

MARCH OF EVENTS

By JACK WEBER

Imperial Jubilee . . .

If one can overcome the natural feeling of nausea on reading the press accounts of the celebration of twenty-five years of parasitism of King George, there are valuable political lessons to be learned from such circuses. The British monarchy is part of that vast paraphernalia of English imperialism for hypnotizing the working class. Without such hypnotism, the proletariat would see through their own eyes and not through those provided for them by the capitalist ruling class. The creation of illusions is the function of a vast apparatus supported by the bourgeoisie: the bourgeois press, the schools, the church, the radio—and the monarchy. With the aid of these weapons British imperialism gives the impression to the worker that he is part of a common civilization, that there is a common fatherland, that there are higher things in life than material class interests and the class struggle. By means, further, of bourgeois democracy completely controlled and manipulated by the rulers, the worker is hypnotized into believing that he actually has a share in willing his own slavery and exploitation.

Role of Monarchy . . .

The bourgeoisie foster carefully the illusion that the King is a mere figurehead, that he reigns but does not rule. So long as the proletariat remains acquiescent to bourgeois rule, so long as there is no threat to the power of the capitalist class, the monarchy remains seemingly a mere feudal tradition, quite harmless within the framework of bourgeois democracy. In reality the ruling class is far-sighted and in conducting the defense of its power against the possible attacks of the working class the capitalists resort to military strategy: they build in advance second and third line trenches to which to retreat in case the first line is taken. Thus if the workers begin to see through the heavy veils cast over reality by the propaganda of wage slavery, if they begin to utilize bourgeois democracy to change the system, then there is always the House of Lords upon which to fall back. If that is not enough, then there is finally the "national emergency" to assume, by the "divine right of capitalism," the prerogatives of outright, reactionary dictatorship. Under capi-

talism, in short, the King exists as a last resort for the defeat of the proletarian revolution. It is for that reason, to have a social "stabilizer," that the tradition of monarchy is maintained. Thus every so often the monarchial shield is exposed to published view, it is furnished and polished so as to perform resolutely its hypnotic function. But behind this shield can be clearly discerned the cold and calculating cruelty of the bourgeoisie!

Labor Party . . .

It is not only the direct instruments of capitalist power that serve to create illusions among the workers. It is also the reformist labor leaders who foster the viciously false idea that the King stands not for the ruling class but for the nation. Instead of teaching that the King may at the proper time become all the elements of state force and coercion epitomized and summed up, MacDonald and those of his ilk still in the Labor Party offer their allegiance to the King as the representative (chosen by whom?) of the "entire nation." The belly-crawling sycophancy of these reformist betrayers can arouse only the utmost disgust and loathing of the working class. The bourgeoisie will not let this occasion, a celebration of their preservation as a ruling class in Europe, pass without taking full advantage of the "wave of patriotism" evoked in the middle classes to force a general election on the patriotism and rearmament issues. The Jubilee will be utilized to prepare for war. Part of the preparation for war is the establishment of a conservative government. Recent political signs in England have pointed to the "danger" of a new labor government coming into power in the next general election. With the help of MacDonald the bourgeoisie will do everything in their power to prevent such a "catastrophe." The capitalists may not fear the knowledge of labor leaders, but they know that back of these false leaders stand the working masses, demanding decisive steps towards socialism. Let the masses once learn to the end the lesson that reformism is nothing but a form of betrayal, and they will quickly change their leaders for revolutionists who can lead them to victory and who can show them how to defeat fascism that grows more and more as a threat to the workers.

The 'American Approach'

By A. J. MUSTE

Adapting Marxism To the American Class Struggle

The term "American Approach" has been often used but seldom carefully analyzed. When a phrase is thus used, the inevitable result is that different people attach different meanings to it. In raising a discussion as to the real meaning of the term in a recent article (Modern Monthly, March 1935, "For An American Revolutionary Approach"), Comrade Budenz has rendered a service. He states that his thoughts are set down "for the consideration of honest-thinking radicals." A further discussion of them here is consequently in order.

The Workers Party of the U. S. has recognized in the most authoritative way open to it the importance of a realistic approach to the revolutionary task of overthrowing capitalism in the U. S.—namely, by setting it down in the Declaration of Principles adopted by the Party at its founding convention. According to that Declaration the primary task of the Party and of the American working class is "the defeat of the enemy at home—the overthrow of the capitalist government of the U. S." In carrying out that task the Party is pledged to "use the revolutionary potentialities of American tradition and history" and to adapt its strategy and tactics to the concrete situation and the line-up of class forces in the U. S.

Theory and Practice

Some of those who have advocated the "American approach" have counterposed it, either openly or by inference, to the Marxian and Leninist approach. According to Lenin you have to take one or the other; you can't have both. This is not the viewpoint of the W. P. The very same section of the Declaration of Principles to which I have just referred states that "The W. P. of the U. S. is founded on the great principles of revolutionary theory and practice stated by Marx and Lenin and tested by the experience of the class struggle on an international scale, above all in the Russian Revolution of 1917." It is precisely these principles that we propose to apply in a fearless, realistic fashion to the American scene.

In proposing to do that we are certainly not going counter to Marx and Lenin. Quite the contrary. Neither one of them regarded their theory as a "dogma to be learned by heart and repeated mechanically." Both emphasized the importance of taking into account the special historical, cultural, political, economic, technological factors in different countries.

Lenin's Realistic Approach

If we are speaking of a realistic application of Marxist-Leninist fundamentals to American conditions, then it is correct to speak not only of an American, but of a French, British, Chinese, etc. approach, i. e., of taking into account the special conditions with which the revolutionary movement is confronted in each country. And it is then important at this point to observe that it was Lenin who gave the world the supreme example to date of this fearless, realistic, yes experimental, reckoning with theoretical conditions in a given country at a given historical moment—which is not to imply, as we shall have occasion to point out later, that Lenin had a nationalistic outlook or philosophy.

There runs through the article of Comrade Budenz a "contempt for theory" expressed in vigorous and picturesque language. "Radical parrot-talk" of the "other-worldly breathers," "the futile pyrotechnics of other-worldly theoreticians," and "pontifical theology which is paralyzing effective radical action," are excoriated. Precisely because some very vigorous head-thumping needs to be done, it is to be regretted that by the manner in which these things are said and by what is left unsaid in the article in question, the way is left open for very serious misunderstanding.

How Advise the Youth?

Lack of revolutionary theory in the swiftly changing, complex modern world is exactly the same as want of a compass in mid-ocean. Shall we advise our young workers and students not to study the history of class struggles and the theory which is based upon an analysis of that history? Tell them that this is only a waste of time? Fortunately, they would not take

the advice if we did give it. The alive and intelligent ones among them are eager to learn more of revolutionary theory. I am told that one of the ablest of the young workers in the former C.P.L.A. who would not and could not join the Communist Party, nevertheless for months secretly took every leaflet and statement that he drafted to a C. P. acquaintance to make sure that it was "correct from a Marxian viewpoint." That was not an unsound instinct by any means! Lenin who has the most colossal practical achievements in working-class history to his credit was constantly and profoundly occupied with theory. Pragmatically and to say the least, it did not seem to affect adversely his practical efficiency as a revolutionist!

There is even place for a certain division of labor in the revolutionary movement. The man who makes a contribution to theory or history, who can teach young workers, who writes a revolutionary drama or battle-song, is not necessarily to be read out of the Party because he never organized any steel workers or "educated" a scab on a picket line, any more than a picket captain who carries out the tasks assigned him by the Party—is disqualified for membership because he cannot carry on a disputation about Bonapartism or the permanent revolution with one of the Party intellectuals.

The 'Lunatic' Fringe

There are posts, various brands of pseudo-theoreticians, who merit the severest condemnation of responsible revolutionists. One consists of those who participate in the endless gab-fests in corridors and cafeterias which are supposed to be profound theoretical discussions; only they are carried on by comrades who do not know theories, only words and phrases—discussions which will never contribute anything to revolutionary theory.

Any more than church sewing-circle talk-speeches ever contributed to theory or certain Greenwich Village gatherings ever added anything to the science of biology or to literary criticism. Theory is no substitute for action and hum-drum practical work; much less is talk such a substitute. We agree with comrades in the Party, and with Marx, Engels, and Lenin in condemnation of those who use Marxian writings as a ritual or incantation, those who have a pat, abstract, mechanical formula from the books to apply to every situation, and who lead Marx to exclaim that he was not a Marxist. We can share also the contempt of some of our comrades for those who regard themselves as fully qualified to pontificate on the most complex and fundamental problems of the working class movement on the other side of the globe though they have never shown any capacity to contribute anything to the solution of the simplest problem under their own noses. Most eagerly do we join in putting in his place the upstart who has read a few books and taken a few courses and who regards it as his prerogative to look down from Olympian heights upon workers who have performed colossal tasks in the actual class struggle. "Activists" who encounter this species should not jump to the conclusion, however, that "theory is dangerous." It is a case of youth or glands or something like that. Responsible "theoreticians" and responsible "activists" are not enemies, not thin-skinned individuals who cannot stand criticism; they are comrades who have much to teach each other.

The American Pragmatism

One other point may be touched in this connection. Americans, we are told, are not interested in theory. They are pragmatists, experimental; they want action. Remembering that there are exceptions to all rules, and a good many in this connection, Americans, we are told, are not interested in theory. They are pragmatists, experimental; they want action. Remembering that there are exceptions to all rules, and a good many in this connection, Americans, we are told, are not interested in theory. They are pragmatists, experimental; they want action. Remembering that there are exceptions to all rules, and a good many in this connection, Americans, we are told, are not interested in theory. They are pragmatists, experimental; they want action.

From prison we wrote the Provisional Committee for Non-Partisan Labor Defense and asked them to raise the question of an appeal from the sentence and a fight for our freedom. The Non-Partisan Labor Defense raised the question of forming the Robins-Gras Defense Committee with every political party and grouping in N. Y. and all responded to the appeal. That is, all except the Communist Party. The Hotel and Restaurant Branch of the Amalgamated Food Workers, which fell under leadership of Communist Party "leaders," wrote in prison that they had tried their best for us but could not aid with anything but their solidarity. The membership of the union forced a change of policy and they finally joined the Robins-Gras Defense Committee.

The appeal was successful in the Appellate Division, the judges were unanimous in setting aside the verdict, and criticized the conduct of the trial judge in denying us a fair trial. We were freed from prison a week later.

This favorable result was due to the loyal working-class support our committee received and the really splendid legal work of Abraham

to come. Lenin's party too seemed hopelessly weak, poor, isolated from the stream of events as the year 1917 opened. It would actually have been worthless but for its discipline, its grounding in theory, its militant use of theory in action. Because it did not try to win the masses by any cheap device, it actually won the masses as the objective situation developed to the crisis point.

Assimilating "Activists"

One thing that we might expect from the American emphasis on action and experimentation is a comparatively large number of "activists" in the Party and in the radical movement generally. The Party must welcome them, assimilate them, learn how to utilize their qualities to the utmost, make them feel that the Party is the avenue for the expression of their militant energies, educate them or it will simply be subjecting itself to a series, if not fatal, handicap. Thousands of these militants have never been able to accept S. P. parliamentarianism. They have tried the C. P. in many cases and given it up. Thousands more who have never been in any working class party or group are coming along in the new unions. From the picket lines we must recruit the most intelligent young workers into the ranks of the Party. We must win, keep and develop inspiring leaders of mass struggles. They are hard to find and to replace if lost.

As a natural outcome of the country's pioneer experience and tradition, movements of revolt in the U. S. and their leaders have had a strongly anarchistic tinge. Comrade Budenz correctly calls attention to this fact in his article. It is not without significance that the heroes he mentions are Jefferson, John Brown, Thoreau, Wendell Phillips, and that he writes with ellipsis of being "free from the leading strings of any radical Mother Church." This impatience of restraint and leaning to direct action is "American." (Both reactionary American employers and conservative American trade unionists exhibit the tendency in strikes.)

The Fallacy of Individualism

Insofar as this tradition of "freedom" makes for resistance to the part of American workers to bureaucracy in the economic or political movement and to mechanical domination of the Party by a bureaucratic International, it is a useful and precious thing. The trouble with the individualist anarchist is that his revolt does not express itself in an organized way. It takes the form of individual protest, "conscientious objection," "civil disobedience," putting oneself on record, withdrawal from society as in Thoreau's case, a dramatic demonstration in John Brown's case, etc. But this is for the most part futile, and side by side with it are found, consequently, the most extreme regimentation and conformity. Witness the auto

cracy in the trade unions. And nowhere can one find people with greater ability to have their minds changed for them instantly and painlessly, to declare that black is white and vice versa at the behest of the boss, than in the American section of the Third International.

Thus it is essential for these mass workers and leaders to whom we have referred as important elements for the Party, to learn in the indispensable role of a disciplined, revolutionary party in the struggle of the working class today and in its final emancipation. They must learn to work in an organized way and to express their dissent, which often may be well founded, in an organized way, with in the Party. If they do not learn to work under the discipline or at least influence of the Party, they are either condemned to futility in the end, or are drawn into the ranks of the service of the trade union bureaucracy (something that has happened with plenty of them in the American movement) or worse still go into the service of capitalists or even fascists—as happened with a number of prominent Italian syndicalists, e. g.

The Vanguard

Where is there today a mass movement of workers, except the trade union movement which under its present collaborationist leadership is certainly not to be regarded as a model to be copied, or where is there a flourishing progressive movement in the unions themselves, except where there is some political party or group to give continuity, perspective and drive? The Party must express itself in mass organizations and mass work; but equally does the mass work depend for its very life upon the organized, conscious, disciplined, revolutionary vanguard.

It may not be amiss to follow these comments on anarchism through a step further. Anarchism is no solution for the working class today. The job is to overthrow the highly organized capitalist state and to construct a highly organized socialist society. For either the destructive or the constructive side of the task anarchism is helpless. Organization, not anarchy, is required. Let our comrades ponder deeply the brilliant and devastating comment of Trotsky after pointing out that Prince Kropotkin, anarchist leader, opposed the revolution and became a Russian patriot in 1917: "The principles of liberalism can have a real existence only in conjunction with a police system. Anarchism is an attempt to cleanse liberalism of the police. But just as pure liberalism is impossible to breathe, so liberalism without the police-principle means the death of society. Being a shadow caricature of liberalism, anarchism as a whole has shared its fate. Like every sect which founds its teaching not upon the actual development of human society, but upon the reduction to absurdity of one of its features, anarchism explodes like a soap-bubble at that moment when the social contradictions arrive at the point of war or revolution."

Question Box

By A. WEAVER

SAMUEL Z. N. Y.—

Question: Do you not think that here in the U. S. the further logical development of the class struggle (strikes, etc.) will lead to a spontaneous overthrow of capitalism, so that we should concentrate our entire efforts in the economic field (trade union, unemployed organizations, etc.)?

Answer: This question raises the entire problem of "spontaneity" of the masses, which is by no means new to the revolutionary movement. Thirty-three years ago Lenin, in his pamphlet "What Is To Be Done," polemized against the advocates of "spontaneity," and we can think of no better argument against this position than to quote from his writings of that time: "... All those who talk about 'spontaneity' of the masses, etc., imagine that the pure and simple labor movement can work out an independent ideology for itself, if only the workers 'take their fate out of the hands of the leaders.' But in this they are profoundly mistaken. To supplement what has been said, we shall quote the following profoundly true and important utterances by Karl Kautsky: ...

"Many... believe that Marx asserted that economic development and the class struggle create, not only the conditions for Socialist production, but also, and directly, the CONSCIOUSNESS (K. K.'s italics) of its necessity. ... In this connection Socialist consciousness is represented as a necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is absolutely untrue. Of course, Socialism, as a theory, has its roots in the modern economic relationships in the same way as the class struggle of the proletariat has, and in the same way as the latter emerges from the struggle against the capitalist-created poverty and misery of the masses. But Socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises out of different premises. Modern Socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for Socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicles of science are not the proletariat, but the BOURGEOIS INTELLIGENTSIA (K. K.'s italics). It was out of the heads of members of this stratum that modern Socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduced it into the proletarian class struggle to be done. Thus, Socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without (von Aussen hineingebracht), and not something that arose within it spontaneously (unwuchsen)." ...

"Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of the workers in the process of their movement then the only choice is: Either bourgeois, or Socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a 'third' ideology, and moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle Socialist ideology in any way, to deviate from it in the slightest degree means strengthening bourgeois ideology. There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the spontaneous development of the labor movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology. ..."

How far can the labor movement develop without the introduction of Marxian consciousness? To this Lenin answered: "... The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i. e. it may itself realize the necessity for combining in unions, to fight against the employers and to strive to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc." (All emphasis in above quotations are in the original.)

Lack of space, which has required that we extract only important parts from Lenin's work, does not permit us to further develop this very important subject. However, let it suffice for the moment to point out that about 15 years ago the Italian proletariat was brought, by the logic of the class struggle, to an actual seizure of the factories, but, because there was no Marxian consciousness, i. e., a strong revolutionary party did not exist, the workers did not know what to do and Mussolini now sits in the saddle.

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