Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

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UNDER THE BANNER OF MARXISM

By Max Shachtman

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Dedicated in comradely solidarity to the delegates to our Fifth National Convention and to all those who are unshaken and unshakeable, who do not flinch and weaken, who are confident and resolute, whom nothing can detach from the cause of working-class emancipation.

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UNDER THE BANNER OF MARXISM

The Marxists are under tremendous pressure.

The Second World War has come to an end but no socialist revolution has come to destroy capitalism. Where capitalism has been weakened or wiped out, it has been to the profit of Stalinism. Where Stalinism has profited, the working class and its vanguard have lost.

Before our very eyes, capitalism and Stalinism are preparing the Third World War, a war to the death to determine which system of exploitation and oppression shall rule the earth. The conflict between these two so mighty giants dominates all political thinking and all political life. The world is already so completely divided between the American side and the Russian, that no other pole of attraction is visible. Because no other is visible, it seems that no other is possible, at least not before the conflict turns into a world-shattering explosion.

Where in this conflict is the proletariat, its independent program and goal, its own army and leadership? Program, goal, army and leadership of its own, it has none today. Docile or discontented, apathetic or restless, disheartened or disorientedly combative, it is everywhere under the thumb of drillmasters of imperialism and in its service. Nowhere does it fight its class enemy with a socialist consciousness; it fights only the "enemy of its enemy."

Where in this conflict is the revolutionary Marxian movement? It is everywhere small and isolated, weaker than it has been in decades. It has the ear of few workers and the allegiance of even fewer. While it discusses its problems with earnestness and perturbation, it is assailed by the almost deafening roar of the two giants: "Enough idle talk about your proletariat and your socialism! Choose one of us or the other. Nothing else is real!" The pressure is not always blunt; sometimes it is bland and subtle. But it has never before been so great, and movement is wavering under it. It is hard to admit these facts; it would be stupid to deny them.

The American Marxists are subjected to a multitude of pressures and difficulties. We suffer in general, like our comrades everywhere, from the defeat of the Bolshevik revolution and the triumph of Stalinism. To think that we are unaffected by it in the United States because the American workers know or care very little about the Bolshevik revolution and Stalinism, is utterly superficial.

The vast majority of the American workers, including the most advanced among them, are steeped in the tradition of individualism, democracy, political freedom. Stalinist totalitarianism is repugnant to them. But in a general way, they identify Stalinism with Bolshevism and the revolutionary Soviet government, looking upon the former not as the exterminator of the latter but rather as its continuator and more or less legitimate successor. That is how they have been taught to think by the bourgeoisie, the labor leaders and the growing crop of ex-revolutionists who specialize in providing "inside information" to prove the case. Consequently, these workers regard with suspicion or, at best, with doubt those groups which defend the Russian revolution

and its principles even if they are anti-Stalinist.

On the other hand, a small minority of American workers, likewise identify Stalinism with Bolshevism and regard it as its legitimate successor, but, for reasons that are familiar to us, they are attracted to Stalinism. Even if from a different standpoint, these workers, too, regard with suspicion or, at best, with doubt those groups which are anti-Stalinist even if they are defenders of the Russian revolution.

The decay of the revolution and the vast confusion created by the rise of Stalinism is therefore a double handicap to us! It requires a thorough political understanding of the problem, and patience and perseverance to overcome the handicap. Our movement is one hundred per cent right in going out of its way, so to speak, to distinguish and dissociate itself from Stalinism, its agencies and policies, in the ranks and the eyes of the working class, even if it entails courting (and - this we will continue to see to - overcoming) the risk of vulgar anti-Stalinism. Meanwhile, we progress only among that tiny sector of workers and students who grasp the polar opposition between Stalinism and Marxism, and are ready to engage seriously in the fight for socialism.

We suffer also from the fact that the socialist revolution failed to win in a single European country after the Second World War. It may be argued that this would have a dolorous effect upon our European comrades but not upon us in the United States, inasmuch as the American workers are not socialists, are not in favor of a socialist revolution here or anywhere else and therefore could not be depressed as a result of its failure to win power in Europe. The argument is literally beside the point.

In the first place, the American Marxist movement itself has been depressed as a result not only of the failure of a socialist victory in Europe - that includes even ourselves who entertained no stratospheric illusions on this score - but also of the failure of a strong and vigorous Marxist movement to appear in Europe. In the second place it is false to assume that the "non-political," let alone the advanced workers, are unaffected by the aftermath of the World War in Europe. It is entirely correct to say that they are not affected in the same way or to the same extent as the Europeans. But our inability to point to any significant progress, much less a triumph, for our movement, our principles, our program in Europe, where capitalism collapsed so resoundingly after the war, is not exactly the strongest appeal we have to those workers who read our press and hear our voice. Take the militancy and the scope of the class battles of the American proletariat after the Bolshevik revolution and the attractive power even in the United States of "Lenin's ideas" of those days, and contrast it with the situation as it is today. Another reason for the isolation of the Marxists will become sufficiently clear.

Finally, there is the pressure of the mounting ideological war against Stalinism carried on by the American bourgeoisie which, precisely because it is carried on by the bourgeoisie, is also directed against communism, against the revolutionary Marxist movement and not least of all against the working class, here and everywhere else. There has

never been anything like it. Not even the war, military and political, that the imperialist world conducted against the Russian Revolution of 1917 can be compared with it. That war deceived very few of the people and won the support of even fewer. The Russian Revolution had comparatively little difficulty in defending itself against this war in the ranks of the working class. Even the conservative workers looked upon the great revolution with sympathy or friendly interest. It did not take too long to spread among them the truth, the simple facts, about what was actually going on in Soviet Russia. The bourgeoisie had at its disposal nothing but lies and calumnies. Now it is different. In its war against Stalinism, the latter has given the former such weapons as it never dreamed of having thirty years ago. What could the bourgeois press do then with its stories about Lenin as an agent of the Kaiser, about Lenin's Chinese and Latvian terror-troops, about Lenin's nationalization of women? Very little, and not for very long; in a word, practically nothing. But just think of what this same press is able to do with its stories about Stalin's alliance with Hitler, about Stalin's G.P.U. terror, about Stalin's nationalization of slave labor, about all the cynicism, perfidy, knavishness, cruelty, the hideous oppression and exploitation of the mind and body of the people that characterize the Russian regime today.

One of the most important things it is able to do is to bring demoralization into the ranks of the socialist movement, especially in the United States and above all in the United States. In Europe, to say nothing of Asia, the American campaign against Stalinism (and socialism) is far less successful than it is here. There are two reasons for it.

No matter how much the European worker is impressed by the democracy and prosperity that prevail in the United States, he himself can get very little more of it in his own than is contained in a photograph or a propaganda pamphlet. The marvels of American Free Enterprise are not for him, they are not for Europe. To the extent that they are a reality, they are exclusively reserved by and for the United States. There is the grand aristocrat of the world, the only aristocrat left in the capitalist world! It is practically the only one that can have cannon and butter (more or less), super-monopoly and democracy (more or less). To Europe, the United States is the irreconcilable enemy of the socialist reorganization of society (as understood by the workers who support the Stalinist or the Social-Democratic parties), the last important prop of that rotting capitalist order which has become intolerable to the peoples of Europe, which they want to destroy, and for which American Free Enterprise is only a most remote and theoretical of alternatives.

The second reason is that the European people have a far clearer insight into the real meaning of the American campaign than ninety-nine percent of those "radicals" whom it has so successfully corrupted. Twice in one generation the United States has intervened directly and decisively in Europe, in the First World War and in the Second. After each war, Europe was worse off than before, the United States better off. After each war, Europe was a scarred wreck, the United States, in comparison, more vigorous than ever. The Europeans are terror-stricken at the thought of another world war - in a way that the "average American" (including the average American "radical") simply cannot under-

stand or feel. War is war, rationing is rationing, death is death, destruction is destruction, but in each case they mean different things to Europe and to the U.S.A. In the United States the war meant high prices for butter which was available; in Europe it meant no butter at all and no milk and often no cows. In the United States, it meant five soldiers killed; in Europe one hundred soldiers killed, or more. In the United States, it meant bombs exploding only at the Alma Gordo testing grounds; in Europe, it meant the terror bombings of Coventry, London, Amsterdam, Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden, Warsaw. The Europeans know what war has meant on both sides of the Atlantic. To one degree or another they know that they are being fed and trained for another war, their lands the battlefield, their children—the cannonfodder, their fate ruin. That is why, for the most part, they fear or are uneasily suspicious of or are filled with hatred toward the American imperialist democracy. That is why even the European bourgeois and social-democratic spokesmen who serve it find themselves compelled to defend it guardedly and apologetically when they appear before the people.

Here it is different! The absolutely fatal cancer which is born with capitalism and eats away at its heart, which has brought it to death or to the edge of death in every country of the Old World, does not manifest itself so clearly and virulently in the United States. Here capitalism expands and flowers(or so it seems at first blush), while everywhere else it is dying. It seems to be exempt from the inexorable laws which have wracked and doomed it everywhere else. The contrast between the economic standards and political freedom of the German and the Russian does not appear to be very serious. But when the American Way of Life and the Stalinist Life of Joy are contrasted, the difference is most impressive! No question about it: the American worker enjoys a far higher standard of living than the Russian, and he has incomparably more democratic freedom than the Russian who has none at all. What is the historical origin of the difference? Its social causes? What is the relationship between the two? What is the trend of development for tomorrow and what determines it? Nobody bothers very much about these questions, nobody but a "handful of Marxian dogmatists." The only thing that counts is that there is the known and incontestable difference.

The entire American bourgeois campaign is based upon this difference. From it flows the imperious demand: "Make your choice between the American way and the Stalinist way! And make damned sure that your choice is the right-minded one! Don't think for a moment that ideological pressure is our only weapon!"

Is there not, perhaps, another choice? ask the handful of Marxian dogmatists? Cannot mankind, leaving the path of Stalinist totalitarianism and American imperialist democracy, take a road that leads to socialist freedom, peace and abundance?

The reply comes in a thunderous orchestral crescendo of editorials, sermons, lectures, moving pictures, radio broadcasts and speeches by Max Eastman:

"No, no and no! Capitalism is the only society in which freedom is possible. Capitalism has its weaknesses, it has its defects, it has its ugly sores. But here, where it is properly practised, it functions

exceedingly well, on the whole. Where else do you have such a high standard of living and the possibility of its growing higher and higher? Where else can an office boy become President of the United States Government or United States Steel or both? Where else do you have so much democracy and therefore the continuing possibility of extending that democracy more and more? As for your socialism, it is a Utopia. The only socialism you ever saw is Stalinism. It is the only socialism you will ever see. It ought to be clear to you, as it is to us, that there never was any other socialism and there never will be. Even you have recoiled from Stalinism, but you don't understand it the way we do. With the best intentions in the world, you are only Stalinists who have not yet taken power, just as Stalin is a Trotskyist who has taken power or a Leninist who has kept it. We have ample proof of that, with lots of facts and lots of profound analysis. Here are scores of books and pamphlets and articles by men who were once Utopians like yourselves but who have seen the light - Eastman, Hook, Gitlow, Oak, Lyons, Burnham, Budenz, dos Passos, Harrison, and any number of other Smiths, Joneses, and Robinsons, every one of them a scholar and an expert. Not one of them is a capitalist or an exploiter of labor, but they are all working for us now. Do not persist too long in the error of your ways. We do not even demand unconditional submission. If you want to make a criticism here or there, we are always open to constructive suggestions. We have any number of Labor Leaders and Critical Social Thinkers and we tolerate them. This is not Russia, thank God! But if you don't want it to become another Russia, choose and choose the side of the just!"

Yes, here it is different! Here the pressure is enormous; it comes from all sides; it comes in a multiplicity of forms; it is exerted everywhere in different degrees. And here it is much more effective than in any other country of the world because here it is more seductive and persuasive. Capitalism here is prosperous (more or less) and democratic (more or less). It has been a success. In a country like ours, a "practical" country which has never had much use for theory or generalization, above all in social science, success equals good. The Marxian movement has thus far failed to become a serious political force. In a country like ours, failure equals bad - to fail is to show that you didn't have it in you in the first place, that you have no future. In the looming battle between the two titans, who already trample over peoples and nations as though they were ant-heaps, it is not popular in the respectable circles to persist in revolutionary independence not only from Stalinism (mere independence from Stalinism in the United States is not only easy and cheap, but a sure road to safety and popularity if not to respectable acclaim) but also from reactionary American imperialism. It is not popular to persist in holding firmly to the socialist road and the socialist goal.

We will deal later with the extremely significant and important question of why the American bourgeoisie - that all-powerful bourgeoisie, so fat, so strong, so vaunting in its confidence - concerns itself to such an astonishing degree with promoting the speeches and writings of the "ex-Utopians" who concentrate on arguing that socialism is a failure or that Bolshevism is Stalinism and vice-versa. We will see why this happens in a country where, apparently, capitalism is not in the slightest danger of assaults from a socialist working class or Leninist ideas or even from a substantial Stalinist movement. For the

moment, it is enough to record that this hooligan ideological pressure against Marxism (the specifically American counterpart of the hooligan police pressure against Marxism in Hitlerite Germany) has yielded valuable results for the bourgeoisie. It has broken from any fidelity to Marxism and the socialist struggle a considerable number of our once prominent or well-known spokesmen and defenders in this country, above all among the intellectuals. And in breaking them from Marxism, with its high standards of intellectual discipline, its unquenchable passion for social justice, its tenets of cool objectivity in political judgment - it has also broken them as rational and distinguished men.

Every one of them would undoubtedly take offense at this, yet it must be said that there are firm grounds for comparing their cases with those of the Trotskyist and Zinovievist capitulators to Stalinism. They are not the same people; they are not the same phenomenon. The two are, however - to employ a favorite phrase of Trotsky - symmetrical phenomena.

The capitulators to Stalin range from the most sordid and contemptible to the most saddeningly noble. Stalin made them "confess" so that they would degrade themselves, disavow and defame their own revolutionary past and the past of the revolution. He needed their "confessions" in order to dig a deeper grave for socialist principle, the socialist road, the socialist struggle. How could he get such "confessions" from people whom Czarist persecution could never budge? By appealing to something they still held sacred - the interests of the revolution, however terribly undermined. By convincing them of the hopelessness of the "old ideas" as a means of safeguarding what was left of the revolution. What were the "old ideas"? The mobilization of the proletariat as an independent class force fighting consciously and in its own name for the socialist revolution. "Renounce Trotskyism! It is Utopian and therefore counterrevolutionary. Where is your world proletariat and its struggle for socialism? We alone can carry things through and only by our methods. If not for us, the world bourgeoisie will triumph over us all. Bear that in mind!" In substance, that was the Stalinist line which, in so far as ideological pressure was employed, impelled the capitulators to capitulate.

Our own "ex-Utopians" represent a symmetrical phenomenon. "Where is the socialist proletariat? Where is the struggle for socialism? Where is the socialist movement? All these things are - or were - sacred, but in any case they are not visible. What is left to fight for, actually, concretely? Some measure of democracy, and that is better than none at all. Who threatens it, actually, concretely? Stalinism. What can resist it? The revolutionary movement? Little or no sign of it. The proletariat? Let us not make an abstraction, a fetish, of the proletariat. It must have a leadership, a real one, not a desirable but mythical one. It will either be led by Stalinism, which is real, or by the bourgeoisie of American democracy, which is also real. We once thought that the socialist revolution would lead to democracy and socialism. Well, all it led to was Stalinism. We know what would happen to us and everyone else if Stalinism triumphed. That, above all and everything else, must be prevented. We don't care too much how it is done, either. This is no time for dogmatism or hair-splitting or any scientific refinements. To outstrip Stalinism we must travel fast. Traveling fast means traveling light. Overboard

goes all our old baggage. It is true that reformism - the abandonment of socialist struggle in the name of attachment to democracy - has not proved to be much of a hindrance to Stalinism but rather, if anything, an aid to it. No matter - somehow we will be different. After all, this is the United States, which is very rich and very democratic and very modern - not like backward China, for example - and here we know a man who can quietly contact one of Roosevelt's assistants and help steer the New Deal right. We ourselves will concentrate on exposing and opposing Stalinism by speech, article and book, and we'll show we really mean it by joining with anybody and everybody else who opposes Stalinism. As an earnest of our intentions, we will start by confessing the errors of our own past, thus warning off all others by displaying our own horrible example."

Basically, it would seem clear enough this is the line along which the confessions and conversions of our "ex-Utopians" took place. (It is not without interest that Gitlow's book is entitled "I Confess", Freda Utley's book is "The Dream We Lost," Eugene Lyons' book is "Assignment In Utopia," and Eastman's book is "The End of Socialism In Russia.") The Russian capitulators turned their backs reluctantly to socialism and surrendered to Stalinism. The American capitulators did likewise, and surrendered to American capitalism. Stalin used Radek, until he murdered him, as his expert in attacking Trotskyism, that is, revolutionary socialism, proletarian internationalism, workers' democracy. Our capitulators, while pretty safe from judicial murder at the hands of the present White House, are used for pretty much the same end, even if not as directly and consciously as Stalin used Radek. The bourgeoisie- the thoughtful, intelligent bourgeoisie - and its press, its schools and lecture halls are at the disposal of the capitulators. Not only in the campaign against Stalinism, but also in the campaign against the revolutionary socialist movement and its ideas, Eastman, Hook, Lyons and their imitators constitute an important division of the brain trust of American capitalism.

What makes them political experts from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, is obvious. But what makes them political experts from the standpoint of the working class or even ordinary sincere democrats - to say nothing of socialists - is absolutely incomprehensible! Their principal qualification is that, although they teach in different classes, all of them belong to one and the same political school. It should be called by the cumbersome but accurate name of: "I-Was-a-Political-Idiot-but-Now-I-Am-Smart School."

Take Max Eastman. He started out, in his courageous defense of the Russian Opposition, by showing that Stalinism had nothing in common with the revolution, that it was antipodal to socialism and was undermining it, that Trotsky and his comrades were the only loyal champions of workers' democracy and socialist progress. Then he decided to take Marxism gently to task. Its theory of the inevitability of socialism is a theory of fatalistic quiescence which does not provide for planned action by concerted individuals who understand that capitalism makes possible the fight for socialism and who are resolved to carry on that fight in good weather and bad. Lenin - there was a man after his own heart! Lenin, the scientist, the social engineer, the engineer of revolution! He was not content to sit in the British Museum and wait for socialism to come by its mystically dialectical inevitable self. He

went out, organized a party of revolutionists by profession, worked out an engineer's plan to bring the revolution about, and proceeded scientifically and resolutely to work according to plan. The trouble with the revolutionary movement is that it is stultified with Marxism. If it really wants to get socialism, it has only to adopt genuine Leninism, as so clearly explained by Eastman. Then followed his Herculean wrestling matches with other giants like Hook and Burnham, where he tried his best to pull down them from the clouds of dialectics and inevitability and pin them to the good earth of active revolutionary struggle for socialism. Socialism, he pleaded, is only desirable and possible, but it is not inevitable. To realize it, you simply have to organize and fight for it, as Lenin and the Bolsheviks did.

This struggle in favor of struggling finally exhausted him. Some people think and then write. Eastman wrote and then thought. Each new book implicitly renounced its predecessor. He ended with a book which introduced a slight change in his original position. Now, he informed his public, it is perfectly clear that socialism is neither desirable nor possible; and if you are imbecile enough to fight for it, the only thing that is inevitable is Stalinism. Stalinism is not the enemy of socialism, it is its true incarnation, its only possible incarnation. The man who once chided the revolutionary movement for failing to understand the virtues of Leninism, now appears before the convention of the A.F. of L. to chide the labor movement for failing to understand that the capitalist goose can keep on laying golden eggs forever and a day provided the working class is intelligent enough not to kill it. Upon hearing this new theory of perpetual motion, the labor bankers and businessmen at the convention burst into enthusiastic ovations for the new scientist and champion of labor's very best interests.

What is it, exactly, that makes him more of an expert on the subject than credentialed representatives of the Chamber of Commerce? Only one thing: his insistence upon the claim that practically all his life he has been a political idiot. That politics is practised by idiots of all kinds and of long standing, is a matter of common knowledge. But as a rule, the idiocy is subject to debate, and the politician in question is always ready to take the indignant negative. With our "ex-Utopians," it is different. They are downright anxious to convince the world that all their lives they have been political idiots and now they know it.

"But why does such a confession give you special letters of credit in politics? Wouldn't it be more decent if you hid yourself quietly for the next ten years without writing or uttering a word about the subject on which you were so frightfully wrong all your life? Why should anybody listen to you for one minute now?"

"Why? Because now I am really smart! Now I am really an expert! Now I am sure of my ground - look how categorically I write!"

"But that's what you said yesterday and a year ago and five years ago and ten years ago, and each time you not only discovered that you had been an idiot but you insisted on communicating the fact to the still patient world."

"You don't understand a thing. You're a doctrinaire, a dogmatist,

a hairsplitter, a Utopian. You're a typical Bolshevik - intolerant, arrogant, impervious to fresh argument and independent thinking. I know what I am saying and I insist upon being heard because this time I <u>really</u> know what an idiot I've been all my life."

Eastman is only one member of the School. Hook is another - different from Eastman, as each is from all the others - but still a member of the School. His books and articles on what Marxism really is, are not countless but they are numerous. Read them, if you can, one after the other. Hook is not as rollicking and lusty and sword-direct in his confession of life-long idiocy as Eastman is. He does the same thing in a more stately, dignified and academistical way, but he does it. Each of his writings on Marxism, if it is not an outright repudiation of what he wrote before, is at least a mockery of it. He started out by explaining that Lenin's works showed an understanding of Marxism, on the whole, and that Kautsky's works did not. He ended up (at least for the time being) by writing - just as firmly, just as authoritatively, just as confidently - introductory tributes to Kautsky's works. Withal, he remains the only man who really understands Marx and he is not the last to admit it. On theoretical and political problems of the socialist movement, he is an increasingly awesome Authority, accredited to that post by years of implicitly acknowledged idiocy.

To be sure, mistakes in politics are as common as daisies and God knows we have made our share of them. But there are mistakes and mistakes, as the saying goes. We Marxist sinners are guilty of much, no doubt. But we have never based our claim to attention and respect on the fact that our lives have been an unbroken, allsided, multicolored, highvolted and positively ludicrous series of self-exposed and self-renounced political blunders. If we ever came to that, let us hope we will commit no public nuisance. We will have the elementary decency to retire from politics altogether and apply ourselves to such internationalistic but less venturesome pursuits as stamp-collecting.

Or take Budenz, or Gitlow, or Oak or any of a dozen others. With embarrassing emphasis on personal detail, they write and speak of how, for many years of their adult life, long after baptism, confirmation and attainment of majority, they were taken in by the communist or Stalinist movement as if they had no more sense than a cretin baby born of tested and registered cretin parents. With growing amazement, you read of their unperturbed membership in an organization led by and largely composed of robbers, footpads, thugs, kidnappers, assassins, corruptionists, peculators, swindlers, confidence men, careerists, spies, union-wreckers, hedonists, rapists, cowards, adventurers, demagogues, hysterics, dreamers, fools, and rogues, rascals and scoundrels of every variety. Alas, even an honest man can sometimes wander into a den of iniquity. But he has only to look around him and he takes to his heels. It may take him a few days or a week or two. If he is a slow thinker or has a cataract in his eye, it may take him a few months before he leaves. But these people were there for years and years. They not only saw all the things they write about (and a good deal they do not write about) but even contributed their not unappreciated mite to the universal foulness. Yet they stayed on and on and on.

Why? "You ask why? Simple! Because for years and years, more

than we can remember, we were political idiots! We could not tell right from wrong, right from left, good from bad, top from bottom, inside from outside. Take our word for it, we know what we're talking about. This very minute we have manuscripts for more confessions which will wipe out the last scintilla of doubt about our idiocy."

"All right, we'll make an effort to read them, too. But look here, even the most highly polished idiot in the world could not have overlooked these things for so long."

"Is that so?. I'm surprised that you in particular should fail to understand how it happened. We were blinded to all that filth by our devotion to the socialist ideal, the socialist goal, the socialist principles, the cause of working-class emancipation. We were ready to do anything, to overlook anything, to further that aim. What fools we were! We didn't further it at all. We only brought it harm."

"Excellent! No more of those horrors for you and none for me. We'll build a clean and honest movement for socialism."

"Not now! I tell you, we've got to destroy Stalinism before it destroys us. I don't care who does it or how it's done, or whom I work with, or under, to get that job finished. I'm not a political idiot any longer. I know American capitalism is not perfect - you don't have to tell me that, you know. But it's the only power left that can handle Stalinism. You don't think for a minute that your tiny little socialist sect can cope with Stalinism?"

"No, as a matter of fact I don't. Not yet. We're not strong enough to destroy Stalinism. But we think that our road is the only one that can really lead to its destruction without undermining the working class and strengthening some other tyranny over the people."

"Road, road, road, road! That's all I hear from you people. I tell you again, when your house is on fire you're crazy if you get finicky about how you put it out or who helps you do it." (The classical question of the burning house never fails to get dragged into the discussion, like that other question, so classical in California, about whether you would support the war if a Japanese soldier threatened to rape your sister.)

"I wouldn't be too finicky, either, except that I'd take care not to douse the flames with wood chips, dry leaves and kerosene, or give the hose to a man who will turn it on me. After all, even firefighting is a science, with good sound rules based on experienced and ---"

"Science! Rules! Experience! A lot of empty words. I thought Stalinism had taught you something. You refuse to learn. You're still a doctrinaire, a bigot, a theorist, a dogmatist, a Marxian theologian, full of the old and outlived answers, without a fresh idea in your head. I used to be a political idiot, but not now. I must rush off to write a couple of articles for the Reader's Digest and the New Leader, where people appreciate my work. We've got to smash the Stalinists. Why, those monsters actually believe the end justifies the means. They're a menace. We must use any means to destroy them. Some day you'll understand that you're wasting your time with all this sectarian nonsense.

Why, selling typewriters for a living, or even correction fluid, is more profitable than what you are doing. Let go of me, and don't think I'm coming back."

The story is not yet told. The type is not yet described. To understand this ignominy properly, its most distinguishing feature must be portrayed. It is ugly and downright unpleasant for an American Marxist to write about. Here is not just a capitulation "in general." It is not just a succumbing to the ideology, to the political or economic or moral superiority of capitalism "in general." It is more than that and worse than that. It is a special national brand. It is a capitulation that positively reeks of American chauvinist aristocratism.

Fatigue and retirement, abandonment of principle, outright desertion and renegacy - none of these is new or unusual in the records of every militant social movement. The struggle is carried on by human material and its resistivity to stress differs in every case. The Marxian movement has had more than one gloomy period in the hundred years of its struggle: after the defeats of 1848, after the defeat of 1871, after the defeat of 1905. In every one of these periods, capitalism - on a world scale, as a social system - not only seemed to emerge stronger from the revolutionary assault which it had beaten off, but actually did become stronger. It made great economic progress in all the countries where it prevailed. It allowed for long periods of peace and order. It allowed for considerable political progress - despotic governments became, on the whole, less despotic and democratic governments more democratic. There was at least some discussable ground for the belief that this was the basic and durable trend of capitalist evolution. There was at least some ground, therefore, under the feet of those who abandoned the socialist movement altogether and reconciled themselves to this flowering capitalism and of those who abandoned the revolutionary principles of the movement but remained within it as socialist reformers of capitalism. The former said socialism was impossible or unnecessary or both, and that capitalism was good enough; the latter said capitalism would grow up into socialism if systematically weaned by the movement. Before both of these, Marxism, with its theory of crises, catastrophe, capitalist decay and revolutionary transformation, was on the defensive.

But what is there in the objective situation of world capitalism today, of capitalism as a social system, to make it attractive to anyone who even rubbed shoulders with Marxism for a few months? Is capitalism today making the sturdy economic progress and promoting that economic welfare of the masses which it registered in the few decades that straddle the turn of the century? Is it advancing, if not everywhere then at least on the whole, from despotic to democratic political regimes, in any sense comparable to the early days? Is it presenting a prospect of even such peace as the world enjoyed between the end of the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War? Is it spreading the blessings of culture and science at least to the peoples of the modern world?

Where is capitalism making any such progress? In Russia? With due respect to J.R.Johnson, the answer is decidedly in the negative. Perhaps in the satellite countries of Russia - Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and (yesterday) Yugoslavia? With due respect to the theoreticians of the Fourth International, the answer given both by us and by the capitalist world is likewise in the negative. In Germany perhaps? If Prince Bismarck or Eduard Bernstein were to come

alive today they would jump back into their graves at the sight of what has happened to German capitalism. Where then is capitalism vigorous and virile and promising? Anywhere in Europe? Maybe in China or in Pakistan or in the Federated Malay States? Some place in Africa or Latin America?

No. Wherever you look on the map, capitalism is dead or dying, capitalism is sick, prostrate or paralyzed, capitalism is wracked and shattered or stands precariously on one kneecap, capitalism does not have the confidence of the people or even much confidence in itself. Wherever you look on the map, it is hard nowadays, exceedingly hard, to find a single plain-spoken and aggressive spokesman for capitalism. That Stalin is for socialism goes without saying. Hitler was for socialism. Laval was for socialism. Attlee is certainly for socialism, heaven help us, and so are Blum and Spaak and Saragat. Who speaks for capitalism? Churchill, de Gaulle, de Gasperi, the Papists of the avowed democratic or concealed fascist brand? They speak against socialism, communism, collectivism, and sins and for human rights, religious rights, democratic rights. But where can one of them be found to say: Capitalism is good, capitalism is getting better, we are its forthright champions? Nowhere! Nowhere, except in one country - the United States of America.

Here, capitalism is not only rich but richer than ever. Here, capitalism is or gives a tremendous impression of being strong and stable. Here, capitalism pays high wages, incomparably higher than anywhere in the world. Here, even workers, millions of them, have homes or apartments, automobiles, washing machines, television sets. Here, the lowly Negro is better off than most highly-skilled German workers and the less lowly Negro has just been allowed to sit in a Texas college classroom. Here, no war bombs fell but we could produce enough bombs to shatter the rest of the world and still have some meat and butter on the table. Here, we have billions, enough for ourselves and enough to give away as gifts. Here, democracy did not collapse during the war and it is spreading by leaps and bounds after the war. Here, the Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, McGraw-Hill and the United States Steel Springs Corporation, with fat, smug courage, can extol the marvels of capitalism in page after page of advertisement tracts that could not possibly appear in the newspapers of any other country in the world. Here, every labor leader is for capitalism. Here, Max Eastman can sing whole lyrics to capitalism at a labor convention and, so far as the delegates are concerned, escape without injury either to his body, his pride or his dignity -- something which could not occur today in any other country in the world.

Here capitalism flourishes despite the agony of capitalism all over the world; it flourishes because of this world agony; it can flourish only by intensifying this agony. Its emissaries, missionaries and other apologists abroad, including "labor men," do not even claim that it is possible for European capitalism to reach the level of the miracle that has been reserved exclusively to the United States. Even the rashest American salesman does not dare to hold a brief for capitalism "in general." He does not even think in such terms any longer. He speaks only of the virtues of American capitalism and does his recruitment for it only on the ground that it can help Europe (or Asia or Latin America or Africa) get off its back and on to its knees.

The United States is the aristocrat of capitalism, the only aristocrat left. It has not only an aristocratic capitalist class which is the envy of what is left of the capitalist class everywhere else, but an aristocratic agrarian middle class, an aristocratic urban middle class and a still aristocratic working class.

The real basis for this aristocratic position does not lie in the virtues and organic strength of capitalism but in the weakness, decay and disintegration of the rest of the capitalist world, in its misery and helplessness, in its exhaustion and dependency. It is this agony of world capitalism that made possible the unique rise of American capitalism to its present exceptional position. This unique position in turn depends upon and requires the perpetuation of the agony of the rest of the capitalist world. It should not be too hard to understand that if British, French, German and Japanese capitalism were prosperous and powerful, American capitalism would not and could not have the unprecedented advantages that it enjoys in world production, in the world market and in world politics. The capitalist world is small. It is getting smaller. There is room in it for fewer and fewer strong and healthy capitalist powers. In the small capitalist world today, there is only one such power left - the aristocrat of them all, the only one with even an appearance of good health and continuing capitalist prospects.

It is a practical impossibility in our time to capitulate to capitalism "in general," to capitalism as a historical system, to capitalism as a universal social philosophy or ideology, to be reconciled with such a capitalism. It does not exist. What is possible and what does take place, is the capitulation to American capitalism, the only one for which anyone, here or abroad, feels it possible to speak up with any vigor or forthrightness.

So we repeat: Those who have abandoned the struggle for socialism, who have become the champions of capitalism, no matter how much they qualify it with the adjective "democratic," those who have in any way reconciled themselves to capitalism today (we emphasize again: today, in order to distinguish the specific character of the present phenomenon in and around the Marxian movement from its apparent relative in the old days), are tainted with American chauvinist aristocratism and reek of it. If reconciliation with capitalism was a disgrace to a socialist in the old days, it is doubly and triply disgraceful today.

Amid the general decay of world capitalism, the bourgeoisie of the United States feels entitled to speak of the "American Way of Life." In a sense, within limits, it is justified! American capitalism certainly occupies a specific and unique position in the general decay in which it is more hopelessly entangled than its champions imagine. But correspondingly, we too are entitled to speak, in these days of wrath for the revolutionary Marxian movement throughout the world, of the specific and unique character of those who now abandon the fight for socialist peace and freedom in this country. Americanized Quitters. Ugh! What a name to bear!

* * *

Only with the foregoing well in mind is it possible to understand the case of those who have recently oozed out of our party and into the void. We refer in particular to Goldman and Erber.

What an appalling display of irresponsibility they both make! What saddening examples of demoralization!

Goldman looked upon himself as a political leader and a teacher. Perhaps he still does. His services to the revolutionary movement are substantial and serious; they cannot be erased - the last thought in our mind is to try. But even the most glorious past cannot be used to justify or cover up everything. Goldman organized and directed a political struggle inside the Socialist Workers Party. It was a bitter struggle but there was no way to avoid it. Goldman assumed a heavy responsibility and discharged it in his own way. The struggle culminated in the split in the S.W.P. Goldman and the comrades who followed his leadership joined the Workers Party. In it, Goldman took his rightful place as a leader of the party as a whole, freely chosen for that position by the entire membership. The high, indeed, the very flattering opinion that Goldman had and continually expressed for our party after joining it is too well known to need restating here. What is worth while recalling in particular, however, is his often expressed gratification over the loyalty, the objectivity and the high political level of even the most vigorous debates on controversial matters that he witnessed in our party. He even felt impelled to write down his happy feelings about it in unsolicited letters.

The question of our attitude toward the Marshall Plan arises. Goldman presents his own view inside the leadership; he presents it to the membership orally; he presents it in our press so that our friends everywhere may be acquainted with it. An extensive discussion ensues and in the final decision on policy, Goldman's view is rejected. So far, everything is normal. Then arises the question of our attitude toward the socialistic candidates in the presidential elections. Goldman, and not he alone, proposes that our party give its support to one of the three candidates, Thomas. In the debate, his view is discussed as attentively as any other. The party rejects it, however, and decides that we recommend a vote for Thomas or either of the other two socialistic candidates, Dobbs or Teichert. Explosion! Goldman, who does not find it possible or necessary to attend the meeting of the National Committee of the party at which the discussion and decision occurred, likewise does not find it possible or necessary to remain in the ranks of an organization which adopted such a resolution, or even wait for the Committee's resolution on the subject to reach him. Moving with unusual speed, Goldman resigns from the party. Just like that!

Why? Has the party betrayed socialism or the working class? Has it abandoned its program? Has it suddenly adopted a decision on a question which is in flagrant and catastrophic conflict with everything it stands for? Or perhaps the difference of opinion on this question is, for Goldman, only the culmination of a long and fierce struggle he has fought in the party over a whole series of vital controversial questions, the straw that has broken the camel's back? No, no and nothing of the kind. Is it then possible that a man of Goldman's political experience can really be so exercized over this one question, which is, after all, one way or the other, a pretty episodic trifle, that he must

quit his party on account of it? In view of the fact that the efforts he exerted, after his resignation, to get votes for his presidential candidate could not be registered on a delicate sphygmomanometer, a certain skepticism would appear to be not entirely out of place.

But let us open our gullible mouths real wide and swallow the idea that the question of the election policy, plus the question of the Marshall Plan policy or even multiplied by it, were of the most vital, urgent and overwhelming moment. That is when it would be especially indicated for Goldman, or any political leader and teacher, to make extensive, if not tireless, efforts to convince the other leaders that they are wrong and he is right, and at the same time, or following these efforts, to try to convince the membership as a whole. A man like that has - or so all of us used to think and most of us still think - a clear responsibility to his colleagues in the leadership he shares, and an equally clear responsibility to the membership which placed him where he is. After all, a political party, good or bad, tight or loose, is not a movie theater that you stroll out of with a yawn or thrash out of with a snort when the newsreel doesn't please you. But Goldman is not afflicted with such a sense of responsibility. He does not make the slightest attempt to persuade either the party leadership or the membership. In a fit of petulant demoralization, he explodes and quits.

A charitable person may say reprovingly: "Do not be so harsh. Soften your fanaticism with the milk of human kindness. After all, it is not the first time he has flounced out of an organization. Be a little more tolerant." We would then have to reply hastily: "No, no, it is not intolerance we feel, but apprehension. If he acts that way a few more times in a few more organizations, people may eventually get the idea that he is not to be taken seriously as a political person because he does not take his political allegiances seriously. And such an idea, although clearly erroneous, may end up by impairing his political prestige. That's what we are apprehensive about." That is what we would answer. But how many people would believe us?

The case of Erber is even more lamentable. His abilities and contributions to the party were often valuable and properly recognized for what they were. Also recognized was the fact that he fell deeper and deeper into the habit of undermining his own value, often to the point of negating it entirely. The writer had occasion to call his attention long ago to a dubious attribute: his impressionism. Impressionism in the political movement is not an altogether bad quality, and this was often proved in Erber's case. It made him sensitive to new situations and new problems, and in itself this sensitivity is certainly a plus. But if it is not balanced by theory (generalization from significant experience), scientific discipline (the employment of tested methods and standards), and intellectual firmness (resistance to the clamor of the prejudiced, the ignorant, the weak and - in politics - the reactionary, and an understanding contempt for the pressure they seek to exert upon you) -- if it is not thus balanced, the plus easily becomes a minus. Events make their impression on you like winds on a loose-legged weathervane. You veer, you reel, in a stiff blow you collapse, and then you are not even any good for telling the direction of the wind, or rather you are carried off by it. If Erber is not evidence of the sure upshot of unbalanced impressionism, then there never was any and

there never will be.

Erber grasped long ago the existence of a problem that others also grasped, sooner than he or later, more perspicaciously or less. Trotsky often referred to it in these terms: the crisis in society is the crisis of revolutionary leadership. How shall we bridge the gulf between the overripeness of capitalism for socialist reorganization and the unreadiness of the proletarian revolutionary movement to carry out that reorganization? The problem is enormously real and only a blind and very smug blockhead would deny it. The existence of the problem is not discovered by Erber for the first time in his swan-song - his latest document. It is dealt with in a whole series of documents which he began writing soon after our party was founded. Every year, sometimes every six months, he produced another one. Without exception, all of them fitted into that category which is best described by the excellent phrase that Goldman favored so much: What is true is not new and what is new is not true.

A man who is clearly wrong, through and through, should not be called a muddlehead. That scientific term should be applied only to one who, as the name indicates, is capable of piling up a tower of alternating layers of good sense and bad sense, of intelligent ideas and preposterous ones. Not a single document that Erber produced in the course of his endless thinking-out-loud was clearly and thoroughly wrong. Every one of them was as close to a model of muddleheadedness as even a critical consumer would have the right to demand. The reader should not think for a moment that this is malicious afterthought. It is only a restrained re-statement of what so many of us said each time a new Erber document labored its way to our attention. Besides, the muddleheadedness of every one of these efforts is fully certified by the fact that Erber could not and would not underwrite a single one of them today.

We will not dwell on the fact that every document in which he undertook to deal with the problem of the present weakness of the Marxian movement and how to overcome it, showed such wide areas of - how shall we say it? - of unfamiliarity with the history of this movement, including its history in the United States, with the history of its ideas and its activities, and such courage in dealing authoritatively with the unknown, as was at once astonishing and deplorable. What is more noteworthy for the moment is the fact that all his documents had one of two outstanding characteristics and sometimes both.

Each new document was an implicit disavowal or an explicit abandonment of the standpoint presented in the preceding document. Each new document dealt with the problem of the reconstruction of the movement as though the preceding one had never been written. Without blinking an eyelid, he was able, in one of his documents, to list his earlier contributions and write that "It is apparent to me that the question could not be answered beyond the limits of the above documents without a more serious attempt to outline the historical fundamentals that underlie the whole future of our party." The more patient of his readers contented themselves with the thought that what had been apparent to them and had been pointed out to Erber in good time was, now at least, apparent to him.

What produced this blithely repeated self-repudiation? Essentially, his impressionism. Each time, every year or twice a year, a new thought would impress itself upon the undiscriminating and intellectually undisciplined writer-thinker in such a way as to become THE thought, to the disequilibrating exclusion of practically everything else.

This same impressionism accounted for the other characteristic of his documents: their inconclusiveness, or more precisely, their firmness in trivia and their vagueness about the important question with which they presumably dealt. He had no particular difficulty in posing a crucial problem - well or badly - but he never managed to find an answer.

Let us be more exact. Where he offered an answer that could at least be held in the hand, the party never had much difficulty in showing how hollow or superficial or disorienting or downright nonsensical it was. These were the instances where his answers boiled down pretty much to some proposal for jumping over our own heads. Typical was his scheme for overcoming our isolation by becoming what he called "a small edition of a mass party." This proposal, hilarious in conception and in formulation, produced an excited yawn in the party, but even that for not more than a minute. It did not last much longer with its author, either. Only a few months had to elapse before it was uncourteously dropped out of the window and a proposal - its exact opposite, it goes without saying - put forward with the same fragile self-assurance. Otherwise, as has been indicated, there would be no answer at all.

He could write fifty solid and vastly solemn pages dealing with "the problem." He could ask the most audacious questions, challenge everybody to answer - Yes or No! - if the movement should have a perspective or not, demanding to know if anybody really proposed to stumble along toward a mass party or get it by conscious planning, state with admirable unequivocation, as for example in 1944, that "this article presents an affirmative answer" (Yes, by George, we can plan and chart our course!); add with pugnacious vigor that "it is my view that it is not only possible but indispensable" (Refute that if you can! I say it is possible to plan our work and - hang me for it if you will - also indispensable!); and then, worn out by these shattering declarations, fall limply into the very next sentence: "However, the article will not offer a solution."

People would look at each other a little bewildered or embarrassed. To remind ourselves from time to time or even every week that we face a big problem, is good. To pose the problem, to call attention to the fact that it has not been solved and that it must be, is not bad either. To conclude that you have no answer to the problem may show your honesty or your modesty or your befuddlement or your bankruptcy (in Erber's case of course it was modesty), but surely it should not give you extra special privileges in drawing on the dwindling reserves of the paper industry. If you are honest and modest, then be so truly. Just write, "We have a tremendous problem; the solutions we have profferred are erroneous or faulty; we must absolutely find a good solution lest we perish; as for myself I have no solution." Spread that over one page or two or ten - but not over fifty pages and not every Monday,

Thursday and Sunday afternoon. If it is befuddled you are, and the answers given to the problem by the others are not acceptable, then take a deep breath for a while or some other treatment. If you are bankrupt, tell it to a few sympathetic friends but don't make such an extensive and noisy exhibition of the fact.

Such thoughts did not beset Erber then any more than they do now. Being an impressionist, he could not find a solution to the problem other than that presented by those whom he used to call proudly the "old Marxists." That incapacity he raised almost to the level of a virtue, if not the virtue, of our time.

Now, in his elaborate resignation from the Workers Party, a document which represents a radical rupture with revolutionary Marxism and the fight for socialism, he makes this questionable virtue his only claim upon our time and his only claim to distinction. In the past, for all his gyrations, he at least had some sort of grip upon Marxism and it kept him in the revolutionary movement. In the last year or so, this grip became looser and looser. There was no lack of warning to him, as to Burnham and others before him, against the demoralization that was assailing him. He was reminded of what he once knew pretty well, that nowadays above all others the revolutionist must steel himself and steel others against the slings and arrows of the times. The warnings and reminders did no good. His disintegration could be watched week by week the way you watch a man expiring on his deathbed.

Is there, then, not something wrong with the movement itself - not with him - since it could not hold him in its ranks? Indeed there is! We do not even dream of denying it! The movement is small and weak and isolated, Marxism is on the defensive. The forces arrayed against us are multiple and mighty and if they are not self-confident they are arrogant or persuasive, bestial or subtle but always persistent and insidious. Small as we are today, they devote no small amount of attention to us, for their good political instincts make up for what they lack in thought-out understanding of what we represent. They pour down upon us a steady trickle of acid. What, after all, is so surprising if this trickle dissolves the elementary lime deposits that make up the mental bones, the political bones, of some of us?

Has this thought been invented for the special purpose of explaining away Erber "after the fact" and "exempting" the movement from "its responsibility"? Surely even the arrant skeptic must be moved by the mountain of contrary evidence. We adduce but one item. It was written not so long ago, in July, 1944.

"The Socialist editor who recently, in defending the victims of the Minneapolis frame-up, referred to Trotskyists indulgently as somewhat naive people who still believe in the 'Communist Manifesto' as originally written hardly realized the historical significance of his statement. Yes, Trotskyists are the only people to whom the great document of Marx and Engels remained a living program.

"The two decades of struggle against the current proved an unbearable strain to most of our fighters, both in the ranks and in the leadership. No need to refer to the capitulators in Russia or the many stalwarts of the early Comintern in Europe who disappeared from polit-

ical life. Suffice it to note how few of the pioneers of the Communist League of America still remain. It is difficult to estimate how many thousands have passed through the organization in the last 15 years. (Among them a host of very able men like Muste, Burnham, Hook, Spector and others.) No more severe tests could be devised to test the optimism of a movement than those to which we have been subjected upon one field of working class defeat after another. Only those with a broad historical vision, a firm grasp of theory and life lived in close personal connection with the movement and the problems of the workers could survive."

And further:

"This decay of class feeling and militancy was an inevitable result of the decay that penetrated the entire social organism. No class, above all not one so basically rooted in the productive process as is the proletariat, can base its politics upon the status quo of a rotting society without beginning to rot itself. The proletariat could only save itself in a revolutionary struggle against the status quo.

"But only a tiny segment of the working class understood this and was willing to wage such a fight. More accurately, it was not even a segment of the class but only an ideological grouping that consciously expressed the historic aims of the working class and identified itself with the most advanced program and revolutionary traditions of the working class.

"This core of irreconcilables was all that was salvaged from the revolutionary years. They remained all but immune to the all-pervading decay of the times."

No great skill is needed to guess the author. It is Erber, the Erber of yesterday. Despite the somewhat heavy pathos, every word he wrote is true - true then, true now. The past struggle did prove an "unbearable strain" to many. Indeed it did and does. Only those with a "broad historical vision, a firm grasp of theory and life lived in close personal connection with the movement and the problems of the workers could survive" these most severe tests. Yes indeed, not only in 1944 but in 1949 too. Even the core of irreconcilables that remained true to the fight for socialism was not altogether exempt from the effects of the decay of society (for it lives and breathes in capitalist society) or the decay of the working class (for it also lives and breathes in the working class). No, not altogether exempt. We will be just as exact as Erber was five years ago: the core "remained all but immune" to the all-pervading decay.

For proof, in 1944, Erber pointed to his host of very able men. Spector folded his tent one night and stole away into a silence he has never broken. Burnham collapsed in a stupor from which he was aroused to a simulacrum of political life only years later by the vision of de Gaulle. Hook gradually wended his penitent way back under the roof of his father, Dewey. Muste returned to his knees before the Father of all Fathers.

It did not occur to Erber - how could it? - to find or even seek the cause for these (let us use a polite word) departures in some dis-

placed commas in our principles and program or in some awkward sentences. He found the cause where it was and is; the all-pervading decay of the times. That is where we find the cause also for his...departure. We are not immune; we are only "all but immune." The acid of decay trickles down dissolvingly upon the soft-boned and loosens their grip upon Marxism. For proof today, we point to Erber.

"Hold on there for a minute!" cry out some of our friendly critics whom we do not need to identify further. "There are at least a couple of things wrong with what you have written thus far. In the first place, you are giving the impression that all is well with your principles, your program, your traditions, your tactics, and that in the face of a fact that not even you deny, namely, the Marxian (or Leninist or Trotskyist) movement has not progressed but, if anything, it has declined, it is weak, it is isolated, it is without serious influence. You are giving the impression that everything in your old, old arsenal must be left intact, nothing added and nothing subtracted, and that in the face of the fact that with these weapons you have not gotten very far. That's the point!

"In the second place, you have been talking about these people pretty much in psychological terms - their lack of character, their lack of firmness and endurance, their lack of understanding, their personal deficiencies and the like. After all, you are not confronted with a psychological but with a political problem. And after all, even if all those who left the movement did suffer from the personal shortcomings you ascribe to them, wouldn't it still be necessary to deal objectively with what they write, with their criticisms, that is, to deal with their ideas independently of the personality of the authors, on the basis of the merit or demerit of the ideas themselves? That's the point!"

This outcry is familiar but it does not seem to us to be very valid.

We are not inseparably attached to our Marxian principles or to our party, in the sense that we live for their sake. We are inseparably attached only to that conquest by man of nature, to that emancipation of man from all forms of physical, mental and spiritual slavery, which will assure the fullest flowering of the human personality. There and only there is our goal and our reason for associated existence. The social relations that make up capitalism (not simply the fact that a capitalist has more money and a worker less) stand in the way of realizing this goal, so we combat it. Stalinism is our enemy for the same reason. The socialist revolution is indispensable for realizing this goal, so we work for it.

This work we perform with our instruments. The instruments are our ideas (principles, program, tactics). The "we" are those who agree on the goal, agree that these are the instruments for attaining it, and seek to keep them clean and sharp and to perfect themselves in their use. The "we" make up the revolutionary party at any given time. To get us to abandon these instruments, it is only necessary to offer us better ones. We will not hold on to what we have simply because the proffered alternative is brand new or very old. We will hold on to them, however, and fanatically, if the alternative is false and inferior.

We will certainly hold on to them if no alternative is offered.

Our ideas did not come into full and hermetically-sealed roundness overnight. They have developed for a hundred years and more. With our own mortal abilities we have tried to continue that development. Those that did not bite smoothly and deeply into the material they were applied to, we modified as needed or discarded altogether, sometimes later than others did and sometimes sooner. You need to have only a hat-tipping acquaintance with our party to know this. Yet, with all this, we have at no time found it necessary to abandon the fight for socialism, or the fundamental ideas of Marxism as the only worthwhile weapons in the fight. We can even add that it is only by means of these very ideas that we have been able to explain intelligently and intelligibly the reasons why these ideas have not yet triumphed and have even suffered prodigious defeats.

We are aware of what every sparrow knows - that we have not yet solved the social problem. We are not less aware that we have not yet solved every problem in the realm of our own ideas. We are ready to listen to every proposal made to help in that respect, but that does not mean that we should be required to accept every proposal right off the bat just because its proponent has been swept off his feet by its apparent reasonableness. We are ready to discuss every proposal or criticism, but that does not mean that we are hopeless bigots because, in the discussion, we defend those views we hold to be correct. We are ready to accept any proposal or criticism - new or old, and regardless of its source - but only after good arguments have been made to establish its validity.

It would be hypocritical if we denied that we approach many of the "new proposals" for "improving" our Marxism with a somewhat inhibiting skepticism. It is not entirely our fault. What we have heard and seen of these "improvements" - nine out of ten times - in the last quarter of a century has not encouraged us to hope for too much.

Let us say we are trying to get far off the ground. Science and experience tell us that the best way is by means of aircraft or perhaps a rocket. To the best of our ability, we build one machine after another. Some of them are very promising; others take off and crash with the pilot. It is discouraging! But we persist in our ideas, and each time these ideas explain to us our preceding failure. Someone comes along and says: I have a better idea. The way to get to the moon is to dig a great big hole in the earth. We are just a little skeptical. He does not convince us. Off he goes, muttering: Visionaries! Utopians! Bigots! Fanatics!

The analogy is loose and primitive but the point is not too obscure. Our actual experience in the defense of Marxism for the past quarter of a century is that in practically every case our critics wanted us to dig a great big hole in the earth. So, with this freely acknowledged reservation, which we hope will not be condemned too harshly, we reiterate our readiness to listen, to discuss and to change.

So far as our "psychological judgment" is concerned, the objection seems to us decidedly invalid and more than a little suspect. Society,

classes, groups (including political groups) are composed of individual human beings. Not one of these individuals is exactly like another. To one degree or another, each differs from the others in his past and present environment, his upbringing, his physical, intellectual and spiritual attributes ("character"), his abilities in one field or another, his interests, his associations and associates and a thousand and one other things. Generally, in all social questions, especially as they are posed at times of sharp conflict, the individuals in society tend strongly to divide in accordance with their class position and interests, and it is the resulting class struggle that is the principal motor of historical development. But this is no mechanical and absolute division, as is shown in a million familiar examples. The "psychological explanation" of classes and their motors (the bourgeoisie has this one complex, the proletariat has that neurosis) is ... dubious. The "psychological explanation" of this, that or the other individual and his motor is not altogether uninteresting, especially if it is always remembered that the individual is part of society and that if he makes conditions, conditions also make him. If we permit ourselves to make "psychological judgments" of political individuals on rare occasions we are not by that alone stepping too far beyond the bounds of political analysis and dispute.

Having said this, we readily admit what is valid. The ideas of the critic have their own status, too, and merit consideration "in their own name." That would be even more evident if the same ideas were presented anonymously. We have enough confidence in our own idea s to defend them openly and directly against any that challenge them. We note briefly that the same cannot be said about Erber. That is disclosed by his whole procedure.

Not once did he even try to submit the ideas contained in his new document to those with whom he had worked and exchanged opinions throughout most of his political life. Toward the end, he made a couple of mumbled references to the fact that he was thinking about some basic questions, that he was changing or had changed his mind about "democratic centralism" or "the war question". To think, to change your mind, these are God-given rights. But just what he was thinking, just how he had made up his mind, he did not find it necessary to inform his comrades and colleagues. He was content to leave them in the helpless position of guessing. That too is a man's right. Erber abused it to the limit.

At long last, he came to a conclusion, if that is what you can call his document. He submitted it simultaneously with his resignation from the party. What about discussing his views first? Oh no, not that! He dropped the document into our laps and fled like a man who had screwed up all his courage and then shot his wad in one super-audacious act.

Is it possible that he felt his differences with the organization to be so deep and irreconcilable that it seemed like a waste of time to discuss them? Yes, it is possible. But in that case, why was his brief letter of resignation accompanied by a long document addressed to the members of the Workers Party and its National Committee? Just to notify them of his departure? That formality was satisfied by the letter of resignation which stated that he no longer agreed with the principles and program of the party. Then perhaps to explain in per-

suasive detail what was wrong with these principles and program, out of a feeling of responsibility toward those he had worked with so long and who had honored him with the position of a leader and teacher, out of anxiety over their persistence in theoretical and political error, out of a desire to put right where wrong was?

That might of course account for the document and its salutation. But in that case, why did he not appear before this membership (to hell with the leadership) to argue his views, to win them to the right way to fight for socialism which he has finally discovered? It goes without saying that he had all the formal and actual opportunity to do so. He did not avail himself of it. He threw his rock into the window and took to his heels like those who throw rocks into windows and take to their heels. He has no confidence in his own views. He had no confidence in his ability to defend them, in a fair and square discussion before the membership, from the Marxian criticism to which they would be submitted. It was safer to nibble away at us from a distance, in a closed-off corner. Our critic is discreet.

If the author would not come to grips with us, we can come to grips with his work. If we lacked enthusiasm for the task to begin with, we must admit that it has come and grown considerably in the course of performing the task, on about the same principle as the appetite grows with the eating. If the first reaction, upon reading the document, is downright repugnance, the second is consolement, and both for the same reason. If, after all the reading and cogitating which the author claims, this document is all he could produce as the criticism of our principles and tradition, then things are not so bad with us. It is certain that if we get no heavier blows than this, we will manage to... survive. Erber's document is really so lamentably porous that it is not worth a minute's attention so far as settling accounts with him is concerned. But in so far as it offers the opportunity to re-state our principles, to demonstrate their validity again, to reaffirm the fight for internationalism and socialism, it is worth treating.

Before taking adieu from our late friend, we will consider the three questions with which he concerns himself: the Marxian theory of the state; the nature and unfoldment of the Russian Revolution; the Third World War and the socialist attitude toward it.

LENIN AND THE MARXIAN THEORY OF THE STATE

Erber starts with the Russian Revolution and follows with Lenin's concept of the state, to which he counterposes the Marxian concept as he understands it. We have no particular objection to that order and hope that none will be offered if we reverse it.

Erber begins with an acknowledgment: The theory of the state is of key importance for socialists. The attitude toward this theory is the bedrock difference between Leninism and reformism (and "centrism") since it determines the road to power. Lenin's theory cannot be accepted "without following the strategy and tactics outlined in the basic documents of the early Comintern." This acknowledgment must not be lost sight of for a single moment. What is demonstrated on this score cannot settle every question before the socialist and labor move-

ments. But it can settle one very important point.

If it can be shown that Lenin's theory of the state is in conflict with Marx's theory, then the strategy and tactics of the early Comintern which follow from Lenin's theory certainly do not follow from Marx's, and therefore the rejection of Lenin is not - or is not necessarily a **rejection of Marxism.** (Erber rejects Leninism in the name of Marxism.) However, if it can be shown that Lenin's theory is nothing but a restatement of what Marx and Engels taught, then the rejection of the former amounts to the rejection of the latter, and the repudiation of the strategy and tactics of the early Comintern amounts to the repudiation of Marxism, that is, of the proletarian struggle for socialism. (It should not be necessary to add that when we speak of the "basic documents of the early Comintern" we are not speaking of this or that comma, word, sentence, paragraph or page, but of what was fundamental, of precisely that which distinguished the revolutionary Marxists of that time from the reformists and - without Erber's condescending quotation marks - the centrists.)

Erber rejects Lenin's theory of the state because it is - hold fast, now! - "simplistic, crude and static," dogmatic, false, and in conflict not only with Marx and Engels but also with historical and political reality. How a theory that is so patently gross and preposterous could have fooled an eye as critical and a mind as luminous as Erber's for so many, many years, is hard to understand. But that's another matter which relates far less to eyes and minds than it does to feet in flight, and we pass on.

Why is Lenin's theory of the state crude and simplistic? The minute this not entirely inappropriate question is applied to Erber's document, you see how completely he has immured himself in a fog so dense that it is almost impossible to find a landing place in it without the aid of radar equipment. To accept or reject Lenin's concept of the state, you ought to know what it is and be able to express it. There are two good reasons why this should be easy, even for Erber. The first is that Lenin's concept is not cloudy, complex and dynamic but - thanks to years of patient and finally successful explanations made to Erber by Kautsky, Martov, Algernon Lee and the late President Roosevelt - crude, simplistic and static. The second is that Lenin not only devoted at least one work specifically to this subject - State and Revolution - especially since that is precisely and particularly the work in which Lenin seeks to show, in painstaking detail, the view held by Marx and Engels.

Doesn't Erber quote from this work? No. Not even one paragraph? Not even one. A sentence, perhaps? No, no sentence. At least a line? No, and not even a word. The only document from which Erber does quote is what Lenin wrote in "his" theses for the Second Congress of the Communist International* on "Communism, the Struggle for the Dictatorship

*The Theses were not written by Lenin, but in all likelihood, by Bukharin. The only work of Lenin from which Erber quotes was not even written by Lenin. What does a little slipshodedness in such matters amount to? He reads and doesn't know what he is reading. He writes and doesn't know what he is writing. So, he also quotes without knowing whom he is quoting. But we grant: Lenin is politically responsible for the Comintern's theses.

of the Proletariat, and Utilization of the Bourgeois Parliament." Why this document, and particularly the quotation which deals almost entirely with the question of parliamentarism, is chosen against the work which Erber himself regards as "the textbook of the Leninist school," is a conundrum which only its fogbound author can answer. We will leave the question of parliamentarism for later and try to stick to the general and basic question which Erber started to describe as the one of key importance. How are we to learn what Lenin's theory was, at least in Erber's view? We have to grope around in the fog until we come to something that has some corporeal feel to it. It is not easy. Careful search discloses two more or less specific references, and that is all. We will cite one of them briefly, not in order to get it out of the way, but because adequate treatment of it belongs elsewhere.

"Lenin could conceive of only two states - a bourgeois state and a proletarian state. The former directed the economy in the interests of capitalism, the latter in the interests of socialism.

"Had Lenin not been blinded by the simplistic notion that a state is merely an instrument of one class for the suppression of another, he may have conceived of the possibility that the state apparatus could free itself from class control, wield its power over the economy against both classes, and constitute itself the new ruling class, based upon state ownership of property."

You have to read this three times under a light before you can believe it was actually written. Erber, on the hunt for proof of Lenin's simplemindedness, provides us with perfect proof of his own lightmindedness. Lenin, you see, could conceive of only a bourgeois or a proletarian state. Lenin's theory was simpleminded. Why? Listen carefully now: Lenin did not foresee the bureaucratic-collectivist, the Stalinist state, which is neither bourgeois nor proletarian! He did not foresee it because his theory ruled out such foresight in advance, it "blinded" him.

Lenin lived right up to and including the year 1923, plus a few weeks in 1924. How was it possible for him to fail to foresee the non-proletarian, non-bourgeois Stalinist state? What excuse can conceivably be found for his ridiculous simplemindedness? Erber, severe, relentless, unsparing, in other words, dressed up like a real theoretician, refuses to let the quality of mercy drop like the gentle rain. He himself is distinctly of the school of Marx and Engels, whose unapologetic champion he makes himself. Engels - there is the man who really had the right theory of the state. With it, as every child knows, Engels, in contrast to the crude, simpleminded and static Lenin, did foresee the Stalinist state without waiting till 1924 to die, because, as every schoolboy knows from the mountain of evidence in Engels' writings, he did not conceive of only two states. It should of course be added, in a lame attempt to apologize for Lenin, that Engels also had the advantage of being equipped with a very high-quality crystal ball, a ouija board and an astrologer's chart found in a royal Egyptian tomb. At least, we must assume they belonged to Engels, for where else did his present champion and heir get his theoretical instruments?

If we had Erber's ruthless standards, we fear we would have to paste the label of simplemindedness not only on Lenin but also on Marx

and Engels. We would add to what Erber says about Lenin the same thing that was said about Marx and Engels fifty years ago by Erber's predecessor, Eduard Bernstein. But we would be unable to stop there. We would have to admit that there were some thinkers outside the Marxian movement who did "foresee" the Stalinist state, and were therefore not simplistic or crude.

Has Erber ever heard of Herbert Spencer or Hilaire Belloc and the "Servile State"? If he has not, he will. Has he ever heard of any of the rest of the anti-socialist schools of thought, down to our Robert Michels and our present day Hayeks, von Mises' and the editors, politicians, priests and turncoats from socialism whom they inspire? The very heart of their teaching is this: A bourgeois state is possible but the "socialist state" never was, never can and never will be a workers' state because the victory of the "socialists" must inexorably mean the triumph of a tyrannical bureaucratic class which crushes bourgeoisie and proletariat alike; and the existence of the Stalinist state is proof of this and proof of the fundamental invalidity of Marx's theories.

But really now, is Erber's criticism of Lenin identical with their criticism of Marx? Of course not. The latter is, however, the not too distant cousin of the former. We sincerely hope that Erber does not discover this relationship and draw the plain conclusions from it, as Eastman and others already have. But his document does not provide very much solid ground for such a hope.

We will leave Erber's first "specific" reference to Lenin's theory for a moment, and proceed to his second and only other reference.

"In Lenin's view...the bourgeois state was now stripped down to its real function as 'nothing else but a machine for the suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie, of the mass of toilers by a handful of capitalists.'"

This is too much and too little for Erber. This twenty-five-word quotation which sums up Lenin's theory of the state is just too crude and simplistic - even static - to be accepted by a refined and subtle intellect. He rejects it, and accepts in its place the theory of Marx and Engels, particularly Engels. Why the latter in particular? Because in his hunt, he has discovered, late in life, Engels' famous letter to Conrad Schmidt (October 27, 1890), from which he quotes with such confidence, frequency and a feeling of relief that for a fleeting moment a dozing reader might get the impression - which is patently ridiculous - that Erber has so much as a glimmer of comprehension of what he is quoting. Before we cite this letter which Erber so imprudently selected out of the voluminous writings of Engels and Marx on the state, we can establish beyond question the clear, unequivocal views that both these great socialist thinkers put forward at all times.

"...the state," wrote Engels in his new introduction to Marx's Civil War in France, "is nothing more than a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy."

Where does this differ in one single respect from Lenin's view

which Erber quoted, except to strengthen it by the additional emphasis on the fact that the state is no different in the democratic republic than it is in the monarchy? Lenin, we recall, was "blinded by the simplistic notion that a state is merely an instrument of one class for the suppression of another." Who originated this simplistic notion, who blinded Lenin, if not the man who wrote that the state "is nothing more than a machine for the oppression of one class by another"? What is the difference between the two? That Lenin says "merely" and Engels says "nothing more than"? That Lenin says an "instrument" and Engels says a "machine"? That Lenin says "suppression" and Engels says "oppression"? That Lenin had a short beard and Engels a long one? That Lenin died in Russia and Engels died in England? We have given all these possibilities the consideration they merit, and we have concluded that none of them gives us the answer. The right answer, charitably formulated, is: Erber is a muddlehead.

But after all, it might have been a chance formulation - crude, simplistic and static - that Engels let slip into an introduction to a brochure by Marx, but which did not represent his refined and profound and true view. All right, we will try again. On January 24, 1872, Engels writes to Theodor Cuno:

"While the great mass of the Social-democratic workers hold our view that state power is nothing more than the organization with which the ruling classes, landlords and capitalists, have provided themselves in order to protect their social prerogatives, Bakunin maintains that it is the state which has created capital, that the capitalist has his capital only by favor of the state." (A depressing thought strikes us at this point: if that is what Engels said about Bakunin, what would he say about Erber?)

"Our view," says Engels. If we may guess, that means Marx and Engels. But isn't that view pretty simplistic? Hmmm. Then Lenin was simply plagiarizing from Engels. Hmmm. Well, thinks Erber, if Lenin can plagiarize from Engels, why can't I plagiarize from Bernstein? That's not an easy challenge to take up.

On April 18, 1883, Engels writes about the state to Van Patten in exactly the same vein and in almost the same words.

"The main object of this organization has always been to secure, by armed force, the economic oppression of the laboring majority by the minority which alone possesses wealth."

But why do we need private and posthumous letters for this miserable job of grubbing for quotations which are familiar to all students of Marxism, knowledge of which should be a sine qua non for everyone who presumes to write on the subject? Didn't Engels write a whole book on the subject of the origin of the family, private property and the state? Didn't he stick firmly by the views he set forth in it, in everything he wrote subsequently, including his preface to the fourth edition written only a few months after the letter to Conrad Schmidt that has so overwhelmed Erber? Isn't the text available, in all modern languages, including English? Yet, Erber finds it possible to write about the state, and about Engels' theory of the state, without so much as a mention of Engels' classic work, let alone citing from it. After

all, why should he? Anyone who can discuss Lenin's theory without citing State and Revolution would be untrue to himself and his method of exposition if he quoted The Origin of the Family while discussing Engels' theory. Since we ourselves prefer the old-fashioned way, we will quote from Engels:

"The state is the result of the desire to keep down class conflicts. But having arisen amid these conflicts, it is as a rule the state of the most powerful economic class that by force of its economic supremacy becomes also the ruling political class and thus acquires new means of subduing and exploiting the oppressed masses. The antique state was, therefore, the state of the slave owners for the purpose of holding the slaves in check. The feudal state was the organ of the nobility for the oppression of the serfs and dependent farmers. The modern representative state is the tool of the capitalist exploiters of wage labor."

And further: "In most of the historical states, the rights of the citizens are differentiated according to their wealth. This is a direct confirmation of the fact that the state is organized for the protection of the possessing against the non-possessing classes."

And still further: "The aggregation of civilized society is the state, which throughout all typical periods is the state of the ruling class, and in all cases mainly a machine for controlling the oppressed and exploited class."

Engels' theory, and Marx's, remained to the end the one they succinctly advanced in their earliest works, in one that is so well known that Erber must have heard of it at one time or another - the Communist Manifesto.

"The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."

Under socialism, the state will die out because there are no class distinctions to maintain. The state - the "public power" - "will lose its political character." And what is this power, according to the Manifesto? "Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another."

In every case, almost word for word and comma for comma, Lenin's formula is identical with the one invariably employed by Marx and Engels. It is not the basic theory of Lenin that Erber has abandoned in his demoralized flight from revolutionary socialism, but the basic theory of Marx and Engels.

Still, what about the letter to Conrad Schmidt in which "the theoretical basis for such understanding was laid down by Engels many years before Lenin began his study of the state," in which "Engels gave us an insight into the relations of the bourgeoisie and the state apparatus from which we can understand such politically diverse trends toward statification as the New Deal and the Nazi state"? The letter has been familiar to students for some time now, first in Sidney Hook's publication, then in a slightly revised publication in the New International and later in the Stalinist edition of the Marx-

Engels letters. What we have to deal with is an Erberian rediscovery of America, an authentic one because he too does not know what continent he has actually landed on.

"There is a reciprocity between two unequal forces (wrote Engels); on the one side, the economic movement; on the other, the new political power which strives for the greatest possible independence and which having once arisen is endowed with its own movement. The economic movement, upon the whole, asserts itself but it is affected by the reaction of the relatively independent political movement which it itself had set up. This political movement is on the one hand the state power, on the other, the opposition which comes to life at the same time with it."

Then, skimming lightly over Engels' polemic against Dühring, he snaps up another morsel: "...the exercize of a social function was everywhere the basis of political supremacy."

The conclusions which Erber draws from these thoughts are enough to raise your hackles. Here is another of those all too frequent cases which show that your politics are not unrelated to the functioning of your intellectual equipment. A state of political demoralization can so disarrange your gray matter as to prevent an intelligible thought from filtering into it. This is not a harsh but really the kindest observation that can be made: he doesn't understand what he is reading.

With the "insight" which the quotations from Engels give him, Erber works out these novel ideas:

The officers of the primitive organized communities "developed into the economically dominant class," freeing themselves from the control of the community and dominating over it by virtue of the increase of the productive forces which added to their, the officers', social functions. These officials "continued to serve a social function but they now had an additional function - a strictly class function - to preserve the new class division against attack from the exploited class." This new class function required a special apparatus, armed men assisted by material appendages, prisons and repressive institutions of all kinds. "It is this apparatus that Marx and Engels called the state." But he emphasizes, even when it had "the added function of an organ of repression," the social function of the state not only did not end, but "on the contrary, it could maintain its supremacy only as long as it carried out this social function." All right. Next:

If the state, under capitalism or under any other class society, "takes steps to keep society from disintegrating, regardless of the needs of the economically dominant class," it can survive, and only then. But "whenever the state safeguarded the needs solely of the ruling class at a time when these needs ran counter to those of the economy, i.e., when the state no longer fulfilled its social function, it lost its 'political supremacy'; it was overthrown. The French Revolution is the classic example of this." But that was only the classic example, you see. "Not all feudal states were overthrown. The feudal-monarchic-bureaucratic state in Germany adapted itself to the needs of the economy and ruled on behalf of the bourgeoisie, while keeping them at arm's length from the state apparatus itself. (This was the real content of Bismark's policy.)" You get the point? The non-classic but nonetheless

real example shows that the feudal state did not have to be overthrown; it could be transformed by the feudalists themselves or by their smartest, Bismarkian, representatives who could continue to rule for and without the bourgeoisie by "adapting itself to the needs of the economy." Do you follow so far? Then we will go ahead one step further.

What made possible this "adaptation to capitalist society by feudal states"? Erber has no secrets from anyone: it was made possible by "the peculiar nature of the bourgeoisie." Which is what? It is "a class that confines itself to economic functions and demands only that the state be in friendly hands, that is, that the political power is not used to obstruct, but to facilitate the economic operations of the bourgeoisie." That is not how it was before capitalist society rose. "In slave society and under feudalism, the holders of economic power occupied themselves directly with the exercize of political power.... In contrast, the bourgeoisie occupied itself with business and left the administration of the state to those who, in time, made a profession of it.... The result was the development of a state apparatus which, while under the influence of the bourgeoisie in greater or lesser measure, was not under its complete control." At this point, Erber shows that he knows very little about feudal society and nothing at all about slave society. He would have the devil's own time proving that especially in the latter the actual owners of slaves always exercized political power directly. But let's skip over this piece of simplistic and crude ignorance and get along with his peculiar bourgeoisie and the state which is under its influence "in greater or lesser measure" but "not under its complete control."

"The modern bourgeois democratic state, based on universal suffrage, is an exceedingly complex mechanism" and it "defies simple definition." Very good, even the lowly amoeba "defies simple definition." What would be a complex definition? "If it is an instrument for the bourgeois domination of the working class, it is also an instrument for the workers' struggle against that domination. To add to the complexity, the bourgeois state is forced to intervene in the economy against the resistance of the bourgeoisie and develops a momentum of its own which conflicts now with the one and now with the other of the two basic social classes." The complexity of the bourgeois democratic state is not at an end. Neither is the state of confusion of Erber. He is really working up to something. "Its (the state's) reciprocal action upon the economic base can often be opposed to the interests of the economically-dominant class. In periods of social crisis, and most acutely in periods of revolutionary (or counterrevolutionary) change, the state can be wrenched loose from its economic roots and used against the economically-dominant class, with the result that the state, in turn, undergoes vast internal changes in the process. This is above all true under capitalism."

The fog is beginning to lift, isn't it? Outlines of something are becoming discernible. First we have a state. It has two functions. One is a social function, which is rather noble. Pasted on to it, like a dirty and ignoble plaster, is a class function. If the state carries out a purely class function, it won't last long - certainly not if Erber has anything to say about it. It can survive only if it carries out its social function, which is not, we hope you understand, a class function. The capitalist class has only a class function, which

is not - this you also understand, we hope - a social function. The worst of it all is that this state, even when bourgeois democratic, is an instrument for the domination of the working class. But - lift up your hearts! Erber is riding to the rescue, his head bouncing steadily in the saddle of a quotation from Engels. All is not lost, for the state is also an instrument for the workers' struggle against bourgeois domination. The bourgeoisie has a certain influence in the state ("greater or lesser measure"), but thank God, it doesn't have complete control. If Erber arrives on time, maybe we can wrench the capitalist state loose from its capitalist economic roots like a plucked potato, use it against the dominant capitalist class, and introduce vast internal changes in the process. Word of honor, it is possible, "above all... under capitalism."

A little more patience now, for we don't have much further to go. Erber is not content with gray theory alone. He piles evidence upon evidence, straight from the rich mine of living history. He shows, by one example after another, that wherever the bourgeois democratic state was based upon an extensive electorate, "it became an arena in which the other classes fought to bend the powers of government to their own purposes." Every group has a fighting chance to get its interests taken care of by the bourgeois-democratic state, to "bend" it to its purpose.

And such historical erudition, so impressive, so overwhelming, so conclusive! There's been nothing like it outside a high school textbook for years! All about the struggles of Hamilton and Jefferson, Biddle and Jackson, the Republicans and the slavocracy, Johnson and Stevens. And not only struggles between sections of the propertied classes. When labor comes on the scene, it too shows that it can bend the state to its purposes: the Clayton Act, the Norris-LaGuardia Act, universal suffrage in Belgium and Austro-Hungary (even though it was a monarchical and not a democratic state, mind you!). And then the New Deal itself, which "remains incomprehensible from the Leninist theory of the bourgeois democratic state." And earlier historical evidence than that, even more erudite and overwhelming, which can be found only in Erber and in high school texts on civics and history (Second Year course), jampacked with the Athenian Democracy, the Roman Senate, the cantonal democracy of the Swiss mountaineers (no mention of William Tell, but only for lack of space), the Hanseatic League, the Dutch Republic of the merchant families, Hamilton, Madison and Jay, and Girondins and Jacobins, and anything else your heart desires. It is all there. All that, plus that amazing and Leninistically-incomprehensible New Deal, proves it to the hilt.

Proves what? Proves that the state loses its political supremacy if it "operates solely to safeguard the interests of the bourgeoisie." We know that it hasn't lost it. Why? Hold your breath now: "This has not happened to date because the states of the capitalist world <u>have</u> taken measures to fulfill their social function." Hold your breath just one more minute and you'll finally find out what this social function - not the "purely class" but the social function - is: "To protect society as a whole from economic dislocation and general impoverishment, the state has intervened increasingly in the economic sphere, to regulate the economy in order to secure its more normal operation." There, we've quoted it at last and we feel that an enormous burden has

rolled off our shoulders.

Isn't your imagination electrified by the magnificent vistas opened up before mankind by the possibility of the bourgeois state ripping off the plaster of its purely class function and going about its proper business of fulfilling its social function? Aren't we all endlessly lucky that the bourgeoisie is a peculiar class which only has influence but not control in the state, and that the proletariat can bend the state to its own purpose? Aren't we favored by Nature and the Almighty himself by the fact that the bourgeois state can adapt itself to the needs of the economy, despite the selfish resistance of the selfish bourgeoisie, and proceed with its social function of protecting society as a whole - which means all of us, them as well as you and me - and of regulating the economy, which selfish capitalists are braking, so that its more normal operation is secured? Intoxicating thoughts!

Intoxicated with them, Erber breaks out into lyrical song about his state and its social functions. "The trend toward statification of production, foreseen by Engels and observed by every prominent Marxist theoretician since, is nothing else but the effort of the state to fulfill its social function. It has succeeded in fulfilling it to a remarkable degree despite bourgeois opposition.... The state is adapting itself to the needs of the economy."

The temptation to shout Hurrah! for this highly commendable state which not only makes an effort but succeeds in a remarkable degree in protecting society as a whole, is overcome only by the sickening and humiliating thought that at one time Erber was allowed to edit a magazine which calls itself an organ of revolutionary Marxism. After fighting off the wave of nausea, we re-read that all this was foreseen by Engels and observed by every prominent Marxist theoretician since.

What did Engels foresee? The continuing tendency toward what he calls in his Anti-Dühring "the conversion of the great organizations for production and communication into joint-stock companies and state property," which shows that for the purpose of controlling the modern productive forces "the bourgeoisie can be dispensed with." Then Engels adds: "All the social functions of the capitalists are now carried out by salaried employees. The capitalist has no longer any social activity save the pocketing of revenues, the clipping of coupons and gambling on the Stock Exchange, where the different capitalists fleece each other of their capital." It appears that in Engels' view the capitalists did not merely have a "purely class" function but "also" a "social" function. As we shall see, this is entirely correct, and it is likewise correct that Erber has been splashing around in a semantic puddle. But according to Engels, who foresaw, what is the <u>social</u> significance of this state intervention into the economy?

"But the conversion into either joint-stock companies or state property does not deprive the productive forces of their character as capital. In the case of joint-stock companies this is obvious. And the modern state, too, is only the organization with which bourgeois society provides itself in order to maintain the general external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against encroachments either by the workers or by individual capitalists. The modern state, whatever its form, is an essentially capitalist machine; it is the state of

the capitalists, the ideal collective body of all capitalists. The more productive forces it takes over, the more it becomes the real collective body of all the capitalists, the more citizens it exploits. The workers remain wage-earners, proletarians. The capitalist relationship is not abolished; it is rather pushed to an extreme."

First, then, the modern state, "whatever its form" - be it democratic or monarchical - is an essentially capitalist machine, the ideal collective body of all capitalists. This is such a shockingly crude, simplistic and static definition, so much like Lenin's even though it was written by Engels, that Erber refuses to dignify it by quoting it. Second, this state exists in order to maintain the conditions of capitalist production against encroachment by the working class or by individual capitalists. The social function of the state is precisely its class function. The latter is not an "addition" to the former, like an extra suit of underwear which the state puts on when one class influences it and takes off when another's influence is greater.

The class function of the bourgeoisie is precisely its social function. The function of the bourgeoisie is the organization, direction and control of production and exchange, the development of the productive forces, the preservation (and extension) of the national framework ("the fatherland") within which the solid basis of this production and exchange exists. This is its social function. It can fulfill it only as a class function, on the basis of the capitalist exploitation of the proletariat and on no other. When Erber talks about the bourgeoisie not having a social function but only a purely class function, he just shows that he doesn't know what is meant by the words he is whacking away at in his puddle. He seems to think that a class function is not at the same time a social function. Against such ignorance you feel pretty discouraged if not helpless.

In the course of fulfilling its social function, which is also its historical function, the bourgeoisie develops the productive forces to the point where they come into violent conflict with the limits placed upon them by the capitalist mode of production itself. Crisis! Collapse! Widespread destruction of the productive forces! Stagnation or retrogression! In the "old days," the production cycle was resumed by the operation of the "natural processes" and without any significant intervention by the state. The capitalist class emerged from the crisis by itself, as it were.

But the sharper and deeper and more convulsive the crises become, the less capable the capitalists show themselves of resolving them on a capitalist basis. The "economic movement" of which Engels writes to Schmidt is here the movement of the productive forces which "press forward with increasing force to put an end to the contradiction, to rid themselves of their character as capital, to the actual recognition of their character as social productive forces." Correspondingly, the capitalists are forced more and more "to treat them as social productive forces, in so far as this is at all possible within the framework of capitalist relations." (This last phrase of Engels', underlined by us, is especially important.) By speeding the centralization and concentration of capital by means of corporations, trusts and the like, the bourgeoisie continues to fulfill its social function - Erber's

mortifying ignorance and confusion to the contrary notwithstanding. But the more severe the crises, the harder the productive forces "press forward...to put an end to the contradiction" - the more helpless are the individual capitalists to deal with the economic problems. This applies even to the biggest of the individual capitalists or of the aggregations of capital. Increasingly, the problem must be dealt with by the "committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" - the state. Increasingly, it is "constrained" to intervene in the economy.

Erber knows that and every child knows it. The question is, why and how it intervenes, what function it fulfills in its intervention. The state intervenes because, by its very structure and character, it is in a better position to recognize the social nature of the productive forces and to treat them as such, than is the individual capitalist. It finds itself obliged to take over the management and control of more productive forces, and in some cases or for certain periods of time even the direct ownership. That is what Engels calls taking over "the social functions of the capitalists," and he is right. But the modern state, even in its democratic form, is the state of the capitalists. It takes over more and more those social functions which decaying capitalism makes it difficult or impossible for this, that or the other capitalist to perform. But the more it takes over, "the more it becomes the real collective body of all the capitalists, the more citizens it exploits," explains Engels. The modern state, being what it is, intervenes in the economy not only in a capitalist manner but in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole (which means more and more, the most powerful and monopolistic sectors of the capitalist class) and above all in the interests of maintaining the shaky foundations of capitalist exploitation itself.

When Erber, however, speaks of state intervention in the economy to protect society as a whole, he is not just talking like a liberal, at least not like a half-educated liberal, but like the most vulgar and backward of liberals. There is no such thing as "society as a whole" and there has not been hundreds and thousands of years. That Erber can even use such language shows he has reached new shores where a different tongue is spoken from that of Marx and the socialist movement. There is such a thing as capitalist society, divided into classes with conflicting class interests. The modern state can and does intervene to protect capitalist society as a whole, nothing else. That is its social function. It can fulfill it only on the basis of the class society in which and for which it performs this function. Indeed, by performing this social function, the class relationship of capitalism is not abolished, "it is rather pushed to an extreme." So much for the Engels who foresaw and who gave us an insight plus a key to an understanding of the state.

To quote from Engels has more than one value, among them the important one of finding out what he really thought and wrote and advocated, the important one of keeping our theoretical lines from being fouled and distorted by anyone who is capable of testing the patience of paper. But there is no need to stop at quotations from Marx and Engels or Lenin. We can go on to see how their theories - and Erber's - stand up in the light of social reality.

Outside the Stalinist countries, what is the outstanding example of the increasing intervention of the state in the economic sphere? The German Hitlerite state! There indeed was a first-class example - because it was carried out on so intensive and extensive a scale - of how "the states of the capitalist world have taken measures to fulfill their social function." Was it not under Fascism that we saw most clearly that "trend toward statification of production" which our fog-bound critic of Lenin tells us "is nothing else but the effort of the state to fulfill its social function"? Why doesn't Erber give us a few pages, or at least a few words, about how that state intervention worked "to protect society as a whole from economic dislocation and general impoverishment," how it worked "to regulate the economy in order to secure its more normal operation." Even a few words on this subject would make interesting, if not instructive, reading. For example, a few words on how the New Deal led the U.S.A. right into the Second World War, which was a splendid model of protection from economic dislocation and impoverishment and of securing normal economic operation. We grant that the war was only a trivial episode, but that is why we propose that only a few words be devoted to it.

Erber tells us that a study of Marx and Engels does not provide a "finished answer" and that "fifty years of history since the death of Engels provide us with materials on this subject infinitely richer than that on which the founders of scientific socialism had to base themselves." All right. Isn't the experience of the Nazi state rich enough material for Erber? Or is it too rich? In either case, he has nothing to say about it. He has space to tell us that there was once a Hanseatic League (which we must admit is a fact) and that the British bourgeoisie eventually conquered Parliament but not without the Cromwellian interlude (which, with a yawn, we must also admit is a fact), but no space to deal with the Nazi state. Yet, if our memory does not betray us, the Hanseatic League and even Cromwell came before Engels died while Hitler came afterward. More's the pity. We confess to a somewhat morbid curiosity about how our cat would have walked around this bowl of hot porridge.

But enough of this talk about the Nazi state for the time being. It was on the whole a decidedly unpleasant experience. Let us take instead a more attractive bit of infinitely rich material, one which makes the bosom of every forward-looking American heave and quiver with patriotic pride - the New Deal. Two reasons qualify it for Erber's consideration: it occurred after Engels died and it is "incomprehensible from the Leninist theory of the bourgeois democratic state." Erber writes about the New Deal as if it were his most crushing and unassailable argument against Lenin. Actually, it is just about the sorriest section of his sorry document - not the sorriest section, for the competition is strong there, but just about. What is the refutation of Lenin's theory that the New Deal represents?

"...in the midst of capitalism's worst crisis, one that shook it down to its very depths, the bourgeois democratic state in the United States passed as much pro-labor legislation in a few years as took the European workers decades to win."

We are duly impressed, but not more. In a few years, democratic American capitalism, richest in the world, more powerful industrially,

financially and in resources than any country in the world has ever been, clothed in vast layers of economic fat, more advanced technologically than any other land - gave the working class as much pro-labor legislation as took the European workers decades to win, but which they did win long, long before the Americans, in the backward and relatively backward countries of Europe, including the Germany of the Hohenzollerns, the dual monarchy of Austro-Hungary and half a dozen other countries. In this field, then, the United States finally and belatedly caught up to Western Europe. That is indubitably an achievement, but on the face of it, it would seem to be a boast that would impress people in Arkansas more than it would people in England and Germany. In any case, we are too obtuse to have gotten the point as yet, so far as Lenin's simplemindedness is concerned. We must read further.

"Roosevelt had a relatively free hand vis-a-vis the bourgeoisie. He took over at a time when widespread state intervention in the economy was the only means of restoring social and economic stability. Such intervention was firmly resisted by the big bourgeoisie, despite their weakened political power, which reached its low point in the 1936 elections. As a counter-force to the bourgeoisie and as a mass base for themselves, the New Deal bureaucracy encouraged and facilitated the organization of labor, especially the CIO. With the power of labor increased, and the power of the bourgeoisie weakened, the two fundamental classes were more evenly balanced and the 'Bonapartist' position of the state enhanced.

"Yet this 'Bonapartism' was unlike the regimes to which Marxists have traditionally applied the term. These regimes were invariably dictatorial and relied upon police measures. The New Deal, on the contrary, was overwhelmingly popular with the masses....The New Deal encroached upon the freedom of property and expanded the freedom of organized labor. While the bourgeoisie organized the Liberty League to defend the 'freedom of property' against state intervention, the rights of labor to bargain collectively were written into law and enforced through the National Labor Relations Board."

We learn also - for the first time, of course, which is why we read with such tooth-tearing yawns - that a contradictory trend was at work in the New Deal: a process of regimentation affecting all classes, greatly enhanced police powers, a huge state bureaucracy. But once admitted, it isn't really too much to worry about.

"Yet this process had no adverse effect upon political liberties. Even the war brought no serious curtailments of civil liberties. To the extent that restrictions took place in some fields, gains were registered in others. It is necessary to conclude that, to date, there is no evidence that state intervention in the economy has resulted in the curtailment of political democracy....

"If state intervention remains purely bureaucratic and unaffected by the labor movement, its expansion will pit the workers' economic struggle increasingly against the state. The bureaucracy will seek to defend its own interests by restricting the freedom of the labor movement. Even here the attack will be against labor's economic rights, since an attack upon political liberty must necessarily effect that of all other strata of the population and confront the state with a unit-

ed people. Unless a mass fascist movement appears, the conversion of the democratic state into a police-state can only be a slow process punctuated by struggles. The likelihood is that it would erupt, at some crucial point in a violent struggle.

"But there are no grounds for believing that state intervention must inevitably take a purely bureaucratic form. Such a perspective is valid only on the assumption that the working class will not rise above a trade union level and will prove incapable of entering the political arena as an independent class force to fight for its own program. The latter development cannot but have a tremendous impact upon the government's role in the economy. This is what Engels meant when, in dealing with the effect of politics upon economics, he wrote; 'This political movement is on the one hand the state power, and on the other, the opposition which comes to life at the same time with it.'"

Read these lines over again, if you have the intestinal stamina for such a job. "It is necessary to conclude that, to date, there is no evidence that state intervention in the economy has resulted in the curtailment of political democracy....But there are no grounds for believing that state intervention must inevitably take a purely bureaucratic form." You might say that "it is necessary to conclude" that these lines could be written only by an extraordinarily clever person who sat down with the deliberate purpose of seeing if there were any limits to the amount of confusion that could be packed into a few lines. Obviously, this is not the case with Erber.

How explain, then, that he did write these lines? Have we not had, and precisely during that period in world history when Erber was still alive, the results - including the results in the field of political democracy - of the most extensive and intensive state intervention in the economy in Germany, Italy and Japan, to say nothing of the organization of the economy by the Stalinist states, to say nothing of the intervention into the economy of all the states in wartime? Are these known results what Erber means by "there is no evidence"? There is indeed evidence that state intervention need not "inevitably take a purely bureaucratic form," and that evidence is provided exclusively by the intervention into the economy of the revolutionary workers' state of Russia after 1917. But Erber is certainly not talking about that; he is talking about bourgeois states. Can he adduce one serious example of intervention by such states which was not or is not bureaucratic, which did not and does not increase the ranks and the power of the state bureaucracy, be it in the fascist or the bourgeois-democratic states - one serious example, just one, to prove that he has given any serious thought to what he has written? How can he write this tedious trash about bourgeois state intervention not resulting in any serious curtailment of civil liberties - we ask again - in the light of the clear and pronounced trend that operates in present-day capitalism as a whole? The only answer is: his thinking has been corrupted by the extraordinary and exceptional power of American imperialism. The ghost of Roosevelt and the ghost who succeeded him can congratulate themselves on the new "Marxist" scalp they have added to their belt.

Of all the important bourgeois states, the United States is the

only important example which Erber can point to as one in which there has been widespread intervention into the economy under an out-and-out bourgeois regime without "serious curtailments of civil liberties." We can grant that without hesitation, all the more readily since we pointed it out and explained the reasons for it at the very beginning of the war (when Erber was in a sweat piling up evidence of a speedy police-state development in this country!).

A serious thinker, writing about such a fundamental question, could not and would not confine himself to the mere recording of this fact. He would attempt to relate it to other relevant facts. Once stated, he would have to ask himself why the state intervention led to such different political (and economic) results in the United States and, for example, in Germany. Does the difference lie in the nature of the "German soul" perhaps, or the chemical makeup of the Italian, or those commonly known qualities which enable any red-blooded American to lick any ten Japanese? Does it lie in some mysterious and mystical inability of German capitalism to resist the laws of capitalist degeneration and an equally mysterious and mystical inability of these laws to make an impression on American capitalism? If Erber is aware that this is precisely the problem that any serious political scientist or sociologist, to say nothing of a Marxist, must deal with when he writes about such things as the New Deal, he is very successful in concealing it.

American capitalism is subject to exactly the same economic and political laws of development and degeneration as German capitalism - exactly the same and no different. But as with all such laws, the results of their inexorable operation depend at any given stage upon the concrete materials within or upon which they operate, upon the "resistivity" of these materials. To overcome the social crisis in Germany in 1933, on a capitalist basis, required fascism - given Germany's poverty and economic wreckage, given the means and resources she had at her disposal, given her position in the capitalist world, given the state of the working class, given the relationship between the contending classes. The social crisis that assailed American capitalism at the same time was caused by the same fundamental contradictions of capitalism. But to overcome it in this country in 1933, still on a capitalist basis, did not require fascism. For that, the fantasmagorical motley of the New Deal was sufficient - given America's immense wealth, the means and resources at her disposal, given her world position, the state of her working class, given the relationship between the contending classes here. When Hitler said that democracy is a luxury of rich nations, he showed a better grasp, if not of Marxism than of economic and political reality than is revealed in all of Erber's incoherent mumbling.

The Roosevelt New Deal showed that its champion was a much wiser and abler bourgeois statesman than, let us say, Hoover. The former saved the capitalist order which the latter's policies were imperiling. Time and again, Roosevelt pointed out that, under the given circumstances, his was the only course for restoring the capitalist system including capitalist production and profit. The results proved his case! Time and again, Roosevelt pointed out that in order to save capitalism from chaos, particularly "revolutionary chaos," it was necessary for the state to "prime the pump" for the bourgeois economy and

to grant to the American working class the much-belated economic concessions which their fellow workers in the advanced European countries had obtained in struggle years and decades before. If he succeeded with his "priming" and his concessions to a far, far greater extent than any bourgeois statesman in Europe during the same period, it was not because the latter were politically stupid or inept in comparison with him. It was not because the bourgeois state is anything else but an instrument for preserving capitalism and suppressing the proletariat. It was because American capitalism was and still is a "peculiar" capitalism in that it has resources - layers of fat around it - that no other capitalist country possesses or can afford to dispense with. From these layers of economic fat, accumulated for the bourgeoisie by the working class, Roosevelt pried loose a few slices for the working class and a slice or two for the growing mob of bureaucrats needed for the operation.

Naturally, the bourgeoisie howled with pain at this unaccustomed operation; naturally, the working class shouted with glee at this contrast with Hooverism. But Roosevelt, true to his ungrateful class, and the Roosevelt democratic state, true to its capitalist nature, stood firm, more or less, and continued with its operation, more or less. Roosevelt's class conscience and the class nature of the Roosevelt state both remained intact. To keep the bulk of the fat on the capitalist body, to add more fat to the capitalist body, and to save the body itself from forces that would threaten its complete destruction (as an intelligent bourgeois statesman could see from the revolutionary experiences to which European capitalism was being subjected) - it was wise and necessary to throw a few slices to the working class.

Did that operation bring Roosevelt and the New Deal state into conflict with certain sections of the capitalist class? Of course! Did it even bring them into conflict with big sections of that class? Certainly! Did it force them to seek support in the ranks of the working class? To be sure! But what does that prove about the validity of the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state?*

Capitalist society could not exist for ten minutes without the capitalist state. That holds true not only because the main contend-

* The New York Times recently showed how well a bourgeois can understand the "social function" of the bourgeois state when it intervenes in the economy. In an editorial (January 8, 1949) on the economic program of Truman, who pointed out that we "may require the temporary exercize of selective controls in our economy," the Times chides those critics who, because of their opposition to a given proposal for state economic intervention (concretely, Truman "threatening the steel industry with subsidized government competition if it doesn't expand as fast as Washington thinks it should"), fail to grasp the significance of state intervention as a whole. The editor says: "If experience is of any value as a guide in such matters, there are times, we think, when government has a positive responsibility to save the free enterprise system, not from its enemies, but from its more zealous and uncritical friends." The Times editor understands the problem a thousand times more clearly than Erber. The state must step in, despite the resistance of capitalists, in order to save capitalism for the capitalist class!

ing classes would, in the absence of a state power to regulate their conflict, immediately tear each other and therefore society as a whole into bleeding shreds, but also because each capitalist and group of capitalists would tear one another to bleeding shreds in the unrestrained and unregulated struggle for the greatest share of the total surplus value, for the greatest power. The state is necessary not only to regulate the conflict between the classes (in the interests of the economically dominant class - not as Erber so loosely puts it, the "wishes" of the capitalist class), but also to regulate the conflict within the capitalist class which is united, as a rule, only in opposition to its mortal enemy, the proletariat. This inner-capitalist conflict, the state also regulates (seeks to regulate) in the interests of the economically dominant section of the capitalist class (monopoly capital), coming into conflict with it only when the promotion of the immediate interests of this section would endanger the preservation of the entire class and its social system.

Neither the Hitlerite state, on the one side, nor the New Deal state, on the other, defied the Marxian definition of the state. Both can be understood only in the light of the teachings of Marx and Lenin. In both cases, it was shown that the modern state is the "committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" - not of this particular Morgan or that particular Thyssen, of the Liberty Leaguers or of the German-Jewish capitalists, but of the bourgeoisie as a whole. In both cases, the economic and social power of the big bourgeoisie was strengthened. In both cases - the "New Order" of Hitler and the "New Deal" of Roosevelt - culminated in the economic, political and human massacre of the second world war. For that war, both states turned to the production of cannon and the consequent fortification of the strength and power of monopoly capital. But if, in doing so, Germany had to forego butter and the United States still had butter (which we use here as a popular synonym for everything from real butter to "civil liberties"), that proves nothing against Lenin's theory of the state. It proves only that a poor capitalism can produce cannon only by foregoing butter, whereas a rich capitalism can produce cannon without foregoing butter altogether. And it also proves that this wealth, which underlies all that is peculiarly American in political philistinism and peculiarly American "exceptional" chauvinism, is still dazzling enough to blind weak-eyed people to the fundamentals even of American capitalism, to twist their thinking machinery, and to twist and subvert the political allegiance of American revolutionists. With this acknowledgment, cheerfully made, we pay our tribute to the power of American chauvinism and express our contempt for the ex-Marxian Trilbys whom it hypnotizes into intellectual paralysis.

Erber has, therefore, discovered, with shattering effect upon himself, that the bourgeois state can come into conflict with the bourgeoisie, and that the working class can extract economic and political concessions from the bourgeois state, especially from the bourgeois-democratic state. It is an important discovery. At any rate, it was important when it was first made, a century or two ago. We truly regret that in the wearisome daily routine of party work, we neglected to tell Erber about it and left him to re-discover it for himself. It is somewhat disconcerting, we admit, to think now that the De Leonists are suffering from Leninist simplemindedness in their

opposition to any struggle for reforms from the bourgeois state; that the early Communist Party movement in this country, which had a similar attitude, was likewise Leninist in its malady. But we are relieved to think that the Stalinists of today are not Leninist, since they do call for all sorts of reforms which they demand from the bourgeois state; and that both the Socialist Workers Party and ourselves, who since our inception have made various demands on the bourgeois state for economic and political measures in the interests of the workers, are also free from the Leninist curse. We are also very happy to read that the only two sinister examples of our sectarian Leninist simplemindedness on the state which Erber records was our failure to demand of the Los Angeles School Board that it refuse to let G.L.K. Smith speak in a public school (which would have given us a powerful basis for demanding that we be allowed to speak there), and that we did not propose a very practical alternative to trial of the Nazis by the Nuremberg Allied court. (This infuriates him so much that he forgets to offer his own "practical" alternative).

Our muddlehead is not yet finished with this question. Blue in the face, he insists that the workers should try to and can get reforms from the bourgeois-democratic state. (Why only from the bourgeois-democratic state? They can even get them from outright totalitarian bourgeois states. Erber does not seem to know that under Hitler, the German workers received quite a few economic concessions, including improvement in their conditions, particularly so far as cheap housing is concerned, that they never had under the Weimar Republic, at least not to the same extent. We shudder to think of what would happen to Erber if someone were careless enough to tell him of a few facts like this!) And these reforms can be obtained by parliamentary means, he insists further. That is what Lenin's theory precludes and excludes.

The reader will recall Erber's long quotation from Lenin's theses on parliamentarism at the Second Congress of the Communist International which was not written by Lenin. We will not say that Erber is dishonest, because we want to be kind as well as accurate. He has simply lost his sense of proportion and his sense of context. We will deal with the question of parliamentarism in more cogent reference in another chapter. Here, only a few words.

Every real student; every responsible investigator, can understand Lenin's position on this question without difficulty. We are not speaking of malicious political enemies, superficial journalists, catch-me-on-the-fly impressionists and professional exposers of Bolshevism, but of real students. The latter know that Lenin not only favored the most militant struggle for a genuinely representative parliament in Russia (the struggle under Czarism for the Constituent Assembly, about which more later), but that he strongly supported participation even in the Czarist pseudo-parliament, the Duma. They also know that Lenin devoted a classical polemic against the "left sickness" of ultra-radicals in the Comintern who opposed parliamentary activity and participation.

Against what was Lenin, and the early Comintern, fighting in the Second Congress theses? Against the Kautskyans and reformists of the world who were committing a double sin against socialism: first, in their advocacy of the purely parliamentary road to working-class power,

in general; and second, in their advocacy of this view above all in those days. And what were they? They were the days when an unprecedented revolutionary crisis was sweeping over all of Europe; when civil war between proletariat and bourgeoisie raged in one country after another; when power lay in the streets, very often, and bourgeois parliamentarism had collapsed to the point where it could be propped up only by the degraded social-patriots in the labor movement; when the idea of the Soviet form of government was in the mind of millions of militant Europeans workers (even in far, far-off Seattle and Winnipeg - yes, American Seattle! - Soviets, workers' and soldiers' councils were being spontaneously established!) and the watchword of Soviet power was on their lips; when parliaments were the last trench of the bourgeoisie.

The issue was not, as so often in our own day, the defense of bourgeois democracy from fascist totalitarianism, but the social-democratic defense of parliamentarism and capitalism from revolutionary proletarian power. Erber once knew this so well that he went out of his way (quite rightly, too) to insist on including this thought in one of our party's political documents (our resolution on the "National Question" in Europe, 1943). Now he has the familiar political disease of amnesia.

Once the big post-war revolutionary wave had ebbed, it was necessary for the defeated revolutionary and working-class movements of Europe (Lenin's theses were, of course, primarily though not exclusively concerned with the situation in Europe), accent had to be shifted considerably to "parliamentary" activity. Lenin was not only aware of this, but at the Third Congress, along with Trotsky, he led the struggle against the contrary-minded ultra-leftists and even threatened to split the International if they prevailed.

That did not change Lenin's fundamental position on parliamentarism! First, parliamentary activity that is not subordinated to the daily class struggle of the independently mobilized working class, is parliamentary cretinism. Second, parliamentary government is the ideal form of bourgeois rule over the working class and it can and must be utilized to the full with that basic fact in mind. Third, parliamentarism is not and cannot be the governmental form of working-class rule, inasmuch as that requires the Commune-type of state. Fourth, with the sharpening of the class struggle and its development to revolutionary situations and civil war in one country after another, the struggle of the working class is necessarily transferred outside of the parliamentary field, and parliaments offer less and less possibility for even minor reforms for the working-class, they become more and more an obstacle in its revolutionary struggle. Finally, the peaceful, organic, parliamentary road to socialism, in the light of all historical experience, is an illusion.

These five points of Lenin's views are sufficient for the moment. A refutation of these views ought, one would think, to deal with these points on the basis of the experience accumulated in Lenin's time or since Lenin. Not a word about this from Erber. He quotes from the theses, and with his customary empty pomposity, considers them disposed of without further ado. But just to make sure, in case the idiocy of Lenin does not communicate itself directly to the reader, he points out one of its horrendous consequences:

"The view that it is 'their state,' that we make demands only to expose it, that we expect nothing from it, that we will 'utilize' it since the bourgeoisie is stupid enough to permit us to, creates a frame of mind in our movement which is alien to the workers of a political democracy and isolates us from them. This approach robs the Leninist of a moral basis for his struggle in a democratic arena, and consequently, makes his agitation devoid of the moral indignation over violations of democracy by the bourgeoisie."

As Engels would say, that's enough to give you epilepsy! We do not believe that the bourgeois state is a genuinely democratic state. We believe that even the most democratic bourgeois state is still a form of rule of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. Therefore, how can we be morally indignant if the bourgeois state outrages the working class? This argument is so stupid, from every conceivable point of view, that it is hard to believe even a demoralized man can be very happy with it. It is not only stupid, but old and hoary, and unlike wine it has not improved with age.

Let us take a man like John Chamberlain. He is an honest liberal, an honest democrat, a political thinker, with a full understanding of Marxism which he must have acquired while reading the Communist Manifesto on a subway train one night. Like Erber, he is not a blind New Dealer. In fact, he is a bit critical of it. Unlike Erber, he does not claim to be a socialist, because, you see, if you start with socialism you end up inevitably with Stalinism. Like Erber, he writes a book on politics. Like Erber, he deals with the question of the state, the very first words in his book being almost a dead copy of Erber: "No book on politics can be worth its salt if the author lacks a clear notion of the origins and evolving nature of the state." Like Erber, he has no such clear notion. Like Erber, he does not care for our attitude toward parliamentarism which, like Erber, he traces to our theory of the state. Listen to what he says - he, Chamberlain, not Erber:

"The Marxian may protest his belief in the temporary uses of parliamentarism, but he will inevitably be less interested in making the democratic forms work than he will be in proving that they can't work beyond a certain point. The Marxian is committed by his theory to a use of parliamentary institutions and free speech not as something good in themselves or because they are needed instruments of people whose love of freedom transcends purely material interests, but merely as a sounding board or a theater for propaganda looking eventually to the strict racket of the proletarian dictatorship. In his fight to preserve and deepen democracy the Marxian is beaten before he starts. For by the very nature of his philosophical assumptions he is psychologically unprepared to fight for democracy beyond the point where his strict racket succeeds in capturing the State. He is by definition interested in class power, not in freedom or democracy."

This appears in Mr. Chamberlain's The American Stakes (an excellent title which pairs perfectly with Erber's American "Marxism"), published nine years ago, in 1940. While our approach robs us of moral indignation, we have enough of it left to denounce Chamberlain's outrageous plagiarism from Erber. In this anticipatory plagiarism, however, he does not try to separate Marx from Lenin, because, as we said,

he is, after all, an honest liberal. But that apart, he simply "repeats" Erber's criticism, sentence for sentence and almost word for word. What is quoted above is only one sample. There are so many others in Chamberlain's chapter on the state that for a moment you get the feeling that Erber must have copied wholesale from it, which is of course untrue, for Erber is a Marxist, isn't he? and an original thinker to boot, whereas Chamberlain is anti-Marxist and not very original. If we didn't feel fairly sure that there are two persons involved here, we would suppose that there is only one. It is not Erber - God forbid! - but Chamberlain, who then adds:

"...if the theoreticians continue to popularize the belief that the State belongs solely to the capitalists, they will be encouraging, not revolt, but a dangerous passivity. The only sound slogan is, 'It's your State!' Under that slogan you can raise a fighting army or the defense of 'rights.' Under any other slogan you merely encourage the growth of cynicism."

But away from Chamberlain, the plagiarist, and back to Erber, the original and seminal thinker. We have never believed that moral indignation is a substitute for objective political analysis and political conclusions and we do not believe it now. But to say that our views rob us of moral indignation is, if we may repeat the harsh word, stupid, just plain stupid. Erber has some dubious praise for the I.W.W. The extreme view which most Wobblies had of the state in general and of the democratic bourgeois state in this country in particular, is pretty widely known. Did this view rob them of "a moral basis for their struggle in a democratic arena" when the state clubbed, framed, imprisoned and even shot them down? Was the anarchist campaign to save Sacco and Vanzetti from democratic judicial murder "devoid of moral indignation" because of their view of the state? Or still better and still clearer: If someone says the Hitlerite state is "their state," the state of anti-Semites, of anti-Marxists, of anti-democrats, of Fascist assassins - which it undebatably is, or was - is he robbed of moral indignation when he carries on a struggle against the wholesale murder of Jews and Marxists and democrats by the state which he says is organized to murder Jews and Marxists and democrats? If Erber is not saying that, then he is saying that because Marxists (or Leninists, as he prefers to call them) believe the bourgeois state is a bourgeois state, they have no basis for fighting against the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti or the lynching of a Negro and nobody should take their fight seriously. In that case, he is saying something reactionary as well as stupid.

However, we will restrain ourselves and "for the sake of argument" admit that it is not "their state." Whose is it? Is it "our state" - the state of the working class? Of course not! Do you think Erber is a total blockhead? He doesn't say that for a minute, and to ascribe it to him would be downright calumny. Right is right. It isn't their state and it isn't ours. It is not the bourgeoisie's or the proletariat's. The state, Erber reminds us, is what Marx and Engels called "armed men" with material appendages like "prisons and repressive institutions of all kinds." Presumably the armed men put the workers into the prisons when the bourgeoisie exerts the greater pressure on the state and the bourgeoisie goes into the prisons when the workers exert the greater pressure. "...the bourgeois democratic state is

amenable to various class pressures." If the New Deal hasn't proved that to you, you are pretty hopeless....

It may have taken the New Deal or even post-New Deal reflections for Erber to learn that working-class struggle and pressure can gain many reforms and concessions from the bourgeois state, democratic or autocratic. The political facts of life come to him slowly. We do not complain about that. Every man has his rhythm. But we suggest that we learned this some time back, almost immediately after discovering that two plus two makes four. Among others, we learned it from Lenin.

In his two best-known classics on the questions, State and Revolution and the Anti-Kautsky, Lenin just doesn't bother with repeating the veriest commonplaces of the Marxian movement. His two works are devoted to the question of the state in connection with the revolution, with the direct struggle for power, and not in connection with the daily political struggles of the working class in non-revolutionary periods. What those struggles are, how they are to be conducted, what they can accomplish - all that he takes for granted. He is assuming that his readers are at least half-educated socialists to whom fifty pages to prove that two plus two makes four would be a bore. In fact, with reference to Kautsky, whose arguments on the fight for reforms and concessions are also "plagiarized" from Erber, Lenin impatiently writes, in the first pamphlet: "Opposition and general political struggle are beside the point; we are concerned with the revolution." In his second pamphlet, he apostrophizes Kautsky as follows: "It would not be amiss for you to know that 'opposition' is a concept that belongs to the peaceful and only to the parliamentary struggle, i.e., a concept that corresponds to the non-revolutionary situation, a concept that corresponds to a situation marked by an absence of revolution." Lenin knows all about the state being "amenable to class pressures," all about the usefulness of bourgeois democracy to the struggle of labor and socialism.

But he also knows that what he was called on to deal with was the fundamental question over which a tremendous controversy had broken out - the state and revolution. It is there that Lenin made his great contribution to the debate - not by revising but by reviving the Marxian teaching on the state in the light of the experience of the Russian Revolution. It is this contribution that has to be attacked, and the dull page upon page to prove that in the rich and wonderfully peaceful United States workers can get reforms from the bourgeois state and that the bourgeois state collides with bourgeois opinion, is "beside the point" and only gives you a headache.

Even Erber begins to feel a little uncomfortable about not having gotten to the question that bothers him at the outset. Trodding ever so gently on the extreme ends of his toenails, he writes toward the end of his document:

"It may be argued that even if the bourgeois democratic state is amenable to various class pressures, this does not prove that it can be 'pressured' into solving any basic problems in accordance with the workers' needs and certainly, could not be taken over by a working class parliamentary majority to establish socialism.

"It is quite true that this has not been proven. However, neither has it been disproven. No one can say over what road, or combination of roads, the struggle for power and socialism will lead. What is necessary for us is to establish that both Scheidemann's road and Lenin's road were failures. Both must be rejected."

He squeezed it out at long last! Congratulations!

Is the parliamentary reform of capitalism the road to socialism? Not exactly a brand-new question. It's as old as the Marxian movement itself - even older. It's been debated thousands of times, by thousands of people in and out of the movement, in dozens of countries, in tens of thousands of books and articles and speeches, under the most diversified of circumstances. The debate now has a good hundred years of living historical experiences of all kinds and in all countries to base itself on - not just books and theories and abstractions, but a whole spectrum of actual experiences.

Erber plunges into all this, without a stitch of clothing on him, without impedimenta of any kind, naked as a baby, with a "fresh approach" that is highly commendable. He dives in again and again; he swims; he floats; he darts to the bottom, stirs up the mud, lifts up all kinds of stones to find what he's looking for; zooms to the top again, tries out every stroke, floats on his back and on his belly. At last he comes out of the water, just the way he went in.

"What did you find? What did you learn? What do you think?" asks the anxious throng that immediately surrounds the fearless venturer into the depths. "Is there anything to the reformist road of Scheidemann after all?"

He sits down slowly, sinks his chin on his hand, tightens his brows, focuses his eyes to an impressive faraway look, draws a deep breath, mumbles and sighs for two solid hours, and with oracular majesty proclaims:

"It is now clear to me that two plus two makes four!"

Tremendous excitement and elation from the throng! "But what about Scheidemann's road - is it right?"

Another deep breath, another sign, another proclamation: "It is quite true that this has not been proven."

Fine, splendid, very statesmanlike, very categorical, no shilly-shallying there! "Then Scheidemann's road is wrong?"

The chin sinks deeper, the brows grow sterner: "However, neither has it been disproven. Both Scheidemann's road and Lenin's road were failures. I finally saw that when I hit six fathoms. Both must be rejected."

There is a slight murmer of disappointment in the throng, but hope has not yet fled. "Tell us, O Wise One Who Has Risen from the Depths, what road shall we take to get out of this infernal mess of ours?"

The noble head is lifted, the eyes acquire a post-infinity stare, you can virtually see the fine wheels of the mind churning at a furious pace as The All-Revealing Revelation is uttered: "No one can say over what road, or combination of roads, the struggle for power and socialism will lead."

"No one? Not even you?"

"No, no one, not even I."

This need not be told to the end. Any reader can easily imagine the ensuing outburst of joy and enthusiasm in the throng, the pervading feeling of new morale in the struggle that courses exhilaratingly through their blood, the renewed determination they feel for launching the assault on capitalism, the profound gratitude they feel toward the Almighty and toward Nature for vouchsafing them so luminous a thinker, so inspiring a leader, such a Man among men.

It hasn't been proved, but then again, and however and nevertheless, and on the other hand, and to give all sides a fair shake, and to put it clearly, neither has it been disproved.

"But the experience in Finland, in Germany, in Austria, in Italy, in Spain?! Do they not prove something about the reformist road, O Wise One Who Drips Water?"

"What does that prove?" says the Wise One impatiently, shaking off some more water. "Only five countries! Why, there are more than fifty countries belonging to the United Nations alone! When I say it hasn't been proved, I mean it hasn't been proved to the hilt. Has it been proved in San Marino? in Ecuador? in the islands of the Polynesian Archipelago? Of course not! Then how can we be so Leninistically dogmatic? Just because thousands of people have died from a stiff dose of potassium cyanide, does that prove it is necessarily fatal, or that it was more than a coincidence? Have we any conclusive proof that it was administered properly, by diplomaed medical men, under controlled laboratory conditions, or that the victim did not actually die of boredom? Thousands of people - what is that to a scientist? Why, there are four hundred million people in China alone who have not been tested with potassium cyanide. The sampling to date is too small, and there is always Ecuador. I am a scientist, not a dogmatist. I say, don't I, that Scheidemann's road has not been proved. But I also say it has not been disproved. And don't I add that I don't know what road to take or to recommend? That shows how modest I am, how humble I am, how ignorant I am. I am honest enough not to pretend that I know the answer, as you conceited folk do. That may not appeal to everyone, but I know some people it will appeal to: those who do not want to do anything in the struggle, or who have grown tired in the struggle, and who envy and admire and thank me for giving them a totally scientific reason for not doing anything."

Having rejected the reformist road and the revolutionary road, Erber can no longer remain in the Workers Party. "Were I a member of a broad, Marxist educational society, without a program, without a 'line,' and based upon more than one historical tradition, where all views have equal status, the struggle for my ideas (what ideas?) would

have an educational significance aimed toward the crystallization of a programmatic grouping at a later stage."

Let us help out Erber with a free and sincere suggestion:

Form your educational society! You will find plenty of somewhat faded material for your membership. Title: League of Know-Nothing Socialists. Alternative title: Loose Alliance of Associated Muddleheads (L.A.A.M.). Program? No program. Line? Likewise none. Size? Broad. Historical tradition? More than one and take your pick. Views? All men are created equal and your views are as good as mine if not better. Purpose? Crystallization, but not now. Meetings? On call, whenever a member gets an idea, or thinks someone else may have gotten one. Rules and regulations for meetings: First half hour devoted to proving that Lenin's road has been disproved. Second half hour devoted to proving that Scheidemann's road has not been proved or disproved. One half hour of silence, devoted to earnest searching of the soul. One quick minute of mutual questioning, for the sake of formality, to see if any one has yet found the right road to socialism. No collection taken to pay for the light in the hall, since none has been shed. Singing of the familiar League (or Alliance) song, first stanza beginning with "Ignorant and muddled are we, with nothing to say or do." Adjournment. All that takes less than two hours, leaving enough time to see a late movie.

We will cheerfully provide Erber with the names and addresses of enough prospective members for foundation purposes. We are even ready to go further and arrange a definite division of labor with Erber and his army of friends. If anyone comes to us saying that he is for socialism, we will try to convince him that the revolutionary road is the only road by which it can be realized; therefore he should join our ranks. If he says, at the end of our discussion, that he is not convinced, and that he wants an organization that takes the reformist road, we will unhesitatingly give him the address of the Social-Democratic Federation (if he is over 60 years old) or of the Socialist Party (if he is under 60). However, if our arguments prove unconvincing and he says he wants an organization that knows how socialism cannot be achieved, but hasn't the slightest notion of how it can be achieved, we will thank him for his patience and recommend him to the ministrations of Erber's League. We do not insist on reciprocity. What could be fairer?

Upon reflection and closer reading, however, it occurs to us that one sector of this division of labor may well be superfluous. Erber's rejection of Lenin's road is clear and categorical. The same cannot be said about his view on Scheidemann's road. His rejection of it is purely verbal and confined to the mere statement in the quoted passage. Read a little further, and you see that Erber has accepted Scheidemann's road, that is, the road of reformism, the road of parliamentarism, the road of class collaboration in industry and in government. His rejection of this road is pure camouflage (conscious? unconscious? That is beside the point). The camouflage consists in falsifying the classical reformist position!

Why Erber rejects the revolutionary road, he tries to explain in page after page of stertorous gasps. But why does he reject Scheidemann's road? (We assume that Scheidemann stands not for the individual,

but for the "road" which he symbolizes.) On that, Erber gives us one single sentence, not less but also not more: "Social Democracy came to view the struggle entirely as a parliamentary one, with the economic organizations of the workers limiting their role to improving the lot of the workers under capitalism, until a parliamentary majority would introduce socialism from above." And how, in contradistinction, has the Wise One Who Drips Water come to view the struggle?

"In the last analysis, the strength of the working class is, therefore, economic. Its political strength has real meaning only in terms of its economic strength. The latter cannot be given to it by socialist parliamentarians nor can it suddenly appear 'under the conditions of the highest tension of the class war.' What is wrong with a 'purely reformist' participation of the workers in measures of economic control in a non-revolutionary period?...The organized power of the workers must seek means of asserting itself in economic controls on the level of the department, plant and industry. Without such economic power as its base, the political victories of the workers rest on a very frail foundation.

"This exceedingly important concept was one of De Leon's contributions to Marxist thought."

As you can see, the Wise One is back at his muddleheaded march in two directions. The political strength of the workers has real meaning only in terms of its economic strength. Bull's-eye! What follows? What could follow except a muddle? The achievement of Reuther's GM program would have been a tremendous stride forward for the workers....And the I.W.W. concept of workers' management of industry was not altogether wrong.... All right, all right. Where is the muddle? What the revolutionists of all shadings - Leninists, Luxemburgists, even militant syndicalists - have always talked about is the workers' management of industry as a function of their ownership of the means of production and exchange. Short of that, we have talked about workers' control of industry, with the bourgeoisie still owning property and managing industry, but this control only as the direct transition, in a period of sharp class struggle, to ousting the parasites altogether. But we have always rejected the sharing of control or management of industry by the two irreconcilably hostile classes as a long-lasting stage in the development of the struggle.

Why? Out of some abstract dogmatism? Not at all! Our position is only a generalization from experience in the class struggle. We are for the workers, through their organizations, fighting at all times for certain rights and privileges in industry, which safeguard and improve their economic and social position, strengthen their self-confidence and weaken the power of the exploiter. We are for factory inspection, for reducing the workweek, for increases in pay, for workers' control of hiring and firing, and the like. But we are not for joint worker-employer committees or boards in industry, any more than we are for joining together the A.F. of L. and the Chamber of Commerce, the C.I.O. and the National Association of Manufacturers.

What are these "joint labor-management councils"? First of all, they are based on the conception of the "essential identity of interests" between two classes whose interests cannot be reconciled, which

means their very basis is false and rotten. Second, they are one of the means whereby the workers' representatives in the councils are called upon to police the workers without being able to police the employers, that is, to enforce upon the workers the decisions which, at bottom, only the employer makes or can make by virtue of his ownership of industry. Such joint councils exist and can exist only on the basis of the mutual understanding that ownership requires and legitimatizes profit, that the industry must be managed in such a way as to assure profit. And since profit can be realized only by the exploitation of workers (or is that too a simpleminded Leninist dogma?), the guarantee of profit is the binding framework within which any management - "pure" bourgeois, "joint labor-employer" or "joint government-employer" - can operate under capitalism.

That is why, wherever such "joint councils" have been established (with the enthusiastic or enforced agreement of the bourgeoisie), they have operated for the benefit of the capitalists and against the interests of the workers. The workers and their representatives are required to take the responsibility, singly and collectively, for the anarchy of capitalist production which they cannot overcome so long as the bourgeoisie runs the economy and so long as the working class does not organize and control the economy in its own name and its own way.

"Times are bad. The company is not making any money. Things are all wrong in the economy." The revolutionist replies: "If that is the pass to which things have been brought by our 'managers,' they are social bankrupts. They cannot keep industry going properly. They cannot keep the workers at a decent standard of living. Throw them out! We have enough ability to organize industry properly by ourselves." The reformist, the labor bureaucrat, the class-collaborationist, the champion of labor-management committees, replies: "We must keep this industry going. We must work harder and make fewer demands. We may even have to take a wage cut, because if this industry goes out of business, we are wiped out of our jobs. We have seen the bosses' books - they're really up against it."

Is it such "joint labor-management councils" so dear to the reformists, to our own Gompersists and their imitators in the A.F.of L. and C.I.O. today that Erber has in mind when he writes that the power of the workers "must seek means of asserting itself in economic control on the level of the department, plant and industry"? That is the only conclusion we can come to from the most careful reading of his muddy prose. In that case, he does <u>not</u> differ from the social democratic reformists!

He has <u>falsified</u> the Scheidemann conception! His description of how the "social democracy came to view the struggle" is one-sided and a misrepresentation, and we do not hesitate to come to the defense of the Scheidemanns against their misrepresenters. "Strict" social-democratic theory declared that just as it was possible and necessary to win parliament to socialism by gradual penetration, so it was possible and necessary to win industry to socialism by joint factory councils with the employers.

Just as a coalition with the bourgeoisie was necessary on the political plane, so it was necessary on the industrial plane. The

social-democrats were the originators, particularly in Scheidemann's fatherland, of the joint labor-management councils in industry, and exactly and precisely on the basis of Erber's not very novel idea that the power of the workers in politics must be coupled by "asserting itself in economic controls on the level of the department, plant and industry."

What, if not that, has been the "pro-labor" side of the argument in this country, for decades, in favor of all the "joint labor-management" schemes? What, if not that, has been meant by all the "industrial democracy" schemes of the labor leaders, reformists, liberal muttonheads and enlightened capitalists in this country? We used to know what planet Erber inhabited. We are not so sure today.

It was through their "joint councils" that the German Social Democracy finally discovered that, in the decay of capitalism, labor is called upon to be not the grave-digger of capitalism but, as it was put, the "doctor" who seeks to cure the ill. If Erber is simply ignorant of these familiar facts, he should stop abusing the social democrat If he is simply ignoring these facts, it is only in order to present his acceptance of class collaboration in a "less Scheidemannistic" light.

It may be said: This is too strong. We reply: It is not strong enough, and here is proof of that.

Erber criticizes "our demand that the MRP be ousted from the MRP-SP-CP government during the crisis of 1946 (in France), instead of demanding the ousting of the CP." (Erber does not indicate that he agreed with us at that time and now considers that he was in error. That is not new. In none of his writings has Erber ever acknowledged that he made any political error - we repeat, in none! As he was told years ago, he suffers from the offensive malady which the Germans call Rechthaberei and therefore always writes with a pained expression of injured innocence on his face.) Then he adds: "The minority, which opposed the slogan of 'CP-SP to Power' dared not even think of the latter alternative, and therefore had no political proposals whatsoever."

This is not the place for rehashing our 1946 discussion. Only one thing is interesting. According to Erber today, the correct political course at that time would have been to demand that the Stalinists be ousted from the coalition government, that is, to demand a coalition government of the Social Democracy and the Popular Republican Movement (MRP)!

There is your true un-Leninist socialist policy! Erber may not know the whole road to socialism, but he knows his intermediate stations. He is not a Scheidemannite. Oh no! He's just a Kautskyan, which means he differs from Scheidemann like one banana from another. The road to socialism lies through a coalition government with the MRP, that is, with the party of the bourgeoisie. And not just any old party, but the party of the Vatican, the party of social Catholicism, of clerical political obscurantism, beloved by the Lord and by Washington.

A man must possess a stupendous amount of triply distilled effrontery to be able to advocate a Social-Democratic-M.R.P. coalition government in the name of socialism, and in the very same document in which he associates himself, to even a minute extent, with such people as the Debs, Haywood and St. John of the I.W.W., Daniel De Leon and Rosa Luxemburg. If any one of them were alive today, the best that Erber could expect is that they would hang themselves after seeing who took their names and toward what end.

Erber is for collaboration between the working class and the bourgeoisie in industry. Erber is for coalition governments between the working class and a bourgeois party in parliament. Erber is, as we shall see, for support of an imperialist war. That all this separates him sharply from Marx and Lenin is self-evident. In what significant way he considers himself separated from Scheidemannism, i.e., from traditional reformism, is a puzzle that is insoluble in political terms. It must be unraveled by students of psychology, which is not really our province. We still think there is room for a League such as we have recommended. But it is now doubtful if there is room in such a League for Erber, provided it adheres firmly to the basic principle which alone justifies its existence: "We do not know what to say or do." If he is admitted to membership, then only on the ground that he himself does not yet know that he has become a perfectly housebroken social-reformist.

Maybe he doesn't know that, but at least he knows something about Engels' letter to Conrad Schmidt, doesn't he? Therewith, we are at the last point in this chapter. No, he doesn't know anything about Engels' letter; he doesn't understand it. All you can say about him is that he remains faithful to the virtue of muddleheadedness. So, back again we go to Engels.

In his letter, as in several others written toward the end of his life, Engels deals with greater preciseness than ever before with the question of the interacting relationship between economy and politics, between substructure and superstructure, between economic development and "force". He found it necessary to introduce a balancing corrective into the popular understanding (misunderstanding) of the Marxist theory. As he wrote in another letter of the same period: "Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that younger writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due it. We had to emphasize this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into their rights." (The phenomenon is a familiar one, and applies no less to Lenin than to Marx or...Trotsky.)

The letter to Schmidt is occasioned by an anti-Marxist criticism by the German, Paul Barth, who charged that the Marxists "deny any and every reaction of the political, etc., reflexes of the economic movement upon the movement itself." "He is simply tilting at windmills," jeered Engels. There is an important interplay and reciprocal influence exerted by the economic movement and the political power which has a relative independence from the economy, but "it is the interaction of two unequal forces." The state power can speed the economic development by moving in the same direction. It can stand in the way of the

economic development, in which case it can do it great damage or be itself smashed. The same thoughts are expressed, even more trenchantly, in the chapter on "The Force Theory" in Engels' Anti-Dühring. Let us supplement the Schmidt letter with an instructive quotation from the Anti-Dühring, which will make it even clearer that Erber just doesn't know what to make out of the material he stumbles over:

"...after the political force has made itself independent in relation to society, and has transformed itself from its servant into its master, it can work in two different directions. Either it works in the sense and in the direction of the normal economic development in which case no conflict arises between them, the economic development being accelerated. Or, force works against economic development; in this case, as a rule, with but few exceptions, force succumbs to it.... But where - apart from cases of conquest - the internal public force of a country stands in opposition to its economic development, as at a certain stage has occurred with almost every political power in the past, the contest has always ended with the downfall of the political power. Inexorably and without exception the economic evolution has forced its way through - we have already mentioned the latest and most striking example of this: the Great French Revolution....

"That force, however, plays another role in history, a revolutionary role; that, in the words of Marx, it is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with the new, that it is the instrument by the aid of which social movement forces its way through and shatters the dead, fossilized, political forms - of this there is not a word in Herr Dühring. It is only with sighs and groans (Engels is speaking here, rest assured, of Dühring, not of Erber.) that he admits the possibility that force will perhaps be necessary for the overthrow of the economic system of exploitation - unfortunately, because all use of force, forsooth, demoralizes the person who uses it."

In Erber's scholarly and erudite survey of human history (wherein the Hanseatic League and the Long Parliament find the place due them), he comes at length to the French Revolution. It is the "classic example" of how the state (feudal) lost its political supremacy when it "safeguarded the needs solely of the ruling class at a time when these needs ran counter to those of the economy." "However," notes the observer whose vigilant eye misses nothing, "not all feudal states were overthrown. The feudal-monarchic-bureaucratic state in Germany adapted itself to the needs of the economy and ruled on behalf of the bourgeoisie, while keeping them at arm's length from the state apparatus itself." From which follows at least one "suggestive" conclusion: "The possibility of adaptation to capitalist society by feudal states was based on the peculiar nature of the bourgeoisie."

The "economic movement" under feudalism was the tendency to replace agriculture and handicraft by machinofacture, land by capital, production for use by production for profit, the shut-in primitive market by the world market. Force was represented by the political power of the feudal state and its possessors, the feudalists. The economic movement was represented by the advent of machinery, by merchant and lending capital, and by its possessors, the young, mixed bourgeoisie. In France, the state power persisted in fettering with outlived feudal bonds the unfoldment of the economic movement. The

revolution, which also represented force, a force opposed to the state, overturned the state, cut the bonds and, under Napoleon in particular, the economic movement, capitalist production and exchange, was vastly and rapidly accelerated not only in France but elsewhere in Europe. The young bourgeoisie took clearer form, and consolidated itself and its social power, under the protection of the new bourgeois state. Right!

Just as right is the story of the German development. There, the gifted and ruthless statesman Bismark led Germany to national unification by breaking the power of the particularist nobility, consolidating a German nation, and promoting the "economic movement." He promoted a capitalist development of Germany under a capitalist state (not under a feudal state), but without yielding the political power to the very young and very cowardly German bourgeois upstarts, who were terrified at a reproduction of the Great French Revolution because a new force - the militant proletariat - was already on the scene threatening to make the revolution...permanent. So, while it is not as simple as it appears in Erber's version, the fact is absolutely indisputable that for Germany to move from feudalism to capitalism, the violent overthrow of the feudal regime by the new class, the bourgeoisie, was not an indispensable requirement. From which our innocent one shyly suggests, does it not follow that to move from capitalism to feudalism, the violent overthrow of the capitalist state by the new class, the proletariat, may also prove to be not an indispensable requirement?

One by one, your hair stands on end! Reasoning by analogy is always risky, but at times necessary and enlightening. But there has to be some basis for the analogy in the first place. To establish such a basis in his case, Erber would have to show, by his Bismarkian example, that the bourgeoisie, the young, rising and oppressed class which was the authentic bearer of the new social system, began its climb to power by infiltrating the feudal state, exerting more and more "political pressure" on the feudal state, forcing it more and more to "adapt itself to economic needs," and gradually, after a while and without a revolutionary overthrow of the feudal state and the feudalists, taking command of the state. Once he showed this, he might have at least one square inch of ground to stand on in saying that, correspondingly, the proletariat, the young, rising and oppressed class of today, can climb to power by infiltrating the bourgeois state, exerting more and more "political pressure" on it, and so on and so forth, until it has converted this state into its own instrument for the inauguration of socialism.

But he not only does not try to show that this is what happened in old Germany - he insists that something quite different happened. It was the representative, not of the bourgeoisie, but of the old feudal caste, Bismark, who brought about the social transformation in Germany. And the young, rising bourgeoisie? Elsewhere - without any thought about what he is writing, without any thought of the need of tying together what he writes on one page with what he writes on another - Erber tells us: "The German bourgeoisie was fated never to establish its control over the state apparatus; its control passing from the Junker domination to reformist labor domination to Nazi domination." This is exaggerated, but it will do. Now then, since it is

generally understood that modern Germany has been a bourgeois state for several decades, we must conclude that the other end of the analogy would have to look something like this:

Under capitalism, some Bismarkian representative of the bourgeoisie will use the bourgeois state in such a way as to adapt it to the needs of the economy. He will see to it that the bourgeois state does not "operate solely to safeguard the interests of the bourgeoisie". He will see to it that it fulfills a "social function". He will direct the transformation of capitalist society to socialist society, just as Bismark directed the transformation of feudal society to capitalist society. Then, to make the analogy real and complete, Erber will tell us a hundred years from now that "the American proletariat was fated never to establish its control over the state apparatus."

Socialism without socialists! Socialism without revolution! Painless socialism! Testimonials by Fredrick Engels, certified by Ernest Erber, produced on request! Capitalist teeth extracted with Bismarkian laughing gas! Come and roll on the floor with hilarity!

But bless our soul, all this bears a frightening resemblance to the new theory of some Trotskyists and ex-Trotskyists: just as Bismark and Napoleon brought capitalism into existence without giving the bourgeoisie any political power to speak of, so Stalin and the Stalinist bureaucracy are destroying capitalism and bringing socialism (a workers' state) into existence without giving the proletariat any political power at all. Be it said in extenuation of their madness that they have not tried to make poor Engels responsible for their "theory."

For all the difference between these two theories, there is one thing basic to them both: Neither one of them understands the specific characteristic of the proletarian revolution, of the socialist transformation of society. Both theories are reactionary.

Erber writes: "The possibility of adaptation to capitalist society by feudal states was based on the peculiar nature of the bourgeoisie." He picked up this cloudy notion in one of his daydreams. What is "peculiar" about the bourgeoisie is the characteristic it shares with all preceding ruling classes: it is an exploiting and oppressing minority which requires a state power to protect its social domination from assaults by the exploited and oppressed majority. It is, like its predecessors, a wealth-possessing and property-owning class. The state of antiquity, the slave state, could be transformed into a feudal state without necessarily undergoing a violent revolution and destruction. Why? Because this social transformation could take place without the slave-owners necessarily being destroyed, without the slave-owners necessarily being expropriated of their wealth (and therefore of their social power). The slave-owner either was an owner of land already, or the wealth accumulated for him by his slaves enabled him to become a landowner and therewith a part of the new feudal ruling class. Where the old state power did not "run in the same direction" as the economic movement, it was, generally speaking destroyed. But it also could run in the same direction; and the old ruling class could become the new ruling class or part of the new ruling class.

Similarly, in the case of the transformation of the old feudal states into capitalist states. They did not necessarily have to undergo a violent revolution before the transformation could be completed (although if it did not undergo one, the transformation was never as "classic" and "complete" as in the case of eighteenth and nineteenth century France). The wealth and power of the feudal lords did not necessarily have to be expropriated and destroyed for the transformation to capitalist society and the capitalist state to take place. The economic wealth and the political power accumulated by the English feudal lords under feudalism were the means by which they perpetuated themselves - in the form of capitalists - in the course of England's transformation from feudalism to capitalism; which is how the roll of the British capitalist class today includes so many distinguished and aristocratic noblemen, up to and including authentically titled capitalist Dukes. The same holds true of Germany, where the roll of the capitalist class included not only the sons of authentic old bourgeois (merchant capitalists and loan sharks) but also sons of the no less authentic ex-feudal Prussian Junkers. Similarly in Japan and in any number of other countries.

To achieve the transition from feudalism to capitalism, from the feudal states to the capitalist states, it was not necessary to destroy wealth, to expropriate it, to destroy its possessors. It was only necessary to establish the supremacy of capital over landed property, of capitalist economy over feudal stagnation, of the capitalist nation over feudal dispersion and particularism. That revolution could be and in some countries was achieved "organically" (more or less), in others violently. But more important: that revolution could be achieved in some countries by the peasants, artisans, incipient proletarians and petty-bourgeoisie; in other countries by the bourgeoisie itself; and in still other countries by the feudal caste itself.

The historically-outlived class was able in many cases to adapt itself WITHOUT MUCH DIFFICULTY to the social transformation, i.e., to the bourgeois revolution. It could do it by becoming part of the new class which was the principal beneficiary of the new social order. It could adapt itself even without becoming part of the new class, simply by remaining a landlord class, which, while not strictly speaking a capitalist class, shares in the surplus value extracted by the capitalist class. (Landlords are not part of a "pure" capitalism; they are a class "handed down" from feudalism; and since almost nowhere have they been wiped out by capitalism, the latter continues to exist side by side with this "feudal remnant" to the present day.) Erber does not give the slightest sign that these thoughts ever occurred to him.

How do matters stand with the socialist transformation of society Here is exactly where the term "peculiar nature" is appropriate. The proletariat is the only class in all history that comes to power not for the purpose of oppressing or ruling over another class but in order to abolish all classes, itself included. It cannot consolidate its power, let alone move on to socialism, without abolishing all privileges and all class wealth, including all private property in the means of production and exchange. Some proletarians may not yet know what their historical mission is on this earth. But the bourgeoisie of the entire world does know - including all the ex-feudal capitalist aristocracy of Italian and Swedish Counts, German Barons, French, Jap-

anese and Georgian Princes, and British Dukes. Hence, their fierce, unrelenting, intransigent, irreconcilable hostility to the socialist revolution or, to use a salon term, transformation. In comparison, the opposition of the feudal lords to the capitalist transformation was insignificant.

Take the matter from another angle. The class which is the bearer of the new economic movement under feudalism is the bourgeoisie. It alone can bring this movement to full unfoldment. But capitalist society and the capitalist state, as we have pointed out, does not necessarily have to be brought into existence by this bourgeoisie. It can be brought into existence by feudalists and even by slave-owners; it can be brought into existence by popular revolution or by bureaucratic measures from above; it can be brought into existence by the political power of the bourgeoisie or without that power, by depriving the bourgeoisie of such power; it can be brought into existence democratically or by blood and iron - because all it needs basically to assure its existence is the supremacy of capital, of private ownership of the means of production and exchange.

The class which is the bearer of the new economic movement under capitalism is the proletariat. Its "peculiar nature" is that it is a socialist proletariat. It alone can establish a socialist economy. But the socialist state - more accurately, the workers' state - without which all talk of a socialist society remains talk and empty talk, such a state cannot be brought into existence by slave-owners, by feudal lords, by capitalists, by Sidney Webb bureaucrats, by trade-union bureaucrats or by Stalinist bureaucrats. The proletariat is - the only class in history (see how peculiar it is!) that nobody but the proletariat itself can emancipate.

Being peculiar, it is unlike the bourgeoisie in another respect. For the triumph of capitalist society over feudalism, the bourgeoisie does not have to have political power. But for the triumph of socialist society over capitalism, the proletariat must have political power, a state of its own. No political power for the proletariat, no democratic rule by the proletariat, means - no socialism. Only by means of this political power - its own state - can the ruling proletariat carry through its socialist economic transformation. It cannot even begin to carry it out within the womb of capitalist society the way capitalists carried out their economic transformation within the womb of feudal society.

Erber quotes from Engels' letter to Schmidt to show that Engels understood that the state power can greatly influence the economic movement. "Force (that is, state power) is also an economic power." Erber is as honest as the day is long. But he was either in a hurry or else he was anxious to spare us the trouble of reprinting too long a document. That is the only explanation we can make for Erber's having decapitated the quotation. But poor as we are, we still have enough paper to print an extra sentence, especially if it was written by a man whose conception of the state made such an illuminating impression on Erber's mind. Here it is, head as well as trunk: "Or why do we fight for the political dictatorship of the proletariat if political power is economically impotent? Force (that is, state power) is also an economic power." We think that with its head restored, it

presents a more rounded picture.

But after all, cannot the dictatorship of the proletariat be achieved by purely parliamentary means, without violence? and can it not be exercized through a democratic parliament? Didn't Kautsky once explain that there are more workers than capitalists? Cannot the former get their parliamentary majority democratically and rule over the tiny-dying-off capitalist class? Is it not - don't be dogmatic - just barely possible? Haven't you forgotten that while the bourgeoisie had no democratic political rights under feudalism, the proletariat, at least in some capitalist countries, does enjoy democratic political rights which it can use for impressive parliamentary victories? Isn't Erber speaking, after all, of bourgeois democracies?

Let us see how far we get once we have granted this. Just to spread the greatest happiness among the greatest number of Lenin-killers, let us say: Abstractly, we can conceive of a special combination of circumstances under which a genuinely and resolutely socialist proletarian party - not just a party of reformist bureaucrats - can obtain an electoral majority and a majority of seats in a parliament. (We say a parliament and not a Congress and we hope that this distinction is clear to every reader. We know quite well that to discuss the question of proletarian revolution in connection with the Congress of the democratic United States is, if not downright subversive and illegal, very much frowned upon, and we are reluctant to be frowned upon. Hence, attention! We are speaking of any country you can find on the map but not, of course, of the United States.) Abstractly, we can even conceive of such a combination of circumstances under which the bourgeoisie is so demoralized and feels so hopeless and helpless that it decides not to offer resistance to the democratically-expressed will of the people and throws in the sponge. Good enough? We have granted the possibility!

Where does that leave us? Even the most optimistic social democrat, to say nothing of so intransigent a socialist as Erber, cannot guarantee that this is a certainty. It may turn out that way, but then again it may not. "It has not been disproved, but neither has it been proved." Now, if the fighting cadres of socialism, and the militant working class as a whole, are prepared, intellectually and organizationally, for nothing but the peaceful transition to socialism through the democratic parliamentary method, as it was in Germany and Austria and so many other countries, what will happen when one fine day it is suddenly confronted with a damnably stubborn bourgeoisie, armed to the teeth with its state apparatus ("bodies of armed men with prisons") and its unofficial fascist legions, determined to drown the peaceful, unprepared proletariat in its own blood? That might very well turn into an unpleasant situation for us.

On the other hand, however, if the socialist militants and the working class in general are prepared, intellectually and organizationally, to meet all conceivable forms of resistance to the inevitable social change which the tenacious bourgeoisie may offer, nothing is lost and everything is gained. We do not thereby cease or even impede our electoral and parliamentary efforts. If the bourgeoisie turns actively counterrevolutionary, the proletariat is prepared to meet it, blow for blow. But if we find, in the crucial days, that the bour-

geoisie has decided to bow to the democratic will of the people, especially when this will is backed up by organized and unflinching power - why, so much the better! It will be an enormous relief to all of us and a happy augur for a fairly painless transition to socialist brotherhood and peace. Nothing can be lost by instilling the revolutionary concept into the minds of the working class! A lot can be lost, including seas of proletarian blood, by instilling the rosy reformist concept into the minds of the working class! A lot can be lost by forgetting the sanguinary tragedies of the working classes of Europe in the last thirty years of experience with reformism. Those who cannot remember the past, as George Santayana said, are condemned to repeat it.

Bourgeois democracy is an excellent thing for the working class. It is as superior to autocracy as it is inferior to workers' democracy. Universal suffrage is an excellent thing for the working class, which fought to get it and will fight to retain it. But like the prettiest girl in all of France, universal suffrage cannot give more than it has, Erber quotes Engels, but has only an ectoplasmic grasp of what he is quoting. We will cite for him another passage from our old Engels in which every word is a jewel in a modern setting, and which is so lucid and simple that even Erber ought to perceive its true meaning:

"The possessing class rules directly through universal suffrage. For as long as the oppressed class, in this case the proletariat, is not ripe for its economic emancipation, just so long will its majority regard the existing order of society as the only one possible, and form the tail, the extreme left wing, of the capitalist class. But the more the proletariat matures toward its self-emancipation, the more does it constitute itself as a separate class and elect its own representatives in place of the capitalists. Universal suffrage is the guage of the maturity of the working class. It can and will never be anything else but that in the modern state. But that is sufficient. On the day when the thermometer of universal suffrage reaches its boiling point among the laborers, they as well as the capitalists will know what to do."

Engels is writing about the bourgeois democratic republic! Every word is a jewel.

Erber may not understand himself, but we understand him. Erber may think he has rejected the reformist road, but like Moliere's doctor-in-spite-of-himself, Erber is a reformist-in-spite-of-himself. The passage from revolutionary Marxism to reformism is not hard in our times, especially in the United States. Its chauvinism eats into the working class and it eats into the revolutionary movement. Its aristocratism eats into the working class and it eats into the revolutionary movement.

The class struggle in this country is <u>still</u> in a primitive stage. It will not take as long here as it did in old Europe for the primitive stage to become a very advanced and sharp stage. But for the moment it is still primitive and moves; or seems to move, slowly. The proletariat has not yet even constituted itself here as a separate class, although we are confident that once it starts it will move with startling speed. The proletariat here is still the tail, the extreme

left wing, of the capitalist class, although we are confident that one day that tail will reach over and crack the head. It is these circumstances that make it possible for Erber and those like him to write such puerile, liberalistic, petty-bourgeois, fog-soaked, authentically "American" trash about the state, about democracy, about parliamentarism, about revolution.

Over forty years ago, Trotsky wrote that impatience is the hallmark of the opportunist. Even though time presses, we are patient. The American working class will not end as it is. When this giant really awakes, he can recreate America and perhaps the world. We will persevere and tell him the truth: about himself and about his leaders, about the bourgeoisie, about bourgeois democracy, about workers' democracy, about the state and revolution. On the day - and it will come - when the thermometer of universal suffrage reaches its boiling point, then, if he has learned the great lessons of our victory as well as the great lessons of our tragedies, he - and not only the capitalists - will know what to do.

STATE AND REVOLUTION IN THE LIGHT OF TWO EXPERIENCES

Erber has also modified his views somewhat on the Russian Revolution.

He writes that "The October Revolution" is an imperishable page in the history of the great movements of the masses to take their destiny into their own hands that began with the French Revolution." This is, as they say in the Army, S.O.P. It can be found in the literary sobbings of any heartbroken liberal: "You know, the Russian Revolution was an interesting experiment. However, it didn't turn out so well. The laboratory blew up, the scientists blew up, the building blew up, everything around it blew up. No more experiments so far as I am concerned. No more totalitarianism for me. I am not enthusiastic about another war, a war against Russia. But if it has to be, it has to be. And if we have to use the atomic bomb, and Franco, and de Gaulle, and Peron - well, you just have to be realistic in politics."

Yesterday, Erber was a champion of the Russian Revolution. Overnight, quick as a flash, he reexamined its history with the tender objectivity which distinguishes him. What he dreamed of rather set him back on his heels. By morning, it turned out that the world would be a better place to live in today if the imperishable page had perished before it was written. The Bolshevik Revolution was a mistake from start to finish - a grotesque and monstrous mistake. Everything we suffer from today, everything the Russian people suffers from, everything the rest of the world suffers from or has suffered from in the last thirty years - everything! including Erber's readiness to join the great American crusade against Russia - is the result of the October Revolution.

Surely, this is an exaggeration? It may be possible to exaggerate Erber, but it is not necessary. We cite his own words.

"Rarely in history has a political leadership appeared that was so thoroughly motivated by a selfless idealism or so completely dedicated to the lofty mission of liberating mankind. But the course they chose had a terrible logic of its own. Once they embarked upon it, they became its prisoners and there was no turning back. This course could not be traversed without the suppression of the socialist opposition, without the Cheka terror, without one-man management of the factories, without compulsory labor. They are all fatal links in a chain that began with Lenin's revision of the traditional Marxist concept of the relationship of democracy to socialism in favor of the anti-democratic view of the party ruling on behalf of the masses, as was expounded by Lenin on the eve of taking power in his essay Will the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?"

At the basis of the Bolshevik course was Lenin's revision of the Marxian concept of democracy and socialism (the one thing Erber finds unendurable is a revision of Marxian concepts), which led with a logic of its own to all the succeeding horrors. Including the Johnstown flood? Not yet, that comes later.

"Once the Bolsheviks had dispersed the Constituent Assembly and decided to rule alone, they had set foot on a course from which there was no turning back. The suppression of the socialist opposition, the terror, the secret police and the long, bloody, destructive Civil War, were now inevitable. As the latter developed, all intermediate solutions became impossible, and all forces that could help bring them about were ground to bits."

Coupled with the first error is the attitude toward the Constituent Assembly. Once dispersed there was no turning back. More horrors followed. So far, the "imperishable page" is not doing too well; it looks more like the most accursed page in history. But have patience and hold your nose. You are about to see how it is possible to catch up with and outstrip the rantings of an English aristocrat against the abominations of Jacobinism:

"The evidence is pretty conclusive that Lenin made a bad miscalculation in believing the German workers would make a successful revolution. Yet, he had staked his whole course in Russia on this gamble. If Lenin won, history would absolve the Bolsheviks of all the charges their socialist opponents made against them. But if he lost? The awesome consequences of Lenin's miscalculation are written in the last thirty years - the whole tragic history of Social Democratic sterility, Stalinist degeneration, fascist victory, a Second World War, and our world of Stalinist totalitarianism and capitalist decay."

Not less, and probably more! But in heaven's name, if that is true or even half true, how can you have one single kind word for people who, by revising Marx, dispersing the Constituent Assembly and miscalculating the German revolution, inflicted upon mankind such an appalling series of calamities, disasters and catastrophes as you describe? What place in history should be assigned to these people, from Lenin on down, whose "mistakes" plunged a whole generation into our present abyss? Devil of a lot of good it does us to know that they were selfless idealists and completely dedicated to a lofty mission. They ruined the world, they did! A plague take

them all and all like them, and thrice accursed be their names and the memory of them!

But there, we've become angry and lost our temper again! As everyone knows, this is a friendly discussion that should be conducted with courtliness, affability, dispassion, critical independence and a soft musical accompaniment. Right is right. In defense of our unseemly outburst, we have only this to say:

To us, the Bolshevik Revolution was the great dividing line between socialism in theory and socialism in practise - it was not yet socialism, but the end of socialism as mere theory and the beginning of socialism as living social practise. In the Paris Commune, the people ruled their own destinies for the first time in history, but only for ten weeks, without support from France, without support from Europe, without the strength, the time, the possibility of mustering such support; without clear consciousness, without clear leadership. It was the dawn, but a false dawn.

In the Russian Revolution, the people ruled for years, the socialist proletariat ruled with understanding of its status and its role, with a leadership such as no class in history ever equalled. They proved - in a backward, three-quarters ruined country! - and proved it once for all, that the socialist proletariat itself can take power in its own name, hold pwer, and proceed to put the inherited chaos into socialist order. Beset by every conceivable foe, handicapped by every conceivable difficulty, they proved it beyond anybody's dreams, beyond what they were required to prove, beyond what a working class encircled and isolated in one backward land could be expected to prove. They proved at long last that the proletariat does not have to have a master to exploit and oppress it, that there is no quality inherent in the proletariat that precludes its taking power for itself. They proved that in the dark mass for which all rulers and their retainers have such lordly contempt is hidden deep and powerful springs of resourcefulness, idealism, passion for liberty, capacity for brotherhood, enormous creative genius which await only revolutionary release to inundate and fructify the social soil corrupted by the rule of man over man until it blooms for a peaceful world.

They not only proved that this dark mass, once lighted up by revolutionary fires, can govern itself, but they found once more, to an infinitely higher degree than the Paris Commune or the Revolution of 1905 in Russia, that natural state form which the working class needs for its own rule until there is no rule by anyone over anyone - the Commune-type of state, the Soviet-type of state. It was there to be found, not because it had been invented and artificially imposed upon the people by some doctrinary, but because it developed naturally in their class struggle first as a fighting weapon and then also as the form of their rule. With this new and highest form of democratic representative government, they passed above and beyond bourgeois parliamentarism just as surely as parliamentarism had in its time passed above and beyond monarchical rule by divine right. And even after they succumbed to powers beyond their strength, the proof was not undone, for they succumbed not because the socialist proletariat had dared to take power but because the proletariat in other countries had not dared.

Practically every bourgeois in the world recognized whose revolution it was and who ruled Russia. Millions of workers and colonial slaves recognized it too. That is why revolutionary Russia was able to light the fires of freedom all over the world. That is why it aroused passions and hopes, combattivity and confidence in millions and tens of millions who were never before inspired. History does not know of another event like it; this old world was never before shaken as it was by the triumph in Russia.

It was our revolution. It remains our revolution, our victory and vindication - even now! Even now when it has been killed, strangled by its imperialist encirclers, deserted by those who should have been its socialist comrades-in-arms, speared in the back by its Stalinist assassins, dragged in the mud by every backslider and faint-heart, it is our revolution. How easy and contemptible it is to draw near the slain Achilles and kick his head now and spit on him. Every craven, every deserter, every dilletante can now track his dirty boots on to the imperishable page and relax his wretched bowels over it. That is cheap, it is popular in the most respectable quarters, it requires no courage.

The defense of the Russian Revolution moves along with the attack on it in the same way and with the same aim that the fight for socialism goes on by the side of the fight against socialism. Read all the "socialist" attacks on the Revolution that have been written in recent times, including Erber's. If their authors have the slightest awareness of what is really involved, they give no evidence of it. The attack upon the Russian Revolution conducted nowadays by the traditionally anti-socialist and anti-working class bourgeoisie is not different in a single essential from what it was beginning with 1917-1918. All that is new in it is the ammunition that Stalinism has provided it with. Otherwise, the attack remains the same. It has a political meaning determined by its class aim and the class interests that prompt it. What does it boil down to? We have indicated that before:

"You workers, whatever else you do, do not take state power, do not even think in such terms! We have been warning you against it since the days of Marx. In Russia, they didn't listen to us, and look what happened. Lenin carried through a Marxian revolution. We are even ready to admit that Lenin himself was a noble idealist, but that didn't mean very much. Once started on the road, the movement had an iron logic of its own. Its inevitable outcome is the Stalinist state they have today, which even the radical Trotskyists say is an inferno for labor. Once you abolish private property, once you put all economic power into the hands of the state, we are all done for, you as well as we. Socialism is a Utopia. Capitalism is not absolutely perfect, but so long as we have free enterprise and democracy, you can get as much out of it as we can. Go ahead with all the reforms you want to. We will disagree with you here and there. But learn from Russia! Do not think of revolutionary socialism!"

That is the only political meaning of the "theoretical struggle" to prove that Stalinist totalitarianism was the inevitable outcome of the Russian Revolution, that Stalinism flowed "logically" from Leninism which the bourgeoisie understands perfectly to have been nothing but revolutionary Marxism. That "theoretical struggle" is

part and parcel - a very, very big part today - of the bourgeois struggle against socialism and against the working class. You have to be a permanent resident of one of the remoter planets not to see this demonstrated a hundred times over in the daily ideological and political life of our times.

When we defend the Russian Revolution, its great principles and its great achievements, it is not because we are hopeless stick-in-the-muds. We are not idol-worshippers or iconoclasts in principle. We are not traditionalists or innovators in principle. We do not believe that what is old is gold or what is new is true. Our defense of that Revolution, even more than our defense of its pioneer, the Paris Commune, is nothing but the continuation of our fight for the socialist emancipation of the people. And whoever does not know ought to know that the whole line of the bourgeois attack on the Revolution is the continuation of the century-old fight against socialist liberty and part of the century-old fight against the working class.

"Come now, are you saying that any attack on the Russian Revolution or criticism of it is reactionary, bourgeois, a blow to socialism and the working class? Isn't that dangerously close to the method of argument used in the notorious Stalinist amalgams?" We anticipate the familiar question. Since that is not what we said, we are no closer to the Stalinist method than we ever were.

Lenin submitted the Russian Revoltuion and its course to criticism; Trotsky had his criticism, during the great days and later in his life; Rosa Luxemburg criticized it; we ourselves have a critical reevaluation to make. Marx criticized the Paris Commune, but so also did the British bourgeoisie. It all depends on what you are criticizing, what you are attacking, how you criticize or attack it, on what is your political point of departure, on what is your political conclusion. We do not even dream of denying anyone the right to criticize the Russian Revolution or the labor movement in general. We hope in turn that we shall not be denied the right to criticize the critics. There is the proletarian, the socialist or Marxist criticism of the Russian Revolution; there is the bourgeois criticism of it. And there is the "intermediate" criticism which renounces or rejects the struggle for socialism without yet adopting in full the position of our class enemy.

Erber's criticism, like those it is patterned on, does not belong in either the first or the second category. It is "intermediate' between the two...but not equidistant from them. Read Marx's memorial to the Paris Commune. It was not an uncritical eulogy of everything the Communards thought or did - far from it. Indeed it was written by a man who, a few weeks before the establishment of the Commune, regarded the idea as preposterous! But every line vibrated with a challenging defense of the revolution.

"Workingmen's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators, history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them."

Read Rosa Luxemburg's criticism of the Bolshevik Revolution which she set down in 1918 in her fragmentary prison notes. She did not draw back from what she felt she had to say about the regime of Lenin and Trotsky. But she was blood-kin of Marx, she was a revolutionist to her fringer tips who never for a moment relaxed the struggle against the enemy for socialist freedom. What right - political, moral or any other - do the backsliders and tired and retired radicals have to pull into their camp the revolutionist who ended her critical notes with these clarion words:

"What is in order is to distinguish the essential from the non-essential, the kernel from the accidental excrescenses in the policies of the Bolsheviks....It is not a matter of this or that secondary question of tactics, but of the capacity for action of the proletariat, the strength to act, the will to power of socialism as such. In this, Lenin and Trotsky and their friends were the first, those who went ahead as an example to the proletariat of the world; they are still the only ones up to now who can cry with Hutten: 'I have dared!'

"This is the essential and enduring in Bolshevik policy. In this sense theirs is the immortal historical service of having marched at the head of the international proletariat with the conquest of political power and the practical placing of the problem of the realization of socialism, and of having advanced mightily the settlement of the score between capital and labor in the entire world. In Russia the problem could only be posed. It could not be solved in Russia. And in this sense, the future everywhere belongs to 'Bolshevism.'"

Where can you find so much as a lingering trace of this spirit, this attitude, this intellectual axis, in all of Erber's document, which sniffles as though it had a perpetual cold, which moans and groans and squeaks as though it ached in every joint? No use looking for it. It isn't there. His political fever has burned it out of him.

"Still, abuse him all you want, you ought to take up his views objectively, oughtn't you? Just because he rejects Leninism and Scheidemannism, does it follow that his views should not be given a hearing, or that they should not be answered - if you can answer them?"

Yes, you are right. He should be given a hearing and an answer, which is why we printed his document who needn't have, and why we are writing this commentary. You are right, dear reader, but do not be too surprised if Erber's rejection of Lenin "and" Scheidemann turns out to be of electrono-microscopic importance. As Morris Raphael Cohen once said with a skepticism we frankly share: "The notion that we can dismiss the views of all previous thinkers surely leaves no basis for the hope that our own work will prove of any value to others." We shall soon see what value Erber's work has.

It is no great problem to attack the Bolshevik Revolution today. Buy any of a dozen such attacks and you find all the raw materials required by an enterprising person. For a modest investment,

you get two or three standard blueprints plus a wide range of parts to choose from for the finished product. You get: what Trotsky said about Bolshevism before the revolution; what Luxemburg said about Bolshevism after the revolution; what Lenin said about the revolution before and after; a few loose facts and figures about the Constituent Assembly; a selection of stories about Kronstadt by any number of people who weren't there, authenticity guaranteed or your money back, plus a choice of figures on how many sailors were murdered by Lenin or Trotsky or Dzerzhinsky (one, one hundred, one thousand, ten thousand - whichever looks better); a selection of quotations from Lenin and Trotsky about (1) dictatorship and (2) democracy; a calendar showing that Stalin took power after Lenin died, proving with actual dates that Stalinism flowed from Leninism; differently colored bits of gossip, all very spicy and revealing, about various Bolsheviks, certified by a number of political Peeping Toms; labels marked "Cheka Terror," "Secret Police," "Suppression of Socialists," all lithographed in scarlet to imitate bloodstains and scare children; an assortment of wiring, string, nails, screws, matchsticks, nuts and bolts, and a bottle of rubber cement. All the quotations are easily pasted together, for they come carefully chopped out of context and cut down to convenient size. No special skill or training is required; any child can follow the directions and assemble all sorts of articles from the kit, including a full series for the New Leader which can be expanded, with the aid of a little more work and ingenuity into a full-length book for a venturesome publisher.

Once you have this handy little kit (more elaborate ones are available if you want to invest in more of these second-hand books), you can write a critique of the Bolshevik Revolution as good as Erber's. We urge the reader to believe that very little skill is required for this sort of job. They will all come out looking about the same.

In the beginning, there was the Error. At the other end are the woes of the world today. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. You draw a straight line between the beginning and the end, and you get a clear and complete understanding not only of the development of the Russian Revolution but of all world politics for the past thirty years. It is a triumph for one of the elementary principles of plane geometry.

But where is the three-dimensional reality of the country known as Russia in all this, with its class stratifications and their reciprocal relations, with its economic and social situation and the urgent political and social problems it posed at a given time, with its relations to the rest of the capitalist world in which it actually lived? Doesn't exist. It is just a discrete point on the straight line.

Where are the classes in Russia at the time of the revolution and afterward, what was their position, what were they thinking, what were they doing, what did they want? Were there other political groupings in Russia, apart from the Bolsheviks, and did they play any role in the development of Bolshevik policy, in the development of the Revolution? Not important. Each class and each party gets no more than one discrete point on the straight line.

The same question with regard to the classes and their struggle outside of Russia, the political groupings, especially the Social-Democratic parties, and their policies, and what effect they all had on the Bolsheviks and the Revolution, gets the same answer. Not worthy of note. A few more discrete points on the straight line.

But at least the straight line is made up of all these discrete points? No sir! Got nothing to do with it! The line projected itself by a logic of its own right out of the heart and substance of the Error itself, just as mundane wickedness emanates from original sin. Erber knows all there is to know about the interaction between one force, the economic, and another, the political. What about the interaction of the multitude of economic and political forces which affected the development of Bolshevism and the Revolution? Not important. Waste of time. Therefore, not one word about it in his "reexamination" of the Revolution. What about Trotsky's studies and analysis of the course and the causes of the degeneration of the Revolution, which Erber must surely have read while he was still alive? Of no value. Doesn't have to be refuted. Doesn't even have to be mentioned. Waste of time. I'm working with my kit.

"Wait a minute! Do you mean to tell me that Erber has written a reevaluation of the Russian Revolution and Stalinism without dealing with Trotsky's analysis, which he himself shared for so many years?" Yes. "And he doesn't even mention it?" That's right. "But that's utterly impossible, I can't believe you!" Then read Erber's document for yourself, dear friend, and don't be so dogmatic about what is impossible nowadays. We, meanwhile, will proceed to Erber's reevaluation in some detail.

We start with the three quotations in which Erber explains how Bolshevism ruined the world. The ruination began, in the theoretical field, "with Lenin's revision of the traditional Marxist concept of the relationship of democracy to socialism in favor of the anti-democratic view of the party ruling on behalf of the masses," and it gathered real momentum in the political field "once the Bolsheviks had dispersed the Constituent Assembly and decided to rule alone." That's plain enough and straightforward. There's nothing muddleheaded about that; or more accurately, nothing more than usual.

What is the traditional Marxist concept which Lenin, says Erber, held to firmly up to 1917 and revised in that year and afterward? We will repeat from Erber the quotations wherein it is set forth:

"If there is anything that is certain, it is this, that our party and the working class can only come to power under the form of a democratic republic. This is, what's more, the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the great French revolution has already shown."

That from Engels. And this from Rosa Luxemburg:

"Democratic institutions - and this is of the greatest significance - have completely exhausted their function as aids in the development of brougeois society...We must conclude that the socialist movement is not bound to bourgeois democracy, but that, on the

contrary, the fate of democracy is bound with the socialist movement."

And further from her Reform or Revolution?: "We must conclude from this that democracy does not acquire greater chances of life in the measure that the working class renounces the struggle for its emancipation, but that, on the contrary, democracy acquires greater chances of survival as the socialist movement becomes sufficiently strong to struggle against the reactionary consequences of world politics and the bourgeois desertion of democracy. He who would strengthen democracy should want to strengthen and not weaken the socialist movement. He who renounces the struggle for socialism renounces both the labor movement and democracy."

There is the concept that Lenin revised in theory and practise! As usual, Erber simply does not know what it is he is quoting. He doesn't know where it comes from, what it refers to, or how to apply it. Lenin said something against bourgeois democracy? Here's something by Luxemburg in favor of democracy! Fine quotation. Throw it at Lenin with full force! Lenin was against parliamentarism? Here's something by Engels in favor of a democratic republic. Wonderful quotation. Throw that one, too! Let us, however, be a bit more careful.

The quotation from Engels is taken from his long-concealed criticism of the draft of the Erfurt program of the German Social Democracy in 1891. It is not directed at some over-radical opponent of parliamentarism, but at the opportunists in the party. In a letter to Kautsky accompanying the criticism, Engels writes that he "found an opportunity to let fly at the conciliatory opportunism of Vorwärts (the German party organ) and at the cheerful, pious, merry and free 'growth' of the filthy old mess 'into socialist society.'" This gives us a hint of what Engels would let fly today at Erber. What occasioned Engels' reference to a democratic republic? Perhaps someone in the German party who wanted to disperse a Constituent Assembly and set up a Soviet government? Quotations from our teachers do not decide political questions for us; but if they are used, they should be used in context so that their real sense and purpose is conveyed. Engels complained bitterly about

"the inroads which opportunism is making in a great section of the Social-Democratic press. For fear of a revival of the (Bismarckian Anti-)Socialist Law and from recollection of all manner of premature utterances which were let fall during the reign of that Law, the present legal position of the party in Germany is now all of a sudden to be treated as sufficient for the carrying out of all the demands of the party by peaceful means. People talk themselves and the party into the belief that 'the present society will grow into socialism' without asking themselves if for this it is not equally necessary that society should grow out of its old social constitution and burst its old shell just as violently as the crab bursts its old shell - as if in Germany society had not in addition to smash the fetters of the still semi-absolutist and moreover indescribably confused political order..."

This already gives us quite a different picture from the one our muddlehead wants to draw for us! We will not grow gradually into socialism, insists Engels. The old shell will have to be burst. And

the opportunists are keeping quiet about the need to destroy in the very first place the semi-absolutist political order, the Hohenzollern monarchy. That is why he concludes that "our party and the working class can only come to power under the form of the democratic republic." Engels is simply posing the democratic republic in opposition to monarchical semi-absolutism! Not an inkling of this from Erber.

Was the democratic republic synonymous, for Engels (and Marx), with bourgeois democracy and parliamentarism? If that is the concept Erber wants to convey, it is his right; if he wants to make Engels responsible for it, it is not his right. Engels, in his Origin of the Family, calls the democratic republic the "highest form of the state," adding that "the last decisive struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie can only be fought out under this state form. In such a state, wealth exerts its power indirectly, but all the more safely." In his letter to Bernstein on March 24, 1884, Engels writes that:

"The proletariat too requires democratic forms for the seizure of political power, but, like all political forms, these serve it as means....Further, it must not be forgotten that the logical form of bourgeois domination is precisely the democratic republic, which has only become too dangerous owing to the development already attained by the proletariat, but which, as France and America show, is still possible as purely bourgeois rule...the democratic republic always remains the last form of bourgeois domination, that in which it is broken to pieces."

It is under bourgeois democracy that we have the last form of bourgeois domination, and under bourgeois democracy that the rule of the bourgeoisie is broken to pieces. And that is precisely what the Paris Commune almost succeeded in demonstrating, and what the Russian Commune did succeed in demonstrating to the full! Not, as we shall see, if the Russian Commune had followed the free advice of the eminent Marxist Erber, but because it followed the leadership of Lenin.

Does the shattering of bourgeois rule mean that the proletariat dispenses with a democratic republic? Not at all! That follows only for parliamentary cretins who cannot absorb the idea that there can be any democratic republic other than the bourgeois democratic republic and the bourgeois parliamentary system. The Paris Commune was not a bourgeois state. Engels called it a dictatorship of the proletariat. But the Paris Commune was a democratic republic nevertheless, and a thousand times more democratic than the finest bourgeois democracy! The democratic republic is "the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the great French revolution /the Paris Commune/ has already shown."

That is precisely what the great Russian Revolution also showed. The Russian Commune was not a bourgeois democracy, but a democratic republic. Neither in 1871 nor in 1917 did the revolutionary proletariat, in establishing its own democratic republic, set up a parliamentary state but a Commune-type of state. Engels calls the Paris Commune a democratic republic in full knowledge of the fact that it was not a parliamentary regime. How does Erber explain that? He doesn't. He gives no sign of realizing that there is something here that merits explanation. In the fog with which

he has surrounded himself to match the state of his political mind, democratic republic and bourgeois democracy become synonymous and inseparable, democracy and representative government become synonymous with parliamentarism and inseparable from it. He sees the bourgeois republic and parliamentarism as a tremendous advance over autocracy and despotisms of all kinds, he sees the great advantages they offer the working class. But he cannot see beyond bourgeois democracy and parliamentarism to a workers' republic which is neither bourgeois nor parliamentary.

Lenin devoted page after page of his classic, State and Revolution, to showing - in our opinion irrefutably - what Marx and Engels saw with their critical eye in the Paris Commune, what they learned from it and what they tried to teach to the working-class movement. It is simply inconceivable that Erber is unacquainted with what Lenin shows in these passages. That is precisely where Lenin should be grabbed by the throat and exposed for having revised the traditional Marxian concept. There is not a peep out of Erber on this score, not a hint, not even a wink of the eye. Why? Because he's an honest critic, a scholarly thinker and an objective one. Lenin quotes striking and illuminating sections of Marx's study of the Commune:

"The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time....Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for workmen and managers of his business."

A good deal more can be and has been written about parliamentarism by Marxists, but to save your life could you compress the revolutionary criticism of parliamentarism into so few words as succinctly and unambiguously as Marx has done here? You can argue for years on whether Marx was right or not, but no debate is possible on where Marx stood in this question! We will return to it later.

What Erber does not understand (as you see, we are very polite) is that Lenin opposed parliamentarism not because it was democratic and not because he was "for dictatorship," not in order to replace democratic by anti-democratic institutions, but for contrary reasons. "The way out of parliamentarism," wrote Lenin, "is to be found, of course, not in the abolition of the representative institutions and the elective principles, but in the conversion of the representative institutions from mere 'talking shops' into working bodies." On what grounds did Lenin attack parliamentarism? Because of its inferiority to despotism or because of its inferiority - from the working-class point of view, of course - to the Commune-type of state?

"Take any parliamentary country, from America to Switzerland, from France to England, Norway and so forth - the actual work of the 'state' there is done behind the scenes and is carried out by the departments, the offices and the staff. Parliament itself is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the 'common people.'"

The real government machine of the bourgeois-democratic state is the locust horde of bourgeois and bourgeois-minded bureaucrats, growing in number, power, arrogance and contempt for the masses every year. Even an Americanized "Marxist" ought to know this by now. If the American people as a whole do not know it better than the people of other countries, they are being forced to learn fast.

Even an Americanized "Marxist" ought to know - that is, ought still to know what he once knew and taught others - that of all the bourgeois democracies, the American is the most reactionary and the least responsive to the will of the masses. No other bourgeois democracy has a political system so cunningly calculated to thwart the will of the people: with its state's rights, its division into a bicameral legislative body, its enormously bureaucratized executive with unprecedented powers, its appointed judiciary with law-making and law-breaking powers, its outrageously undemocratic system for amending the Constitution, its broken-field system of electing Congressmen every two years, Presidents every four and Senators every six, with its boss-patronage political machine which parallels and mocks the legal government machinery from top to bottom - to mention only a few of the traditional and fundamental characteristics of our bourgeois democracy. The mass proposes; the bureaucracy disposes. The mass is allowed to vote once a year and to "petition" the government at all times. The rest of the time, it has nothing to do with running the government, with the adoption of the laws of the land, and even less to do with carrying them out. The parliament talks; it adopts the laws; the executive, the locust-horde of the bureaucracy, carries them out in its own fashion. That is in the very nature of parliamentarism. And that is why the Paris Commune and the Soviet system marked such an enormous advance in genuine democracy. In the Paris Commune, Lenin noted,

"Representative institutions remain, but parliamentarism as a special system, as a division of labor between the legislative and the executive functions, as a privileged position for the deputies, no longer exists. Without representative institutions, we cannot imagine democracy, not even proletarian democracy; but we can and must think of democracy without parliamentarism, if criticism of bourgeois society is not mere empty words for us, if the desire to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our serious and sincere desire, and not a mere 'election cry' for catching workingmen's votes, as it is with the Mensheviks and S.R.'s, the Scheidemanns, the Legiens, the Sembats and the Vanderveldes."

This was written by Lenin in the middle of 1917, before the Soviets took power, while the Bolsheviks were calling for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly which the bourgeoisie and the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s and all the later champions of the Assembly were sabotaging with all the strength and tricks at their command. It was not written after the Bolsheviks dispersed the Assembly and in order to give a "theoretical cover" to their action. It was written in broad daylight, for everyone to see, and no political person had the right to misunderstand what the Bolsheviks stood for.

So far as Luxemburg is concerned, again Erber just doesn't understand what he reads and so imprudently or inappropriately quotes. Luxemburg is attacking the Bernsteinites, the revisionists, the opportunists, the very ones whose pathetic ideas Erber has already swallowed hook and line and is preparing to swallow sinker too. If any criticism is to be made of Luxemburg's formulation, it is that it tends to be a little absolute. But that does not concern us at this time. As a general statement of the Marxist view it is unassailable. It does not in the least speak against Lenin or the Russian Revolution; it speaks against the muddlehead! "We must conclude that the socialist movement is not bound to bourgeois democracy, but that, on the contrary, the fate of democracy is bound with the socialist movement."

Luxemburg is a Marxist. She distinguishes between bourgeois democracy and...democracy. She is saying nothing more than this (it is a good deal!): The victory of socialism does not depend upon the preservation of bourgeois democracy; genuine democracy depends upon the victory of socialism, upon strengthening the socialist movement, upon the independence and militancy of the proletariat, upon the unrelenting struggle for the socialist goal, on no compromise with bourgeois politics. "He who renounces the struggle for socialism renounces both the labor movement and democracy."

Does Erber understand whom Rosa Luxemburg is speaking of here? Of the man who, decades later, was to attack the Bolsheviks for establishing a workers' state instead of a bourgeois democracy, for expropriating the Russian bourgeoisie and taking socialist measures instead of maintaining capitalist economic relations. That man's name? Erber will find it on his birth certificate. "You mean Erber?" We do. "The same Erber who just quoted Luxemburg?" The same. "But Erber could not have attacked the Bolsheviks that way; it's impossible; I don't believe you." You will, as soon as we have quoted from Erber. Again, do not be so dogmatic about what is possible nowadays and what is impossible.

We are not finished with the question of Lenin's "revision" of the Marxist theory. We will not even attempt to finish with this theoretical and historical question in these pages. The reader is referred to the rewarding study, so neglected in our disorganized and superficial times, of at least three basic documents without which a serious discussion of the question is impossible: Lenin's State and Revolution, Karl Kautsky's reply to Lenin, and the indispensable sequel by Lenin, The Proletarian Revolution and Kautsky the Renegade. If we return to the question, it will be in connection with the political reality of the Constituent Assembly and the struggle for the Soviet power.

"The Bolsheviks," writes Erber, "rose to power in the Russian Revolution on democratic slogans: 'Down with the Kerensky Dictatorship! Only the Soviet Power Will Convene the Constituent Assembly!' However, after the Bolsheviks dissolved the Constituent Assembly, democratic slogans became a weapon of their socialist opponents, while they tried to give the relationship of democracy to socialism a new interpretation: Not through political democracy, but through its overthrow would socialism be achieved, ran the new Bolshevik doctrine. Democracy was considered the fortress of the bourgeoisie,

dictatorship the weapon of the working class. Democratic processes and institutions were described as bourgeois weapons to blind the masses."

It is doubtful if the editor of a liberal weekly would sink to such political vulgarity or such studied stupidity - it is hard to say which. There is no doubt that the editor of some cheap bourgeois rag could rise to it without any difficulty. It positively stinks with the odor of the unscrupulous and illiterate bourgeois journalist.

Lenin, Erber explained to us, first revised the Marxian concept on democracy and socialism in the early and middle parts of 1917. In its place, he adopted the "anti-democratic view of the party ruling on behalf of the masses." But, continues Erber's explanation, after adopting the anti-democratic view Lenin still put forward democratic and not anti-democratic slogans. Why? Was there a "cultural lag" in Lenin's mind? No, democratic slogans were the only ones by which the Bolsheviks could rise to power. A supremely clever trick! For, once in power by exploiting the democratic sentiments of the masses, the Bolsheviks, dropped their mask and showed in practise what their revision of Marxism really meant. It meant the destruction of political democracy and the establishment of dictatorship. Democracy was denounced as bourgeois, so were democratic institutions and processes; and "democratic slogans became a weapon of their socialist opponents." A clever trick which shows what the Bolsheviks really were, and, you will agree, a trick so despicable that it makes Erber's delicate nose twitch and curl.

You may have your own opinion on how clever the Bolshevik trick was, but only one opinion is possible about Erber's trick - it is not clever at all. Perhaps we are doing him an injustice in speaking of his "trick." We humbly and quickly apologize. Instead we will do him such justice as nobody can challenge: His head is drenched to super-saturation with the petty-bourgeois mode of thought and expression.

Because the Bolsheviks attacked bourgeois democracy as bourgeois and defended proletarian democracy as a thousand times more democratic, it follows, like apricots from acorns, that the Bolsheviks were against democracy. Because the Bolsheviks attacked bourgeois representative institutions and the bourgeois democratic process as bourgeois, it follows, like an oak tree from an apricot pit, that they were against democratic representative institutions and processes. Because the Bolsheviks attacked the twisted, subverted, formal political democracy that exists under bourgeois rule, under the ownership of the means of production and exchange by an exploiting minority which gives it the power of life and death over the masses; because they supported the Soviet system of government as one which gives the masses real control and power - it follows, like Erber follows Marx, that they were for destroying political liberty.

The poor fellow simply cannot think in any but bourgeois terms. His mind is tightly boxed in by them. Proletarian democracy, soviet democracy, is a blank space to him; he cannot see it. The minute you are opposed to bourgeois democracy, not from the standpoint of despotism or Fascism, but in the name of a Soviet democracy, you are

in for it so far as Erber is concerned. He cannot forgive you. It is clear to him that opposition to Bourgeois democracy is opposition to democracy - full stop. That's the only kind of democracy there is. No other democracy is possible, and don't try to fool him. The minute you are opposed to parliamentary representation, it doesn't matter what you are for - Erber knows you are against representative government, democratic institutions and processes, and political democracy in general. And don't try to confuse him with a lot of talk about classes and class antagonisms, because you'll be wasting your time too.

Let us see just what it was that the Bolsheviks did do, and what happened with the "democratic slogans /which/ became the weapon of their socialist opponents."

The key to the first door of the mystification is given in the second part of the sentence above. How is it that "democratic slogans" became the weapon of the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionists only after the Bolshevik Revolution? It was certainly a powerful weapon before November 7, 1917. These slogans were certainly popular with the masses of the workers and peasants. In fact, they were so powerful and popular that the Bolsheviks were able to rise to power with their aid, as Erber notes. How is it that the "socialist opponents" didn't use this weapon against the Bolsheviks before they came to power, in order to prevent them from coming to power and bringing our whole world to its present dismay? Weren't they in an exceptionally favorable position to raise these slogans and to carry them out in political life? They were chiefs of Kerensky's Provisional Government and at the same time they were the chiefs of the Workers' and Soldiers' and Peasants' Soviets. They enjoyed, for months after the overturn of Czarism, the undeviating and enthusiastic support of the masses. They had all the political power and support that anyone would need to do anything he wanted to, certainly so far as raising democratic slogans and carrying them out is concerned.

Now that our memory is refreshed by Erber, we too seem to recall that they didn't do anything of the kind. They refused to convene the Constituent Assembly. They refused to give the Finns, Ukrainians and other peoples yoked by Czarism their national independence. They suppressed the peasants who tried to throw off the landlords and take the land. They persisted in carrying on the Czar's imperialist war which had bled and sickened and tired the people. They did nothing of consequence against the bourgeoisie which was sabotaging and crippling the economy. They did nothing of consequence to crush the counterrevolutionary monarchist nests in the country. But they did what they could to crush the Bolsheviks, their press and their freedom of action.

Strange, isn't it! What inhibited these unterrified democrats? Were they lured away from the Marxist concept of the relation between democracy and socialism by Lenin's revision of it? That was not quite the case, as we remember. Or did Erber fail to reach them in time with a copy of Engels' letter to Conrad Schmidt (if not in full, then in selected excerpts) plus his own theory on how the state can adapt itself to the economic movement and fulfill, not a class, but a "social" function? That explanation, too, while

interesting, does not seem to be adequate. Or maybe the Bolsheviks or the workers and peasants themselves, prohibited those "socialist opponents" from becoming champions of democracy? That, too, is worth considering, but obviously not for long.

The "socialist opponents" did not fight for democratic slogans and democracy when they were in the best position to fight for them. Why? Because to fight consistently and militantly for democracy under conditions of the sharpest conflict between the classes, that is, under conditions of revolution, required a break with pure-and-simple parliamentary methods and modes of thought, a break with the bourgeois democrats and bourgeois democracy. Because such a fight required, for the realization of its objectives, the installation of the working-class state power and led inexorably to this state power.

There is the hitherto well-kept secret of the failure of the "socialist opponents" and the success of the Bolsheviks, which we are at last compelled to make public under Erber's ruthless pressure.

"Come now, you are joking. Erber knows this 'secret' and he even mentions it in one sentence." We are joking only a little bit. Erber knows the secret like a village journalist knows the Rosetta stone. He can take a picture of it, he can describe its dimensions, he can even copy the writing, but he hasn't the remotest notion of what it means. Erber "knows" the secret, but he has no idea of what it means, although that requires none of the abstruse and esoteric skill of an Egyptologist. He writes:

"Against the Menshevik policy of subordinating the aims of the Revolution to the imperialist program of the bourgeoisie, Lenin advanced the policy of subordinating the Revolution to the full or maximum socialist program of the proletariat."

That he doesn't know what he's talking about in describing Lenin's policy, is clear to anyone who has read what Lenin advocated and did in 1917. But his ignorance on this score has no special distinction since it is no greater than his general ignorance (the part is never greater than the whole, we were taught in school). In any case, it belongs to another discussion. What he says about the Menshevik policy, however, has the distinguishing merit of being a fact, and shows that he has some notion of the "secret."

Now, if we adopt the daring hypothesis that a policy of subordinating the Russian Revolution to the program of the bourgeois - its imperialist program, no less! - was not quite the right thing to do, what, in the opinion of the Wise One, was the right policy for Marxists to pursue? On this question, we can call on Marx himself for a suggestion. Scared to death of being denounced as Marx-worshippers, we hasten to say that Marx's words do not "settle" the problems of the Russian Revolution. But they do help to "settle" them and, at the very least, they show how Marx (not Lenin the revisionist, but Marx the Marxist) would have approached these problems.

Marx is writing about the bourgeois-democratic revolution in

Germany, in his famous and all-too-little-known Address to the Communist League in 1850. We do not ask Erber to read it, because it is much too simple, crude and static for him to understand, and we have no desire to overtax the facilities at his disposal. But the reader is asked to read our very long excerpt with the patient and rewarding attention it merits, bearing in mind, as he reads it, what actually happened in Russia, what the Bolsheviks actually said and did in Russia, and what the bourgeois democracy and the "socialist opponents" actually said and did in Russia.

> "As heretofore, so in this struggle the mass of the petty bourgeoisie will maintain as long as possible an attitude of temporizing, irresolution and inactivity, and then as soon as the victory is decided take it in charge, summon the workers to be peaceful and return to work in order to avert so-called excesses, and so cut off the proletariat from the fruits of the victory. It does not lie in the power of the workers to prevent the petty-bourgeois democrats from doing this, but it does lie in their power to render their ascendancy over the armed proletariat difficult, and to dictate to them such terms that the rule of the bourgeois democrats shall bear within it from the beginning the germ of its destruction, and its displacement later by the rule of the proletariat become considerably easier. Above all things, during the conflict and right after the battle, the workers must to the fullest extent possible work against the bourgeois measures of pacification, and compel the democrats to carry into action their present terroristic phrases. They must work to prevent the immediate revolutionary excitement from being promptly suppressed after the victory. They must keep it going as long as possible. Far from setting themselves against so-called excesses, examples of popular revenge against hated individuals or public buildings with only hateful memories attached to them, they must not only tolerate these examples but take in hand their very leadership. During the struggle and after the struggle the workers must at every opportunity put forth their own demands alongside those of the bourgeois democrats. They must demand guarantees for the workers the moment the democratic citizens set about taking over the government. They must if necessary extort these guarantees, and in general see to it that the new rulers pledge themselves to every conceivable concession and promise - the surest way to compromise them. In general they must restrain in every way to the extent of their power the jubilation and enthusiasm for the new order which follows every victorious street battle, by a calm and cold-blooded conception of the situation and by an open distrust of the new government. Side by side with the new official governments, they must simultaneously set up their own revolutionary workers' governments, whether in the form of municipal committees, municipal councils or workers' clubs or workers' committees, so that the bourgeois democratic governments not only immediately lose the support of the workers, but find themselves from the very beginning supervised and threatened by authorities behind which stand the whole mass of the workers. In a word: from the first moment of victory our disturst must no longer be directed against the vanquished reactionary party, but against our previous allies, against the party which seeks to exploit the common victory for itself alone.

"2. But in order to be able energetically and threateningly to oppose this party, whose betrayal of the workers will begin with the first hour of victory, the workers must be armed and organized. The arming of the whole proletariat with muskets, rifles, cannon and ammunition must be carried out at once, and the revival of the old bourgeois militia, directed against the workers, resisted. Where this cannot be effected, the workers must endeavor to organize themselves independently as a proletarian guard with chiefs and a general staff elected by themselves and put themselves under orders not of the state but of the revolutionary municipal councils established by the workers. Where workers are employed in state service, they must arm and organize in a separate corps or as a part of the proletarian guard with the chiefs elected by themselves. Arms and munitions must not be given up under any pretext; every attempt at disarmament must if necessary be thwarted by force. Destruction of the influence of the bourgeois democrats upon the workers, immediate independent and armed organization of the workers, creation of the most difficult and compromising possible conditions for the momentarily unavoidable rule of the bourgeois democracy - these are the main points which the proletariat, and consequently the League, must have in mind during and after the coming uprising."

This utterly amazing document - amazing for the compactness and unequivocalness of its summary of Marx's views on the bourgeois-democratic state and bourgeois democracy, on the role and tactics of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and amazing for its almost uncanny word-for-word anticipation of the course of the Bolsheviks in the Revolution - deserves reading in full, down to the last line in which the German workers are told that "Their battle cry must be: the Permanent Revolution!"

(If we may be permitted a "personal note," we add the incidental information that it is to be found complete in a compilation of Marx's most important writings made by Max Eastman in 1932, which we helped to assemble, translate and edit. In his introduction, Eastman, referring to Marx's Address of 1850, says that "it will perhaps more than anything else written by Marx convey a full sense of the degree in which he was the author and creator of all the essential outlines of what we call 'Bolshevism'." Right, a hundred times over and over again! Eastman's advantage over Eerber lay in his knowledge, understanding and attempt at consistency. When, therefore, he repudiated the Russian Revolution and Bolshevism, he also repudiated Marx and the fight for socialism. It was a triumph for logic and what he called "the Anglo-Saxon mind.")

Let us jump from Marx in Germany in 1850 to Lenin in Russia in 1917. The Wise One writes:

"The Kerensky regime had done its utmost to block its further advance by frustrating the efforts of the masses to end the war and divide the land. The regime sought to stretch out its undemocratic authority as long as possible by repeatedly postponing the elections of a Constituent Assembly. If the revolution was to advance, Kerensky had to go. Only the Bolshevik party was able to show the way to the teeming, creative, democratic Soviets of 1917.

The revolution broke through the impasse and opened a road toward a solution of the land and peace questions. Far from carrying out a coup d'Etat, as their opponents charged, the Bolsheviks rode to power on the crest of an upsurge that sought to realize the long-promised objectives of land and peace."

We are beginning to get an idea of what the Marxist policy should have been, and it's not bad as a starter. "If the revolution was to advance, Kerensky had to go." Right is right. But Kerensky alone? Really, now, would that have been fair? Should Kerensky have been made the scapegoat for the "Kerensky regime," that is, for the Kerensky government? What about the "socialist opponents" - the Mensheviks and S.R.s - who made the existence of the regime possible, who were part and parcel of it, who were fully co-responsible with Kerensky in trying to "stretch out" the "undemocratic authority" of the regime "as long as possible," in doing "its utmost to block" the advance of the revolution "by frustrating the efforts of the masses to end the war and divide the land?" What gives them immunity and not Kerensky? Whatever our opinion may be, we know the opinion of the Russian workers and peasants: the whole kit and caboodle had to go! Their place had to be taken by - write it down again! - "the teeming, creative, democratic Soviets of 1917." Led by whom? By Lenin and Trotsky, because - write this down, too! - "only the Bolshevik party was able to show the way" to the Soviets. Only the Bolsheviks.

That way was the seizure of power by the workers' and peasants' Soviets, which proceeded to give the land to the peasants, control of the factories to the workers, peace to the whole country, and to usher in the greatest victory for the socialist working class in all its history.

But what about the Constituent Assembly - didn't the Bolsheviks demand that it be convened and then, after tricking the workers into giving them power on the basis of this democratic slogan, didn't these same Bolsheviks disperse the Assembly when it did convene? This brings us to Erber's second pontifical bull against the Bolsheviks, the second Error which brought about the subsequent thirty-years' horror. And for a second time, Erber is counting on the possibility that his reader's ignorance is greater than his own.

The Bolsheviks along with the Left Social-Revolutionists, did indeed disperse the Constituent Assembly. But this means that they refused to disperse or dissolve the revolutionary workers' and peasants' Soviet government in favor of a counterrevolutionary and unrepresentative parliament. That's the first point and the main point!

What was the revolutionary Soviet power? It was "far from... a coup d'Etat," it was the triumphant revolution of the "teeming, creative, democratic Soviets" which "broke through the impasse and opened a road toward a solution of the land and peace questions." This impasse was broken through against the opposition and resistance not only of Kornilov and Kerensky, but above all of the Mensheviks and S.R.s. The workers and the peasants, in their democratic Soviets, repudiated the two old parties and their leadership. They turned to the leadership of the left wing of the S.R.s and above all the leadership of Lenin's party, because - we are still

quoting from the Wise One - "only the Bolshevik party was able to show the way." That way was lined with the slogan, was it not, of "All Power to the Soviets!"

What was the Constituent Assembly that finally convened in 1918, after the Soviet revolution? It was a faint and belated echo of an outlived and irrevocable political situation. It was less representative and less democratic than the Kerensky regime had been during most of its short life. During most of its existence, the Kerensky regime was supported by the bulk of the workers, soldiers, and peasants who were democratically organized in their Soviets. It was supported by the Menshevik and S.R. parties and party leaderships which, at that time, dominated the Soviets, had their confidence and support, and represented (more or less) the actual stage of political development and thinking of the masses at the time. Given the change in the political development and thinking of the masses, this regime had to go, says the Wise and Stern One.

But what did the Constituent Assembly represent when it finally came together, despite the months of Kerenskyite, Menshevik and S.R. sabotage? It was elected on the basis of outlived party lists. It was elected by a working class and peasantry that - politically speaking - no longer existed. The S.R. party, which held about half the seats, had already split in two. But while the official party, controlled by the right wing, held most of these seats, the new left-wing S.R. party which was collaborating with the Bolsheviks in the Soviet power and which already had or was rapidly gaining the support of the great majority of the peasants, held very few of the S.R. seats. The official S.R. list had been voted by the peasants before the tremendous revolutionary shift had taken place in their ranks. The official S.R. peasant supporters no longer existed in anything like the same number that had, earlier, cast their vote for the party list. Substantially the same thing held true for the Menshevik group in the Assembly, which represented the votes of workers who had since turned completely against the Mensheviks and given their allegiance to the parties of the Soviet Power, the Bolsheviks or the Left S.R.s. The composition of the Assembly, on the day it met, no longer corresponded even approximately to the political division in the country. The sentiments and aspirations of the masses had changed radically since the party lists for the Assembly were first drawn up and after the voting had taken place. By its composition, we repeat, the Assembly was less representative than the Kerensky government in its heyday.

It is not surprising, then, that the Constituent Assembly turned out to be a counterrevolutionary parliament. The Bolsheviks and the Left S.R.s called upon the parties of the Assembly to recognize the Soviet Power. The Mensheviks and right-wing S.R.s, to say nothing of the bourgeois Kadets, refused. Understandably! They had opposed the democratic slogans which brought about the revolution. They had brought the revolution against the monarchy to an impasse. They resisted tooth and nail the attempts to "open a road toward a solution of the land and peace questions." They had opposed the slogan of "All Power to the Soviets!" Their leadership had been repudiated and overturned by the "teeming, creative,

democratic Soviets" which turned to the Bolsheviks as the "only" ones able to show the way. They had "subordinated the aims of the Revolution to the imperialist program of the bourgeoisie." They capped this not very glorious, not very socialist, not very democratic record by presenting a little amendment to the Soviet Power, namely, that it give up power and all claim to power, and take its orders henceforward from them! They asked the revolution to renounce itself, dig its own grave, jump into it and cover itself with earth hallowed by bourgeois democracy. From its very beginning, the Constituent Assembly declared war upon the Soviet Power.

Erber, the democrat, is merciless in his criticism of the Bolsheviks for dispersing the counterrevolutionary Assembly. But nowhere does he even indicate that what was involved was the demand by the Assembly to disperse and dissolve the revolutionary Soviet Government installed by the "teeming, creative, democratic Soviets of 1917"! Erber is for the Soviets so long as they confine themselves to teeming, but not if they exercize their democratic rights and mission to create a proletarian, socialist power. What is the difference between the Russian Assembly, which he accepts, and the German Scheidemann whom, he says, he rejects? Only this: Scheidemann succeeded in crushing the German Soviets and the Assembly failed to crush the Russian Soviets - that's all.

It may be asked: "Even if it is granted that this Assembly was unrepresentative, why didn't the Bolsheviks call for new elections which would have made possible the convocation of a parliament corresponding democratically to the political division in the country?"

The Bolsheviks preferred the Soviet (Commune-type) form of government to the parliamentary form from the standpoint of the working class and democracy and as the only state form under which the transition to socialism could be achieved. The Bolsheviks did not invent the Soviets, they did not create them. The Soviets developed spontaneously among the masses and, without asking anybody's approval, became organs for the defense of the demands of the masses and organs of power. The wisdom and superiority of the Bolsheviks consisted in understanding the full meaning and social potentiality of these democratic organs which they themselves did not fabricate artificially but which they found at hand as a natural product of the revolution. Among the Bolsheviks, it was Lenin who understood them best. His views were not concealed, hidden in his pocket to be brought out only after the masses had been tricked into giving the Bolsheviks state power. Immediately upon his return to Russia, Lenin saw that the Soviets were already a state power, a unique power, dual to the official state power and in immanent conflict with it. Almost the first words he wrote on the subject (Pravda, April 22, 1917) were these:

> "It is a power entirely different from that generally to be found in the parliamentary bourgeois-democratic republics of the usual type still prevailing in the advanced countries of Europe and America. This circumstance is often forgotten, often not reflected on, yet it is the crux of the matter. This power is of exactly the same type as the Paris Commune of 1871.

The fundamental characteristics of this type are: 1) the source of power is not a law previously discussed and enacted by parliament, but the direct initiative of the masses from below, in their localities - outright 'usurpation,' to use a current expression; 2) the direct arming of the whole people in place of the police and the army, which are institutions separated from the people and opposed to the people; order in the state under such a power is maintained by the armed workers and peasants themselves, by the armed people itself; 3) officials and bureaucrats are either replaced by the direct rule of the people itself or at least placed under special control; they not only become elected officials, but are also subject to recall at the first demand of the people; they are reduced to the position of simple agents; from a privileged stratum occupying 'posts' remunerated on a high bourgeois scale, they become workers of a special 'branch,' remunerated at a salary not exceeding the ordinary pay of a competent worker.

"This, and this alone, constitutes the essence of the Paris Commune as a specific type of state."

Lenin prized the Soviet type of state, from the very beginning of the revolution, for its superiority from the standpoint of the workers and of genuine democracy. His view on the Constituent Assembly, furthermore, is most concisely and clearly set forth in the first two of his theses on the subject:

"1. The demand for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly was a perfectly legitimate part of the program of revolutionary Social-Democracy, because in a bourgeois republic a Constituent Assembly represents the highest form of democracy and because, in setting up a parliament, the imperialist republic which was headed by Kerensky was preparing to fake the elections and violate democracy in a number of ways.

"2. While demanding the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, revolutionary Social Democracy has ever since the beginning of the revolution of 1917 repeatedly emphasized that a republic of Soviets is a higher form of democracy than the usual bourgeois republic with a Constituent Assembly."

Lenin wrote his views about the Soviets, and repeatedly stated that "Humanity has not yet evolved and we do not as yet know of a type of government superior to and better than the Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Laborers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies," not after the Soviets had rallied to the support of his party, but from the very start, in April, when the Soviets were overwhelmingly under the leadership and control of the Mensheviks and S.R.s, with the Bolsheviks as a small minority among them. Lenin wrote his views on the Soviets and the Constituent Assembly, on the Commune-type of state and the parliamentary type of state, for the entire political public to see and read. Anyone able to understand anything in politics was able to understand Lenin.

Once the Soviet power had been established with the decisive support of the masses of workers and peasants, the Constituent As-

sembly could not represent anything more than a throwback to bourgeois democracy, a throwback in the course of which the new Soviet power would have to be crushed, as it was crushed later on in Germany, Bavaria, Austria and Hungary. To have tried to bring into life a "good" bourgeois parliament when life had already made a reality of a far more democratic form of government established by the masses themselves and enjoying their support and confidence, would have meant a victory for reaction. That in the first place.

In the second place, we do not hesitate to say that, abstractly, a second and a third or fourth attempt to establish a more democratic parliament, could not be ruled out as impossible, or unnecessary, or contrary to the interests of the working class - abstractly. Similarly, you cannot rule out a decision by the revolutionists themselves, under certain circumstances, to dissolve Soviets that came into existence under different circumstances. The Soviets may be too weak to take supreme power in a country but strong enough to prevent the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois parties from consolidating their power on a reactionary basis; the bourgeoisie may be too weak to crush the Soviets but strong enough to hold on to its rule. The revolutionists or the Soviets may not enjoy sufficient popular support; the bourgeoisie may hesitate before a civil war in which everything is at stake. Decisive sections of the people may believe insistently in the possibility of finding a solution in a more democratic parliamentary system and at the same time refuse to allow the new proletarian democracy to be destroyed. History knows all sorts of combinations of circumstances and is very fertile in creating new combinations. How long it would be possible for revolutionary Soviets (a semi-state) to exist side by side with an uncertain bourgeois parliament (another semi-state) under any and all conceivable circumstances, cannot be answered categorically or in advance. All we need to say is this: there are historical laws of revolution, we know these laws, and we also know that there have been and will probably continue to be exceptions to these laws.

However, it is not this abstract question that is being discussed, important though it is in its own right. We are not saying that in every socialist revolution, regardless of the country, the period, the economic and political conditions in which it develops, Soviets will arise; or if they do that they will develop just the way they did in Russia, that the workers' organs will come into existence in head-on conflict with the bourgeois parliamentary system, that these workers' organs will have to disperse or dissolve the parliament in the same way that we saw in Russia, that the bourgeoisie will have to be overturned by violence, that the ousted bourgeoisie is absolutely certain to resist with armed force, that a civil war is absolutely inevitable. It is conceivable that the rise of the socialist proletariat is so swift, mighty and irresistible; that the economy is in such a state of disorder and the bourgeoisie in such a demoralized, depressed and hopeless state, that it decides to throw in its hand without a real fight. It is conceivable that under such or similar circumstances the classical bourgeois parliament can be so drastically revised from within its own organs that it becomes transformed into something

radically different. All laws, including historical laws, have their exceptions. But again, that is not what we are discussing here. We are discussing what actually happened in the Russian Revolution.

And what actually happened, that is, the way the social and political forces actually meshed and drew apart and clashed in Russia during the revolution, shows that the Bolsheviks acted as revolutionary socialists in the struggle around the Constituent Assembly and not like political science professors drawing diagrams on a highschool blackboard.

Which brings us to the third place - the political reality. Once the Soviets took power, the counterrevolution instantly adopted the slogan of the Constituent Assembly even before the Constituent actually convened. The true representatives of the classes regarded neither the Soviets nor the Constituent Assembly as abstractions. For the reaction as well as for the petty-bourgeois democracy (each from its own standpoint), the Constituent Assembly became the rallying cry, the banner, the instrument for the struggle to overthrow the Soviet Power of the workers' and peasants, which also meant to overthrow all the achievements obtained by this power and expected from it. The conflict between "Soviet" and "Assembly" on the blackboard is one thing. In the Russia of 1917-1918, it was a violent and irreconcilable conflict between the classes. In Erber's document, it need hardly be added, the class struggle does not exist. Or if it does, why, it can easily be straightened out by men of good will. The Assembly demanded the capitulation of the Soviets; it could not exist without such a capitulation. Men of good will were of little use in this conflict. A civil war broke out, and as the German phrase has it, the weapon of criticism gave way to the criticism of weapons.

The civil war that followed is clearly the fault of the Bolsheviks. Of that, there is no doubt in Erber's mind. It's notoriously true, too! If the Bolsheviks had not taken power, there would have been no need for a civil war to crush them! Even before the Bolsheviks took power, as a matter of fact, if the Soviets (we mean, of course, the teeming, democratic Soviets) had not existed at all, there might not even have been a Kornilovist-monarchist plot to drown them in a bloodbath. Indeed, we may even state it more generally: If workers were not so insistent and militant in trying to impose their modest demands on obstinate and reactionary employers, the latter would find no need of subsidizing thugs and fascists to beat and shoot workers. You can hear that philosophy expounded in any highschool (third term), from a thousand pulpits and ten thousand newspaper pages: If labor gets unreasonable in its demands and doesn't know its proper place, well then, we don't like it, you know, but if that happens, Fascism just is inevitable. Yessirree! It's notoriously true. It is also true that if you stop breathing altogether, not even your worst enemy will dream of strangling you.

Oh, wait a minute! Erber is not defending the bourgeoisie and the reaction! He's really radical, and he doesn't care much about what is done to the bourgeoisie. What upsets him is that

the Bolsheviks took power and dispersed the Assembly in opposition to the workers. Do you see now? Listen to this little sneer, lifted right out of the literature of the professional anti-Bolshevik (and the professional anti-unionist, we might add):

"As for the masses who constituted the Soviets, Lenin held that they would be won to the idea in time. It was for the vanguard to act and explain later. Those of the workers who refused to accept this concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat had to be handled firmly, for their own good."

Our little animal is a vicious one, isn't he? Lenin was for imposing his dictatorship upon the masses and explaining to them later. And if they didn't go along, why, shoot the rabble down - for their own good! He turned out pretty bad, this Lenin. Fights for months with democratic slogans; fools everybody, including the democratic Soviets which brought him to power on the crest of their upsurge and without a coup d'Etat on his part, and then, a very few weeks later, the mask is off! He acts for their own good; he shoots them for their own good. There's an authentic portrait of Lenin for you, an unretouched photograph of him!

What is the proof for this insolent charge? One proof is the famous "demonstration" of January 18, 1918, organized by the reactionary City Duma of Petrograd against the Soviet Power and for the Constituent Assembly. The "demonstration" was dispersed by Red Guards. To show the magnitude of this Bolshevik atrocity, Erber quotes an article by Maxim Gorky, "whose honesty as a reporter of the events can be accepted." We hear Gorky burning with indignation at the charge that this was a bourgeois demonstration and denouncing the Bolsheviks for encouraging "the soldiers and Red Guards /to/ snatch the revolutionary banners from the hands of the workers."

Gorky's honesty, guaranteed by Erber personally, makes him a good reporter of events! Gorky was, to be sure, an honest man and a socialist. But on revolutionary problems, he had no more qualification than the next man, except perhaps that he was warmly sentimental, almost always confused in the political conflicts of the Marxian movement, and a bitter enemy of the Bolshevik Revolution for a long time, above all, at the time it occurred. If Erber picks him out as his reporter of events, it is a clear case of like calling unto like. Erber is attracted by Gorky's impressionism and by his confusion, which he likes to think is no greater than his own muddleheadness.

You read Erber's lurid quotation from Gorky, and your mind's eye conjures up the image of Scheidemann, Noske and Ebert mowing down the German workers with machine guns. Erber has his countries, parties and men mixed up a little. Who was involved in this huge demonstration which, if you follow Erber, you might think was terminated with workers dead and dying by the thousands? Three days before Gorky's anguished article, his own paper, Novaia Zhizn, reported the demonstration as follows: "About 11:30 some two hundred men bearing a flag with the words, 'All Power to the Constituent Assembly,' came across the Liteiny Bridge." There is the imposing

number of the Petrograd population that followed the clarion call of the bourgeoisie, the Mensheviks and the S.R.s to proclaim the sovereign rights of the Constituent Assembly which they had so successfully sabotaged for six months. One hundred plus one hundred, making a grand total of two hundred men, all good and true!

The other proof is this: "Gorky is quite correct in asking what the bourgeoisie had to cheer about in the convocation of a Constituent Assembly in which the bourgeois party, the Kadets, held only fifteen seats out of 520, and in which the extreme right Social Revolutionaries, who had been identified with Kerensky, were thoroughly discredited."

We will even try to explain to this innocent what the bourgeoisie had to cheer about. A Constituent with only 15 Kadets out of 520 seats and a majority for the S.R.s, even right-wing S.R.s, would give the bourgeoisie very little to cheer about, if this Constituent were proclaiming its sovereignty against the Czarist Duma. The same Constituent, however, in proclaiming its sovereignty against the revolutionary power of the democratic Soviets of the workers and peasants, would give the bourgeoisie, inside Russia and all over the world, plenty to cheer about. And it did cheer about it!! How explain that mystery? And how explain a few other mysteries?

Between them, the right-wing S.R.s and the Mensheviks had the majority of the seats in the Constituent. Since it was an ever-so-democratic Constituent, this must have meant that the two parties were supported by the majority of the population. The Constituent is dispersed by the Bolsheviks, who do not have the masses but who act for them and explain later, and who shoot them down for their own good. So far, so good. The outraged S.R.s and Mensheviks return to the outraged masses, with the declaration, as one of them put it, that "The Constituent Assembly alone is capable of uniting all parts of Russia to put an end to the civil war which is speeding up the economic ruin of the country, and to solve all essential questions raised by the revolution." The masses want democracy and the solution of all these essential questions. The Mensheviks and S.R.s promise to solve them. In fact, Erber tells us, they are now really for peace and for land to the peasants. What is more, the roles are reversed on the matter of democracy. The Bolsheviks are for the despotic dictatorship over the masses and "democratic slogans became a weapon of their socialist opponents."

We are in 1918. The Bolshevik power is established in only a very tiny part of Russia and consolidated in none. The anti-Bolsheviks have political control in a multitude of localities - the great majority - and they even have considerable armed forces at their disposal. The Bolsheviks do not have what Stalin, for example, has today: a huge, tightly-knit political machine, hordes of privileged bureaucrats, a tremendous army, an all-pervading and terrifying G.P.U., and the like. They cannot simply dispose of their opponents by force or terror, as Stalin does. It is still a fair and square political fight, with the big odds still apparently in favor of the "socialist opponents" who now have democratic

slogans as their weapons and the democratic Constituent Assembly, in the flesh, as their banner.

The unexplained mystery, hidden to Erber behind seven of his own fogs, is this: How account for the fact that the "socialist opponents" get nowhere with their "democratic slogans" and their Constituent Assembly? Aren't they the parties of the workers and peasants, as proved by the majority they registered at the opening of the Constituent? Aren't they now armed to the toes with "democratic slogans" which, only a day ago, were so vastly popular with the masses that the cunning Bolsheviks won power with their aid? Thorny questions, aren't they? But Erber is not going to get any thorns in his fingers if he can help it. Solution? He leaves the questions strictly alone.

That's a solution for him, but it does not answer the questions. The answer gives us the second key to the mystification: The bourgeoisie had everything to cheer about in the convocation of the Constituent Assembly - <u>everything</u>. It could not expect to restore its power in its own name in the Russia of 1917-1918. But it could hope to restore it behind the stalking horse of bourgeois democracy, the Constituent Assembly and its Menshevik-S.R. champions. Shall we look into this point for a minute?

Here, for example, we have the report of the U.S. Consul Dewitt Poole to the American Ambassador in Russia, written in Petrograd exactly one week after the final session of the Constituent. He is reporting on his visit five weeks earlier, to Rostow-on-Don "to investigate the question of the establishment of an American Consulate in that city." During his visit, Mr. Poole meets with notorious monarchist and Cossack counterrevolutionists like General Kaledin, General Alexeyev and others connected with General Kornilov. The anti-Bolshevik united front is being formed into a "Council" in the Southeast of Russia immediately after the Soviet Power is established and before the Constituent even assembles. Let us read, and with profit, every one of the lines that we have room to quote from Mr. Poole's report:

> "Negotiations are in progress for the admission to the Council of three representative Social Democrats, namely, Chaikovsky, Kuskova and Plekhanov; and two Social Revolutionaries, namely, Argunov and Potresov.
>
> "On the conservative side the Council, as now constituted, includes, besides the three generals (Alexeyev, Kornilov and Kaledin), Mr. Milyukov; Prince Gregory Trubetskoy; Professor Struve; Mr. Fedorov, representing the banking and other large commercial interests of Moscow; two other Kadets or nationalist patriots yet to be chosen; Mr. Bogayevsky, the vice ataman of the Don Cossacks; and Mr. Paramonov, a rich Cossack. The Council will undoubtedly undergo changes in personnel, but a framework of an equal number of conservatives and radicals, not counting the three generals, appears to have been adopted.
>
> "In pursuance of the agreement with Mr. Savinkov, a proclamation to the Russian people has been drafted....It refers

to the suppression of the Constituent Assembly and asks for the support of the people in defending that institution. It is sound on the subject of the continuance of the war. The proclamation will be issued in the name of the league, unsigned, because it is frankly admitted that it has not yet been possible to obtain the names of persons who, it is thought, would be thoroughly acceptable to the people at large."

Isn't every line of our wonderful Mr. Poole covered with mother-of-pearl, even though he never, we suppose, read Engels' letter to Conrad Schmidt? What did the bourgeoisie have to cheer about in the convocation of the Constituent Assembly? Gorky didn't know. Erber doesn't know yet. False modesty prevents us from saying we know. But Generals Alexeyev, Kornilov and Kaledin - they know. Prince Trubetskoy - he knows. Gospadin Fedorov, "representing the banking and other commercial interests of Moscow" - he knows. Gospadin Paramonov, a Cossack who happens also to be rich - he knows. Alas, every one of them has passed from our midst to enjoy the reward of the pious; not one of them is alive today to tell Erber what he knows. And that's a double pity, because the proclamation of the Council was so "sound on the subject of the continuance of the war" - which is another subject that is of interest to Erber.

General Denikin issued a proclamation on January 9, 1918, before the hideous Bolsheviks dispersed the Assembly, proclaiming the aims of his "Volunteer Army."

"The new army will defend the civil liberties in order to enable the master of the Russian land - the Russian people - to express through their elected Constituent Assembly their sovereign will. All classes, parties, and groups of the population must accept that will. The army and those taking part in its formation will absolutely submit to the legal power appointed by the Constituent Assembly."

This Czarist General did not have much luck either. He was ready to "absolutely submit" to the Constituent, but he couldn't find anyone else who panted to follow his inspiring democratic lead. "The volunteer movement," he wrote later in his souvenirs, "did not become a national movement....At its very inception... the army acquired a distinct class character." Erber should be compelled by law - democratically enforced - to read this. There are classes in society and their interests are irreconcilable. Above all in revolutionary times, all groups, movements and institutions "acquire a distinct class character." So distinct that a Czarist general finally sees it. But not Erber.

Here is another Czarist General, Kornilov, and here are five instructive points from his program of February, 1918:

"(3) To reestablish freedom of industry and commerce and to abolish nationalization of private financial enterprises.

"(4) To reestablish private property.

"(5) To reestablish the Russian Army on the basis of strict

military discipline. The army should be formed on a volunteer basis...without committees, commissars, or elective officers....

"(8) The Constituent Assembly dissolved by the Bolsheviks should be restored....

"(9) The government established by General Kornilov is responsible only to the Constituent Assembly....The Constituent Assembly, as the only sovereign of the Russian land, will determine the fundamental laws of the Russian constitution and will give final form to the organization of the state."

It's a double pity that Kornilov joined his ancestors in the unsuccessful attack on Yekaterinodar a few weeks later, so that he can't explain what the bourgeoisie had to cheer about, either.

Maybe we can find a hint from the other paladin of the Constituent, General Alexeyev, who is also armed to the teeth with "democratic slogans" (after the Bolsheviks take power but not, we regret to note, before), plus 100,000,000 rubles appropriated for his democratic efforts by the no less democratic government of France. In a perplexed and gloomy letter to the Chief of the French Mission in Kiev, the General writes in February, 1918:

"The Cossack regiments coming from the front are in a state of complete moral dissolution. Bolshevik ideas have found a great many followers among the Cossacks, with the result that they refuse to fight even in defense of their own territory. (Alexeyev means, of course, that these stupid Cossack regiments refuse to fight for the French banks.) They are firmly convinced that Bolshevism is directed solely against the wealthy classes...and not against the region as a whole, where there is order, bread, coal, iron and oil."

We have found the hint! In the eyes of the masses, even of the politically backward and privileged Cossacks, the Constituent Assembly, the fight for it, the men and groups leading that fight, represent not democracy but the wealthy classes, the restorationists, the reaction, and at best, the compromisers and confusionists. In the eyes of the masses, the Bolsheviks and the Soviets represent the fight for freedom and the assurance that it can be won. They represent the movement "directed solely against the wealthy classes."

That is why the Mensheviks and S.R.s, with all their votes, and with all their "democratic slogans" and their Constituent Assembly, never and nowhere inspired the masses, never and nowhere recruited them to the banner of struggle to overturn the Soviet Power, and succeeded only in bringing the most shameful discredit upon themselves. That is why the "anti-democratic" Bolsheviks consolidated the Soviet Power among the democratic masses in spite of odds almost without historical parallel. The "theoretical dispute" was decided freely by the masses, decided in struggle.

So far as main lines are concerned, could the Bolsheviks have followed some other course. Erber has an alternative to suggest. He writes:

"It is one of the unquestioned myths of our movement, that the Bolsheviks, once they were in power, had no other alternative but the course they pursued."

What did that course they actually took lead to? Erber knows. They fooled the masses into putting them into power. They shot down workers...for their own good. They shot down socialists... for their own good. They refused to dissolve the Soviet Power and, to maintain themselves, they terrorized everyone else. A terrible business, taken all in all. But there was once another myth about the Bolsheviks, and this is how it was once described:

> "Far from the historical myth forged in the recent past by the anti-Bolshevik 'moralizers,' the Bolsheviks did not take power with any wickedly conceived plans for iron dictatorship and terror. Witness their naive generosity toward armed counterrevolutionaries in the first months, the so-called 'honeymoon' period, of the Soviet power. The morals of a revolutionary class are the morals of an army in combat. Its own code of conduct is bound to be conditioned by the sort of an enemy it faces and the conditions under which it fights. It is very naive - and most dangerous - to believe that the revolutionary forces will place adherence to a pre-conceived code of conduct above the need of survival in battle when confronted with these alternatives."

Not bad. Who wrote it? Naturally, Erber, in one of his long series of documents, just a few years ago. Against whom did he write it? Against those who are "very naive and most dangerous," that is, against muddleheads. Against whom, then? Against himself, in anticipation. But is it such a bad thing to dispel historical myths? No, it is an excellent thing. Any myth you dispel is a step in human progress. Only, it helps if you know how to distinguish myth from reality.

Now, what was the good, democratic, socialist, practical alternative course that the Bolsheviks could have pursued if they hadn't revised Marx and dispersed the Constituent? Before we quote further from Erber, we must halt for a solemn moment. The reader would be well advised to make his peace with his Maker, for he is about to die laughing. He can save himself from this fate only by deciding to read no further. We, however, who like a good joke as well as the next man, can take the chance. Instead of dispersing the Assembly, the Bolshevik course should have been -- press down hard on your sides now --

> "A government that was responsible to the Constituent Assembly, either an S.R. government or a coalition of the worker and peasant parties (Bolshevik, Menshevik, Left S.R. and Right S.R. parites)....It would have experienced many internal crises and may have found it necessary to refer the disputes to the people in the form of new elections. However, such a government would have had a much wider base than the Bolshevik regime and the victory over the Czarist and bourgeois counterrevolution would have been far easier, quicker and less costly.

By Jupiter, this is no commonplace genius we have here! What dazzling audacity and sweep of thought, hammerlock grip of logic,

boulder-crushing simplicity, graceful persuasiveness of argument, blade-edge keenness of concept, anxiously-concealed modesty! This is no small triumph. For thirty years now, and longer, men and women of all faiths and estates have ripped their brains to shreds trying to find the answer to the question of how the bloody conflict of the parties of the Russian Revolution, and the consequences of this conflict, could have been averted. It is the story of "The Purloined Letter" all over again, but on what a world-shaping scale! The answer was there all the time, right in front of us. But like the purloined letter, to perceive it took the combination of genius and simpleness which distinguishes the Auguste Dupin from the gendarme on the street. How avert the conflict of the parties and its consequences? By stopping the conflict! By uniting the parties! By forming a coalition! Where? In the Constituent Assembly, the Temple of the Faith and Fountain of All Blessings.

How simple that would have been, had anyone been gifted enough to think of it in 1917-1918! Just take, as the first two ingredients for the coalition - the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks - and mix them together thoroughly. The Mensheviks, Erber told us, had the "policy of subordinating the aims of the revolution to the imperialist program of the bourgeoisie." Lenin "advanced the policy of subordinating the revolution to the full or maximum socialist program of the proletariat." After all, is that so much of a conflict in policy as to prevent men of good taste and good will from getting together? After all, don't you have to be practical in politics? After all, when there's a difference of opinion you can't go biting a man's head off. You compromise on a little point here and a little one there. You take a little, you give a little. All you needed, then, was for the Mensheviks to give a little to the "socialist program of the proletariat," and for the Bolsheviks to give a little to the "imperialist program of the bourgeoisie." That would be the least any reasonable person could do in all fairness to both classes.

Naturally, such a coalition "would have experienced many internal crises." If not many, then at least a few. Erber is a statesman of the new day, and such things do not throw him into unseemly panic. A way can always be found by men of good will. If, for example, the first question on the agenda of the wonderful coalition, with its "much wider base," was what to do with the Soviet Power, that could easily be disposed of. The Mensheviks and S.R.s make a motion to dissolve the Soviet Power. The Bolsheviks and, let us say, the Left S.R.s oppose the motion. There is a fair and square discussion, two speakers on either side, with equal time for all, and then - the democratic vote. It is carefully counted by two impartial tellers. The majority of the coalition cabinet has voted for the motion. The Soviet Power is dissolved, so is the Red Guard. The revolution is buried in a simple but dignified casket. The Bolsheviks, democrats to the marrow of their bones, shrug their shoulders. "Guess we lost that one," they say with perfect good humor. "What's the next point on the agenda?" The first little internal crisis of the coalition, and just see how easily it was overcome! All we needed was men of good will, a sense of humor, and a thorough knowledge of Engels' letter to Conrad Schmidt with glossary notes by Erber.

Well, and good, the Grand Coalition is formed. The Mensheviks do not demand as the price for collaborating with the Bolsheviks that Lenin and Trotsky be kicked out summarily (as they did demand). The Left S.R.s promise that if there is a disagreement over signing a peace treaty with the Germans, they will not rush into the streets with rifles to overthrow the Bolsheviks or the coalition as a whole (as they did do). The Right S.R.s also swallow themselves whole and agree to the coalition if the Soviets are suppressed. At last, the coalition is here. Now, "what," asks Erber, "would have been the nature of the state that would have emerged under such a regime, and what would have been its social basis?" To this he answers:

> "In its essentials it would have been what Lenin had in mind for Russia until February, 1917, under the formula of a 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'; a state which would have cleansed Russia of the vestiges of feudalism and curbed the power of the big bourgeoisie through the nationalization of monopolies and trusts, while leaving private enterprise and the market undisturbed. The participation of the workers in economic life through collective bargaining and measures of workers' control of production would have been far more extensive and democratic under such a regime, despite capitalist economic relations, than was the case after a year of Bolshevik rule...."

It is hard to bring ourselves to discuss the merits of this mouldy piece of Scheidemannistic counterrevolution at any length. It shows such a wilful ignorance of the social structure and the class relations in Russia (we insist, wilful ignorance, because we know that Erber once knew something about them), that it has no claim at all on a detailed reply.

One of the unique features of Russian social and political life lay precisely in the inseparability of the landlords and capitalists It is precisely this feature of Russia that brought Marxists like Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Mehring and (the pre-war) Kautsky on one common side, against the Mensheviks on the other side. The real Marxists all agreed on at least this much: The coming bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia cannot be carried out under the leadership of the bourgeoisie because the real class and economic relations in Russia prevent it from conducting a struggle against the feudalist landlords with whom they are either identical or inseparably identified in a hundred social and economic ways. The democratic revolution can be carried out in Russia only under the leadership of the proletariat. Up to that point - agreement.

The disagreements began only after that point, and it is after that point that Trotsky developed his now familiar theory of the permanent revolution. Trotsky has demonstrated - which is of course the reason for Erber's prudent silence on this score - that whatever Lenin's formula may have been before the revolution, the actual course of events forced the workers, supported by the peasants, to take power. He has demonstrated in numerous writings that nobody has successfully challenged, that once in power, the working class and the Bolsheviks, who had not advanced the policy of the "full or maximum socialist program of the proletariat" (as Erber ignorantly

or maliciously states), found themselves compelled to pass over to the "maximum program" in order to carry out the program of the democratic revolution. What compelled them? Among other things, and not least of all, the uncontrollable class reaction of the bourgeoisie. It understood what neither the Mensheviks nor their dim feeble echo understood: that the assault upon "the vestiges of feudalism" and the "curb" upon their own power, if carried through seriously, could not but be an assault upon its own class position, could not but mean the end of all its economic and social power. The only way to maintain "capitalist economic relations," now so dear to Erber, was to abstain from a real cleansing of the stables of feudalism in Russia.

Why, at bottom, didn't the Mensheviks use the "democratic slogans" as their weapons before 1918? Because they were wicked men without good will? No, they loved the workers and loved democracy. But to carry out the democratic slogans against the "vestiges of feudalism" and despotism, would have brought them into violent conflict with the bourgeoisie. It would have forced them to break with the bourgeoisie. It would have forced them to lead in the establishment of a democratic republic without the bourgeoisie and against it. But that is exactly what they could not do and did not do because they were tied to their dogma that, since the Russian Revolution is a bourgeois-democratic revolution, it must remain under the leadership of the bourgeoisie and within the framework of capitalist society. They remained captives of this dogma throughout the revolutionary storm. Result: they were paralyzed in the struggle for freedom, they lost the support of the workers, and came out of the revolution eternally and shamefully compromised.

All our muddlehead proposes, with that insight you get only from hindsight, is that the Bolsheviks should have followed exactly the same course as the Mensheviks. The high revolutionary role which he asks that the revolutionary party should have assigned itself in the Russian Revolution, boils down to this: Maintain capitalist economic relations (in plain English: capitalism) which the workers themselves were smashing; and smash the state power of the "teeming, creative, democratic Soviets" which the workers themselves were maintaining. And what, we ask in a conspiratorial whisper, what if some of the workers resisted the execution of this modest program? No problem! It would be, to quote the muddlehead, "for the vanguard to act and explain later." The workers would have "to be handled firmly, for their own good." The only trouble is that when the Mensheviks and S.R.s with a little help from Kaledin, Alexeyev, Kornilov, Churchill, Wilson and Poincare, did try to execute this program, for the good of the workers and peasants - the rabble didn't know what was good for them.

"Lenin subjected to merciless ridicule Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution right up to the outbreak of the February Revolution."

Thus Erber, from whom nothing can be kept secret. So what? This: if Lenin had kept up this merciless ridicule, and stuck to the theory of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," the Constituent Assembly would be going full blast to this day and "despite capitalist economic relations," the world would be a distinctly pleasant place to live in, free from Fascism

and above all from Stalinism. But what happened? We don't know exactly why it happened or how, we don't know what got into Lenin's democratic head, but that which did happen was the worst thing imaginable: Lenin took over Trotsky's mercilessly ridiculed theory. From then on Russia, along with the rest of the world, was a gone goose. The Bolsheviks "set foot on a course from which there was no turning back."

Now you know everything, for just as no secret can be kept from Erber, so Erber keeps no secrets from you. We have Stalinism today (and Lord alone knows what else) because of the theory of the permanent revolution. All you Social Democrats, liberals, ex-Marxists, ex-Trotskyists and other professional anti-Bolsheviks, take note! Do you still think Stalinism flowed from Leninism? You are wrong! From Leninism, the authentic, the genuine, the unrevised unretouched, would have flowed milk, honey, democracy and a world of other blessings. The real truth has finally been discovered by the Wise One Who Drips Water after thirty years of world history and thirty weeks of concentrated meditation. It deserves to be set off in a separate paragraph:

Stalinism flows from Trotskyism!

We don't even dream of questioning a conclusion of such epoch-making proportions. We can only say, once our breath has come back to us, that sweeping though it is, it is not sweeping enough. Why from Trotskyism alone? The course of the Bolsheviks, seduced by Trotsky, followed very strictly (more strictly than even they knew at the time) the prescriptions of Marx and Engels on the course that revolutionary socialists should follow in the bourgeois revolution, the course they will have to adopt toward "democracy." In this connection, a few highly revealing words from Engels will suffice to show where the responsibility for the Error really lies, where it all began. We quote from his letter to August Bebel on December 11, 1884:

> "As to pure democracy and its role in the future I do not share your opinion. Obviously it plays a far more subordinate part in Germany than in other countries with an older industrial development. But that does not prevent the possibility, when the moment of revolution comes, of its acquiring a temporary importance as the most radical bourgeois party...and as the final sheet-anchor of the whole bourgeois and even feudal regime. At such a moment the whole reactionary mass falls in behind it and strengthens it; everything which used to be reactionary behaves as democratic....This has happened in every revolution: the tamest party still remaining in any way capable of government comes to power with the others just because it is only in this party that the defeated see their last possibility of salvation. Now it cannot be expected that at the moment of crisis we shall already have the majority of the electorate and therefore of the nation behind us. The whole bourgeois class and the remnants of the feudal landowning class, a large section of the petty bourgeoisie and also of the rural population will then mass themselves around the most radical bourgeois party, which will then make the most extreme revolutionary gestures, and I consider it very possible that it

will be represented in the provisional government and even temporarily form its majority. How, as a minority, one should not act in that case, was demonstrated by the social-democratic minority in the Paris Revolution of February, 1848..

"In any case our sole adversary on the day of the crisis and on the day after the crisis will be the whole collective reaction which will group itself around pure democracy, and this, I think, should not be lost sight of."

An absolutely remarkable letter! An absolutely remarkable anticipation of what happened in Russia in 1917-1918 and of just how it happened! No wonder we revolutionists have such tremendous esteem for our two great teachers, Marx and Engels. Such intellectual titans come but once a century, and not always that often. --And what did Engels mean by how "one should not act in that case?" What was his reference to the February, 1848, revolution in Paris? He explained in a letter to the Italian socialist, Turati, on January 26, 1894:

"After the common victory we might perhaps be offered some seats in the new Government - but always in a minority. Here lies the greatest danger. After the February Revolution in 1848 the French socialistic Democrats (the Reforme people, Ledru Rollin, Louis Blanc, Flocon, etc.) were incautious enough to accept such positions. As a minority in the Government they involuntarily bore the responsibility for all the infamy and treachery which the majority, composed of pure Republicans, committed against the working class, while at the same time their participation in the government completely paralyzed the revolutionary action of the working class they were supposed to represent."

Now perhaps Erber will know, from Engels, who was not present in the Russian Revolution, but who, in exchange, had over Erber the advantage of revolutionary understanding and revolutionary spirit - what the bourgeoisie and the "whole collective reaction" had to cheer about when it "grouped itself around pure democracy" in the form of the Constituent Assembly and its struggle against the Soviet Power. Now perhaps he will know why the Bolsheviks refused, in advance, his kind proposal that they enter as a minority in the Grand Coalition he dreamed up. Perhaps he will also understand why Eastman and others like him, in rejecting the Bolshevik Revolution, also and necessarily reject Marx, why they do not come to a ridiculous halt after condemning Lenin and Trotsky but go right back to the "source" of the Error. Once they have rejected the Russian Revolution and Marx, they have the elementary decency not to pretend that they are still interested in the fight for socialism.

We will dwell even less upon Erber's third "charge" against Lenin - that he gambled everything on a victory of the revolution in Germany. Not only because the charge is false and was specifically repudiated more than once by Lenin himself, as everyone who has read Lenin's writings knows and as everyone who takes the right to talk about the question ought to know, but because it does not merit more than a few contemptuous words.

To Lenin, you see, the whole Bolshevik revolution, the whole course he pursued in it, was a gamble. "If Lenin won, history would absolve the Bolsheviks of all the charges their socialist opponents made against them." A fine democrat's morality this is! A fine piece of gross and typically "American" success-philistinism this is! If the revolution had triumphed in Germany, all Lenin's crimes against Marxism, against socialism, against democracy, all his anti-democratism and contempt for the masses who have to be shot for their own good, all of this and more would have been pardonable. Scheidemann, who saved Germany from the socialist revolution, therewith saves our stern judge from the unpleasant task of pardoning the criminal.

Contrast this low-quality philistinism with Marx, whose revolutionary spirit Erber will never see in a mirror - with Marx writing about the Paris Commune which, we may recall, he was at first opposed to establishing. "World history would indeed be very easy to make, if the struggle were taken up only on condition of infallibly favorable chances," he wrote to Kugelmann. Give Erber infallibly favorable chances for victory and he'll plunge into the revolution with only the least bit of hesitation. And not he alone....

Contrast Erber and every word he writes with the critical appraisal of the Bolsheviks written in prison by Rosa Luxemburg, who is invoked against revolutionary socialism nowadays by every turncoat and backslider who wouldn't reach up to her soles if he stood on tiptoes:

> "That the Bolsheviks have based their policy entirely upon the world proletarian revolution is the clearest proof of their political farsightedness and firmness of principle and of the bold scope of their policies."

You will never see that quoted from the turncoats who have drafted Luxemburg into the crusade against Bolshevism against her will. Nor will you see this quoted:

> "The party of Lenin was the only one which grasped the mandate and duty of a truly revolutionary party and which, by the slogan - 'All power in the hands of the proletariat and peasantry' - insured the continued development of the revolution....
>
> "Moreover, the Bolsheviks immediately set as the aim of this seizure of power a complete, far-reaching revolutionary program: not the safeguarding of bourgeois democracy, but a dictatorship of the proletariat for the purpose of realizing socialism. Thereby they won for themselves the imperishable historic distinction of having for the first time proclaimed the final aim of socialism as the direct program of practical politics."

We can see now how much right Erber has to drag Rosa Luxemburg into court as a fellow-detractor of the Bolsheviks, how much right he has to mention her views in the same breath with his own. Fortunately, Luxemburg is not a defenseless corpse. She left a rich

political testament to assure her name from being bandied about by soiled lips. Read this, directed right at the heart of Erber:

"The real situation in which the Russian Revolution found itself, narrowed down in a few months to the alternative: victory of the counterrevolution or dictatorship of the proletariat - Kaledin or Lenin. Such was the objective situation, just as it quickly presents itself in every revolution after the first intoxication is over, and as it presented itself in Russia as a result of the concrete, burning questions of peace and land, for which there was no solution within the framework of bourgeois revolution."

Not much room here, not so much as a crevice, for Erber's "alternative," is there? Not much room here for his "capitalist economic relations," This is a revolutionist writing - not an idol-worshipper of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, but still a revolutionist, a tireless, defiant, unflinching champion of the proletariat in the class struggle.

> "In this, the Russian Revolution has but confirmed the basic lesson of every great revolution, the law of its being, which decrees: either the revolution must advance at a rapid, stormy and resolute tempo, break down all barriers with an iron hand and place its goals ever farther ahead, or it is quite soon thrown backward behind its feeble point of departure and suppressed by counterrevolution. To stand still, to mark time on one spot, to be contented with the first goal it happens to reach, is never possible in revolution. And he who tries to apply the home-made wisdom derived from parliamentary battles between frogs and mice to the field of revolutionary tactics only shows thereby that the very psychology and laws of existence of revolution are alien to him and that all his torical experience is to him a book sealed with seven seals."

Read it over again, especially that wonderfully priceless last sentence. And then tell us if it is not directed straight at Erber, word for word and line for line! It is much too exactly fitting to be quoted only once! "And he who tries to apply the home-made wisdom derived from parliamentary battles between frogs and mice to the field of revolutionary tactics only shows thereby that the very psychology and laws of existence of revolution are alien to him and that all historical experience is to him a book sealed with seven seals." If ever Erber gets up enough of what he lacks to look into a mirror, there is a ready-made one for him. If anyone thinks he can improve on this stinging answer to Erber and his home-made wisdom, to his Grand Coalitions between frogs and mice, he is just wasting good time.

"Still, didn't Rosa criticize the Bolsheviks for dispersing the Constituent Assembly?" No, she did not. She criticized them for not calling for elections to a new Constituent; she criticized them for the arguments they made to justify the dispersal. But in the first place, her criticism has next to nothing in common with that of the latter-day anti-Bolsheviks (or, for that matter, of the anti-Bolsheviks of the time). And in the second place, she was wrong, just as she was wrong in her criticism of the Bolshevik

position on the "national question" and of the Bolshevik course in the "agrarian question." And in the third place, what she wrote in prison, on the basis of "fragmentary information" (as the editor of the American edition of her prison notes admits), was not her last word on the question. Before her cruel death, she altered her position on the basis of her own experiences, on the basis of her own experiences, on the basis of the living realities of the German revolution. Lenin's State and Revolution was checked twice - first in the Russian Revolution and then in the German revolution! We will give the reader an idea of what she wrote before her death so that he may see why our present "champions" of Luxemburg never find time, space or inclination to quote her to the end.

The German workers, a year after the Bolshevik Revolution, overturned the Hohenzollern monarchy and, just as spontaneously as did the Russians before them, they formed their Workers' and Soldiers' Councils ("Räte," Soviets). The German Mensheviks - Scheidemann, Noske and Ebert - feared and hated the Councils just as much as did their Russian counterparts. They championed the National Assembly (German counterpart of the Russian Constituent) instead, calculating thereby to smash the Councils and the struggle for socialism. Haase and Kautsky, the centrists of the Independent Socialists, oscillated between the Councils and the Assembly. What position did Rosa Luxemburg take, what position did the Spartacus League and its organ, Die Rote Fahne, take? Here once more was the problem of workers' democracy versus bourgeois democracy, the democratic republic of the Councils versus the bourgeois republic, dictatorship of the proletariat organized in the Councils versus the National Assembly - not in Russia but in Germany, not in 1917 but a year later, not while Rosa was in Breslau prison but after her release.

Here is Rosa Luxemburg in Die Rote Fahne of November 29, 1918, writing on the leaders of the Independents:

> "Their actual mission as partner in the firm of Scheidemann-Ebert is: to mystify its clear and unambiguous character as defense guard of bourgeois class domination by means of a system of equivocation and cowardliness.
>
> "This role of Haase and colleagues finds its most classical expression in their attitude toward the most important slogan of the day: toward the National Assembly.
>
> "Only two standpoints are possible in this question, as in all others. Either you want the National Assembly as a means of swindling the proletariat out of its power, to paralyze its class energy, to dissolve its socialist goal into thin air. Or else you want to place all the power into the hands of the proletariat, to unfold the revolution that has begun into a tremendous class struggle for the socialist social order, and toward this end, to establish the political rule of the great mass of the toilers, the dictatorship of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. For or against socialism, against or for the National Assembly; there is no third way."

On December 1st, Luxemburg spoke on the situation at a meeting

of the Spartacus League in the hall of the Teachers' Union. At the end of the meeting, a resolution was adopted setting forth her views and giving approval to them:

> "The public people's meeting held on December 1st in the Hall of the Teachers' Union on Alexander Street declares its agreement with the exposition of Comrade Luxemburg. It considers the convocation of the National Assembly to be a means of strengthening the counterrevolution and to cheat the proletarian revolution of its socialist aims. It demands the transfer of all power to the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, whose first duty it is to drive out of the government the traitors to the working class and to socialism, Scheidemann-Ebert and colleagues, to arm the toiling people for the protection of the revolution, and to take the most energetic and thoroughgoing measures for the socialization of society."

In her first editorial in Die Rote Fahne of November 18, she writes under the title, "The Beginning":

> "The Revolution has begun....From the goal of the revolution follows clearly its path, from its task follows the method. All power into the hands of the masses, into the hands of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, protection of the work of the revolution from its lurking foes: this is the guiding line for all the measures of the revolutionary government....
>
> "(But) What is the present revolutionary government (i.e., Scheidemann & Co.) doing?
>
> "It calmly continues to leave the state as an administrative organism from top to bottom in the hands of yesterday's guards of Hohenzollern absolutism and tomorrow's tools of the counterrevolution.
>
> "It is convoking the Constituent Assembly, and therewith it is creating a bourgeois counterweight against the Workers' and Peasants' representation, therewith switching the revolution on to the rails of the bourgeois revolution, conjuring away the socialist goals of the revolution....
>
> "From the Deutsche Tageszeitung, the Vossische, and the Vorwärts to the Freiheit of the Independents, from Reventlow, Erzberger, Scheidemann to Haase and Kautsky, there sounds the unanimous call for the National Assembly and an equally unanimous outcry of fear of the idea: Power into the hands of the working class. The 'people' as a whole, the 'nation' as a whole, should be summoned to decide on the further fate of the revolution by majority decision.
>
> "With the open and concealed agents of the ruling class, this slogan is natural. With keepers of the capitalist class barriers, we discuss neither in the National Assembly nor about the National Assembly....
>
> "Without the conscious will and the conscious act of the majority of the proletariat - no socialism. To sharpen this

consciousness, to steel this will, to organize this act, a class organ is necessary, the national parliament of the proletarians of town and country.

"The convocation of such a workers' representation in place of the traditional National Assembly of the bourgeois revolutions is already, by itself, an act of the class struggle, a break with the historical past of bourgeois society, a powerful means of arousing the proletarian popular masses, a first open, blunt declaration of war against capitalism.

"No evasions, no ambiguities - the die must be cast. Parliamentary cretinism was yesterday a weakness, is today an equivocation, will tomorrow be a betrayal of socialism."

It is a pity that there is not space in which to quote far more extensively from the highly remarkable articles she wrote in the last few weeks of her life, before she was murdered by those whose "parliamentary cretinism" became the direct betrayal of socialism - by those for whom Erber has now become a shameful apologist by "showing" that the defeat of the revolution in Germany was as much the responsibility of the masses as it was of the Scheidemanns and Noskes! The articles as a whole show the veritable strides that Luxemburg took away from her prison criticism and toward a policy which was in no important respect different from the one pursued by the Bolsheviks toward the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois democrats, toward the Mensheviks and other "socialist opponents," toward the Constituent Assembly and the Soviets. With these articles of hers in print, to mention her today as an enemy of the Bolsheviks, as a critic of their attitude toward bourgeois democracy and the Constituent is excusable only on the grounds of inexcusable ignorance.

The course of the German Revolution, life, the lessons of the struggle - these left us the heritage of a Rosa Luxemburg who was, in every essential, the inseparable comrade-in-arms of the leaders of the Russian Revolution. To claim that this firm solidarity did not exist, is simply an outrage to her memory. What is worse, it shows that nothing has been learned of the lessons of the Russian Revolution and nothing of the lessons of the German Revolution - the two great efforts of the proletariat to test in practice what is, in the long run, the question of life and death for us: the state and revolution. And on this question, with Lenin and with Luxemburg, the real Luxemburg - we remain under the banner of Marxism.

Erber is still a little restless over the traces of what he learned when he was a Marxist. So he comes to the noteworthy conclusion that:

"Even the most perfect organization of the workers in industry, transport, communications, etc., will not guarantee a non-violent accession to power. Since the working class may be challenged by force on the democratic road to socialism, let it be prepared to take up arms not to overthrow a democratic state but to 'win the battle of democracy.' Standing as the defenders of the best traditions of American democracy, its

cause will be immeasurably strengthened. A Marxist in the United States can commit no greater folly, than to view the workers' road to power as culminating in an armed insurrection against a state that rests on political democracy."

Against whom is all this pomposity directed? Against the Bolsheviks, perhaps? What democratic state did they overthrow with arms in hand? The state of Kerensky and Company ("Company" meaning the Mensheviks and S.R.s). And what was this state? We turn to the most authoritative reference work on the subject, Erber's document, and read that the Kerensky regime sought to stretch out its undemocratic authority as long as possible by repeatedly postponing the elections of a Constituent Assembly. If the revolution was to advance, Kerensky had to go." Very well, go he did, along with everyone whose teeth were sunk in his coattails.

Is it directed, perhaps, against Erber's newly-acquired chums and exemplars, the Mensheviks and S.R.s? They did indeed take up arms to overthrow a democratic state, the state of "the teeming, creative, democratic Soviets." Is it directed against the Left S.R.s, that minority which sought to impose its will on the Soviet government with arms in hand because it disagreed with the decision to sign the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty? Or against the still tinier minority of anti-Bolshevik anarchists who likewise sought to overthrow the regime?

Or maybe it is directed against us here? Maybe he wants us to give a solemn pledge not to resort to armed insurrection against "a state that rests on political democracy"? Very well, we do not hesitate to give our pledge to Citizen Pompous Muddlehead, and therewith to state once more our credo:

We do not and will not call for armed insurrection to overthrow a "democratic state," a "state that rests on political democracy." It is an oath. The political infants who led the early communist movement in this country and who had little in common with Marx or Lenin - they issued such calls and advocated such a course. We - never! Not yesterday, not today, not tomorrow. We are not for violence in principle any more than we are for parliamentarism in principle. If anything, our principles call for an abhorrence of violence, as a capitalistic and uncivilized means of settling disputes among people. We are compelled every day to defend ourselves, with whatever organized strength we can muster, from the violence, open or concealed, with which the ruling classes impose their exploitation upon the masses. We are not putschists because we are not bureaucrats - and in every putschist, who has no confidence in the people, is concealed the bureaucrat, who has contempt for the people. Overthrow the bourgeois state by armed insurrection! Who, we? Not today and not tomorrow, and not if we had a hundred times as many members and followers as we have now!

The bourgeois state, bourgeois democracy, still has the confidence and support of the overwhelming majority of the people, including the working-class people. They think bourgeois democracy can solve all their basic problems. We Marxists do not. We believe that such a solution requires a working-class democracy, the rule of

the proletariat, which develops into a more extensive and even more genuine democracy, the rule of all the people, which in turn develops into the end of all rule (democracy is a form of rulership) by dissolving into the classless society of socialism and communism. The workers do not share our belief. Can we even dream of imposing our views, the views of a tiny minority, by merely wishing, or by decree, let alone by armed insurrection?

Without abandoning ourviews for a moment, we say to the workers: Unite into your own economic and political organizations, free from the control and influence of your sworn class enemy. You have confidence in bourgeois democracy? Then organize your own political party. Challenge your enemy not only on the economic field but also on the political. Send your own representatives into the legislative bodies to work and fight for your interests. We say, with Engels, that "universal suffrage is the best lever for a proletarian movement at the present time." We say, with Engels, that "universal suffrage is the guage of the maturity of the working class." We will therefore do everything we can to raise the red line in that thermometer which measures the maturity of the working class. "On the day when the thermometer of universal suffrage reaches its boiling point among the laborers, they as well as the capitalists will know what to do."

But what Marxist would try to displace the bourgeois state with a workers' state before that boiling point has been reached? Certainly no intelligent and educated Marxist would think of it, any more than he would think of walking out into the street with only his shirt on in winter time. A "state that rests on political democracy" is a state which, deservedly or not, still enjoys the confidence of the masses. To think of overturning such a state by armed insurrection under such conditions, is putschist madness and adventurism, not revolutionary Marxism.

When the masses no longer have confidence in the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state, when they have reached the point where they are ready to take the state into their own hands, ready to undertake a radical solution of the social problem, ready to take control of their own destinies - the situation changes! Once the masses have expressed their decision to take power and expressed it clearly and democratically - be their will expressed in the organs of parliament or in organs of their own which they find at hand or in organs of their own which they create spontaneously in the course of the struggle - the situation changes! If the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state bows to the democratic will of the people, so much the better! As we wrote before, nobody would be more delighted than we and with us the whole working class. Up to now, however, history has been very frugal with examples of such bowing to the democratic will of the revolutionary people. But if there is nevertheless one chance in a thousand of that happening, then it is possible only if the working class confronts the bourgeoisie not with votes alone (the "boiling thermometer") but with serried class strength, with organized power. Such power is nothing else than potential violence, that is, violence that can be summoned the minute the democratically rejected bourgeoisie tries to perpetuate its domination over the people by the use of armed force.

But what if the bourgeoisie and its state do not bow to the will of the people? What if the regime seeks "to stretch out its undemocratic authority as long as possible"? With all due respect to the fanatical democratism of the bourgeoisie and its state, we think such an alternative is...quite possible. If it occurs, we will manage to say what Erber says about the Kerensky regime: It has to go! And if it does not go quietly, it will have to be pushed a little.

We, followers of Marx and Lenin, want to make sure that on the day the thermometer boils over - not today, not tomorrow, but on that day - "the laborers...as well as the capitalists will know what to do." We want to make sure that on that day, the laborers not only have enough votes in their hands, but enough power to enforce their will. Is that the folly of viewing "the workers' road to power as culminating in an armed insurrection against a state that rests on political democracy"? Not at all! Erber is just repeating the drivel of the social democrats. What we Marxists call for is the good common sense of the workers' road to power culminating in the armed dispersal - if the stubborn bourgeoisie insists on it - of the state which no longer enjoys authority among the workers, which no longer has the confidence or support of the people, which, therefore, no longer "rests on political democracy" in the real sense of the term. It is with this view that we want to imbue every socialist militant, every vanguard fighter, every worker whom we can reach with our voice and pen.

That, stated for the hundredth time, is our credo. Take note of it, O Pompous Muddlehead! Take note of it, all workers! Take note of it, too, Mr. Public Prosecutor!

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Why are we so impassioned and tenacious in our defense of Marx, of Lenin, of Luxemburg, of Trotsky, of the Paris Commune, of the Russian Revolution, from all their falsifiers and detractors? Out of academic considerations? Because we are mere historians concerned with an accurate record of the past? Because we are Talmudists with our noses buried in the ancient books of wisdom? We are revolutionary socialists, and the fight to keep our heritage clean is an indispensable part of our fight for socialism. Does anyone think we would consume all this paper just to prove that this one is a liar, that one a deserter, that one a muddlehead, the other one a traitor? There are more pleasant and important things to do in life.

We are fighting for socialist freedom, and in this fight we are now on the defensive. The working class is on the defensive all over the world. It is lacerated by defeats, it is confused and disoriented, it has lost a lot of confidence in its power. It has been backed into a corner like the quarry in a hunt. It is surrounded by baying hounds.

The hunters challenge it: "Give up! Surrender!"

The Stalinist dogs bark: "You cannot free your own self. Wherever you tried it yourself, you failed. You are too weak, too

stupid, too undisciplined if left to your own democratic devices. You need an iron hand over you, an iron hand with a whip. Under Lenin's Soviets, the state was feeble. Under Stalin's G.P.U., the state has been consolidated and enormously strengthened. We have extended it over Europe and Asia. You must have a bureaucracy to lead you out of the wilderness!"

The bourgeois dogs bark: "You cannot free your own self. Wherever you tried it, you failed. You failed because there have always been the rulers and the ruled, and that is how it will always be. Look what happened in Russia! You tried, and you failed. Socialism is an ideal, but a Utopian ideal. Marx brought you Lenin. Lenin brought you Stalin. Under our rule you will at least have a bed to sleep in and unemployment insurance."

The reformist dogs bark: "Learn the lessons of the Russian Revolution! Revolution brought you only misery. Lenin was a gambler and he lost. Don't take power into your own hands. All evil flows from that. Just send enough of us to parliament and we will patch up the bourgeois state without you having to do a thing. Collaborate with the decent bourgeois elements, in plant and government and war, and don't lose your temper and get violent. It will do you no good. Revolution only brings Stalinism."

Erber whimpers: "Woe is me and woe is the world. Lenin ruined us all. I really don't know what to say or do about it. I really don't know what road you should take to get out of this universal ruin. Wait here, don't budge. I'll figure out something presently. But whatever you do, don't follow Lenin, don't take the road of revolution, don't take power into your own hands."

Hook nods philosophically: "Lord Acton was right, dear pupils. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. I want no part of it."

Eastman and Louis Waldman conclude: "Vote for Dewey."

Social interests shape ideas. Ideas serve social interests. The ideological campaign against Marxism is still what it always was: an integral part of the fight against socialism and the interests of the working class. The campaign against Lenin, the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution is still what it always was: an integral part of the fight to turn the working class away from the idea of taking their fate into their own hands. The attempt to bind and gag Rosa Luxemburg and kidnap her to an alien camp, so that we cannot hear what she really said and wanted, is still what it always was: an integral part of the turncoats' campaign to dirty the great Russian Revolution so that their capitulation to democratic imperialism will look clean.

The defense of the Russian Revolution is the defense of Marxism. The defense of Marxism is the fight for socialism, the fight to drive away the baying hounds, to enable the working class to leap forward again with renewed confidence in its own strength, in its great emancipating mission, in its eventual triumph.

We are not idol-worshippers. We are not uncritical eulogists of Marx or Lenin or Trotsky or Luxemburg or the Russian Revolution itself. From its grandeur, we have learned what to do. From its decay, what not to do. We think we understand now more than we ever did before why Lenin, for all his disagreements with Rosa, called her an eagle. Even in her prison notes she wrote these words which are so timely thirty years later:

> "Everything that happens in Russia is comprehensible and represents an inevitable chain of causes and effects, the starting point and end term of which are: the failure of the German proletariat and the occupation of Russia by German imperialism. It would be demanding something superhuman from Lenin and his comrades if we should expect of them that under such circumstances they should conjure forth the finest democracy, the most exemplary dictatorship of the proletariat and a flourishing socialist economy. By their determined revolutionary stand, their exemplary strength in action, and their unbreakable loyalty to international socialism, they have contributed whatever could possibly be contributed under such devilishly hard conditions. The danger begins only when they make a virtue of necessity and want to freeze into a complete theoretical system all the tactics forced upon them by these fatal circumstances, and want to recommend them to the international proletariat as a model of socialist tactics. When they get in their own light in this way, and hide their genuine, unquestionable historical service under the bushel of false steps forced upon them by necessity, they render a poor service to international socialism for the sake of which they have fought and suffered; for they want to place in its storehouse as new discoveries all the distortions prescribed in Russia by necessity and compulsion - in the last analysis only by-products of the bankruptcy of international socialism in the present world war.
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> "Let the German Government Socialists cry that the rule of the Bolsheviks in Russia is a distorted expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat. If it was or is such, that is only because it is a product of the behavior of the German proletariat, in itself a distorted expression of the socialist class struggle. All of us are subject to the laws of history, and it is only internationally that the socialist order of society can be realized. The Bolsheviks have shown that they are capable of everything that a genuine revolutionary party can contribute within the limits of the historical possibilities. They are not supposed to perform miracles. For a model and faultless proletarian revolution in an isolated land, exhausted by world war, strangled by imperialism, betrayed by the international proletariat, would be a miracle....
>
> "In Russia the problem could only be posed. It could not be solved in Russia. And in <u>this</u> sense, the future everywhere belongs to 'Bolshevism.'"

"The danger begins when they make a virtue of necessity." That danger is inherent in every great revolution and every great revolutionary party suffers from it. The Bolsheviks were no ex-

ception. They could not be, especially given a socialist revolution, for which there was no blueprint worked out in advance and could not be. Improvization was imperative. What is remarkable is that in all this convulsive turbulence, so much order prevailed, so much was done according to plan, so much was done to turn the helm when the ship of state hit uncharted and unexpected reefs. In that respect, no revolution, no social transformation in history, even equalled the Russian Revolution.

"Es schwindelt," said Lenin to Trotsky when the storm lifted the Bolsheviks to the first socialist power in history - it makes you dizzy. Everybody was made dizzy. The Bolsheviks alone kept their heads. The others lost them completely. The bourgeoisie, the landlords, international capital plunged into their mad and sanguinary adventure to crush the revolution. The Mensheviks and S.R.s joined with what Engels predicted would be "the whole collective reaction which will group itself around pure democracy." In the wild civil war that followed, in which millions of ordinary workers and peasants proved to be far fiercer and more intolerant toward the opponents of the Soviet power than the Bolsheviks themselves, there was no room for the "home-made wisdom derived from parliamentary battles between frogs and mice." One by one, the parties and groups that took up arms against the Soviet Power were outlawed. No one has found another solution in civil war.

The Bolsheviks performed no miracles; they promised none. They were summoned to hold the first revolutionary citadel against frenzied and maddened besiegers until the relief columns of the Western proletariat could be brought forward. They held the citadel, better and longer than anyone expected, even they themselves. Julius Martov, the Menshevik leader, wrote in October, 1921, that "The political tactic of our party in 1918 and 1920 was determined primarily by the fact that history had made the Bolshevik Party the defender of the foundations of the revolution against the armed forces of the domestic and foreign counterrevolution." Alas, what he says about the Menshevik party is not true in its entirety, but only for a tiny part of it. What he says about the Bolshevik party is true in its entirety. But the Bolsheviks were not gods. In seeking to master necessity, they also had to bend to it. War, especially civil war, especially when your enemies on a world scale outnumber you a hundred to one, isnot the ideal culture medium for democracy to flourish in. "The Bolsheviks have shown that they are capable of everything that a genuine revolutionary party can contribute within the limits of the historical possibilities. They are not supposed to perform miracles. For a model and faultless proletarian revolution in an isolated land, exhausted by world war, strangled by imperialism, betrayed by the international proletariat, would be a miracle."

Once the civil war came to a triumphant end for the Soviet Power, necessity became more and more a virtue. What was imposed upon the Bolsheviks by the exigencies of the war was gradually transformed into an article of faith for the period of peace as well. One-party government, which is anything but abnormal in all countries at all times, and was just as normal and unexceptionable in Russia, was transformed to mean: Only one party can enjoy legal existence in the country. To this, Stalinism succeeded in adding:

Only one faction can enjoy legal existence in the party. The extension of full democratic rights - not the right to armed putsches but full democratic rights - to all parties, without exception, would have strengthened the country and reinvigorated the Soviets themselves. It should now be clear that without the presence of other political organizations capable of freely debating (debating, not shooting at) the proposals presented to the Soviets by the Bolshevik party, the Soviets would rapidly and inevitably deteriorate to the position of a superfluous duplicate of the ruling party, at first only consulted by the latter, then disregarded by it, and finally discarded altogether for the direct rule of the party alone (the bureaucracy of the party at that!). In this process, the decay of democracy within the Bolshevik party and the decay of Soviet democracy went hand in hand, each having the same deleterious effect upon the other until both were suppressed completely and, along with them, all the achievements of the revolution itself. Deprived of the saving oxygen of revolution in the West, the democratic organism was suffocated. Poisons accumulated throughout the whole system which could not be thrown off, new poisons were added (necessity becoming virtue), and the Revolution moved tragically toward its death.

Of the period of decay, much has been written - in advance by Luxemburg, in his time by Lenin, later by Trotsky. Much more can be written and much more will be written as the distance of years sets off the Revolution in clearer perspective. We close no doors. We file away nothing as an absolutely closed case. But it does not follow that no conclusions at all can be drawn from the great revolution. It does not follow that anybody's conclusions, no matter how superficial or trivial or reactionary, are as valid as any others. Our struggle has been hurled back - that is now a commonplace. But it does not follow that we start with tabula rasa - knowing nothing, learning nothing, believing nothing. From the grandeur of the Russian Revolution, we have learned something: the superiority of proletarian democracy to bourgeois democracy. From the decay of the Russian Revolution we have learned something: that proletarian democracy cannot exist for long if it is confined to one faction or one party, even if it be the revolutionary party, that it must be shared equally by all other working-class and even - under favorable circumstances - bourgeois parties and groups, for without it the proletarian party and the proletarian democracy both die and with them die the prospects of socialism.

These are not the happiest days for socialism. We know that. We know that the grotesque outcome of the Russian Revolution, the failure of the proletariat anywhere else to come to power, has raised more than one gloomy doubt about the social ability of the working class to reorganize society rationally, about the very possibility of a socialist future.

It is precisely in this regard that the Russian Revolution is our lasting triumph! It is precisely in this regard that the Russian Revolution continues to fortify our convictions!

What the Marxists claimed for decades, the Russian Revolution proved. What did it prove? That the rule of the capitalist class

is not eternal. That the power of the capitalist class is not invincible. That the working class can overthrow the rule of capital and the bourgeois state, not in the books of Karl Marx, but in the living struggle of organized workers. To this day and hour we say: If the Russian working class could take power, the working class can take power in any other country under similar circumstances. This we consider proved.

To disprove it, it is only necessary to show that the Russian proletariat had national or racial characteristics which determined its victory and which are not to be found in any other proletariat. Or, it is only necessary to prove that no other country can ever reproduce a combination of circumstances similar to those which made possible the triumph of the Russian Revolution. Nobody has done this up to now. Until it is done, we regard as proved the ability of the working class to take power in its own name and for its own self. That's a tremendous acquisition for the Marxian and working-class movements. Why should any socialist or even a non-socialist worker be fool enough to bagatellize this acquisition, let alone relinquish it?

"But surely you cannot claim that the Russian Revolution also proved that the working class can hold power and use it to usher in a socialist society!" We make no such claim. That, the Russian Revolution did not prove and, by itself, could not prove. But to prove that the proletariat has some basic and inherent social incapacity to hold power and establish socialism, you must be concrete, and not confine yourself to going from concept to concept to concept without once touching material ground. To be concrete, dear skeptic, to be scientific, you have to show why the Russian proletariat lost power. Merely to point to the fact that the proletariat, one hundred years after the Communist Manifesto, has not yet liberated itself is not one whit more serious an argument to prove that it cannot liberate itself than pointing to the fact that the failure of generations of scientists to find a cure for cancer proves that cancer cannot be cured.

This brings us back to what is, after all, the very essence of the dispute over the Russian Revolution: Why did the proletariat lose power and, therewith, lose the indispensable instrument for constructing socialism?

Exactly ninety-nine percent of the critics of Bolshevism answer the question in this way, at bottom: The Russian workers lost power because they took power. Erber has joined the ninety-nine percent. As he now sees it, Stalinism (the destruction of the Russian workers' power) followed ineluctably from the seizure of power by the proletariat and Lenin's refusal to surrender this power to the bourgeois democracy.

Exactly ninety-nine percent of the revolutionary Marxists answer the question in this way, at bottom: The Russian workers lost power because the workers of the other countries failed to take power.

There is the difference. It is fundamental and yields to no compromise.

We also know that our "proof" is not final. There is no way of making it final in the realm of concepts. It can be made final only in struggle. By ourselves, we cannot provide this final proof. We will not even attempt it. The proletariat alone can provide this proof, in the course of the struggle which it must carry on in order to survive, and in which it must triumph if it carries it on to the end. The Russian proletariat, the Russian Revolution, proved all it could prove. The rest will come. And one of the not unimportant reasons why it will come is that we remain loyal to the fight for socialism. We remain defenders of the imperishable Bolshevik Revolution. We remain under the banner of Marxism.

IN PLACE OF AN EPILOGUE

Erber has now shed just about every political garment he ever wore. But he is not finished. In fact, he has only begun. He has only been leading up to what is really uppermost in his mind, as it is with all the ex-Marxists who have taken the cure: How to support American imperialism in the coming war with Russia. The dozens upon dozens of pages devoted to "theory" and "history" and the Constituent Assembly and the Hanseatic League and Engels' letter, were only the warm-up he required for the plunge. On the very last couple of pages, he finally braces himself, shuts his eyes and lets go. All he has to say on the war he compresses into a tight couple of hundred words.

He is pained to have to leave our movement, but he leaves "without rancor or bitterness." Those are noble words and they do not fail to make the appropriate impression upon us. But old attachments, old friendships, old comradeships - dash it all, they are not easy to break. You get to feel you owe the old crowd a parting gift. What to give them? You smile reminiscently at the old days together, at the madcap foibles of your own youth, then you decide: I'll give them some first-rate political advice for the days to come.

What is the basis for this political adviser's claim upon our attention, upon the attention of anyone in the labor movement? What qualification does he have? One all-too-familiar thing, and nothing else. His life has been one uninterrupted and unrelieved series of mistakes and misunderstandings on every important political and theoretical problem of the working-class movement. He has been wrong on every important question. This is admitted. What follows? Self-imposed silence? Two years of penance in a hermit's cave? Retirement in shame over such a record? None of these, for Erber has no shame. What follows, naturally, is sure-fire political advice personally vouched for by the author. We recommend him as a qualified assistant instructor in the I-Was-a-Political-Idiot-but-Now-I-Am-Smart School.

Still, we are more tolerant than we are supposed to be, and we will listen to advice even from self-confessed idiots - not very long, not very patiently, but we will listen.

It seems that we must prepare to support American imperialism in the Third World War. Not only that, but it seems that we were

wrong not to support it in the Second World War. "Had our perspective been a realistic one, we could not but have preferred the defeat of Germany, and consequently taken an attitude toward the war generally like that of the S.P. or the I.L.P., minus their pacifist deviations." Our perspective was for the victory of the Third Camp. But there was no victory of the Third Camp, you see. So we were wrong in opposing the war, and we'll be wrong in opposing the next one.

Erber's memory is playing tricks on him, or he is trying to play a trick on us. We did not oppose the imperialist war because we guaranteed a victory of the Third Camp - the workers and peasants and colonial peoples of the world - over both the Axis and the Allies. Where did Erber dig up this fine piece of political stupidity? We may have exaggerated the speed of the development of a revolutionary movement of the people. We may have committed more than one other blunder, all of which combined do not begin to compare in any dimension with the mistakes of our critics and opponents. But where did we base our opposition to the war on a guarantee of revolutionary victory in the course of the war or following it?

We based our opposition to the war on the ground that it was an imperialist war on both sides. We based our position on the need to discharge our downright elementary socialist and internationalist duty of stimulating the formation and unfoldment of a Third Camp, independent of the two reactionary war camps. All that a socialist - not a terror-stricken, empty-gutted ex-socialist, but a genuine socialist - has to ask himself in such a crucial struggle is this: Is there a reasonable possibility that the people will rise against the imperialists who have once more, for the second time in one generation, traduced them, dragooned them, dragged them through the blood and filth of the war, blown them to bits? Is there a reasonable possibility that the people can form a movement of their own, not under the imperialist commanders but under their own control? Does a socialist internationalist have the duty to concentrate with all his strength upon turning this possibility into a reality, or should he, like the despairing philistine, howl with the imperialist pack of his own country and help drive still deeper the chauvinistic knives which have cut the international working class into such bleeding, mutually-hostile parts?

Those were the questions, and we had no trouble giving the socialist answer. The Third Camp did not triumph at the end of the war, our trembling philistine has learned. But the Third Camp did emerge during the war, in the form of the underground national resistance movements in Europe. These movements, which were not imperialists fighting other imperialists, but authentic revolutionary struggles of the people against Fascist and imperialist oppression - we did not hesitate for one moment to give our ardent and enthusiastic support. If they did not unfold all the revolutionary socialist implications inherent in them, it was not for lack of trying on our modest part, but because their Social Democratic and Stalinist leadership brought them under the domination of Allied imperialism and sacrificed their logical goal to support of the

imperialist war. Our mistake, it now seems, lay in not following suit. Thank you, thank you very much for the advice.

"No one is required to give a pledge in advance to support the United States in a war against Russia." No one - by which Erber means himself. He does not have to pledge himself to anything, since all questions shatter against the impenetrable armor of "I-don't-know-what-to-do" which he has donned. A socialist movement, which calls on the working class to follow it, must be in a position to say where it stands on the most vital questions of the day.

"Where do you stand on the coming war? Will you support it?" asks the worker.

"We don't know. We are not required to give a pledge in advance. When the war breaks out it may be altogether different from what we expected," we should reply.

"Well, I'm not asking how you stand on any war that may come along at any future time and under any circumstances whatsoever. I'm asking where you stand on the war which is now being so clearly prepared by the two imperialist powers that actually exist," continues the worker.

What should we say? "Go away, don't bother us, we are not required to give a pledge of any kind. It's an open question with us." That's a position for a dilletante and flannelmouth, for a member of the L.A.A.M., but not for a socialist organization.

Erber is ducking the question. The question is not our attitude under any and all circumstances, our attitude toward no matter what war between no matter what states under no matter what conditions. Only a fool answers such questions. The question is of the socialist attitude toward the war that is now being prepared between the two known imperialist powers. If that war does not break out, well and good. But what is the socialist attitude toward it if it does break out? Erber is ducking the question, but he deceives nobody, not himself and least of all the imperialists or their adepts in the labor movement. They understand perfectly: "He's one of us already! We can count on him!"

"There is no Third Camp at present. It must be the aim of the socialists to build one....Our strategy must strive for the independence of labor from the foreign policy of capitalist imperialism, but in such a manner as does not weaken the latter vis-a-vis totalitarian imperialism.... The enemy is at home; but the main enemy is abroad." A magnificent strategy by a master with years of successful experience in socialist strategy in general! Just how do you go about making labor independent of the foreign policy (and the domestic policy, we hope) of capitalist imperialism without weakening and undermining it? Do you support the crushing armaments burden which it is piling upon the people, do you oppose it, or do you just suggest that the war budget be cut down by three percent? Do you support the military pacts and alliances into which the United States, with the pistol of its economic and

political power, forces all the smaller and weaker countries whose people fear the coming war, hate the coming war, and hate all those who are preparing their lands for the battlefield and their sons for the slaughter? Or do you console them with the explanation that you, the American "socialist" who is not, God forbid a teeth-chattering chauvinist, are independent of Washington's foreign policy but not in such a way as to weaken American imperialism in the war or the period preparatory to the war?

Do you tell the American workers to fight for improvements in their economic position and against a deterioration of it, even though this conflicts with the needs of the war-preparations budget, or do you tell them to make just a little sacrifice for the military budget so that American imperialism is not weakened before Stalinist imperialism? Or do you tell them that if a few more nickels are cut off the military budget, American imperialism will still be strong enough to match Russian imperialism anyway - this conclusion being based on the expert military knowledge of Russian and American strength, potentialities, strategic positions and the like, which our democratic bourgeoisie is trustful enough to impart to you?

Do you try to arouse the workers against the cold-blooded preparations for the atom-bomb slaughter which their ruling class is already making? On what ground - that it is an imperialist war, but one which you intend to support after it breaks out? Why should <u>anybody</u> take your position seriously in that case?

The bourgeoisie is serious, which is not an accusation that can be hurled lightly at Erber. It says to the people: The war is not inevitable but it is possible. By arming heavily and making all sorts of military alliances, we may succeed in preventing the outbreak of war. That will be excellent. If we don't succeed in preventing it, we will at least not be caught unprepared. On our part, such a war would be a just war; we would be fighting for the right. Even the Erbers admit it to some extent at least, that is, that it would be far better if we won than if Stalin won. Well, if you are <u>serious</u> about our winning, why do you stand in the way of our preparations for victory? Do you want us to be caught empty-handed? Don't you know that modern war requires years of intensive and extensive preparations? And don't you know that such preparations require sacrifices at home, which means an obedient and docile working class well policed by the labor leaders? Come now, be serious about serious matters! If you really want to win the war, then quit playing with our preparations for it!"

Our formula is a different one from Erber's! Our strategy and tactics strive for such an independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie and the imperialist state as strengthen the former at the expense of the latter. We stand on the ground that the weakening of the foreign imperialism, the totalitarian imperialism, Stalinism, and its ultimate destruction <u>in such a way that progressive and not reactionary consequences follow</u> - depends upon the extent to which the working class of this country is strengthened. To strengthen it requires that it be instilled with confidence in itself and distrust of its class enemy, instilled with class independence in every sphere and with distrust of any form of reliance upon its class enemy, with a thoroughgoing understanding

that its fate and the fate of socialism and of democracy depend upon its independence and its self-confidence, and that everything else is a weak reed or an outright trap. To strengthen it requires that we teach it the meaning of the Luxemburgian dictum which Erber quotes, but of course does not understand and certainly does not follow: "We must conclude that the socialist movement is not bound to bourgeois democracy, but that, on the contrary, the fate of democracy is bound up with the socialist movement." That is, it is bound up with complete independence from the bourgeoisie, above all the imperialist bourgeoisie, and an attitude of complete distrust and hostility toward it.

(This does not, of course, mean that we work to strengthen the foreign imperialism at the expense of our own. That is the slanderous accusation always hurled at the internationalists by imperialist patriots. We do not sabotage plants, we do not blow up bridges, we do not spy for the enemy abroad, we do not welcome the troops of the foreign enemy. We do not call strikes just for the purpose of disrupting production. In general, if we are opposed to subverting the struggle of the working class to the purposes of our own imperialism, we are not one whit less opposed to subverting the struggle of the working class to the purpose of the foreign imperialism. But neither will we drive a knife into the back of workers engaged in struggle for their legitimate class interests on the grounds, real or alleged, that a spy or agent of the enemy is in the leadership of the workers. We know that reactionary trick only too well! We will do all we can to take care of Mr. Spy, but we will not condone the use of Mr. Spy as a pretext for strikebreaking.)

That's all well and good for an ordinary imperialist war, it is said. But Erber has evidently read somewhere that there have been wars between two social orders, too, like feudalism and capitalism. So he adds: "The struggle between Russia and the United States is more than imperialist struggle. It is a struggle for survival between two social orders. The importance of the latter aspect overshadows the imperialist content."

Indeed they are two different social orders! Erber did learn something in the Marxian movement after all - something but not much. But a Marxist, or any serious sociologist, at least tries to establish the historical relations between two different social orders. What are the relations between capitalism and bureaucratic-collectivism? Erber has no space for this. Doesn't he know, doesn't he think it has any importance, or has he really descended to the vulgar street-corner anti-Stalinism of all those who think with their terrified bellies? He writes elsewhere that Stalinism is "a social order whose internal laws of motion remain, in large measure, an enigma to us." To whom does "us" refer, O Wise One? The very words confirm Erber's elaborate ignorance on the subject, which several of his old comrades had a couple of occasions, in private sessions with him, to discover to their amazement. They show that he does not know what "laws of motion" are, in the first place. They show, in the second place, that he does not yet understand that the "laws of motion" of Stalinism are a hundred times less of an enigma than the laws of motion of capitalist society.

Feudalism produced capitalism; capitalism was a product of the decay of feudalism; capitalism rid man of the fetters of feudalism, and in the performance of this historical task, it was necessary and indispensable. Capitalism and bureaucratic-collectivism are also two contending social orders. With what relations between themselves? Has Stalinism produced capitalism as its historical successor? Is capitalism the product of the decay of Stalinism, born out of its womb? Is capitalism called upon to perform the necessary and indispensable task of ridding man of the fetters of obsolete and dying Stalinism? Erber has no time in his flight for such technicalities. Stalinism is an enigma to him. But capitalism - that he understands.

"It is a struggle for survival between two social orders." How impressive and scientific that sounds! And how meaningless it becomes on Erber's pen! What are the relations between the two societies fighting for survival? What is the relationship of the proletarian struggle to these two societies? According to the Marxists, Stalinism is the product of the simultaneous (but not equal) decay of capitalism and of the working class. It is the product of the inability of capitalism to solve its fundamental crisis, to control and manage the productive forces on a capitalist basis, to offer the working class a way out of the social impasse. At the same time, it is the product of the failure of the working-class movement to establish its clear independence from capitalist society, the capitalist state, the capitalist class, its failure to take control of the productive forces and manage them on a socialist basis.

We do not regard Stalinism as the product of evil men, out to gorge themselves with a lot of power, or even of the evil genius of Stalin. It is a social phenomenon; it is a historical phenomenon. As such, its social roots must be traced. If we have not traced them to perfection, we can at least say that no one else has traced them as well or as clearly as we have. The basis for the strength of Stalinism lies therefore in continuing to prop up our decaying capitalist world and in continuing to tie the working class and its political movement to it. Neither the decadent bourgeoisie nor the decadent social-democratic parties have a social program, a political program, capable of defeating Stalinism or even weakening it seriously. Every one of the last twenty-five years proves this. How many more defeats of the working class by reaction, including Stalinist reaction, do we need before this simple lesson is assimilated by everybody?

All that American imperialism can produce for the destruction of Stalinism is a military program, which, even from the strictly military standpoint, is of questionable merit. Why doesn't Erber leave military matters to those who know the difference between an atom bomb and a blunderbuss? Stalinism is a social phenomenon and a social program. Only another social movement and social program can destroy it without reactionary consequences ensuing. "But doesn't Erber also have a 'social program'?" Man alive, of course he has! He's a socialist, a real one! Only, like so many, many other "real and realistic" ones, his social program is subordinated to the needs of American imperialism and its military program. We have seen the superb results of this realism in Russia,

then in Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, then in China, now in Greece and Turkey, and also in Italy, France and Germany. Thank you, thank you very much for the advice.

Erber has gone over to what Lenin and other Marxists appropriately called social-imperialism. The power of American chauvinism has been his golden bridge. Just as there is not a man in all of Europe who could have made Max Eastman's speech at the A. F. of L. convention at any meeting of workers' representatives, so there is not a man in all of Europe who could have written a document like Erber's. He is an Americanized "Marxist," that is, an ex-Marxist cured out of his socialism by shock-treatment from Stalinism and by the softer touch of Rooseveltism, American bourgeois reformism. He has been cured of internationalism, too. Europe and Asia and their peoples do not exist for him. If they did, the mere question of why, for example, Stalinism is such a power among the people in those countries, would cause him to reflect for at least a few minutes before writing his lyrics to the delights of American bourgeois democracy and American imperialism. These delights are enough for him, at least for the time being.

After all, he went through the war in the United States and, when it ended, saw that "to date" there has been no serious curb on political liberty here. During the war, the vast layers of economic fat stood American imperialism in good stead. Its happy geographical position, which saved it from so many of the horrors and devastations of the war which Europe suffered, stood it in good stead. The fact that the "official revolutionary" movement, the Stalinist party, became super-patriotic, stood it in good stead. The fact that there was no such militant anti-war movement such as Debs and O'Hare and the I.W.W. fighters represented in the first World War, stood it in good stead. There was practically no one to imprison and suppress. The anti-war movement was confined to tiny sects, and toward them imperialism was "generous" - more or less. The huge working-class movement was perfectly policed by the bureaucracy of the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O., so that the bourgeoisie, bathing in blood gold, had little to worry about from that source. So, confronted with a pro-war people, a silenced anti-war people, an infinitesimal anti-war socialist movement, a bureaucratically-manacled labor movement and a servile Stalinist party, and favored by a popular pseudo-anti-fascist war program - the bourgeois state did not "curb" political liberty. Admirable self-restraint! There was practically no one for the state to curb; so, it did not curb anyone. This, plus belly-terror of Stalinism which replaced the belly-terror of Fascism, threw Erber off his feet and he has not regained them. We kept our feet and kept our head. Erber has lost his.

We do not think that Erber will mark time. The greater likelihood is that he will develop further. Everyone is familiar with the brand of turncoats which has discovered that any form of collectivism must end in tyranny over the people, in the end of all freedom. It is the brand nurtured by Hayek, by von Mises, by a growing host of supporters and imitators. "Free enterprise," private property, there is the only guarantee or relative guarantee of freedom. Where there is competition in economic life, there cannot

be monopoly in political life. And so on, and more of the same.

Do we detect an undertone in Erber's writings? Are we too suspicious? Does our ear play us false? Perhaps. Indeed, we hope so. But we are "disturbed" by Erber's calm recommendation that the Russian proletariat should have maintained "free enterprise" and "capitalist economic relations" as an insurance against the despotism which "inevitably" followed the seizure of power and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. We are more "disturbed" by Erber's little reference to Tito: "Tito's resistance to the Russian demand that he abolish private property on the land has given new hope to socialists and democrats." Now we know why socialists and democrats have new hope: Tito is protecting private property! Now we know what the conflict is all about: Stalin wants to abolish private property in Yugoslavia and Tito wants to maintain it! Thank heaven we have been released from the toils of ignorance by Erber's timely revelation of the real truth. New hope throbs in his breast because of Tito's defense of private property. Perhaps we are distorting Erber's real view. If so, this is one time we shall welcome the charge of distortion and a refutation of the distortion, rather than be proved to be right. Only, will there be a refutation?

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Over and again we come back to it: these are difficult times for the Marxists. In Russia, the pistol in the back of the neck. In the United States, ideological corruption. Everywhere, isolation. But pistols are not enough to sustain a regime. History is studded with the broken bayonets and pistols of despotism. The corruption we will resist. The isolation we will break through, despite everything. Even in these dark hours, we know from all of history the molecular processes that are working away silently and powerfully among the silent masses who do not realize their power.

There are two Russias, the Russia of the Stalinist despots and the Russia of the silent millions. Explain to yourself, dear reader, why this mighty regime of despots finds need for such a machine of repression as no regime in all our annals has ever had. Tolstoy once wondered with horror at what would happen if Russia got a Ghengis Khan with a telephone. It got one with a machine gun and an N.K.V.D. But it also got a Russian population that is not like the ancient Mongol hordes. There is today a huge Russian working-class. It hates and despises the bureaucracy. It remembers that in this century alone there were three revolutions in its land. Such a memory cannot be obliterated, not even by all the fiendish obliteration techniques of Stalinist totalitarianism. That is why the bureaucracy needs its terror regime. That is why it also needs its never-suspended campaign against "Trotskyism." There is no Trotskyist movement in Russia today, but for the bureaucracy today, and for the masses tomorrow, Trotskyism represents the ideas of the fight for socialism and freedom. The bureaucracy is led by men who once were Marxists. These ex-Marxists know that the idea becomes a power when it grips the masses. They know that this idea can easily, overnight, become so powerful that not even the N.K.V.D.

can withstand its irresistible onrush. Marxism is on the defensive, it is isolated and with little influence. Yet the greatest tyranny in history lives in dread of its ideas, finds it necessary to devote no small part of its efforts to a systematic and unrelenting campaign against it. It feels how precarious is its august perch.

There are two Americas, the official United States, the aristocratic United States, and the silent millions who have little or no way to express themselves officially. Official United States is officially optimistic. It points with conceit to its accumulated fat, its power, its wealth, its solidity. Yet even this wealthiest of all nations feels an unofficial uneasiness. Is the world moving toward the American Century, or is it moving toward the brink of an abyss into which the United States too will be hurled? Is the industrial prosperity a mark of health, or is the flush the mark of a fatal fever? Will the coming war be won by us, or will society be turned into a wilderness? If we win the war into which Niagaras of energy and wealth are being poured, will not the victory crumble under a shattering national bankruptcy?

Explain to yourself, dear reader, why this rich and mighty regime, with its aristocratic position in all fields and at all levels, finds need for such a tremendous campaign against the enemies of "free enterprise," of capitalism -- not just against its Stalinist opponents but against its Marxian opponents as well. What does it fear -- for fear sticks out of every word in the campaign? The Stalinists are weak and terribly discredited in this country. The revolutionary Marxian movement is even weaker. The ruling class fears the silent millions. It fears the working classes. It knows how easily and quickly a situation can develop in the United States -- yes, even in this aristocratic and chauvinistic country -- where the ideas of Marxism can spread among the masses like a prairie fire. What are these ideas, after all, if not the simple and clear, the conscious and consistent expression of the irrepressible struggle-movement of the working class itself! Even in the United States the bourgeoisie fears the ideas of Marxism, and with good cause. The United States is today the greatest world power, but just for that, it rests upon a world of decay and disintegration. That is not a very solid foundation. The revolution will not come tomorrow; it will not come the next day or the day after that. We are a good distance away. But not such a distance away from the first big, powerful and promising political movement of the American working class. We look forward to that day with complete assurance of its arrival, with complete confidence in the direction it will thereupon take. Our job: to hasten that day, to assure that direction.

Right now, the working class of this country is the "living refutation" of Marxism, as the bourgeois press shouts in order to silence its own doubts. It will yet be the living vindication of Marxism. Right now, the working class of this country is in political bondage to the bourgeois parties. It is the tail of liberal bourgeois politics. It has not yet separated itself from

this alien body. It will. It cannot be an exception to the rest of the world. It will not be. What do all the efforts of reactionaries, of conservative liberals, of the labor lieutenants of capital, come down to on the political field? To keeping the working class as the tail of bourgeois politics, to keeping it from its declaration of independence as a class, to keeping it from starting on the road which leads and must lead to socialist power. What do all the efforts of the anti-Marxist chorus come down to? To get us and everyone like us to abandon the revolutionary road, the only road to socialism, to warn off all others from taking the road. They would like to see us, too, at the tail of bourgeois politics, at the very moment when the American working-class giant is restlessly reconsidering his political position.

We do not turn to the official United States which has such a great attraction for weak minds and soft spines. We are with the silent millions who will find eloquent and ringing voice tomorrow.

We will bring our ideas to the worker in the factory and the housewife at home, who know they are traduced by the bourgeois politicians, who know they are treated like dirt by the bourgeois bureaucrats, who are not content with the high-and-mighty airs of the labor bureaucrat and his routinist disposal of their requests and petitions, who want more to say about running the government than they can get by casting a ballot once a year for an oleaginous windbag and writing him letters to Congress for the rest of the year, who are disturbed and frightened by all this talk about another war and by the ominous preparations for it, and are looking for a way out of the terror.

We will bring our ideas to the young worker and the young student, who are already being groomed for another imperialist holocaust, like their fathers and their grandfathers before them. We will show them that there is a war to win which is really their war. We will inspire them with the vision of freedom and happiness. We will arm them with the emancipating ideas of socialism, and contempt for the backsliders.

We will bring our ideas to the scientist and the intellectual, to the brave and honest ones, who are sick at the prostitution of the mind and spirit to which the chauvinism of the time drives them -- the intellectual who wants the arts freed from the social compulsions of the philistines and false patriots, who wants a choice other than the gold-corruption of the United States or the police-art of Stalinism, the scientist who despises the degradation of Stalinism and who is ashamed of enchainment to the god of destruction to which science is reduced here.

This will take time. It will take patience, and perseverance, and a revolutionary spirit that does not break easily. We have men and women with these qualities. We will win more. We will imbue them with a hatred of all oppression and exploitation, physical and intellectual, and a scorn for all who compromise with it. We will imbue them with a passion for freedom for all who do not enjoy it. We will implement this passion with the sharpest scientific weapons we have. And with these weapons, we will win.

"Do you really mean that? Do you really think you will win, that you can win -- you who are so small and so isolated? What do you Marxists have to show for your socialist revolution after a full hundred years of struggle? Be honest with yourselves. All you can look back upon is a defeat. Your Commune defeated; your 1905 defeated; your Russian Revolution defeated; imperialist wars you could not prevent; another one coming; reaction and decay everywhere. Your words are brave and fine, but they are no more than words. We are discouraged, and despair has driven us to retirement and pessimism, even cynicism. We fear your optimism is hollow and artificial. Give it up, give it up!"

Our movement is ringed with this forlorn chant today. Our ear has become so sensitive to it that we easily recognize its accents in Erber's weary mutterings. Yet we are unmoved by it. We repeat quietly that we mean what we say. We know quite well that we have been defeated, often defeated, but we also know why. The defeats were not altogether unanticipated. Those who understand what Rosa Luxemburg called the "basic lesson of every great revolution, the law of its being," thereby understand what brought about the defeats and, by that token, understand that the defeats will give way to victory. In every defeated revolution, we have seen the unrelenting operation of the "law of its being." It is stated with superb insight by Rosa:

> "Either the revolution must advance at a rapid, stormy and resolute tempo, break down all barriers with an iron hand and place its goals ever farther ahead, or it is quite soon thrown backward behind its feeble point of departure and suppressed by counterrevolution."

The Commune, the revolution of 1905, these could not place their goals ever farther ahead, and they were quite soon thrown backward behind their feeble point of departure. The revolution that does not go to the end, that is not brought to its necessary goal, risks being thrown all the way back, and then has to work its way again, painfully and painstakingly, to a new point of departure. The Bolshevik Revolution was a new point of departure. It achieved more than any preceding effort of the proletariat. It advanced farther toward the goal of freedom than ever before in history. With an iron hand, it broke down all the barriers that it could break down by itself. Because it was left to itself, it too was soon thrown backward behind its point of departure and suppressed by the counterrevolution. But if it is true that it was hurled back, it is also true that it succeeded in advancing infinitely closer the goal of socialism than was possible in all earlier attempts, so close indeed that the ruling classes of the whole world held their breath in panic for years.

Now we have to work our way to a new point of departure again. We have no doubt that we will succeed. If socialism depended only on the ideas of Marxism, it would forever be Utopian. But these ideas are only the conscious expression of the irresistible movement of a force which all the ingenuity and science and pistols of the ruling classes can never succeed in wiping out

of society - the working class. There is the spring without which all social existence is impossible! It is a unique spring, because it continues to grow in size and therefore in strength. Brute force can keep it compressed for a long time, but not forever. The larger it grows, the greater the brute force that must be employed to keep it from uncoiling. The more it uncoils without straightening out fully - the more brutally it must be forced back into its original condition. The more force used against it, the more distorted, painful, unendurable becomes the life of organized society. In the Russian Revolution, it uncoiled more than ever before in history, but because it could not smash all the barriers, it was compressed back into shape more violently than ever before in history. But there is a limit to the force that can be applied to it. The power inherent in the spring has no such limit. It has uncoiled before -- more of it each time. It will uncoil in full, and all humanity will straighten up. We have no doubt and no reason to doubt which force will prove stronger in the end . We have no doubt that in the end social retrogression will be turned into socialist victory.

The fight for socialism is our reason for existence. It is our way of life. In this life, so many Erbers have come and gone that we remember their names only because obloquy saved them from oblivion. Always the movement for socialism remained, now big, now small, now big again. Today it is on the defensive, but we know how to fight on the defensive, too. Our goal is human freedom and human dignity. We march to it under the banner of Marxism. "What else," asked Engels, "are we here for?"

Max Shachtman.

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