

The Reactionary Right: Incipient Fascism

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1. Capitalist Backers of The Reactionary Right

Where a social revolution is pending and, for whatever reason, is not accomplished, reaction is the alternative.

—DANIEL DE LEON

THE ominous character of the extreme right-wing organizations that have proliferated in this country in the past several years can scarcely be exaggerated. We do not wish to be alarmist. Yet we think it can be shown that these organizations constitute an incipient movement of American fascism. They have already achieved, in a significant measure, two of three conditions prerequisite for a potent fascist movement. They have attracted substantial financial support from some of the country's big capitalists. They have formed a sinister alliance with leading militarists, both on active duty and retired.

But they have not yet consolidated into one party with a mass base, under one fuehrer. The reactionary right in America is still a hydra-headed monster with scattered grass-roots support. Its mercenary-minded leaders—the leading right-wing organizations are run as businesses—though willing to cooperate with one another, are not united. Some of these leaders even pretend to have differences with others, as, for example, Fred C. Schwarz of the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, who frowns on “extremism.” Nevertheless, the fact that they exploit the same frustrations and appeal

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to the same fears and prejudices tends to draw them together. Sometime, in the tension-ridden turbulence ahead, consolidation of the reactionary right seems inevitable.

It is plainly of great and urgent importance that all who are concerned with making this a sane, free, peaceful and decent world understand the nature, meaning and potentiality of this reactionary movement. The question is: How is this understanding to be acquired? A great deal of publicity has been focused on such men as Fred Schwarz, Robert Welch (John Birch Society), Billy James Hargis (Christian Crusade and We the People!) and others. These are the front men, the demagogues, whose role is to build a mass base for American fascism. It is important, of course, for us to know about these men, to be informed on the nature of their techniques, how they operate. It is also important to know where and how their movements are financed, and what their connections are, military and otherwise. In this connection, it may be noted that several informative and documented studies have been made and published on the reactionary right. One of the most useful of these is "The Ultras—Aims, Affiliations and Finances of the Radical Right,"¹ by Fred J. Cook.

AN OUTGROWTH OF DECADENT CAPITALISM

But it is most important that we know the material facts and understand the social climate and soil in which such movements incubate and grow. Thus, our approach to the problem of spreading understanding of the

¹ Cook's study appeared in its entirety in a special issue of *The Nation*, June 30, 1962.

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reactionary right differs from that of Mr. Cook. It will be our purpose, not to supply still another survey of right-wing organizations, but rather to examine, in perspective, the socio-economic conditions in which they tend to rise and flourish. Our approach, in short, is not that of the “liberal” who is engrossed in dealing with effects, but that of the scientific Socialist, the Marxist, who is concerned with removing the cause.

It will be our purpose to demonstrate that social reaction is a logical outgrowth of an outmoded social system—in this case, capitalism. And that the reactionary right is the instrument of a doomed ruling class intent on prolonging its existence and rule.

It is easy to see this in the case of Hitler’s Germany, Mussolini’s Italy and other countries that have been conquered by fascist reaction. In this connection, it is not comforting to reflect that German fascism was also initially a hydra-headed monster. Several anti-democratic, anti-labor, super-patriotic organizations were incubated by decadent German capitalism in the 1920s. However, this is not to say that they were planned and organized by the bankers and industrialists—the Krupps, the Thyssens, the von Schroeders and other German capitalists who became so prominent in the Nazi movement. “To declare,” wrote Ignazio Silone in *Der Fascismus* in 1934, “that these organizations are only a diabolic invention of finance capital, wishing to preserve its rule, is not enough for an understanding of the nature of these forces which rise from the depths of society.”² With all their social and economic power, the German capitalists could not set such human forces into

² Quoted by Daniel Guerin in *Fascism and Big Business*. (1939)

motion had it not been for the pervasive frustrations, the deep discontent, apprehensions and instability affecting large sections of the German population, particularly the unemployed professional militarists, petty capitalists, artisans, small traders and the rest of that amorphous element erroneously called “the middle class.”

It was only after the right-wing organizations came into existence and manifested their anti-labor character (they often called themselves “volunteer corps” and “combat leagues” who specialized in “Bolshevik fighting”) that certain leading German capitalists began to lend them financial support. One of these gangs, formed in Munich in 1920, took the name “National Socialist Party.” Its leader (“leader” is English for *Fuehrer*) was Adolf Hitler. On Sept. 25, 1923, several of the “volunteer corps” and “combat leagues” merged into the Nazi party with Hitler at its head. From this time on, the German reactionary right was subsidized regularly by the big and powerful capitalists, and after 1929, as working-class discontent—and radicalism—spread, the subsidies poured into the Nazi party treasury.

THE “RESPECTABLES” JOIN THE FANATICS

Like the fascist gangs in Italy and Germany, the reactionary right-wing organizations in the United States sprang up spontaneously. However, the more successful of these were not in business long before they attracted the attention and the financial support of certain capitalists. Now the capitalists’ subsidies of the reactionary right are very considerable. In his study of “The Ultras,” Fred Cook quoted Professor Alan F. Westin, of Columbia University, as saying that “a

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cautious estimate—based on recent surveys of annual corporate donations and published gifts to the Radical Right—would show that the business community contributed *about \$10 million to the Radical Right last year.*” Cook mentions the Schick Safety Razor Co., Richfield Oil, Dr. Ross Dog Food, Southern California Edison Co., Tidewater Oil, Carnation Milk, Papermate Pen, General Electric and other well-known corporations that lend financial support to the reactionary right. But this by no means exhausts the list.

Indeed, the central thesis of Mr. Cook’s exposé is that “the Radical Right of 1962 depends not on the bold and unscrupulous moves of a lone opportunist like [the late Senator] McCarthy; it represents not just the individual, multimillion-dollar effort of an H.L. Hunt; on the contrary, it stands as the symbol of the wedding of fanatics with some of the largest corporations and the most powerful business men in the nation. This is its meaning and its significance. The Respectables have turned the Radicals from freaks into a force.”

“The Respectables,” of course, are the capitalists—the American Krupps, Thyssens and Kirdorfs—who support reactionary, anti-democratic movements with a view to prolonging capitalist rule through absolutism. They are leaders of the class that owns all the means of social production, exploits the working class and dominates society. The capitalists rule industry despotically. They may, if their material interests are served thereby, curtail production and put their workers on short rations. Or they may close their plants altogether and cut their workers off with no rations at all. In any case, they determine the economic policy to which their employees, who have no voice in these matters, must

submit. They may form mergers, replace workers with machines, move their factories to another state or even another country and leave their workers stranded high and dry. In short, whatever this country may still boast in the way of political democracy, in the vital area of economics a veritable dictatorship prevails.³

The step from capitalist dictatorship in industry to political dictatorship is a logical one. “Despotism in economics,” as the American theologian, Jonathan Edwards, put it, “naturally leads to despotism in politics.”

AN IRON HOOP AROUND COLLAPSING CAPITALISM

Here is the root cause of the danger of which the reactionary right is a manifestation. As we said on another occasion⁴:

“... We have been encouraged to stare with fascinated horror at the spectacle of whole nations reduced through bodily torture and systematic intellectual stultification to the abjuration of moral conscience and to the worship of force. These distractions have served to conceal the inner essence of fascism, which, as we shall show, is really nothing more nor less than an attempt to prolong and strengthen the rule of the predominant capitalist element through the

³ “... And so, businesses in order to make right and sound decisions must, in fact, be authoritarian in character. They are corporate dictatorships or oligarchies and must be so... Business institutions are not primarily interested in preserving the freedom of individuals. In fact, they cannot tolerate this concept...”—G.C. Saltarelli, vice president of Houdaille Industries, Inc., as quoted by the Buffalo *Evening News*, July 22, 1961.

⁴ *Fascism Is Still a Menace*, by Eric Hass. (1948)

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medium of an all-powerful State. Its aim is, on the one hand, to arrest the contradictions which threaten to undermine capitalism, and, on the other, to break the back of working-class resistance. Fascism, as the Russian anti-Stalinist publicist Karl Radek put it, *is the iron hoop around the collapsing barrel of capitalism.*

“It is noteworthy that the ruling plutocracy of the democratic capitalist countries have never permitted themselves to be distracted by the political pathology of fascist dictatorship. On the contrary, they have looked ‘behind the haze of irrelevant Nazi ideology and authoritarian bureaucracy’ and they have seen there what one American economist describes admiringly as ‘a group of men of unquestioned genius . . . at work on the problems that have beset capitalism during the past quarter-century.’⁵ Never perturbed by [the Nazis] ‘anti-capitalist’ demagogy, they watched with ill-concealed envy while Nazi capitalist Germany seemingly pulled herself up by her bootstraps, achieved ‘full employment,’ and restored production and profits to high levels. They could agree that ‘to do these things she [Nazi Germany] is changing capitalism but she is not destroying it.’⁶

“Fascism is not ‘mass lunacy,’ however it may appear to be that to normal and decent people. Nor is it the petty capitalists ‘run amok.’ Fascism is, rather, a product of capitalist decadence. It arises in response to the needs of big business at a certain stage in the decline of capitalist society. It is a *tactical method* which the capitalist class adopts at this, its decadent, stage just as

⁵ “The German Financial Revolution,” by Dal Hitchcock, *Harpers Magazine*, February, 1941.

⁶ *Ibid.*

in its infancy it was revolutionary, and fought for and defended ‘liberalism,’ ‘human rights,’ and bourgeois republican institutions.

“There are two corollaries here of paramount importance. The first is that fascism *is not a new system*; it is rather a decadent form of the old. It does not, as capitalism did with feudalism, replace one ruling class by another, or abolish the fundamental laws of the old system’s existence. The same ruling class rules—minus the petty capitalist element whose ruin it hastens. Wealth continues to take the form of ‘an immense accumulation of commodities.’ As Marx observed [in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*] concerning an earlier dictatorship, ‘Instead of society itself having conquered a new point, only the State appears to have returned to its oldest form, to the brazen rule of the sword and the cowl.’

“The second corollary is that fascism is a hydra-headed monster, native to the whole capitalist world. It is a consequence of the concentration of industry and ownership, and of other laws and contradictions inherent in the capitalist system. Wherever capitalism exists, therefore, fascism is a menace, and can only be finally destroyed when capitalism is destroyed.”

This conclusion is as valid today as when it was written in 1948. Incipient fascism, in the form of the reactionary right, has appeared in America in response to the needs of outmoded capitalism. It poses as “conservative.” But its conservatism applies to capitalist property, to economic despotism, not to the enlightened democratic principles of the Bill of Rights. The reactionary right has only contempt and hatred for political democracy. Its “anti-communism” is a cover for

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anti-democracy. Its detestable tactics, some of which (as in the case of the Birchers) are openly patterned on the Jesuitical tactics of the “Communists,” are meant to impose conformity to the status quo. It realizes that superstitious reverence for existing economic and social relationships are cornerstones of the despotism it aims to establish. It is no accident that it attracts to itself such elements as the segregationist White Citizens Council, the slum-bred would-be Hitlers, the bomb-brandishing militarists, and all the other rabid foes of democracy and minority rights.

2. Militarism and Reaction

THE unprecedented growth of militarism in America, and the rise of the Warfare State, are important factors in creating a climate hospitable to the reactionary right.⁷ It is not merely that militarism is contemptuous of democracy. This, of course, is a factor, for as the military establishment grows, more and more people become indoctrinated with the totalitarian military spirit. But even more important are the vested interests that have emerged and are determined to perpetuate a huge military establishment with ever mounting, multibillion-dollar military budgets.

These vested interests are, besides the military brass (whose power has grown with military spending), tens of thousands of scientists and technicians who have devoted their professional lives to the invention and construction of weapons, millions of workers, union hierarchies, whole communities, and scores of the nation's largest corporations.

The alliance between the arms merchants and the military brass is one of the most sinister in history. It

⁷ The threat of militarism to America's traditional democratic principles was well expressed by President Woodrow Wilson in his second annual message to a joint session of Congress, December 8, 1914. In part, Wilson declared: "We never have had, and while we retain our present principles and ideals we never shall have, a large standing army. . . . We shall not turn America into a military camp. We will not ask our young men to spend the best years of their lives making soldiers of themselves. . . . And especially when half the world is on fire we shall be careful to make our moral insurance against the spread of the conflagration very definite and certain and adequate indeed."

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had a tentative beginning in this country in World War II. Both groups found it to be immensely and mutually advantageous. In an address to the Army Ordnance Association in January, 1944, reprinted in the *Army Ordnance Journal*, General Electric's Charles E. Wilson openly suggested the perpetuation of the alliance in "a permanent war economy." He urged that every large corporation appoint a liaison man with the Armed Forces, commissioned as a colonel in the Reserve. The partnership should be initiated by the President and the War and Navy Departments, and it should be continuing, permanent. "The role of Congress," he said, "is limited to voting the needed funds. . . ." He wanted the arms dealers to be free from "the 'Merchant of Death' label." "Let us make this three-way partnership (industry, government, army) permanent and workable and not just an arrangement of momentary convenience."

The development of the atomic bomb and the imperialist struggle with Stalinist Russia that began even before World War II ended created the tense objective conditions for the practical realization of Mr. Wilson's plan. With but a brief postwar respite when the swollen Armed Forces of wartime were demobilized, U.S. military budgets have grown and grown, making an ever larger fraction of the population economically dependent on military spending, inflating the power and prestige of military leaders and rapidly eroding the treasured American spirit of antimilitarism. Today, military budgets exceed \$50 billion yearly, and 2,800,000 men and women are in uniform. The Pentagon alone employs more than a million civilians, and millions more are on the payrolls of military contractors and subcontractors.

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The marriage of the military brass and industry is knit by great industry-financed “defense” lobbies which coordinate with contingents of military officers—all seeking ever bigger budgets—and by more than 1,400 retired officers, including 261 generals and admirals, who are employed by arms manufacturers. Capitalist arms merchants and military brass scratch each others’ backs.

AMERICANS WITH VESTED INTERESTS IN DEFENSE

By 1957, the dangers implicit in the Warfare State were so glaring that the Secretary of Defense himself (then the former president of General Motors, Charles E. Wilson) told a congressional committee:

“One of the most serious things about this defense business is that so many Americans are getting a vested interest in it: Properties, business, jobs, employment, votes, opportunities for promotion and advancement, bigger salaries for scientists and all that. It is a troublesome business. . . . If you try to change suddenly you get into trouble. . . .”⁸

But the most startling warnings of the menace implicit in the Warfare State, and the alliance of the big capitalists and the military brass, came from a lifelong militarist, President Eisenhower. In his farewell address delivered just three days before he departed from office, the President said:

“. . . We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this,

⁸ Quoted by Fred J. Cook in “Juggernaut—The Warfare State.” This excellent documented study of U.S. militarism was published in a special issue of *The Nation*, Oct. 28, 1961.

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three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security alone more than the net income of all United States corporations.

“Now this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

“In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

“We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.” (Italics ours.)

MILITARISTS AS POLICY MAKERS

The creation of this immense power, so inimical to democratic principles, has been accompanied by an ominous transformation in the role of the military brass. Gradually, but with increasing boldness, military leaders have invaded an area long reserved for civilian authorities, the area of policy making. They have been encouraged in this by the reforms that have been made in the nation’s military establishment, reforms in the direction of “unifying” the Armed Forces into one monolithic military establishment with a single “general

staff,” after the Prussian model, at its head. They have also been encouraged by certain reactionary members of Congress. It was in this climate of exaltation of military leaders that General Douglas MacArthur publicly dared to dispute President Harry Truman’s conduct of the Korean War. As is well known, President Truman defended civilian authority by removing MacArthur as commander. Nevertheless, the general had numerous supporters in Congress who, by their support of MacArthur, showed they were ready to see civilian authority trampled upon.⁹

Again, in 1961, military leaders who were in the John Birch Society and other so-called right-wing organizations became emboldened to a reckless degree. It was in April of that year that the Birchite, Major General Edwin A. Walker, commander of the 24th Infantry Division in Germany, was reprimanded and disciplined for “taking injudicious actions and for making derogatory public statements about prominent Americans.” General Walker had described as “definitely pink” former President Harry S. Truman, former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, and others. And he had aggressively indoctrinated the troops under his command and their families with the Birchite line that denigrates democracy as a system that leads to “mobocracy.” An article in the Division’s weekly newspaper, *Taro Leaf*, concluded that the United States is “a republic, not a

⁹ Apparently General MacArthur had some second thoughts on the relation of the military to civilian authority. To the graduating class at West Point in 1962 he made an eloquent plea for military subordination to civilian rule.

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democracy. Let's keep it that way.”¹⁰ (New York Times, April 14, 1961.)

A FATEFUL NSC DECISION

It should be understood, however, that General Walker and numerous other right-wing military commanders who were lending military facilities and personnel for the dissemination of rabidly reactionary political activities, believed themselves to be acting in accord with a decision reached at the very highest level of policy making and strategy, the National Security Council. This is the top-level, ultra-secret group that in “democratic” America determines all high strategy. The decision referred to was reached in 1958, a year of high tension when Vice President Richard Nixon was assaulted by mobs during his “good-will” tour of South America, when President Eisenhower sent Marines to Lebanon, and when “Communist” China stepped up its artillery attack on the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu. Another factor that unquestionably influenced the NSC was the memory of the behavior of U.S. prisoners of war in Korea.

Few American prisoners had tried to escape. Many had lost the will to live and had simply “pined and died.” And many others had allowed themselves to be “brainwashed” into accepting “Communist” dogma. For U.S. military and civilian leaders alike it was one of the most staggering developments in American history.

¹⁰ The absurd claim of reactionaries that the U.S. government is “a republic, not a democracy” is torn to shreds by Arnold Petersen in *Democracy: Past, Present and Future*, where he demonstrates that the American republic is a form of democracy. In doing so, Petersen cites corroborating testimony of James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.

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Such were the factors that persuaded President Eisenhower and his cohorts on the NSC to reach a fateful decision. This decision is embodied in a still-classified (secret) “cold-war policy” paper. Its implementation in the Pentagon was ordered through a series of directives and “guidance” papers, also classified. They instructed military commanders to alert the troops under their command *and the public at large* to the “issues” of the cold war. In other words, the highest council of American capitalism gave carte blanche to the military to propagandize the civilian population.

Right-wing military commanders took eager advantage of the unprecedented opportunity offered by the NSC decision. Soon a score of military bases became bases of operations for Birchites and reactionary demagogues like Fred Schwarz. Schwarz held his Christian Anti-Communism Crusade “seminars” right on military property, using military personnel and equipment. Two mendacious films, *Operation Abolition* and *Communism on the Map*, were shown at the bases over and over again both to enlisted men and to civilians from neighboring communities.

Operation Abolition, produced by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, is a distorted and grossly misleading version of the so-called “student riots” in San Francisco when the committee had hearings there in 1960. Its purpose is to “prove” that students who are the least bit “liberal” in their thinking, or who object to the committee’s tactic of smearing its victims with unsupported accusations, are easily duped by Communists.

The second film, *Communism on the Map*, was

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produced at Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas, by the so-called National Education Program. This film shows the United States virtually engulfed in a world gone either “Communist” or “Socialist.” All its NATO allies but one are “lost.” That one, significantly, is fascist Portugal. Among those whom the film narrator cites as responsible for the disaster are Franklin D. Roosevelt (for having recognized the Soviet Union), and General of the Army George C. Marshall (for allegedly having “made possible” the “Communist” victory in China).

THE MENACE OF RIGHT-WING MILITARISM

It is not our purpose here to give a detailed account of the right-wing activities of Birchite militarists. Our purpose is to emphasize that these activities were authorized by the highest strategy-making body of American capitalism, the National Security Council. Probably the NSC did not anticipate the idiotic Birch-like excesses of General Walker and others. But it must have foreseen that the line the military commanders would take in propagandizing the civilian population would be one which denounced talk of peace as weakness, negotiation as appeasement, disarmament as disloyal, and concession and compromise generally as treason. This would follow logically, not only because the military mind tends to look at world affairs in terms of preparations for war, but because the militarists, and their capitalist “partners,” have an immense material stake in perpetuating the cold war.

It is noteworthy, too, that the right-wing militarists are not content with propagandizing civilians and the military personnel under their command; they are also intent on indoctrinating military officers with their point

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of view. This is not done haphazardly. It is done at the National War College, one of the most important idea-formulating agencies of the federal government, and at other colleges maintained by the Armed Forces. And it is done under the auspices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The agencies of the reactionary right, which advocate an anti-democratic, "tough-minded," blow-up-everything view, are the Foreign Policy Research Institute and the Institute for American Strategy. Heavily financed by the Richardson Foundation, which derives its money from the Vick Chemical Co., these two organizations have been indoctrinating military officers with their point of view through seminars at the National War College under the auspices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹¹

Thus the reactionary right operates at several levels, and in part under official auspices. Its military contingent is not composed exclusively of General Walkers; many "respectable" military leaders sit in its councils and strategy boards.

*

The growth of militarism in America has greatly magnified the danger of social reaction. Indeed, the danger is widely recognized now of possible military usurpation. The usurpation may already have occurred for all practical purposes in the vital area of foreign relations. A powerful military elite has definitely emerged that is dedicated to the proposition of perpetual hostility between the United States and the Soviet Union. This military elite is openly encouraged by right-wing politicians to cross the barriers that exclude the

¹¹ "The Ultras," etc., Fred. J. Cook.

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military from policy making in a democracy. For example, Senator Barry Goldwater, commenting on a warning issued by Senator J. William Fulbright against precisely such a usurpation, said:

“It is high time now that we recognize that our military forces are vital organs of the body politic as well as essential organs of defense. As such, they should be nourished and encouraged, rather than attacked and intimidated.” (*Look*, Sept. 11, 1962.)

The danger of military usurpation was pointed up in stark terms by Harrison Brown and James Real in 1960 in their study of the potentialities of war and nuclear annihilation, *Community of Fear*.¹²

“A small but not negligible fraction of the \$40 billion defense budget,” Brown and Real wrote, “is invested judiciously each year in a well-conceived program of public and Congressional relations. As a result, the military lobby is now the strongest lobby in Washington. Were the State Department to negotiate successfully an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union and were the armed services united in their opposition to the agreement, the agreement would almost certainly be defeated by the Senate. There is little doubt that the armed services exert more control over Congress than that body exerts over the Defense Department. Indeed, the military elite is clearly in a position to assume actual political command over the U.S. striking forces if there are serious signs of ‘weakness’ in U.S. foreign relations.”

If anything should alert American workers to the urgent need to mobilize their own forces, political and

¹² Published and distributed free by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, Calif.

economic, to preserve and extend democracy through a Socialist reconstruction of society this should. For, make no mistake about it, once military usurpation becomes overt, all of the totalitarian, labor-hating characteristics of capitalist militarism will emerge. Karl Liebknecht noted that “the task of militarism is, above all, to secure for a minority, at whatever cost, even against the enlightened will of the majority of the people, domination of the State and freedom to exploit.” (*Militarism and Anti-Militarism.*) And Daniel De Leon, America’s foremost Marxist, observing the class role of military power, long ago uttered this solemn warning:

“There is a nation closer at hand that the powers that be are getting ready to fight in the hope of putting it down—and keeping it henceforth down under the iron heel of military despotism. That nation is not all white of skin, nor all black, nor all yellow. That nation is cosmopolitan. It is the working class of the land. The nation that the land’s plutocracy is foe to, and is arming against, is our own nation’s vitals—its working class.”

Is there any force that can cope with this menace of social reaction?

Yes, one. Potentially—if properly organized—the working class may wield social and economic power greater than that wielded by any class in history. “Organize the working class integrally-industrially,” said De Leon. “Only then can the revolt against militarism result in a Waterloo to the class of sponge, instead of a massacre to the class of labor.” But this is a point to be developed in a subsequent chapter.

3. Trend to a Totalitarian State

EVERYONE knows that fascism suppresses the rights and liberties of individuals and invests the State with absolute power. Yet if one examines the concurrence of the interests and beliefs of the American reactionary right he discovers that one of its first articles of faith is an unalterable opposition to a strong federal government and to everything that may contribute to strong central authority, such as the federal income tax, federal regulation of business and federal supervision of health, education and welfare. Is there a contradiction here? Yes, but it is not the clear-cut contradiction that it appears to be. Nor would it prevent the movement of the reactionary right from culminating in an all-powerful, fascist-totalitarian State.

In this connection it is interesting to recall that a leading article of faith in the syndrome of Nazi beliefs before Hitler came to power was opposition to capitalism. The Nazis made German big business their whipping boy. Hitler denounced the capitalists' "proverbial cowardice," "senility" and "intellectual rotteness" even at the time that some of the biggest capitalists, men like Krupp and Thyssen, were financing Nazi activities. Yet Nazi "anti-capitalism" was never aimed at abolishing the capitalist system as such. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler explained that he meant for capitalism to be rejuvenated by "an influx of fresh blood coming from the lower classes." In 1926 Hitler stated flatly, "We shall protect free enterprise as the most expedient or rather the sole possible economic order."

Moreover, when the Nazis came to power they imposed what they called State “direction” and “guidance” on the various industries. In practice, however, the “direction” and “guidance” came from the most powerful capitalists in the respective industries—in much the same way as, during World War II, the War Production Board and other regulatory wartime agencies in the United States were run by dollar-a-year executives loaned by the big corporations.¹³ As Otto Nathan described the Hitler government in *The Nazi Economic System* (Duke University Press, 1944):

“It was a totalitarian system of government control within the framework of private property and private profit. It maintained private enterprise and provided profit incentives as spurs to efficient management.”

In other words, the “anti-capitalism” of the Nazis did not prevent the Nazi totalitarian State from functioning in the interests of the German capitalist oligarchy. By the same token, the opposition of the reactionary right to a “strong federal government” in the United States

¹³ The late William Allen White put it this way in his *Emporia (Kansas) Gazette*: “One is surprised to find men representing great commodity trusts or agreements or syndicates planted in the various [World War II] boards. It is silly to say New Dealers run this show. It’s run largely by absentee owners of amalgamated industrial wealth, men who either directly or through their employers control small minority blocks, closely organized, that manipulate the physical plants of these trusts.” Editor White went on to comment on the way these capitalists ruthlessly used their positions for the advantage and aggrandizement of the corporations. “. . . If you touch them in nine relations out of ten, they are kindly, courteous, Christian gentlemen. But in the tenth relation, where it touches their own organization, they are stark mad, ruthless, unchecked by God or man, paranoiacs, in fact, as evil in their design as Hitler.” (*Congressional Record Appendix*, May 14, 1943.)

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would be no obstacle to the rise of a totalitarian or fascist State in which the “private property” and “private profit” of the American plutocracy would also be maintained.

It is noteworthy, too, that just as the Nazis contradicted themselves in their “anti-capitalism” stand, so does the reactionary right in this country contradict itself in its rabid opposition to a “strong federal government.” For example, a right-wing demagogue may denounce the federal income tax as “the root of all evil” and “right out of the *Communist Manifesto*,” and, in the same speech, call for stepped-up spending for arms and a balanced budget. Or, he may indignantly charge the federal government, through its mental health program,¹⁴ with conspiring to make leaders of the right wing “political prisoners” in mental institutions and in the same speech hail as “bulwarks of freedom” such liberty-destroying laws as the Smith Act and the McCarran Act (Internal Security Act of 1950).

THE APPEALS TO RACE PREJUDICE

Indeed, inconsistency and foot-in-the-mouthness are characteristics of both the American reactionary right and the German Nazis. This is logical, for those who are financing and running the more successful right-wing organizations deliberately exploit the prejudices, fears and frustrations of uninformed people. The Nazis, as all

¹⁴ The reactionary right is hostile to all the activities of the U.S. Public Health Service, which it frequently claims is staffed with “Russian-born” doctors and dentists. It really thinks mental health programs are aimed at the right wing. Articles elaborating this theme were inserted in the *Congressional Record*, May 7, 1956, by Senator Barry Goldwater.

the world knows, exploited anti-Semitic prejudice with systematic cruelty. As a matter of fact, a study of the “anti-capitalism” of the pre-1933 Nazi party shows that it was almost always given a “Jewish-international-banker” twist. In the same way are the attacks of the reactionary right on a “strong federal government” larded with sly appeals to Anti-Semitic and racial prejudice.

In this connection, we may note the hostility of the whole reactionary right, North and South, East and West, to the United States Supreme Court which it angrily designates “the Warren court.” This hostility centers on the court’s decisions outlawing racial segregation and it has inspired a raft of racist literature which is widely read among reactionary-rightist groups. In their study of *The American Right Wing* (Public Affairs Press, 1962), a document prepared originally as a report to the Fund for the Republic, Ralph E. Ellsworth and Sarah M. Harris make the following significant observation:

“Many have wondered if perhaps the segregation question may be the issue on which the Right will finally present a united front. Certainly it is dear to many hearts, and is sufficiently dynamic to hold together both rational and irrational elements—a necessity for any sort of nationalist mass movement which succeeds.”

Thus in many ways and on many levels the reactionary right works to create a mass base for a movement whose goal is the very thing that rightist spokesmen claim to abhor—a strong centralized government with absolute power over the nation’s citizens, especially the working class. The logic of this conclusion may be stated as follows:

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1. In the minds of reactionary rightists, the “free enterprise system”—along with “Christianity,” “nationalism” and “individualism,”—is the target of a savage and ruthless conspiracy. Their concept of “free enterprise” is vague and, in general terms, means all economic activities of private capital as opposed to government enterprise. Therefore, what the reactionary right defends—along with “Christianity,” “nationalism” and “individualism”—is the capitalist system.

2. But the capitalist system has reached a stage of decadence where, without “regulation” by the capitalist State, it would quickly disintegrate in anarchy. It does not matter that some capitalists rant against “government interference.” Individual capitalists may at times be restricted and hurt by such “interference.” But as a class they cannot do without it. Indeed, if the State did not today provide a huge market for arms and military supplies—dictating to the capitalists every minute detail of their construction, dimensions, quality, etc.—the whole capitalist system would quickly go into a nose dive and crash. Moreover, such is the recklessness and boundless greed of capitalist “free enterprisers” that even their fellow capitalists become persuaded that “regulation” is sometimes necessary. *Vide* the thalidomide scandal. The chemical drug, thalidomide, was responsible for the deaths and/or malformations of thousands of babies in Germany, England and elsewhere. When it became known that in the United States only the stubborn integrity of a woman doctor employed by the U.S. Public Health Service had blocked the public sale of thalidomide, and that the dangerous drug, had nevertheless been distributed to American doctors for experimental use on unsuspecting patients,

even capitalists who abhor “government interference” urged quick congressional action to restrict the profit-hungry drug-manufacturing companies.

THE CAPITALISTS’ EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The modern political State in capitalist countries is the *capitalists’* State, in Marx’s words, the “executive committee” of the capitalist class. In countries where there are political democratic institutions, and a popular vote, such as in the United States, the fact is obscured. Do not the workers constitute a majority? Is it not they who elect the administrators of political government? How, then, can the U.S. government be called a *capitalist* State?

The question is a tricky one. For one thing, the capitalist political State is by its very nature and historical development an instrument intended to perpetuate the yoke of capitalist exploitation upon the neck of the working class. Its entire governmental and juridical structure is geared primarily to the protection and perpetuation of corporate, or plutocratic, property interests. It, therefore, cannot, and will not, serve the interests or protect the welfare of the vast majority—the working class.

Nevertheless, by virtue of America’s social and historical conditions, which we cannot detail here, certain political democratic institutions and the popular vote do exist, thus opening the road to peaceful social change. To divert the workers from this road, everything is rigged and all the organs for molding public opinion are used to focus mass attention on two parties which, though rivals, have substantially the same views on

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every basic social question.¹⁵ In most states, Republicans and Democrats conspire to keep a third party, a party that may offer a bona fide alternative to capitalism, off the ballot by means of exorbitant conditions set forth in election laws. But even where the barriers are surmountable, a conspiracy of silence, such as that practiced against the Socialist Labor Party and its candidates by the press, radio and television, fosters a state of mass ignorance and insures a victory for Tweedledum or Tweedledee. The net result is that when the workers, whose votes are decisive, cast their ballots they elect staunch upholders of the capitalist status quo.

Nowadays the capitalist nature of the political State is also obscured by the blunderbuss attacks of the reactionary right which equates Socialism with the phony “Communism” of Soviet Russia, and “liberalism” with Socialism. These attacks often charge some of the most conservative supporters of capitalism, Republicans as well as Democrats, with being “conscious or unconscious” participants in a “Communist conspiracy.”

THE REACTIONARY RIGHT’S BLUNDERBUSS ATTACK

The following typical reactionary-rightist circular, which was distributed by the personnel manager among

¹⁵ “As for the one-party system [of the U.S.S.R.]: it must be contrasted, unfortunately, with precisely that segment in the political life of the West which is itself today most subject to question, most doubtful in point of adequacy to the needs of the time. I mean the system of political parties and parliamentary institutions. In the doctrinal sense we in America also have in certain respects a one-party system. For aren’t the two parties ideologically indistinguishable? Don’t their pronouncements form one integral body of banality and platitude?”—George F. Kennan, former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, in a taped interview published in the British magazine *Encounter*, March, 1960.

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employees of a large electrical-supply house in San Diego, Calif., illustrates the blunderbuss nature of the reactionary right's attacks on capitalist administrations that by its own fantastic and weird logic it has condemned as "liberal" and "left-wing":

"The message for Wednesday . . .

"Much is written these days condemning so-called right-wing extremists. So as Al Smith would have said, 'Let's take a look at the record.' Were the right-wing extremists the ones who recognized Russia? Did they shamefully give away Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria and Albania to the Soviet empire? Did they destroy Nationalist China and deny aid to freedom fighters in Poznan, East Berlin and Hungary? Were they the ones who gave the secrets of the atom bomb to Russia? Are they the ones favoring Communists in Indonesia and Katanga? Did they deny victory to our troops in Korea? Did they publicly entertain Nikita Khrushchev? Are they recommending a no-win policy against Communism? Are the right-wing extremists the ones who are advocating total disarmament in the creating of a U.N. Police Force? Have they protected Red agents holding high office in the U.S. government? The so-called right-wing extremists are just extremely concerned Americans who are worrying about the left-wing extremists who have been occupying Washington. . . .

"Inform yourself. Visit the Patriotic Information Center."

The reckless and irrational accusations in this broadside supply their own comment. The point is that such attacks tend to obscure the capitalist nature of the

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State, whether the Administration is Republican “conservative” or Democratic “liberal.”

It is true that the Democratic “liberals” have done most to enlarge the role of the State in regulating the economic life of the nation. The Administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, especially, adopted many regulatory measures. Outwardly, New Deal-sponsored regulation of private business appeared to be for the benefit of the non-owning masses—as many of the genuinely idealistic New Dealers intended it to be. Actually, although it bridled the individual capitalists, it did so in the interests of the total capitalists, the dominant, plutocratic oligarchy.

Can anyone seriously doubt this? If so, he has only to reflect on the tremendous expansion and growth of the great, plutocratic corporations of America after nearly three decades of being “regulated” by these New Deal measures. In no period in history has there been such a fabulous accumulation of wealth and concentration of economic power.

There is no escape for American capitalism from the intervention of the State. This is particularly true now that capitalism has reached a state of permanent economic crisis. Decadent capitalism needs the State to “regulate” its affairs, to manipulate credit, to curb stock market speculation, to restrict and regiment its workers, to supply it with a market for arms, to conduct its trade with State monopolies, and to perform such other functions as are considered necessary to protect the dominant capitalist element and promote its interests. As Federal Judge John J. Parker put it in an address in Minneapolis, May, 1941:

“Regulation of economic life by the State is a

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permanent fact in the United States. The fight is not between laissez faire and government regulation; it is between government regulation and some form of collectivism or communism.”

The so-called “liberals”—New Dealers, Fair Dealers, *et al.*—have pushed the regulatory legislation, but in so doing they have merely functioned as handmaids of capitalism. Regulation of the capitalists’ collective affairs by the State is the result of attempts at dealing with problems of the capitalist social system in decay. The opposition of the reactionary right to “government interference” with “free enterprise” will not stop this development. However, the reactionary right is a serious obstacle in the way of the only movement that could and would stop it. For the only real alternative to feudo-capitalism and an authoritarian State is the Stateless, classless Socialist Commonwealth.

4. Industrial Feudal Portents

THERE has been a reactionary right among the U.S. owning class for decades. Reactionary capitalists, believing the day was over when a veil of platitudes could conceal the fact of economic despotism, have long been eager to throw “democracy” overboard. In the years just prior to World War II a veritable parade of U.S. bankers and industrialists returned from jaunts to Rome and Berlin with Nazi medals and autographed photos of Mussolini in their valises, and the comforting counsel of Hermann Goering in their minds. They believed they had found what Winston Churchill described in 1927 as the “necessary antidote” to Socialism.¹⁶ In one of his editorials the late William Randolph Hearst opined that Fascism would come into existence in the United States “only when such a movement becomes really necessary for the prevention of Communism.”

But the Italian and German capitalists who backed Mussolini and Hitler sought more than the destruction of revolutionary movements among workers; they sought also to break the workers’ resistance to intensified exploitation. One of the primary objects of the Nazis, as Otto Nathan pointed out in *The Nazi Economic System*, was “to change the distribution of the national income in the direction of a smaller share for the workers.” The larger share, of course, was to go to “the entrepreneurial

¹⁶ Mr. Churchill praised Fascism on Jan. 21, 1927, following a visit to Italy. His statement was quoted by the British *New Leader*, Jan. 20, 1940, and again in the *Congressional Record*, Feb. 25, 1941.

and capital-owning class of the population, which had supported the Nazi bid for power with the understanding that the back of the labor movement was to be broken.”

How this was accomplished in Nazi Germany has more than casual interest for American workers. Among other things, intensified exploitation required that the German worker be deprived of his rights as a “free” wage worker, that the “free” labor market be destroyed, in short, that the worker’s status be reduced to that of an industrial serf.¹⁷ To accomplish this, the Nazi State “froze” the workers to their jobs (much as U.S. workers were “frozen” to their jobs in World War II) and acted as bailiff in capturing and punishing those who sought to escape. No German employer could hire, and no German worker could seek employment, except through the State employment office, which thus set up a veritable labor monopoly.

DE LEON FORESAW RISE OF FEUDO-CAPITALISM

The trend that culminated in this system was noted by Daniel De Leon, the foremost Socialist of the twentieth century, as early as 1907. It was, De Leon pointed out, a by-product of the centralization of industry and concentration of ownership. just as the great corporations, through monopolistic agreements, sought to prevent wide price fluctuations and otherwise to minimize the disastrous consequences of anarchistic competition, so they would also attempt, by regimenting

¹⁷ The Nazi technique for dealing with labor also involved taking over the trade unions and incorporating them in the Nazi system. This is discussed in a subsequent chapter.

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the workers, to control labor. Thus, in *As to Politics*, De Leon wrote:

“ . . . The country is now moving into a social system to which the name ‘Capitalism,’ in its proper sense, is applying less and less. A monopoly period is now surging upward to which the designation ‘Plutocratic Feudalism’ is the fitter term.”

Just because workers are in the overwhelming majority, De Leon continued, does not mean they will necessarily win emancipation. “They will do so only when they shall have understood their own revolutionary mission, and organized accordingly.” Contrariwise, should the workers continue to be befuddled by the labor fakers who run the pro-capitalist unions, and confused by the “liberals” and reformers, and misled by demagogues, or should they persist in the “apathetic course of philosophically standing by and looking on,” they “will sink to the depths of serfs, actual serfs of a plutocratic feudal glebe.”

Thus years before Hitler or Mussolini appeared in the picture, De Leon aptly described as “plutocratic feudalism” or “industrial feudalism” the system to which the outmoded capitalist system was tending. Later, several capitalist observers perceived the similarities between medieval feudalism and the Nazi system. In a study prepared for The Brookings Institution entitled *How Nazi Germany Has Mobilized and Controlled Labor*, L. Hamburger used the term “industrial feudalism” repeatedly. The Nazis, he said:

“ . . . set up a modern equivalent to antique and medieval feudalism. The *colonus* of the later Roman Empire, the *serf* of the Middle Ages, was considered part of the estate of his squire or lord. He was attached to,

fixed on, the estate; he had no right to move away. He was, in the language of feudal law, *glebae adscriptus*. Similarly the German worker was now becoming attached to, fixed on, his job—*glebae adscriptus*, if it happened to be an agricultural one, or *factoriae adscriptus* (if one may say so) if it happened to be an industrial one.”

Behind the Nazi “master minds” who conceived this system of labor control were the German capitalists whose class needs demanded that the workers be rendered incapable of resisting. Indeed, the whole lesson of the German worker’s tragedy would be lost if we did not understand that his degradation to serfdom was in response to the imperatives of outmoded capitalism, of the same system that, in America, has incubated the reactionary right.

As in Germany in the early 1930s, so in the United States today, outmoded capitalism is hopelessly enmeshed in its own contradictions. Virtually every industry has a great deal of excess industrial capacity that it dare not use lest the markets be glutted and the price structure collapse. Indeed, even by restricting the use of productive capacity the capitalists cannot avoid paying a penalty for the anarchy of their system. Inevitably surpluses pile up and recurring “recessions” overtake the economy.

Capitalism’s basic inability to cope with the tremendous productive forces unleashed in the twentieth century is reflected in a fierce struggle for the markets of the world. It is significant that the more prolific these productive forces become, all the greater is the compulsion to export the surplus product, hence all the fiercer is the war-breeding struggle for trade. This is a

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reflex of the obsolete system of wage labor under which the workers receive in wages an ever smaller proportionate share of their product.

But the most damning indictment of outmoded capitalism, and the most conspicuous evidence of its decadence, is chronic unemployment. Unemployment, of course, is not a new experience for workers under capitalism. However, in the past unemployment appeared in periods of economic crisis and virtually disappeared when trade and production revived. Nowadays each business “revival” leaves a huge and growing residue of jobless workers. Instead of rehiring workers the capitalists install machines, especially automated machines. In industry after industry there is a spectacular improvement in labor-saving—really labor-*displacing*—technology. Nor is there any end in sight. Indeed, there is every sign that we are on the eve of a sweeping advance of automation, and an awesome displacement of labor, not only in factories and farms and mines, but also in offices and even in the so-called service industries. “The novelty of this proposition,” wrote Mr. W.H. Ferry, vice president of The Fund for the Republic, Inc., “is that the majority of victims of technological displacement will be *permanently* out of work. They will not just be ‘resting between engagements.’ They will not just be waiting for the next upturn, or for expansion of the industry or company in which they were working.”¹⁸

To cope with this situation, and prolong their system of private ownership and parasitic privilege, the

¹⁸ *Caught on the Horn of Plenty*, a bulletin issued January, 1962, by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions.

capitalists need new and more stringent controls over the working class, controls that will enable them to check the aspirations of the steadily shrinking army of employed workers while, simultaneously, they regiment and control the unemployed.¹⁹

Capitalist apologists have long boasted that their system has made the worker master of his own labor and, therefore, free. But this is an illusion. The wage worker is “free” of course in the sense that he has the legal right to quit his job. But if he does he must immediately set out to find a new one. As a class, wage workers are anything but free. As a class workers have no alternative to selling themselves to the capitalists except starvation. The very existence and functioning of capitalism are conditioned on the presence of a class of wage slaves who are more or less fixed in this status and who, no matter how hard they work, or how much they scheme, cannot escape from it.

This system, which enables the worker to earn a “living wage” in good times—and lets him slowly starve or vegetate on relief in bad ones—suited the needs of American capitalism during the competitive period, or before the industrial leviathan became the economic and social power of the land, and particularly before the age of automation. With the growth of huge economic empires, certain shortcomings in the wage system became apparent. Like small and medium industry, the

¹⁹ “We are fast approaching the time when business must solve the unemployment problem if it wishes to endure. Unemployment has been the chief attacker of the capitalistic system and it will overthrow that system unless its problems are remedied.” John R. Commons, University of Wisconsin professor and labor historian, Oct. 7, 1930. (*Wisconsin News*, Oct. 8, 1930.)

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great monopolistic corporations also encountered periods of depression and stagnation. At such times they dumped great numbers of workers on the mercy of charity. This created a social problem, for a mass army of unemployed constituted a direct threat to the capitalist system. Haphazard “made work,” public works programs, unemployment insurance, etc., could, of course, lessen the danger considerably, but they could not entirely eliminate mass unrest—they constituted a safety valve, as the shrewd savior” of capitalism, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was keen enough to perceive.

TOWARD INDUSTRIAL SERFDOM

Now, however, mass unemployment threatens to become, not a temporary, but a permanent condition. Moreover, it will involve not merely the workers displaced by technology, but millions of frustrated youths who do not even have the opportunity to participate in the economic process. The more farsighted capitalists fear that these elements may be attracted to movements seeking to change the status quo, especially to revolutionary Socialism. It is a situation far too dangerous to capitalism to be dealt with haphazardly. Hence the need for the absolutist or totalitarian State toward which outmoded capitalism is steadily moving, shedding one by one, both covertly and overtly, the attributes of political democracy. For only the State, the executive committee of the capitalist class, could control and manipulate a mass of chronically jobless proletarians and keep them occupied, if not with public works, then with bread and circuses, as the propertyless freemen, displaced by captive slaves, were kept occupied in ancient Rome.

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Simultaneously, monopoly capitalism is evolving feudal characteristics in its relations with employees not yet displaced. Under medieval feudalism, serfs and masters had reciprocal duties. If the serf could not leave the land neither could the master drive him from it. The modern capitalists want it one way and one way only. They want the worker to be bound to industry, without the right to strike, while retaining the right for themselves to lay him off when business is bad, or to displace him with a machine.

The capitalist ideal is an enormous, but passive, reservoir of labor (occupied with public works, or kept content with state handouts and public spectacles) from which they could draw whenever the occasion demanded, and into which they could deposit workers displaced by new machines and periodic depressions. They loudly resent government “interference” in business, but they yearn for a setup in which the State assumes control of the workers, a setup in which workers are denied the right to go from job to job at will, in which the ages, skills and vocational records of every worker in the land are neatly catalogued and indexed, in which there is always an adequate supply of workers from which industry can draw, and in which the “free” market for labor gives way to naked compulsion.

If capitalism remains the ruling principle of society the trend to industrial serfdom, enforced by a despotic State, will certainly continue.

5. Pro-Capitalist Unionism: Handmaid of Reaction

THE American workers are not organized to resist the fascist usurpation of which the rise of the reactionary right is a premonition.

This is a sobering and tragic fact. Such unions as do exist are the incarnation of disunity. Their jurisdictional struggles reflect in caricature the rat-pit character of capitalism generally. It is not uncommon nowadays for employers to call in rival unions to break strikes. The motto of a bona fide working-class union would be “an injury to one is an injury to all.” But in what passes for unionism today a more apt slogan would be “every union for itself and devil take the hindmost.”

Officially the AFL-CIO, Railroad Brotherhoods and kindred independent unions accept capitalism and pledge themselves to its perpetuation. “We believe in the free enterprise system, and we shall defend it,” Walter Reuther, president of the United Auto Workers, told the National Conference on Automation, April 14, 1955. (“The Challenge of Automation,” Public Affairs Press, 1955.) Far from uniting the workers to terminate the economic despotism of capital, today’s unions organize the workers for their continued subservience. They are, in fact, labor merchandising concerns in the control of entrenched bureaucracies who regard them as a kind of private property. The bulk of rank-and-file members stay away from union meetings and are held, not by principle, but by economic coercion. Many were handed

their application blanks by the employers' hiring agents. It is doubtful if one dues-payer in five belongs to the faker-led unions for any other reason than because he has to keep his job, or because union membership gives him seniority privileges over other workers, or, perhaps, because of a union pension program or sick or death benefits.

Would anyone argue that such "unions" can offer a serious obstacle to fascist reaction? If so, let the experience of the German workers, organized in similar unions, disabuse him.

"SHINING EXAMPLES" TO LABOR EVERYWHERE

Three years before Hitler's rise to power, in 1930, the German unions had 7,700,000 members, a figure which represented a decline from the World War I peak of ten million. "The German trade unions," the Social Democrat, Albert Grzesinski, wrote in his book, *Inside Germany* (E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1939), "had long been shining examples to labor throughout the world." They had collective bargaining years before the Wagner Act granted the same privilege to American unions. They owned a bank with deposits of \$80,000,000. Their annual business exceeded \$1 billion. Fifty of the leading trade-union journals boasted a combined circulation of 6,500,000. Like the AFL-CIO, the German unions were "business unions."

These "powerful" unions, these "shining examples" of labor organization, were not so much as a match stick in Hitler's path to power. According to the popular fiction, they were destroyed by the Nazis. This is untrue. Actually, they were taken over by the Nazis and converted into the Nazi Labor Front! Moreover, to add

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ignominy to ignominy, they were taken over without a struggle. Here, briefly, is the shameful story:

Hitler and his cohorts wanted to represent themselves as *national* leaders. For this they needed the workers' support, or at least their passive submission. One of the schemes they hit upon to "win" the workers over was to usurp the international workers' holiday, May Day, a day German workers traditionally celebrated. If the Nazis could prevail on the workers to celebrate *under the auspices of the new regime*, the battle would be half won. But this would require the cooperation of the German Federation of Labor, and particularly its two presidents, Theodor Leipart and Peter Grassmann and their lieutenants. The Nazis had previously tried to organize a union of their own but the mass of workers had remained aloof. Their new strategy was to invite the hope among leaders of the established trade unions that if they, the leaders, would play ball with the Nazis, the Nazis would play ball with them. The strategy worked! In his book, Albert Grzesinski, an ingenuous apologist for the betrayal of Social Democracy, provided us with the following unblushing account of the trade-union leaders' surrender:

"Unbelievable as it is, the leaders of the German trade unions hoped that their organizations could continue to function in the Third Reich. Their childlike faith proved unfounded. It may be said, in their behalf, that they were prompted by a deep sense of responsibility toward the membership [!] and by a desire to save whatever could be saved. It was with these thoughts in mind that they decided to cooperate with the new regime and participate in the Nazi May Day celebration."

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The leaders' "sense of responsibility toward the membership"—if it existed at all—was akin to that of a shepherd toward his flock. But we can understand their desire to "save whatever could be saved." Especially did they desire to save their bureaucratic jobs—even though this meant delivering the German workers into the hands of stark reaction.

THE REACTION NEEDS TRADE UNION IMPOTENCE

Accordingly, the workers marched on May Day. Hitler addressed them on the "honor" and "dignity" of labor. Except for a few vague promises he did not even give them the satisfaction of hearing a concrete program for economic reconstruction.

Once the celebration was over, the labor leaders' role in the Nazi scheme of things was finished. Their downfall had already been ordained. As early as April 17, Goebbels had received the following directive:

"On May 2, the trade union headquarters will be occupied. Coordination also in this field. There may be a fuss for a few days, but then they will belong to us. . . . Once the trade unions are in our hands, the other parties and organizations will be unable to survive. . . ." (Quoted by Konrad Heiden in *Der Fuehrer*, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1944.)

Think of it. Here were nearly eight million "organized" workers! A veritable army—and the crafty Nazis, knowing the unions' impotence, looked for nothing more in the way of resistance than a "fuss." Their contempt was boundless—and *it was deserved!*

As scheduled, on May 2, between ten and eleven in the morning, vanloads of Nazi Brownshirts and Storm Troopers pulled up before every trade-union building in

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the Reich, occupied the offices and arrested the leaders. Dr. Robert Ley, leader of the Labor Front, published a manifesto in which he brazenly declared:

“Worker! Your institutions are sacred and inviolable to us National Socialists. . . . I swear to you that we shall not only keep intact everything that already exists, but we shall also extend still farther the protection and rights of the worker. . . . ”

In his book, *A History of National Socialism*, in which Dr. Ley’s manifesto was quoted, Konrad Heiden summed up the debacle:

“The trade unions had been regarded as inviolable by every previous government, and now National Socialism took them over without the slightest difficulty.”

A few days later trade-union members were informed that they had been enrolled in the German Labor Front, an organization attached to the Nazi party. Sick and death benefits, and other lures of “business unionism,” which the German workers had been taught by the Social Democrat reformers to cherish, were not taken from them by the Nazis. Dr. Ley also kept his promise to “extend still farther the protection and rights of the worker” by giving him vacation junkets under Labor Front auspices and “strength through joy.”

“SECRET” OF THE GERMAN UNION’S WEAKNESS

To paraphrase Marx, it is not enough to say, as the apologists for the German trade unions do, that they were taken by surprise. A workers’ organization, no more than a woman, is excused for the unguarded hour when the first adventurer who comes along can do her violence. The riddle is not solved by such shifts, it is only formulated in other words. There remains to be

explained how a nation of workers could be surprised by a gang of swindlers, and taken to prison without resistance.

The answer lies in the nature of the German workers' political and economic organizations. Politically they had been corralled by two rival reformist parties which had unscrupulously used "socialism" and "communism" as lures. Their unions faithfully reflected political reformism. They had been so preoccupied with the line that the workers' condition could be improved within capitalism that they were completely devoid of a revolutionary spirit, and of a program to wrest control of industry from the employing class. They were organized to do business with employers, to bargain collectively, to avoid as much as possible unpleasant industrial conflicts by submitting disputes to arbitration. Such unions could not possibly act resolutely in opposition to the fascist takeover even if their members wanted to—and substantial numbers of German workers *did* want to act in those fateful days when Hitler rose to power. But the German unions gave them neither a program of action nor a goal. Like their American prototypes, the German unions aspired to nothing higher than "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work."

The German workers themselves were deceived by the apparent strength of their organizations—"shining examples to labor throughout the world." The Nazis were not. But here another question arises. Why did not the Nazis smash the unions and let it go at that? Why did they keep the workers "organized" in the Labor Front?

One answer is that they needed a "labor" organization to facilitate stuffing the workers with party propaganda.

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But the primary purpose of the Labor Front was that it was the most efficient way to police the workers. Dictatorships of the past maintained themselves by censoring the press, curbing free speech and banning public assemblages. But capitalist production is impossible unless the workers *assemble* in the factories. “The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie,” wrote Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, “replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination due to association.” The factory, therefore, becomes the potential center of revolutionary activity. Modern dictatorships, unable to prevent assemblages of workers on the job, must find means of controlling them.

These means are ready made. They exist in the reformist and pro-capitalist trade unions. And if, as was the case when fascism came to power in Italy, it is not feasible to convert the established unions into fascist tools, they are easily destroyed and replaced by fairly authentic fascist imitations. The point is that those who do the masterminding for fascism are alive to the importance of “organizing” the workers. “How can working-class resistance be paralyzed without unionization?” asked the French fascist, Kerillis. (*Echo de Paris*, Oct. 6–16, 1933.) As Dr. Ley explained:

“Nothing is more dangerous to a State than uprooted men deprived of their defense organizations. . . . Such men undoubtedly become victims of unscrupulous agitators and a constant source of disturbance. . . . The Labor Front was created to isolate these unscrupulous agitators.” (Dr. Ley, Nov. 15, 1933, as printed in *Durchbruch der sozialen Ehre*, 1935.)

HOW CAN FASCISM BE STOPPED?

There is an obvious lesson in the experience of German labor for the American workers. The proliferating reactionary right is incipient fascism, and as the social and international tensions continue to mount, the danger of a fascist coup in America will grow. Suppose this danger faced us now. How could fascism be stopped? There are, of course, elements in the capitalist class that are not ready yet to throw “democracy” overboard—just as there were in Germany in 1933. But against organized terror and ruthlessness, heavily subsidized by corporate capitalist wealth, such elements offer at most a feeble resistance.

Who, then, could stop an attempt at a fascist takeover in America? Only the workers, the people who perform the useful mental and manual labors of society. And the workers could do this only if they were properly organized and prepared to accomplish the necessary thoroughgoing Socialist reconstruction of society.

Is it necessary to point out here the woeful inadequacy of the existing pro-capitalist unions? These unions are in the complete control of labor fakers who have a stake in the capitalist status quo. The very last thing they want the dues-payers to think about is a revolutionary change. They are in fact the American counterparts of the German Leiparts and Grassmanns. Does anyone doubt that the Meanys and Reuthers and Hoffas *et al.*, would be any less anxious to it “save what could be saved” of their lucrative dues-collecting concerns, or that they would be any less ready to come to terms with a fascist reaction?

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The American workers have a latent power that is invincible. But before that power can be employed, either to thwart reaction or win through to emancipation, it must be consolidated in a real working-class union, a Socialist Industrial Union, an—

“ . . . economic organization of the working class that denies that labor and the capitalist class are brothers; that recognizes the irrepressible nature of the conflict between the two; that perceives that the struggle will not, because it cannot, end until the capitalist class is thrown off labor’s back; that recognizes that an injury to one workingman is an injury to all; and that, consequently, and with this end in view, organizes the *whole working class* into *one union*, the same subdivided only into such bodies as their respective craft tools demand, in order to wrestle as *one body* for the immediate amelioration of its membership, and for their eventual emancipation by the total overthrow of the capitalist class, its economic and political rule.” (De Leon)

Such unionism would prepare the American workers, intellectually and organizationally, to act at a moment’s notice, and to act audaciously and resolutely in their own class interests. It would be more than an insurmountable obstacle to reaction. It would be a mighty and indestructible engine of human emancipation. It would be the workers’ power!

6. It Is Happening Here

DESPITE adherence to the forms of democracy, the United States has traveled a long way toward establishing the authoritarian political rule to which economic despotism is tending. Precisely *how* far we have traveled this fateful road is suggested by the fact that the setting up of concentration camps was authorized under provisions of the so-called Internal Security Act of 1950, better known as the McCarran Act, perhaps the most fascist legislation ever adopted by the United States Congress.²⁰ The *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1950, said editorially that this law represented “a long step away from the American tradition of liberty and freedom.” It was, the *Times* noted in an ironic understatement, “in a very real sense, un-American.”

Most Americans were oblivious of the existence of concentration camps in this country. They are equally oblivious of the fact that the McCarran Act in effect empowers the President to suspend the Bill of Rights and invoke police-State tactics against any citizen, even though he has committed no crime. We do not exaggerate. Title II of the McCarran Act, dealing with the subject of “Emergency Detention,” reads in part:

²⁰ Six of these camps were actually established and maintained for several years in a “stand-by” condition. However, the Feb. 11, 1963, issue of the *American Civil Liberties* bulletin carried the following item in its “Civil Liberties Briefs”: “The United States Department of Justice reported recently that the government once had six camps ready to confine American Communists in case of an emergency. They were abandoned or turned to other uses five years ago.”

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SEC. 103. (a) Whenever there shall be in existence such an emergency, the President, acting through the Attorney General, is hereby authorized to apprehend and by order detain, pursuant to the provisions of this title, each person as to whom there is reasonable ground to believe that such person probably will engage in, or probably will conspire with others to engage in, acts of espionage or of sabotage.

Note that all that is needed to imprison a citizen, or “person,” is that the Attorney General “believe” that he “probably” will either commit or conspire to commit acts of espionage or of sabotage. Anyone—literally anyone—could be apprehended and incarcerated under this police-State formula. For him, habeas corpus and all other constitutional protections would be suspended.

And the Fifth and Sixth Amendments of the Constitution still declare that no one shall “be deprived of . . . liberty . . . without due process of law,” and anyone accused of crime “shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury. . . .”

Hardly less vicious than the McCarran Act is the Smith Act of 1940. This law is a repudiation of America’s revolutionary tradition. The Smith Act is the first law ever adopted by this nation that punishes free speech. It makes it unlawful to advocate revolutionary change by force or violence. Worse, it dredges up the ancient and discredited conspiracy statutes and punishes as a felony, not only the commission of overt acts, not only speech, but also a mere agreement with others to advocate revolutionary change by means of force or violence at some future date.

While the measure was still pending in Congress, July 31, 1939, the New York *Herald Tribune* (which later applauded application of the Smith Act to the

Communist leaders) said of it that it was on the “stupid level of a Nazi campaign against the Jews.”

Both these fascistic and un-American statutes were aimed ostensibly at the Communists, for the U.S. Communist party, by its foolish aping of the Russian Revolution, and its pursuance of the serpentine Kremlin line, was and is discredited and vulnerable. But, in fact, the McCarran and Smith Acts knocked down the constitutional defenses of all the people, and took the nation two long and portentous steps toward fascist reaction.

The Communist party, far from being a menace to reactionary capitalism, is an asset. As Michael Straight put it in the *New Republic* in 1951, at the time the U.S. Supreme Court validated the conspiracy section of the Smith Act:

“Fear of Communism is the most effective weapon ever developed by the Right in America; so effective that if the Communist party were dissolved by Russia tomorrow it would be re-created by the Right on the following day.”²¹

²¹ The further the Communist party declines in membership and influence the more desperately do the reactionary rightists inflate the domestic “Communist menace.” To make the situation even more ironic, it is repeatedly revealed that a sizable percentage of even today’s tiny CP membership is composed of J. Edgar Hoover’s own FBI agents. They are so numerous that not infrequently they inform on each other. For example, a Cleveland couple, accused by a former FBI agent in CP ranks of being Communists before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, admitted that they, too, had been reporting to the FBI for eight years. (Associated Press item, *New York Times*, June 7, 1962.)

According to the testimony of ex-FBI man Jack Levine, writing in *The Nation*, Oct. 20, 1962, the FBI has 1,500 informants in the Communist party, or “one informant for every 5.7 members.” This “dues-paying FBI contingent...had become the largest single

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Also portentous are the repeated encroachments on the free ballot in America and the virtual monopoly of the ballot in some states by the Tweedledum-Tweedledee parties of capitalism. The growing tendency is to enact election laws that raise prohibitive barriers to new or minority parties. In Ohio and California the laws are so drafted as to make it virtually impossible for a new party to win a place on the ballot. In Ohio this exclusion is all the more absolute, since there is not even a provision in the Ohio law for a write-in vote, and recent reports indicate that California is contemplating the elimination of the write-in vote also.

Also symptomatic of the direction capitalism is taking is the attempt by the broadcasting capitalists and their friends in Congress to repeal Section 315 of the Communications Act (the so-called "equal-time" law) and thereby to restrict free speech on the publicly owned airwaves and to monopolize broadcasting channels for the major parties.

"Ruling classes," said De Leon, "are at best veiled autocrats. So long as the corresponding ruled class does not yet feel its historic mission to overthrow the ruling class throb in its veins, the veil is kept unlifted from the face of the rulers. In the measure that the ruled class does begin to feel its historic mission throbbing in its breast, the veil begins to be lifted. The nearer to a crisis, the stronger is the need felt by the rulers for autocratic measures." (*Daily People*, April 24, 1912.)

financial contributor to the coffers of the Communist party." Mr. Levine adds: "As membership [in the CP] continues to decline and the percentage of informants increases, the day will soon come when FBI informants, who are rising rapidly to the top, will capture complete control of the party."

THE HUMAN INGREDIENTS OF FASCISM

The danger confronting the American workers cannot be exaggerated. True, there is not yet a fascist party in America embracing all the reactionary-rightist elements. Yet a quick survey reveals that there are the human ingredients for such a party, ingredients that only need the historic catalyst to bring them together. These elements, or ingredients, may be quickly enumerated. They include:

A highly classconscious capitalist plutocracy that fears democracy, that is eager in one way or another to deprive the workers of all democratic political weapons, particularly those which they might utilize to challenge the plutocracy's material interests and privileged class position. The plutocracy has already shown by its generous contributions to the reactionary right that it is prepared to finance social reaction;

An upsurgent body of militarists who equate "democracy" with "mobocracy," and whose concept of the ideal society has as its prototype the totalitarian military machine in which all authority is vested in command and subordinates obey unthinkingly;

Scores of reactionary-rightist organizations of which the John Birch Society, Fred Schwarz's Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, Billy James Hargis's Christian Crusade and We the People, Dr. George S. Benson's Harding College and National Education Program are perhaps the best known;

A powerful Roman Catholic political (Ultramontane) machine which operates behind the facade of religion, invokes the catch phrases of democracy, denounces the

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masses,²² insidiously praises as a model the “sane corporative system” of Portugal’s Salazar (while brazenly denying its clerical fascist character), and utilizes its potent influence to condition the workers for submission and conformity;

A cabal of reactionary “thinkers” and “philosophers”: the Will Durants who teach that democracy “is not the natural form of government of mankind,” and that “the natural inclination for the average human being is to follow and obey”; the Peter Druckers for whom the masses of mankind “can only be organized by force, in slavery and negation”; and a host of “statesmen” who rationalize usurpation on the ground that world problems are beyond the understanding of the citizens;

Exponents of the “master race” theory, professional anti-Semites, militant defenders of “white supremacy”;

A vast slum proletariat—political hangers-on, pro-capitalist labor union bureaucrats, racketeers, gamblers, gangsters, dope peddlers, prostitutes and pimps, those who make up the underworld and near-underworld, in short, the offal of capitalist society from which both Hitler and Mussolini recruited their Brownshirt and Blackshirt hoodlums. These will in time be augmented by the cynical, desperate and brutalized elements that will inevitably result from a growing army of permanently unemployed adults and deprived, frustrated and jobless youth;

And finally, the “liberals” who are nearly always

²² “. . . the masses are inert of themselves and can only be moved from outside. . . . The masses . . . [are] an easy plaything in the hands of anyone who exploits their instincts and impressions ready to follow, in turn, today this flag, tomorrow another.”—Christmas message of Pope Pius XII, Dec. 24, 1944.

ready to yield a principle for the sake of this or that expedient; the Social Democrats and “Communists” who are trained in the tactics of double dealing and political Jesuitism (“the end justifies the means”—the means invariably becoming the end) ; and political opportunists generally.

Not only do we have in America the human ingredients for a fascist party; we have also the conditions that provoke and activate them—economic anarchy, deprivation and frustration, virulent racial strife and rising class tensions.

HANDMAIDENS OF REACTION

Finally, no sober appraisal of this perilous period can ignore the vast and ramified State bureaucracy that has mushroomed under conditions of capitalist decadence. Self-preservation, being the first law of survival, is also the first law of bureaucratic existence. It does not matter whether the bureaucrats, big and little, are “liberal” or “conservative”; in a crisis they fly to the defense of the bureaucratic machine as instinctively as hornets fly to the defense of their hive. The fact that industrial feudal reaction would preserve State bureaucracy, and even expand it, while a Socialist revolution would dismantle the whole bureaucratic apparatus, practically insures the bureaucracy’s passive, if not active, support of reaction.

The “liberals,” “socialist” reformers, trade-union leaders, and others who, in their alleged “progressivism” seek an extension of State power to “control” and “regulate” in the supposed interests of the workers, encourage the expansion of this sinister bureaucratic power.

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Would American fascism, if permitted to rise, be “mild”? Or would it be ferocious, ruthless and destructive of civilization’s humane credos?

The answer is that there is no such thing as a “mild” form of fascism. Once a ruling class strips off the velvet glove and reveals the mailed fist, it is driven inexorably to all the extremes manifested by European fascism. It must overwhelm the slightest opposition with force and frightfulness. It must plant its secret agents everywhere to detect and destroy the seeds of rebellion. It must gather into its own hands not only the State apparatus with its bureaucracy and organs of coercion but also all the instruments of education and information. It must conquer and imprison the minds of the subjugated and drill them from childhood in what Thomas Mann called “the blasphemous delusion of racial superiority, in the primacy and right of violence.” It must brutify the “elite” and actually encourage misdeeds of morbid lust. It must invoke depravity as a political weapon. This is the experience of totalitarian capitalist regimes.

The dark and evil potentialities are here. “Civilized” America is no more immune to them than was “cultured” Germany. They are the potentialities, not of a people or race, *but of a decadent, degenerate and outmoded system of class rule.*

7. Tomorrow's Democracy—Socialism Will Triumph

A GREAT many minds are puzzling over the problem of how to thwart the reactionary right. Nearly all of them, however, approach the problem pragmatically—just as they approach problems of housing, juvenile delinquency, unemployment, and all the other social evils with which decadent capitalism abounds. Take the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, for example. The Center, which was founded by the Fund for the Republic, Inc., has issued a large number of reports, studies, and occasional papers, some of which are valuable in illuminating aspects of capitalist decadence, such as the impact of technology on employment opportunities, but none of which even remotely suggests that the threat to democracy is rooted in capitalism itself. All assume that our problems, including that of “revitalizing democracy,” may be solved without upsetting the capitalist status quo, that is, without a revolutionary social change.

The Socialist Labor Party, on the other hand, conclusively demonstrates that the democratic institutions of this nation have atrophied, and reactionary forces have been set into motion, because, as a result of the changes that have taken place in the means of production, capitalism is as utterly outmoded as was feudalism at the time of the French Revolution. Capitalism has played a most revolutionary role in history. It has transformed the instruments of

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production from hand tools individually manipulated into huge, complex and enormously productive industrial tools, which are operated collectively by large masses of workers. But for all the fabulous changes wrought by capitalism in the past two centuries, one thing has not changed. That is the system of private ownership of the tools, and, with private ownership, private appropriation of the product. But this ownership is now concentrated in the hands of a very small minority—the capitalist class. The fact that these *privately owned* instruments of wealth production are *socially operated* by the vast majority—the working class—forms the central contradiction of capitalism today. And it is this central contradiction that produces the manifold evils from which society suffers.

The Socialist is ever ready to concede that capitalism has performed a useful historic role, even though it has brought in its wake outrages unheard of in previous systems. But progress in the evolutionary scale is not gauged by human suffering. “The determining factor of social progress,” wrote De Leon in *Flashlights of the Amsterdam Congress*, “is the possibility that a social stage offers for redress and for emancipation.” “The mission of capitalism,” De Leon wrote on another occasion, “. . . is so to organize the mechanism of production that wealth can be so abundantly produced as to free mankind from want and the fear of want, from the brute’s necessity of a life of arduous toil in the production of the brute’s mere necessities of life. Socialist philosophy has made this clear.” (*Industrial Unionism—Selected Editorials.*)

ALTERNATIVES BEFORE US OFFER NO MIDDLE WAY

We are rapidly nearing a crucial hour in history. In this hour the alternatives society faces will be decisive. They will be—Either—Or. Either we terminate capitalist rule and make the socially operated means of production the property of all the people collectively, to be operated in their collective interests, or decadent capitalism will drag society back with itself into a new Dark Age. This is the age of industrial feudalism that the reactionary right portends.

There is no middle way because a “middle way” presupposes retention of the capitalist cause of our danger. It is frequently observed by those deploring anti-democratic trends that a majority could not today be assembled to endorse the famous revolutionary acclamation of the Declaration of Independence, or even the Bill of Rights. But this only confirms the view that capitalism in its decadence engenders a reactionary spirit, not only among capitalists who fear an awakening among the workers, but also among some sections of the exploited working class who have been so thoroughly brainwashed with “anti-Communism” that they associate even the right of dissent with “the enemy.”

Even more ominous is the recently accelerated campaign to discredit “peace” as a subversive idea, as exemplified by the House Un-American Activities Committee’s frontal attack on the so-called peace movements in December, 1962, and the attack by the capitalist press on the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, for his reported advocacy of “political negotiation” as an alternative to military action in the Cuban crisis in October, 1962.

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Prior to these events the open denigration of peace had been associated primarily with the reactionary right, which still constitutes a minority of capitalists. The reactionary right has long accepted the premise that the West is locked in a death struggle with the Soviet bloc, that one or the other must be destroyed and that no compromise or “co-existence” is possible. This view was spelled out for the reactionary right in a document which according to Fred Cook “has become a basic text of the military,” entitled *A Forward Strategy for America*. The document was prepared by the Foreign Policy Research Institute under the sponsorship of the National War College and the joint Chiefs of Staff. In his article on “Juggernaut, the Warfare State,” published in *The Nation*, Oct. 28, 1961, Mr. Cook quoted the following passage which he described as the “heart” of the “forward strategy” message:

“The priority objective of any American grand strategy is, by a broad margin, the preservation and enhancement of our [capitalist] political system *rather than the maintenance of peace*. . . . Our policy must be based upon the premise that we *cannot tolerate the survival* of a political system which has the growing capability and the ruthless will to destroy us. We have no choice but to adopt a Catoic strategy.” (Emphasis, Mr. Cook’s.)

A “Catoic strategy” would apply to Soviet Russia Cato’s command “Carthage must be destroyed!”

Thus the reactionary right has long equated peace with appeasements, disarmament with disloyalty, negotiation and capitulation and concession, and compromise generally with treason.

Until recently the consensus in at least a large section

of the capitalist press, speaking for the majority of the capitalists, had been that the reactionary right and the military brass in the ultra-conservative camp were irrational. Now, however, it appears that the main body of capitalists have moved closer to the position of the reactionary right.

There are many who agree with the Socialist Labor Party that a drastic change in the social structure is urgently needed but who believe the aspiration is hopeless and unattainable. They point to the apathy among the workers and to reactionary tendencies among them, as well as to the preoccupation of better-paid workers, especially of technicians, lower managerial workers and white-collar employees generally, with material things.

There is, of course, no gainsaying the fact that as of now the overwhelming majority of American workers seem headed, like so many sheep, toward industrial serfdom. But the mere fact that they do not now evidence an awareness of their progressive and revolutionary historic mission does not mean that they will not, perhaps soon, awaken and reverse their present direction. History is replete with testimony confirming the view that the mass of the people accept their revolutionary role only when conditions practically compel them to. As our immortal Declaration of Independence shrewdly observes, "all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed."

Apathy is usually the result of a sense of frustration which seizes an individual or a class when efforts in a certain direction seem to prove fruitless and prospects

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hopeless. It does not mean, however, that such an individual or class has lost the capability, or lacks the intelligence required, for the exertion in matters of great substance and consequence. It would, therefore, be a great mistake to assume that the prevailing working-class apathy proves that class is incapable of purposeful and determined action in its own behalf. The spirit of revolt is ever latent in the working class, however seemingly surface manifestations may suggest the contrary. In one of his brilliant editorials De Leon, dealing with this point, observed:

“ . . . failing to see below the surface of things, there are those who are heard to despair of the American working class. They pronounce it dumb and numb—hopeless. Not so . . . The temporary numbness and dumbness to outrage on the part of a class, designated by its economic interests as the bearer of the revolution next in order, is a necessary contribution to revolutionary conditions. Revolutionary conditions are not ripe until the respective ruling class . . . has acquired so ingrained a contempt for the class below that it considers the same not only unfit for aught but slavery, but also incapable of aught but submission. Not until then is that ruling class sufficiently seasoned to fulfill the last remaining mission left it to fulfill—the offering of the requisite resistance without which, the hour having sounded for the ferment of revolution to stir the revolutionary mass, the revolution would fizzle down. . . .

“The perfidy of a revolutionary class, in inspiring contempt for itself, and thereby confirming its despots in their habits of despotism, is an unconscious act that, proceeding from the revolutionary class, turns its

oppressor himself into a midwife for the revolution. . . .”²³

THE “CONTENTED SUBJECTS” OF GEORGE III

Indeed, the American Revolution offers a prime example of mass indifference and even hostility to the advocates of drastic measures. Only a few years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, wrote Clinton Rossiter in *The First American Revolution*, “all but a handful of these Americans were contented subjects of George III.” Rossiter continued:

“ . . . Among the ruling classes²⁴ sentiments of loyalty to the Crown were strongly held and eloquently expressed, while the attitude of the mass of men was not much different from that of the plain people of England: a curious combination of indifference and obeisance. Benjamin Franklin, who had more first-hand information about the colonies than any other man, could later write in all sincerity, ‘I never had heard in any Conversation from any Person drunk or sober, the least Expression of a wish for a Separation, or Hint that such a Thing would be advantageous to America.’”

In his *Samuel Adams*, Ralph Volney Harlow confirmed the view that only a handful of colonists supported radical aims. “In 1768,” he wrote, “the

²³ [“The Perfidy of Revolutionary Classes,” *Daily People*, Feb. 14, 1905.—*Editor*]

²⁴ “Ruling classes” is a misnomer. At the time of the American Revolution property was widely diffused and the class structure that developed with American capitalism was in its early or prenascent stage. The elements Rossiter refers to here are the merchants and large landowners whose wealth and power were necessarily limited by the availability of land and the easy acquisition of tools, by the absence, that is, of a propertyless proletariat.

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radicals were certainly in the minority and the active leaders among them, in Massachusetts, numbered fewer than a dozen. It was these few, and not the whole province, who were really flaunting British authority.”

Then something happened that jarred the mass of colonists out of their habits of submission. The policies of Lord North forced an appeal to arms, and enough Americans answered it to begin the successful war for independence.

ABOLITIONISTS VS. OVERWHELMING ODDS

Another example of mass indifference and even hostility to the advocates of social change is provided by the overthrow of chattel slavery in the South. The contempt and hatred widely exhibited toward the Abolitionists throughout the North is well known. In the early 1840s the Abolitionists believed the anti-slavery movement was on the upgrade and in 1844 they decided to launch a political party and make a test. The party, to which they gave the name “Liberty party,” nominated James G. Birney for President. Out of a total of 2,698,611 votes cast Birney got only 62,300. This display of numerical weakness was a large factor in the decision to dissolve the party.

In the 1850s, with the slave power more arrogant and the slave institution seemingly more deeply entrenched than ever, the Abolitionists suffered their darkest hour. As late as 1859, just four years before the Emancipation Proclamation, Ralph Waldo Emerson declared:

“No one living will see the end of slavery.”

But once again underlying social and economic forces, which had already condemned chattel slavery as

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obsolete, manifested themselves. And the masses who had formerly viewed the activities of the Abolitionists with hostility and mistrust rallied to wage a war that freed the slaves.

A REVOLUTION THAT SURPRISED EVERYONE

There is one more example worth citing because it occurred in the twentieth century. It is the Russian Revolution. However much the Russian Revolution has degenerated into bureaucratic despotism, the fact remains that originally it was inspired by the loftiest of aspirations, and in its early beginnings it sought to put into practice the Socialist principles that it acclaimed. This is not the place to discuss the reason for the subsequent betrayal of Socialist principles, except to say that the material conditions in Russia in 1917 were not ripe for Socialism, and the anticipated revolution in the advanced nations, which might have supported the revolution in Russia, failed to eventuate, thereby creating the conditions and circumstances under which a despotic bureaucracy could, and did, take over and entrench itself.²⁵ The point is that in Russia, on the very eve of the February Revolution, which ended the rule of the Czar, the revolutionists were a mere handful. The masses were hostile to revolutionary ideas. “In the factories in those days,” wrote Trotsky in *The History of the Russian Revolution*, “nobody dared to call himself ‘Bolshevik’ for fear not only of arrest, but of a beating from the backward workers.” Even on the very eve of the revolutionary upheaval—the 23rd of February, 1917—

²⁵ [See *The SLP and the USSR*.—Editor]

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“no one, positively no one—we can assert this categorically upon the basis of all the data [Trotsky wrote]—then thought that February 23 was to mark the beginning of a decisive drive against absolutism.”

In the first volume of his work, *A History of Soviet Russia*, E.H. Carr affirmed that even Lenin had not foreseen the potentialities of the situation. For only six weeks before the overthrow of the Czar, In January, 1917, Lenin said that he doubted whether “we, the old [will] live to see the decisive battles of the coming revolution.”

But volcanic socio-economic forces had gathered and their eruption could not be long delayed.

The foregoing suggests that the mood and outlook of the masses may alter rapidly. The point was made felicitously by that outstanding Polish Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg, in a letter she wrote to a friend, Mathilde Wurm, whose spirits were sagging as a result of the apparent apathy of the German workers. In this letter, written from a prison cell on Feb. 16, 1917, Luxemburg said:

“There is nothing more subject to rapid change than human psychology. The Psyche of the masses embraces a whole world, a world of almost limitless possibilities: breathless calm and raging storm; base treachery and supreme heroism. The masses always represent what historical conditions make of them at a given moment, and the masses are always profoundly capable of being very different to what they may appear at any given moment. It’s a poor navigator who steers his ship by the superficial weather signs around him, and fails to use the means science has given him to foresee approaching storms. ‘Disappointment’ in the masses is always a

compromising sign for political leaders. A real leader, a leader of real moment, will make his tactics dependent not on the temporary spirit of the masses, but on the inexorable laws of historical development. He will steer his course by these laws in defiance of all disappointments and he will rely on history to bring about the gradual maturing of his actions.”²⁶

The foregoing, of course, does not prove that the American workers are necessarily about to throw off their apathy and indifference en masse and join the fight for Socialist freedom. What it does prove is that their present apparent apathy and indifference are no guarantee that they will not, quite abruptly, wake up to the harsh realities of class rule and to their own class interests.

As for the view that the American workers are “too affluent” to support a program for social change, there are two points to make in refutation.

WHAT AWAKENS THE MASS?

The first is simply that “affluence” among the American workers is largely a myth. Recent studies²⁷ have proved beyond peradventure that the rich in America are getting richer, and the poor are losing, not gaining, ground. As Robert M. Hutchins, the president of

²⁶ Quoted by Paul Froelich in *Rosa Luxemburg*.

²⁷ *The Share of Top Wealth-Holders in National Wealth 1922–1956*, by Robert J. Lampman, Princeton University Press (1962); *Wealth and Power in America*, by Gabriel Kolko, Frederick A. Praeger, Inc. (1962); *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, by Michael Harrington, The Macmillan Co. (1962); *Poverty and Deprivation in the U.S.—The Plight of Two-Fifths of a Nation*, Conference on Economic Progress (1962).

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the Fund for the Republic, put it: "In this affluent society not fewer than three-fifths of all families live on a borderline, and many below it, where any blow that is out of the ordinary, like a breakdown in health, or prolonged unemployment, can shove the family into panic or even into degrading poverty. . . ." (A "Bulletin" issued by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in March, 1961.)

The second point is that even those workers whose living standards have risen above the "borderline" because of special circumstances in the labor market are not secure from the problems and horrors engendered by this decadent social system. Any sharp economic reversal would serve as an abrupt reminder to such workers that they are still economically dependent on their capitalist employers, subject to being thrown into the ranks of the unemployed whenever their capitalist masters find it expedient to do so. While they may be able to "hold out" a little longer, these workers will surely be forced to realize that their "security" was an illusion and that, at best, they are only a few months (and maybe only weeks) away from abject poverty. In the final analysis they are actually no more secure than their less "affluent" working-class brothers. The experience would be even more painful to such workers for having temporarily enjoyed relatively better living standards than most workers.

We do not pretend to have a crystal ball, or to be able to foretell precisely how the capitalist crisis that will produce this mass awakening will develop. But, barring the nuclear war toward which the two rival imperialisms of East and West are taking mankind, its coming is inevitable. It will be a consequence of economic

contradictions inherent in capitalism, contradictions that take on greater dimensions in the measure that technology improves and the gap grows between the workers' wages and the total value of their product. It may manifest itself in a monetary crisis, a sudden, explosive decline in the purchasing power of the dollar as the result of the exodus of monetary gold. Such a development would create havoc in every economic relationship, and it would certainly shake the faith and confidence of millions of workers in the present system. But more likely is the onslaught of a severe depression resulting from a contraction of markets. The capitalists, faced with the fact of "overproduction," will close their plants, throwing millions of workers into the ranks of the unemployed.

Also possible is a situation in which, as a result of the accelerated introduction of automation, large masses of workers awaken to the stark potentialities of their permanent displacement and exclusion from the economic process. Indeed, such development would affect workers in all kinds of jobs,²⁸ including those in "white-collar" and supervisory jobs who often think of themselves as part of "management" rather than as workers. Many of these workers will be compelled to

²⁸ "... The blue-collar worker and the relatively menial service worker will not be the only employment victims of cybernation. . . . As cybernation moves into the areas now dominated by middle management in government and in business—and this move is already beginning—growing numbers of middle managers will find themselves displaced. . . . They stand to be deeply disturbed by the threat and the fact of their replacement by machines. . . ." (*Cybernation: The Silent Conquest*, by Donald N. Michael, a report to the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1962).

"Cyberation" refers to both automation and computers and their systematic design and application.

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realize their working-class status under capitalism and thus more readily become potential recruits for the Socialist movement.

And here the point cannot be emphasized too strongly that the ranks of militant and constructive Socialism will not be filled with recruits from the slummist elements in capitalist society or from those who have become completely inured to poverty and conditioned to accept charity and relief as a permanent way of life.

The battalions of Socialism will draw their recruits from workers who aspire to better things, whose expectations have been whetted, and who have experienced the discipline of collective labor in the capitalist workshops, offices, laboratories, etc.

It is the workers of brain and brawn—the technicians and teachers as well as truck drivers, the office workers as well as production workers—who will furnish both the numerical majorities for Socialism at the polls and the industrial battalions that will back up and enforce the Socialist mandate in the nation's industries and services. Doubtless they will be joined by a limited number of enlightened elements among the capitalists; at least it has been the experience of past revolutions that individuals among the old ruling class have risen above their narrow class interests to play constructive roles. But it will be the working class, whose interests are incarnate in the abolition of capitalist ownership, who will furnish the irresistible might to replace capitalism with Socialism.

SOCIALIST TACTICS

Organization will be the key to their success. First, organization politically under the banner of the Socialist

Labor Party to utilize for all that it is worth the right to revolution that is implicit in Article V, the Amendment Clause, of the United States Constitution, to ventilate the issue of Socialism vs. capitalism in the broad open day, and finally, at the polls, to proclaim the right of society to assume ownership and control of the national economy. Secondly, organization on the economic field, into Socialist Industrial Unions, to back up the Socialist ballot with a nonmilitary force that will not only take and hold the industries and services, but that will operate them in the new Industrial Republic of Labor.

It is not in a negative defense, but in affirmative revolutionary offense, that we can rout the reactionary right and place personal liberty beyond the reach of decadent capitalism's vandal hands. For if it is true that "despotism in economics naturally leads to despotism in politics," and we have shown that it does, it follows that democracy in social life requires that the economic life of the nation be democratically controlled and operated. Such democracy requires not merely that the means of social production—factories, mills, mines, railroads, land, stores, etc.—be collectively owned; it requires also a new kind of government through which the workers may themselves administer the economic process.

Indeed, it is not merely capitalism that is obsolete; it is also political society. Governmental institutions based on geographic constituencies fitted the agricultural era. But with the rise of modern industries and the growing economic interdependence of all sections of the country, boundary lines between the various states and counties became increasingly meaningless. What is needed today, what we must have if we are to revitalize democracy for the twentieth century, is a government based on

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industrial constituencies. Thus instead of electing politicians from states and congressional areas, under Socialism we will elect administrators from the industries and services. We will vote, not from where we live for politicians whom we really do not know, but where we work—in an area, that is, in which we exercise a maximum of knowledge and experience. We will elect our foremen in the shops, our management committees in the plants, and administrators to all the other levels of administration right up to the All-Industrial Union Congress which will direct national production, replacing the political Congress of class rule.

The question is often asked of Socialists: But wouldn't a bureaucracy get the upper hand as in Russia? How can you be sure that freedom would not once again be destroyed?

RUSSIAN DESPOTISM VS. SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

Before answering this question it should be noted that Russia does not have, and never did have, Socialism. The system that masquerades as Socialism in Russia is one in which the political State owns the land and industries, and a gang of "Communist" bosses control the State. The workers of Russia work for wages and have no more to say about determining the economic policies under which they produce than have the employees of General Motors, United States Steel, or any other American corporation. The police-State apparatus created under Stalin, which has been curbed but not dismantled by Khrushchev, was to preserve this system of bureaucratic despotism.

By way of contrast, under genuine Socialism there will be no bureaucrats, no politicians, and no political

parties, not even a Socialist Labor Party. Administrators will have no jobs to dispense, hence no means of building up subservient followings. They will have the privilege to serve but never the power to rule. Moreover, the workers who elect them will also have the power to recall and remove them. For this will be, not a one-day-a-year democracy, but a democracy that functions every day. Like the town meetings of the early years of this nation's history, the shop branches of the Industrial Republic will convene at will. In short, all power will be in the only safe place for power to be—in the collective hands of the people.

Thus, under Socialism, there will be the strongest possible guarantees that power will not be usurped, nor freedom destroyed. And these safeguards will be enormously strengthened by the fact that material well-being will be enjoyed by all the people. It is one of the best-kept secrets of the age we live in that right now the material conditions exist, not only for wiping out the curse of poverty, but for insuring that every human being in the land receives an abundance. Under capitalism, of course, production is carried on for private profit and this requires that the mass of the people be kept in a state of economic dependence. But under Socialism, when production is carried on to satisfy human needs, all will share abundance—and want and insecurity will be banished forever.

Thus Socialism will not only abolish the means whereby power may be usurped; by making it possible for all to enjoy abundance it will eliminate the incentive as well.

The Socialist Labor Party calls upon all who love freedom, and who grasp the ominous meaning of the

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reactionary right, to join with it in preparing for the mighty task of erecting the proper foundation for peace, freedom and brotherhood—the society of Socialist cooperation.

THE END.