

From War Plays to Jazz

It was Karl Marx who declared that the prevailing ideas of any given epoch are the ideas of the ruling class of that period. The moment the ideas of the ruling class ceases to hold sway in the minds of a larger portion of people constituting a given society a period of revolution ensues in which that society is annihilated.

In reviewing the history of capitalistic society and its apparent contradictions in the process of its development one cannot help but note the manner in which all institutions change to conform to the new demands of the ruling class. This adaptability is particularly obvious in the capitalist press and in the church. But equally as efficient as a reflex of the ideas of a ruling class is the theatre.

Before the war the public was surfeited with hundreds of superficial plays based upon the sloppy sentimentality of the "eternal triangle." In a thousand variations the matrimonial shipwrecks caused by two women in love with a man or two men in love with a woman were depicted, invariably closing with the vindication of bourgeois morality. Which of the three should be shot, or hanged, or exiled depended entirely upon the viewpoint of the playwright and the ingenuity with which he manipulated his characters.

After the declaration of war the theatre, like the press and pulpit, schools and colleges, became an instrument of propaganda and we were assaulted with a deluge of war plays that for shallowness and artificiality eclipsed in stupidity anything ever previously attempted. Any hack writer could write a war play provided his intellect was of that undeveloped type compatible with capitalist jingoism. No matter how senseless the play or how atrocious the barnstorming of the actors, a liberal flag waving, interspersed with a generous damning of the Kaiser as the incarnation of evil, was sufficient to ensure its success. War plays were written, not because the playwrights had anything important to say about the war, but because of a commercial calculation that they afforded the most easily interesting topic for exploitation.

In the vaudeville theatres acts that under other conditions would have been hissed from the stage were inflicted upon the public under the guise of flag-waving patriotism. Thousands of ribbon clerks and hash slingers became actors overnight, covering their defects as singers and actors with a generous supply of red, white and blue bunting.

The signing of the armistice was also the signing of the death warrant for the war play. In a few short weeks the war play fell into such disrepute that the managers of theatres had to solemnly assure the public through the advertising columns of the press and the billboards that their attraction was NOT A WAR PLAY!

The ruling class is now confronted with the problem of reconstruction, but the theatre and other institutions, which serve the interests of capitalism, seem unable to originate anything that will serve to enthuse the masses. The only

positive factor thus far in capitalism's reconstruction program is the desire to destroy the proletarian revolution in Russia. To accomplish this end there are no depths of human depravity to which the lickspittle playwrights and scenario writers will not sink in order to misrepresent the proletarian revolution—the mortal enemy of capitalism. So far there has been one redeeming feature about these anti-Bolshevik plays, they have all been such atrocious and palpable lies that even the gullible American theatregoer resents them as an insult to his alleged intelligence.

The confusion, hesitancy and anarchy of this society as it approaches destruction is visibly reflected in the amusement world. Unable to cope with the vital problems that confront the world today, this institution with the class it serves, sinks into idiocy. As a substitute for jingoism in the amusement world we now have "jazz music" and "shimmy dances." These barbarisms could only originate in a degenerate society. From the vile dens of the degenerate Turks adventurous showmen used to secure "hootchie-kootchie" dancers for the purpose of cajoling the dimes out of the pockets of the rural population of the country. These exhibitions were usually concealed in alleys behind circus tents and were considered indecent. Today, however, the musical comedy or vaudeville performance without its shimmy-

Alexander Stocklitsky, translator-secretary of the Russian Federation, was arrested at Detroit, Michigan, on Friday, August 1st, as he was entering the House of the Masses to deliver a lecture. He was surrounded by a dozen police and detectives and without any explanation hurried into a waiting automobile and taken to a police station. The privilege of consulting a lawyer was denied him. The arresting party had no warrant, but after a few hours Stocklitsky was informed there was a presidential warrant "somewhere" for him and that he was charged with violation of the immigration act, or in other words considered an "undesirable alien."

He was searched at the first police station and then during the night was transferred a number of times from one station to another. The authorities were evidently afraid some effort would be made to secure his release and were determined to hold him as long as possible. None of his associates could learn of his whereabouts or the nature of the charges. He was finally taken to the department of "justice," where he was held for five hours and taken to the "rogues' gallery" and questioned by detectives, who hurled the vilest conceivable epithets at him, alternating their personal insults by indulging in obscene tirades against the Bolsheviks.

Monday morning, after being held three days incommunicado, bail was secured and at six o'clock in the evening he was released from custody. His hearing before the immigration authorities is set for August 20th.

ing-jazz number appeals only to old women. And the hootchie-kootchie dance formerly exhibited only in questionable side-shows is now wriggled in the leading ball rooms of the nation. In a degenerate society degenerates hold sway and the slogan of capitalism should now be "All power to the degenerates."

No possible stimulus will ever revive capitalism and its crumbling institutions. This society with all its institutions is rapidly sinking to the lowest depths possible. Neither science, literature, music or art can advance until capitalism has been destroyed.

It is only in a new society, freed from the fetters of class rule, that intellectual advancement can take place. Playwrights of the future will not exist by prostitution to a ruling class, but will truthfully depict life as it really is.

Sometime within the next decade some playwright, as yet unknown, will write a war play and use for his topic the saturnalia of agony and ashes and bloodshed from which we have just emerged, wherein will be depicted the real incentives and issues involved. Then will be laid bare the sordid motives of capitalist imperialism which plunged the workers of the world at each others throats and the words "making the world safe for democracy" will be the signal for contemptuous and derisive laughter.

The proletarian revolution comes, not only as the emancipator of the worker, but as the saviour of human society.—
H. M. W.

Czarizm in America

When it was apparent that he could furnish bail the Detroit officials evidently wired Chicago officials, as both Stocklitsky's home and office in Chicago were raided Monday afternoon and all his personal papers and correspondence, even pictures, were taken.

The principal charge against him seems to be that he is active in the organization work of the Communist Party of America, and those familiar with the tactics of the immigration authorities realize that a strenuous effort will be made to deport him to the land of Kolchak. The United States government is using this tactic to rid itself of some of its political enemies, and every official connected with the government knows that deportation of a man like Stocklitsky to the territory controlled by the Czarist, Kolchak, means the firing squad.

It is the same tactic used by this government in the deportation of the hindoos to India. The British war lords have executed every Hindoo who has been deported from this country that we have any record of. The same tactic is now to be used, with Kolchak as the executioner.

COMRADES! This deportation must stop. These soldiers in the ranks of the army of the revolution must not be sacrificed to these international executioners. Arrange protest meetings and let your voices be raised against these crimes.

Also get busy immediately and raise defense funds for the purpose of defending this and other cases. Send all contributions to J. V. Stilson, Treasurer, Defense Fund, Communist Party of America, 1221 Blue Island Ave., Chicago, Ill.