organizations, like the C.N.T. of Spain and the syndicalist organizations of France and Italy, which refused to give up

their independence and subject themselves to the autocratic will of the Profintern, were denounced as "counter-revolutionists", and "traitors", to to the cause of the oppressed.

The centralization of power through the dictatorship of a political party and workers democracy are mutually antagonistic. Without workers democracy, the leadership cannot keep in contact with the masses. In its attempts to maintain and extend its power, the leadership changes principles and tactics to suit itself. The interests of the bureaucracy run counter to the interests of the masses. The bureaucracy saps the vitality of the workers. In basing itself on the "theoretic and strategic principles of Marx and Lenin", the W.P. is thus headed for the same "demoralization and bankruptcy" which characterize the Comintern.

The mere formal recognition of the principles of workers democracy by the W.P. is of no value. Its constitution and principles are similar to the Comintern's. The National Committee, consisting of 23 members, appoints its own alternates. By a two-thirds vote it can suspend any of its members. It "directs all the work of the party, decides all questions of policy, appoints subordinate committees, including the POLITICAL COMMITTEE, and, in general, constitutes between conventions the functioning authority". THE FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE ARE NOT EVEN MENTIONED. The constitution provides for no referenda of any kind. Even such vital questions as affiliations or amendments are not submitted to referenda of the rank and file. "BRANCH ACTION DEEMED IMPROPER BY THE HIGHER UNITS OF THE PARTY MAY BE FOLLOWED BY DIRECT DISCIPLINARY ACTION BY THE HIGHER UNIT" The lower units of the party are thus subject to the dictatorship of the upper strata.--Problem: Find workers democracy.

The authoritarian conception of the nature and role of the party and state, is in essence based upon a deep distrust of the revolutionary capacities of the masses. In "What Is To Be Done", Lenin says, "There can be no thought of a separate ideology matured through the working masses themselves in the course of their development. The history of all countries bears witness that the working class of itself, is only capable of a trade union consciousness."

The working class, according to the W.P., is "divided by conflicting philosophies, separatist interests of caste, religion, nationality, race, sex, age. Without the revolutionary party its most valiant struggles fail to achieve lasting results". What "lasting results" were achieved by the revolutionary party other than the complete domination of the working class of Russia by the revolutionary party, and the destruction of all the democratic rights conquered by the oppressed in centuries of struggle?

The fact is that the class struggle and not the revolutionary party destroys these "separatist interests". Men group into unions according to their necessities and occupations, into Free Communes by the exigencies of the locality and the community of interests. It is in the field of FUNCTIONAL ADMINISTRATION where the points of coincidence between men are the greatest. The economic and political dictatorship of the revolutionary party and its state apparatus, like all other states and parties in history, creates and perpetuates separatist interests in society. Monopoly of power exists because it can rule only by granting privileges to the bureaucratic apparatus and certain favored sections of the upper strata as opposed to the mass of the oppressed. This is amply demonstrated by the Russian example.

The distrust in the masses is further shown by the statement that, "The united front of different parties and organizations of the workers, welded together in the Workers' Councils, can mobilize the workers and conduct partial actions even when the revolutionary party is yet supported only by the minority". Evidently the working class suffers from paralysis when it lacks the leadership of the revolutionary party! If the revolutionary party is "not imposed from above, without the possibility of control and verification from the ranks, but" rises "from the ranks by tested ability and common approval", then of what value is the common approval of morons "divided by separatist interests" and capable of only "partial actions" and trade union consciousness?

In recognizing the need for workers democracy the W.P. becomes involved in a series of contradictions between its

principles and structure on one hand and the realities of workers democracy on the other. If the Workers Party is the only party fit to lead the workers, what will be the attitude of the party if the workers were to choose several parties, or no parties, and retain control in their own organizations? The only alternative to renouncing the principle and practice of party dictatorship would be to destroy the opposition parties, subjugate the institutions created by the revolution, the workers councils, the unions, the co-operatives and make them the rubber stamps of the omnipotent state; in other words, TO DESTROY THE REVOLUTION. This is precisely what occurred in Russia; this is why the prisons are filled with revolutionaries, why the challenge of Kronstadt was drowned in blood with the aid of Trotsky who was himself later expelled for daring to criticize the existing regime!

The W.P. believes that the role of the party continues until "all forms of class organization, including the state and the party, are finally dissolved in the classless society" Unable to solve the contradiction between the parasitic nature of the state and party and the ideal of a classless society the authoritarian socialists introduced the beautiful fable of "the withering away of the state"!

The confusion and contradictions of the authoritarian Socialists are due to a complete misunderstanding of the true nature and function of the vanguard. A vanguard confines itself to crystallizing the struggles of the workers into revolutionary channels, to helping the masses deepen and extend the revolution. The vanguard does not want the power; it merely urges the workers to keep the power and not to delegate the power to any single institution, be it party or state. "All power to the Soviets!" "No power to the party!" The communists aim to take the power away from the workers and concentrate it in the state on the pretext that there is no difference between the mass organizations and the bureaucratic apparatus. Sooner or later a struggle must take place between the mass organizations and the "Proletarian Dictatorship" which can end only when the workers seize power through another social revolution.

It is plain that no policy based upon such principles

can solve the workers problem, yet the W.P. intends to apply these discredited principles of "Revolutionary Marxism" in accordance with the "revolutionary potentialities of American tradition and history".

There are two well defined tendencies in the American labor movement. One is revolutionary, the other reformist. The revolutionary tendencies in the "Black International", Western Federation of Miners, the 8 hour movement as exemplified by the Chicago Martyrs, American Railway Union and others find their present expression in the I.W.W. The revolutionary tendencies are not an artificial growth. They developed out of the needs of the workers and were necessary for the protection of the workers against the onslaughts of the reaction. The living experiences of the workers, the class struggle, carried them further than just a "trade union consciousness", further than parliamentary twaddle, party dictatorship and the like. They transcended the narrow limits laid down by the S.L.P., the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the new W.P. of the U.S. and many other would be dictators. They fought against and survived only after defeating the attempts of the political parties to dominate them. They practiced direct action and the General Strike and constructed on the bedrock of workers democracy a form of organization that was based on control from the bottom up. They saw in the union something more than an organ of struggle for immediate demands. They said and still say that the "army of production must be organized not only for the every day struggle with the capitalists but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown". (I.W.W. Preamble)

The A.F. of L. is the poison flower of the reactionary tendencies in the American labor movement. This is a fact which no historian of standing can deny. Which of these two tendencies does the W.P. support?

Five years of crisis have aroused the dormant militancy of the American workers. The A.F. of L., due to its corruption and open betrayals as well as its structure, could not give expression to the real interests of the workers. This is why the workers of Detroit, those in the textile mills as well as many other workers are leaving the A.F. of

L. They are looking for some organization that will express their needs; for organizations OUTSIDE OF and in OPPOSITION TO the A.F.of L. The success of the I.W.W in Cleveland, on the Gulf coast and elsewhere shows that workers are ready to join a direct action organization with revolutionary principles.

The new party, however, "favors the organization of workers into unions affiliated with the A.F.of L.", thereby adding life to the degenerating A.F.of L. and preventing the growth of real unionism. After telling us that the A.F.of L. is a racketeering, class collaborating organization with a tendency at the present time to tie itself up with the government, a policy nourished and supported by its leaders, the W.P. says, "Where the masses are forced to form independent unions.....the W.P. will support them in their efforts and struggles". Why not encourage the workers to form their own unions? If the W.P. is willing to help in the formation of Revolutionary Industrial Unions, why then does it not support the pioneer of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism in America,-- the I.W.W.?

The opportunism of the W.P. is shown when it says, "Where the A.F.of L. is unable or unwilling to organize the unorganized workers, especially in the basic industries, the W.P. will assist them to form independent unions on an industrial basis". Why wait for the A.F.of L.? Is this policy of sitting on the fence in accordance with "the revolutionary potentialities of American tradition and history"?

The policy of urging workers to affiliate with the A.F. of L. is counter-revolutionary and opportunistic. The W.P. is willing to "help" any union because the price of its "help" is the complete domination of the union by the party. This is also why the W.P. does not even mention the I.W.W. They are interested only in grabbing the power and getting the jobs. We will support any group of workers against the bosses on the economic front, but we will point out to the misguided workers the folly of affiliation with the A.F.of L. and all opportunistic political outfits, the Workers Party included.

Speaking of parliamentary action they say, "The W.P. will

participate with its own candidates and program in election campaigns, without, however, sowing the fatal illusion that the workers can accomplish their emancipation by means of the ballot box". How accomplish this miracle of "revolutionary parliamentarism"? How nice for a candidate to seek re-election on a platform from which he tells the workers what a farce bourgeois parliament is! Is this also in accordance with the revolutionary traditions of the American workers? The W.P. has yet to learn that participating with its own candidates and program in the election campaigns is the best way to "SOW THE FATAL ILLUSION THAT THE WORKERS CAN ACCOMPLISH THEIR EMANCIPATION BY MEANS OF THE BALLOT BOX"

Despite their indictment of Stalinist bureaucracy, let no one think that the W.P. will not be found "ready to defend it to the utmost". For what else does "Defense of the Soviet Union" mean? It can only mean the perpetuation of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Stalinism is absolutism and this absolutism the W.P. seeks to identify as the workers state (possibly the flower of Lenin and Trotsky's work). The Workers Party's defense of the Soviet Union would necessarily include the defense of the capitalist allies of Russia. For how can they defend the Soviet Union if they fight its capitalist allies?

The program of the W.P. proves that they have learned nothing from the events of the last decade. The same discredited and suicidal dogmas are brushed up and paraded before the workers as a new approach to the solution of the social problem in America. ---S. WEINER

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LENINISM

The Pre-October Lenin:--

"The introduction of 'appointed' bureaucracy must not be tolerated. Only bodies created by the people themselves should be recognized...The idea of the need for leadership by a bureaucracy 'appointed' from above is in essence a fallacious one. It is non-democratic, Caesaristic, a Blanquist adventure". (Comp. Works, Vol. 14, part 1, p.129)

Post-October: "It is stated that soviet democracy is absolutely incompatible with personal dictatorship. This reasoning is very bad. (Ibid. Vol.15, p.217)

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Soviet System *

By Erich Muehsam

(EDITOR'S NOTE: We are herewith reprinting a portion of a somewhat larger article of the martyred comrade Erich Muehsam on the nature of worker's Soviet and our attitude towards it. This is done not only for the purpose of rehabilitating comrade Muehsam against the imputation of adhering to purely communist views made by a number of prominent leader of the Communist Party. This imputation is quite in line with the general policy of the Communist Party: persecuting the living anarchists and exploiting for their own party purposes the martyrdom of those who have suffered for the cause of the working class. The reiteration of such a policy hardly needs special rebuttal. What is important in this connection is to point out the realistic approach of comrade Muehsam which, as the article proves, is not done at the price of derogating the idea of Soviet itself. Therein lies the lesson of the system of ideas expressed in this article.)

...As far as the structure, general ideas and tasks of the soviet system are concerned, people have very hazy conceptions. Even among the libertarian workers' organizations we find the most contradictory opinions as to how soviets should be organized and worked. This general confusion has been increased by the introduction of the soviet idea into state laws and capitalistic methods of production of Germany**. When the workers demanded that they themselves supervise the shops and production methods, these requests were seemingly met by granting them the permission to form shop delegations and call them factory soviets. The field of action for these councils was quite circumscribed, but their rights were still more reduced by forcing the workers to adopt a parliamentary election system which stands

* The term "Soviet" refers to the original meaning of the word: council of workers.

** This refers to post-revolutionary Germany governed by the Social Democratic Party.

in absolute contrast to the Soviet idea but which was used to keep these organization under party control. Even where the revolution and the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" brought victory to the peasants and workers, the Soviets became a tool of state and party instead of being the decisive factor in public life and giving it a socialist turn. If, as it happens now and then, anarchists point their fingers at this fact to prove that the whole Soviet idea has nothing to do with liberty, they make the same mistake as those who deny the very idea of social law on the ground of the miscarriage of state made law. The falsification of an idea cannot prove that the idea itself is wrong.

Soviets are the vehicles of the socialist commonwealth and as such they are the representatives of all people who work for the common good. By means of the Soviets every one of the mass of workers is doing his share in social and public life. When exploitation shall have ceased, every one who does not put himself outside of society will be doing some social service in the Soviets. Only during the revolutionary transition period must all those against whom the revolution is fighting be kept out of the Soviets. As the first duty of the Soviets is to abolish capitalist exploitation and to realize the socialist commonwealth, people who do not want socialism cannot be drafted for the task of constructing it. During this period the special task of the Soviets will be to enforce the decisions of the proletarian class, to destroy counter-revolutionary movements, and to prevent the formation of new types of government that pretend to protect the revolution and talk about the power of the Soviets, the dictatorship of the proletariat, only to entrench themselves in power and to act as dictators.

The anarchists do well when they refrain as much as possible from using the expression "Proletarian Dictatorship" though a correct interpretation of the term Soviet could, without any reservations, hardly mean anything else but the checking of any resistance against the proletarian revolution by the proletariat. The forcible suppression of counter-revolutionary plots through armed struggles, revolutionary tribunals and any other way of enforcing secu-

ity, is necessary as long as the conquered class possesses any power and may be able to attack the rights of the revolutionary workers. A revolutionary class dictatorship is indispensable during the fighting period, yet this dictatorship spells nothing but the revolution itself. However, no single revolutionary group, no party or outstanding selection of revolutionists must be allowed under any circumstances to govern and persecute socialist proletarians. Dictatorship of the proletariat is, to the Marxists, the dictatorship of a Marxist party executive whose power extends over that of the Soviets and has the right to make laws, levy taxes, and represent the revolutionary forces any way they see fit -- even to declare war and recognize treaties with foreign governments. This party clique is supposed to stay in power only until socialism has been spread everywhere. But since any centralized government denotes state power, with all preponderance of authority, special privileges and conspiracy against equality, such a dictatorship therefore paves the road for class suppressions, leads to new forms of exploitation and revives the evils that had been swept away with the revolution. Socialism can therefore never be attained under this form of so-called proletarian dictatorship, for the new power will never resign until a new revolution has turned the power over to the Soviets.

The Soviet system, if it is worked right, creates no bureaucracy, no special privileges, no all-powerful group. A task given to the Soviets by the people does not change in any way the relationship between those that give instructions and those who execute them. The Soviet organization has a federal character. It comprises all producing and consuming forces, from the narrow circle of mutual interests up to the extensive economic organizations. Every person has a place in the Soviets; but the sending of this or that delegate to render this or that service or to discuss this or that plan, to confer upon a question with out-of-town Soviet delegates, to carry through or supervise an undertaking which has been approved by the people, to hold an opinion or to examine somebody else's proposals -- all this does not put the delegate above those whom he represents, nor does it release those who gave the order from their responsibility for the acts of the delegate. All

tasks charged depend upon those that give them; whoever is given a certain task acts in an executive capacity for a certain body that assigns to him that part of the work for which he is deemed fit*. The extraordinary complexity of social life demands innumerable social services on a small as well as on a large scale, so that the division of social duties with its constant changes should embrace everyone's abilities and should place everyone under the supervision of the others. Such mutual responsibility guarantees the unity of society and personality which in turn, safeguards the equal rights of everybody and the mutual support in all common undertakings. Each delegate is sent with the understanding that he may be recalled at any moment during his time of service, each service is undertaken voluntarily and with the understanding that the delegate will resign if he is not equal to his task or in case he thinks somebody else more fit to take care of the welfare of all concerned. Therefore, all elections that place great responsibilities on the shoulders of a single person for a definite time are only parliamentary ballyhoo having nothing to do with the Soviet organization of society, especially if those elections have been arranged from a party point of view and are influenced by those who stand outside of the of workers immediately concerned with it.

An essential part of the organization work is the cooperation of the workers' and farmers' Soviets to safeguard the general supply and demand; both, producers and consumers, have to help in the organization of economic life. The Soviet idea must be popularized in the country, not through forceful methods emanating from the city, but through enlightenment and appeals so that the economically superior farmers will be prevented from conquering the Soviets for themselves after socialist equality has been attained. Wherever exploitation exists in any form, the Soviets must be a tool of the exploited and underprivileged. Therefore, as far as farmers' Soviets are concerned, they will have to represent above all the small farmer and farm laborers. While building the Soviet order the city workers will have

*He is a representative of a particular community to which he belongs and acts as such only in respect to a particular task with which he is charged.

to see to it that the federal character of the socialist organization is carefully preserved from the very beginning. If a Soviet state starts to centralize the Soviets—even in certain limited fields — the Soviets are misled toward their own suppression and destruction. A Soviet society, a Soviet republic — the word republic does not mean a type of state, but any self government of a commonwealth by the people — a Soviet organization can only be thought of as a federal structure, and can never be a state nor exist in a state.

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Socialist Democracy

Editorial note: The following excerpt from the writings of Rosa Luxemburg is printed to show the libertarian trend of her thoughts. Those Marxists who swear by her name should read her polemics against Lenin.

"It is the historical task of the proletariat, when it comes to power, to create in the place of bourgeois democracy socialist democracy, not to do away with democracy itself. Socialist democracy begins, however, not in the promised land after the substructure of socialist economy has been formed, as a ready made Christmas present for the good people who in the meanwhile have loyally supported the handful of socialist dictators. Socialist democracy begins simultaneously with the tearing down of class rule and the building up of socialism. It begins with the seizure of power, it is nothing else than the dictatorship of the proletariat.

"Yes, dictatorship! but this dictatorship consists in the manner in which democracy is employed in vigorous, decided intrusions into the well established rights and economic relations of bourgeois society, without which the socialist overturn cannot be actualized, but not in abolition of democracy. This dictatorship must be the work of a class: not of a small minority in the name of the class; that is, it must proceed at each step with the active participation of the masses, be subject to their direct influence, stand under the control of unlimited public opinion, proceed from the growing political education of the masses". (from "The Russian Revolution" by ROSA LUXEMBURG.)

A Neglected Task

In recent years the libertarian movement in this country has declined to the point where it consists to a large extent of a number of older comrades who have been in the movement since their youth and now cling to it tenaciously by the mere momentum of their former active struggles. The movement has failed to attract young people who had not already been in the revolutionary movement and large numbers of those who were under the influence of the anarchists were lost because of improper training or lack of training.

Is it because the anarchists have never considered the problem of educating the youth and drawing them into the movement to insure its continuity and growth that they have failed to build a youth movement? Well, not exactly. The problem does come up at annual conventions and every year they discuss it (if there is any time left at the last session) and pass formal resolutions stating that they are in favor of helping the youth. In that manner, the problem is solved and except for two or three misguided attempts at running a camp or a modern school (Stelton e.g.) they do nothing to act upon their resolutions.

Almost every social movement recognizes the importance of preparing cadres of young people to carry on the struggle. The anarchist movement in countries like Spain and Argentina have not merely given the problem formal recognition but have worked diligently for many years in this field and their vigorous efforts have borne fruit. What better testimony is needed than the existence of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.) the militant vanguard of the revolutionary workers in Spain, whose membership consists mostly of young men and women under thirty years of age? Though the anarchist movement in Spain has a history of over sixty years, it would not have reached its present heights if it had not consistently and energetically built up its numerous modern schools and other libertarian educational institutions.

This problem is, moreover, particularly important in the U.S. because a large number of the libertarians here are of

European birth. As a result, although the movement did grow for a time, the majority of workers could hardly even be approached; most of the propaganda was conducted by foreign language speaking workers. But even this limited growth was checked with the passage of the immigration laws. Since the problem of youth had not been seriously taken up before then, it should have been clear that the movement was in a serious predicament and was headed for a decline unless the organization of youth were begun immediately.

It has been asserted by some people that this could not have been done because the libertarian philosophy cannot take root among the American youth. The fallacy of this assertion becomes evident when we consider the tremendous appeal of the idea of democracy to most American people. Children are taught to believe in democracy when they first begin school; the democratic idea and even some democratic political and social forms confront them all their lives. And when a libertarian revolutionary organization actually helps to concretize workers' vague democratic ideals in the form of really democratic workers' organizations and fights for the needs of these workers, when young people are given an opportunity to belong to organizations which express their own needs, the possibilities of the growth of a libertarian revolutionary movement are indeed great.

Why, then, has the anarchist movement in the United States failed in this major task of the drawing the youth into its ranks? Besides the fact that the movement was not very strong, they were handicapped by a number of fallacious ideas of which I shall mention the most important ones. Many anarchists believe that revolutionary social developments proceed merely by means of spontaneous mass movements and individual growth and progress by means of a spontaneous inner growth. Related to this fetish of "spontaneity" is the bias which these anarchists have against indoctrination in educational method and organization on social and economic fronts. In order to accept these ideas one must make the ridiculous assumption that individuals and social groups have an inner drive, a sort of an inexorable moving force whose path is predetermined

and will ultimately be traversed and reach its final destination if the individuals and social groups are left "free" and if no extraneous influences exert themselves. Even if one were to accept the assertion of an inner drive, can one rationally believe that individuals and social groups live in a vacuum? Therefore, to advocate giving children complete "freedom" or not "repressing" the workers inner drive to revolution by means of an organization is to play into the hands of those whose influences we wish to counteract.

It is apparent then, that our movement will never grow here unless we begin right now to attack the problem of approaching young people in a planned, organized fashion and building organizations of a specifically youth character. Without as yet presenting a program, we can indicate the types of groups into which the youth can most easily be drawn and developed most effectively: Clubs of various sorts, study groups, evening and Sunday schools and childrens' camps. From these can grow other organizations more definitely based upon economic and political struggle.

The libertarians failed at the crucial time of the stopping of immigration. At present the moment is even a more crucial one. Not only must we make up for the loss of time, but we must now organize against the rapidly spreading anti-democratic, anti-libertarian and fascist influences. It is not too late, however, to begin work. We must begin immediately and pose the youth question, not in a casual nor a half-hearted, formal manner, but as the central problem of our movement. If we can begin the solution of this problem, we are on the road to the solution of many other basic problems facing the libertarian movement in the U.S.

S. MORRISON

"THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT OF SPAIN" by M. Dashar. A brief but comprehensive outline of the history of the revolutionary movement of Spain from its beginnings to the revolt of October, 1934. 24 pages, 10 cents.

"BOLSHEVISM: PROMISES AND REALITY" by G. Maximov. This pamphlet presents startling documentary evidence of the contradictions between their promises, theories on one hand and actual policies and deeds, on the other. 24 pps, 10¢

Socialism Redefined

Very often we hear it said that the period in which we live now is a tragic period. What is meant thereby is not only that its startling developments are rich in human woe and misery, but that it also brings out the fateful implications of many a trend and situation which years ago were deemed normal in their bearings upon social life. Thus we have the total bankruptcy of the International Social-Democracy unfolded in such spectacular and momentous fashion as to reveal even to the most ardent partisan of the latter the long process of decay taking place beneath the blustering front of a seemingly vigorous movement. The disintegration of liberalism, long known to have been under way, took on the sudden dramatic character of a tragic epilogue with the startling victories of fascism. Of no less dramatic significance is the rapid unfolding of the true character of dictatorial socialism, the unmasking of all its pretences and claims, taking place within the comparatively brief period that separates us from the October revolution.

Among such revealing historical experiences of our time must be also included the debunking of the idea of the gradual extension of state ownership and control of industry as paving the way toward the realization of the socialist ideal. Prior to the war it was held by the preponderant number of socialists (Lenin included) that any step undertaken by the state in the direction of control of economic activities constituted in itself a victory for socialism. The progressive nature of any movement was measured by the degree in which it sponsored and supported governmental control of the national economy. The post office and similar government enterprises were held up as models of socialist economy, the latter being often conceived as the gradual infiltration of such enterprises and controls into every phase of economic activity.

It was in vain that the best elements among the socialists protested against identifying state ownership with socialism. The latter, they maintained, should not be confused with state control of economic life. It cannot be

dissociated from a certain minimum of political and humanitarian conditions without which mere socialization of wealth may become the source of a much greater evil than the old, unbridled capitalism. Those conditions implied workers' control, equality in consumption and libertarian forms of political life. The modern state, being one of the consummate forms of exploitation and class rule, cannot therefore serve as the instrument for creating the indispensable conditions for the realization of socialism. To associate the latter with the expansion of the state into the economic field is to distort and falsify the nature of the ultimate goal of the proletarian struggles.

Those protests went unheeded by the majority of the socialists. The narrow, one-sided interpretation of history and its moving forces came to prevail in the socialist movement under the name of economic materialism, led to the impoverishment of the ideal values of socialism. More and more it came to be conceived as a sum total of state encroachments into the sphere of economic activity, the consummation of which will realize automatically the humanitarian aspirations of the working class.

So rooted were those ideas that when the German government of the war period began to carry out systematically the policy of state control, that was hailed by many a German socialist as the opening wedge for the realization of socialism. Those very same measures were deemed by the Bolsheviks of 1917 of sufficient value from the socialist point of view to be adopted as patterns for the new form of economic control thrust upon them by the momentum of the October Revolution. And it is yet to be pointed out by the future historian how great the role of the blind copying of patterns, originally designed for militaristic purposes, was in distorting the work of the October Revolution along bureaucratic lines.

Twenty years passed since an astounded world beheld for the first time the curious spectacle of a seemingly socialist system of state control of industry being applied for purposes militating against the very essence of socialism. And now in the light of the experience of those years, we can definitely say that the policy of the German

government of that period was no mere historical curiosity. We see now the most horrible forces of reaction ever unloosed upon the arena of historic action following in the footsteps of the German government, extending and furthering that very system of state control of economic life which years ago an emasculated socialist movement held up as the hallmark of a true socialist policy.

The militarist government of Japan is tightening its grip over the entire field of economic activity. In that it is spurred on by the most rabidly reactionary, feudal circles of an outspoken fascist character which urge on a much more far-going program of socialization. The Italian and German fascist governments are extending their control over private industries in a manner in which the old socialist parties never dreamed to pursue. Nor is there any doubt as to the reactionary implications of this system of state controls established by Roosevelt's administration. Conceived and designed by the monopolistic groups in control of our economic life, they accurately reflect the line along which a deteriorating economy is driven toward its ultimate degeneration. Few indeed are those that believe now in the progressive potentialities of the N.R.A. as a contributing factor toward the building up of socialism.

In the light of all that it is nothing short of sheer renegacy to identify government control and state ownership with the socialist ideal. It takes now very little of intelligence and integrity of opinion to realize that far as the Japanese government and the Nazi party may pursue their policy of socialization of economic life, they are in reality moving in the direction opposite to that of true socialism. More and more is the latter coming to be evaluated in the light of the most important question: SOCIALIZATION BY WHOM, FOR WHAT PURPOSE, AND BY WHAT MEANS? Is it being carried on by the progressive forces of humanity, for the purposes of furthering the ideal of human brotherhood and equality, is it built upon the basis of free political institutions? Or is it seized upon by the fiendish forces of modern life for the purpose of dragging down humanity to the lower depths of degradation and savagery?

It took the tragic experiences of the last two decades

to bring those questions to the fore of socialist opinion as the decisive test of a true socialist policy. And were the experiences of our time productive of nothing else but this clarification and deepening of the general conception of the socialist ideal, they would already redeem themselves in the eyes of every sincere revolutionist to whom the ultimate objectives of the working class were always something more than a mere sum of economic measures tending to the increase of the power of the state. S-X

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S P A I N

Nothing would be further from truth than to say that Spain, in virtue of the the defeat of the last October revolt, can be classified now with countries like Germany, Austria, and Italy in which the labor movement came to be paralyzed for a long time by the success of fascism. In Germany, for instance, the Social Democracy as well as the Communist Party, have been almost liquidated -- the defeat in the Saar of the united front of Marxists gave a good example of it. It is altogether different in Spain. The Spanish revolution suffered only a temporary setback in its drive toward the last settlement to be made with the present regime. The revolutionary movement lives on, powerful as ever.

This fact is to be accounted for by the fundamentally different character of the Spanish revolutionary movement which distinguishes it from the Marxist movement of the other European countries. The Spanish anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movement has been waging during the last 5 years an uninterrupted revolutionary struggle against the existing social order. During this time its organizations had hardly more than three months of legal existence, having been forced underground for the rest of the time. That is why its forces now are almost intact and are found in a

state of ceaseless reorganization. It is due to this revolutionary vitality of the Spanish anarchist movement that even those elements of the labor movement that have been fighting it continually are now approaching it more and more. The process of radicalization into which those elements are being drawn was not checked by the October Revolution but rather accelerated by it. The enormous strikes and struggles conducted in Spain since 1930, the general strike in Barcelona of 1930, the Figols revolt in January 1932, the Austurian sympathy general strike of the same year, the January uprising of 1933 with the tragic epilogue of Casas Viejas, the four month strike of construction workers in Barcelona, the great anarcho-syndicalist revolt of December, 1933, the Zaragoza general strike of the spring of 1934, the big strikes of Madrid and Valencia in the summer of last year and the October revolt in Asturias, -- all that forms a chain of mass struggles which is far from being ended yet. To the Spanish working class those struggles brought great victories as well as defeats; the most decisive thing about them was the SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY ENGENDERED, sweeping into its sphere ever wider strata of workers, and also the indisputable fact that the idea of direct action found an ever greater recognition among an increasing number of social democratic workers who came to see the illusory character of the social democratic tactics and programs.

And if we can say on one hand that the revolutionary working class is very far from capitulating before the reaction, that it did not by any means sink into a state of passivity, -- on the other hand the picture presented by the triumphant reaction is far from impressing one with the idea of stability of the present political and social relationships. Just the opposite. The reaction lacks unity. Both factions of the governing coalition cannot come to an understanding. If both of them could not find a common ground of interest even immediately after the October revolt, the coalition government made up of those elements will surely be soon exploded by the inner contradiction of the latter.

The present parliament (Cortes) elected in November, 1933, was greeted on the first day of its convention by the out-

break of the anarcho-syndicalist revolt. Since then the Spanish people has shown by numerous revolutionary actions its reluctance to be governed by such a parliament. Nor is the latter capable of governing, no satisfactory majority coalition being possible now. Under such circumstances the party politicians can not find any other way out than reverting to new elections, since no political movement finds itself strong enough to attempt a dictatorship of its own. And so the government has decided to call for general elections in April of 1935, the outcome of which is to tell definitely whether the government is to turn to the "right" or "left"

The helplessness and hopelessness of all those political tendencies under the given situation, the general conviction THAT THE DESTINY OF SPAIN WILL BE DECIDED BY THE MASSES GROUPED AROUND THE ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST C.N.T.,--all that is shown by the manner in which the political parties prepare for the coming elections: namely by their GENERAL COURTING OF THE C.N.T. Already at the end of last year a prominent Madrid daily of left orientation came out with a sensational report stating that the C.N.T. will back up the left candidates in the coming elections. The fascist daily A.B.C. (Madrid) printed an article offering a covenant of mutual support for the purposes of the election campaign. The C.N.T. never let itself be inveigled into any blocks with any left parties ever since the fall of monarchy, and it stands to reason that it cannot have anything to do with any fascist grouping. That the Communist Party, which again publishes a daily in Madrid, keeps on going after the anarcho-syndicalist workers -- that of course is self understood. For a very long time all these manoeuvres could not be duly answered by the C.N.T. since its papers were forbidden. Now with the reappearance of "Solidaridad Obrera" in Barcelona (a daily) the C.N.T. availed itself of the opportunity to make public a manifesto of its National Committee, sent out to the regional committees, which in the clearest language rejects any compromise with the parliamentary idea. It calls upon the Spanish workers to hold firmly to the tactics of direct action and to cleave to the course of the social revolution. This shattered all hopes of the political parties and showed that the C.N.T. fully measured up to its revolutionary responsibilities.

Sharper than ever is the alternative put up before Spain: reaction -- which in that country is impersonated by the Catholic leader Gil Robles, -- or the social revolution which in Spain can be successfully carried out only by the libertarian labor movement which a long time ago seized the initiative of revolutionary struggles and succeeded in rallying and preparing great masses of workers for that objective.

M.Dashar, Barcelona

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At this moment, the famous "Workers Alliance" has completely disappeared from the social scene in Spain. The Socialist Party, which has proved its incapacity to solve the social problem, sees its influence diminish from day to day. (Le Combat Syndicaliste)

A R G E N T I N A

(IWMA) Fascism is growing. Secretly aided by the government, the fascists are raiding workers' halls, breaking up meetings and murdering militants. A widespread anti-democratic campaign is carried on by the subsidized fascist press. The fascists are trained by army officers, and are prepared to establish an open fascist dictatorship as soon as conditions are ripe.

The anarchist movement and the FORA (anarcho-syndicalist unions) are persecuted by the government. Recently the majority of the bakers, auto washers and chauffeurs' syndicates were closed and many revolutionists were arrested. The anarchist daily paper "La Protesta" is barred from the mails and its editors arrested on the slightest pretext. Many comrades are being deported. Mass house-searchings and murders are daily occurrences. Comrade Moron of the Marine Federation of the FORA was murdered by the police and his body thrown into the street. The police later "discovered" the body. They claimed Moron was murdered by his own comrades!

Outside of a few autonomous unions and some bolshevik groups, the labor movement is composed of two organizations, the C.G.T. (reformist) and the FORA. The FORA is affiliated with the I.W.M.A. and stands for Libertarian

Communism. It is compelled to work underground while the C.G.T., which supported the bloody regime of Uriburu, is now working with the Justo government. The leaders attend official banquets, they openly aid the fascists and the government in waging systematic war upon the FORA. The workers in the C.G.T. are growing more and more dissatisfied with the organization and its leaders.

Despite the persecutions, the FORA is establishing new groups and carrying on numerous strikes. The general strike of the Buenos Aires Federation of the FORA was called to prevent the landing of a German ship loaded with Nazi agitators. The strike aroused the masses, students, autonomous unions and even sections of the CGT responded to the call for solidarity with the FORA. The FORA, however, cannot undertake any extensive revolutionary action because the C.G.T. will not join in any action on a wide scale.

At the Rosario Congress of the anarchists (1932) a foundation for systematic work on a practical basis was laid. An extensive system of Relations Committees was organized in order to consolidate the forces of the movement for effective work. While recognizing the importance of the FORA, the anarchists have learned that it is necessary to strike roots in all kinds of mass organizations. They are organizing many youth and student groups, study circles and are establishing cells in the reformist unions. They take part in every form of mass life.

The anarchists are preparing for the social revolution. They are clarifying their position on the practical problems of the revolution and the building of Libertarian Communism. Practical questions such as the organization of production, the transitional stage, the defense against the counter-revolution, etc., are being studied in relation to modern life. They are closely analyzing international developments in order to develop new methods of fighting capitalism and establishing Libertarian Communism.

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The VANGUARD will have each month a complete report of the International Labor Movement. We have arranged for correspondence from various European and South American countries. SUBSCRIBE NOW! Be sure of your copy each month. Send in ONE DOLLAR to VANGUARD, P.O. Box 92, Sta. D, New York City.

U S S R

(Excerpts from a letter from Soviet Russia which appeared in "The Socialist Courier", a very well informed magazine published by the Russian Social Democratic Party.)

Numerous arrests are taking place in Moscow of Communists, Anarchists and of anyone who had belonged to a revolutionary organization, but who long ago gave up any political activity. Among the arrested anarchists are people like Novomirsky and Sandomirsky, old political prisoners of Czarist Russia, at one time very active and popular in the labor movement, but who long ago became reconciled with the Communist Party.

...Of late there has been a very noticeable conflict going on between the old Communists and the younger generation. These conflicts are due to the increasing complaints on the part of the youth of the lack of opportunity for self-expression in the political field, of the increasing regimentation of social life. When the Soviet press reports what is taking place in Germany many young Communists comment sharply to the effect that the situation in Soviet Russia is the same, that they are also governed by orders from above, by intimidation. The judicial farces evoke with the Communist youth a comparison with what is taking place in the U.S.S.R.

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The Soviet pen-flunky, Avdejenko, speaking at the last Congress of the Soviets uttered the following words of modest praise to Stalin:

"All our love, our devotion, our strength, our hearts, our heroism, our lives --all are yours. Take them, Oh great Stalin, Leader of our great nation. Command thy children, and they will travel even through the air, underneath the earth, through waters and in the stratosphere. Men of all times and all nations will utter thy name as that of the wisest, the most magnificent, the strongest and the most beautiful. Thy name is engraved on each mill, on each machine. If my beloved wife should bear me a son, the first word I will teach him will be Stalin."

G E R M A N Y

Despite the conquest of Germany by Hitlerism, the revolutionary working class movement continues to function. The vast system of espionage created by the Nazis has failed almost completely in its feverish efforts to crush all revolutionary propaganda.

We have it from the most reliable sources that the anarchists and the anarcho-syndicalists have established and maintained actively functioning nuclei and groups in every large city and town in Germany. Far from ceasing their activity at the advent of Hitler, they are today publishing two underground papers in Germany; have already smuggled three issues of "Die Internationale", published abroad, into Germany, and distributed them all over the country. New literature is now being published in the form of camouflaged pamphlets that appear innocent from the outside, dealing with the situation on hand and ways and means of coping with it.

Recently they held a secret convention, in one of the larger cities, which dealt only with the problem of perfecting their underground organization. Until now the libertarian movement has completely avoided that plague which is today demoralizing the other working class organizations--spies. The communists are so honeycombed with spies that they are scarcely able to do anything without renewed raids and arrests of their best and most daring workers. Until now, the anarchists and syndicalists have been conducting an extensive propaganda particularly among the unemployed, and as yet, apart from very minor incidents, the comrades have not suffered losses of their militants.

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ITALY - The Government of Rome has succeeded in obtaining the extradition of the Italian anarchist Paolo Bruzzi from Spain by stating that the crime with which Bruzzi was is being charged is one of common law. The Italian government not only lied, but also cheated public opinion by concealing the copy of the sentence of the Judicial Court of Milan. Bruzzi is charged with bombing the Theatre "Diana" at Milan in 1920, and has lived in other countries since.

Reviews

"THE BLACK PIT" (Theatre Union)

Viewed from the point of its subject matter "The Black Pit" - the latest production of the Theatre Union - came the nearest to the original aim of this organization, which is to express through the medium of the stage the realities of the class struggle in America. More than the previous production of the Theatre Union, this play deals with a familiar situation told in the language of the workers every day life, but charged with a high dramaticism of spontaneous power. It tells the story of a young miner who, pitted against the terrific odds of a merciless system, lets himself slip for a moment from the narrow path of class loyalty, to realize only too late the great price he has to pay for it in terms of moral degeneration. Grim, implacable realities, clutching in their grip individual workers, -- it is the story of the struggle against such that makes every incident related in that play vibrate with a dramaticism that is to be sought in vain in the ordinary plays of the bed chamber variety.

Unfortunately, neither the script, nor the production do full justice to the subject matter of the play. Both lack the resonance, vigor, fulness of expression required in plays aiming to portray the proletarian struggles. More than other plays, the latter demand a rich resonant, colorful dialogue, a heroic elevation of tone, fully rounded out situations and an abundance of mass scenes. Instead of all that we have the reserve, the understatement and frugality of artistic means of the psychological drama. And with very few exceptions, the acting and directing cleave to the line laid down by the script: the same muted pathos, the subdued effect, the undertone and the subtleties of silent gaps.

The everyday language of proletarian struggles is not necessarily the language of naturalistic prose; it is essentially heroic in its quality, and to translate the latter into the language of the stage is a task which our proletarian theatre has yet to master.

S-X

REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN SPAIN, by M.Dashar. 10¢, 24 pps.

"The Revolutionary Movement in Spain" is a very valuable and timely pamphlet. For the first time the workers of America have access to an objective analysis of the working class movement of Spain.

The writings of political parties reflect unanimously a hatred and prejudice of a genuine revolutionary workers' movement devoted to the cause of freedom, equality and independence from political parties. These parties cannot understand the desire of workers to keep their unions free from domination, free for all workers who believe that the unions are the instruments of the workers for conducting revolutionary struggles, organizing the defense of the revolution, and reorganizing society around the unions. Even worse than inability to understand is the deliberate campaign of slanders and lies which they carry on out of fear that the workers of other countries might learn a powerful lesson from the Spanish workers and throw off the yoke of political domination and goose-stepping.

The pamphlet goes into some detail in its account of the strikes and the struggles of the workers against the bourgeois-socialist coalition government of the Spanish Republic and outlines the various developments leading to the uprising of October. It points out the ambiguous and directly contradictory positions of the S.P. in different parts of Spain.

If you are interested in the development of the Spanish working class movement - Marxist as well as anarchist; if you want to see another example of working class betrayals by socialist politicians, don't fail to read this pamphlet.

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A.B.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE!

Owing to the difficulties of multigraphing a magazine, some of the material, as the article on the Paris Commune, is late. We expect, however, to get a May issue out very shortly. Our financial report will be printed next month. We urge all our friends and corresponding groups to send in their bundle orders quickly. All those who live in New York are invited to come up to our hall and borrow books from our libertarian library.