

MARCH OF EVENTS

By JACK WEBER

In Belgium...

Social Democracy again proves its role as a brake on the working class in its struggle against capitalism. With the existence of a Marxist party in Belgium, the political crisis through which that country has been passing could have been utilized to direct the proletariat in militant struggle for the purpose of achieving as a first step a workers' government. But a revolutionary party did not exist there, owing in largest measure to the criminal blunders and betrayals of Stalinism. Social Democracy retains its power over the trade unions and in the political activities of the masses. But within the ranks of the socialist Labor Party of Belgium, the most advanced workers, absorbing some of the bitter lessons of the German defeat, have been slowly moving to the left. The deep-going crisis of capitalism produced the objective conditions for the rapid growth of such a left wing, but its leadership could only accommodate itself to the pressure of the reformist leaders at the right and thus held back the workers instead of arousing them to militant action.

Coalition Gov't...

In Belgium, as in France, fascism is a growing menace to the working class. The Belgian king is in close touch with the forces of reaction and the monarchy will be utilized without a doubt in the attempt to save the capitalist system by handing the power to the extreme reactionaries who will crush all workers' organizations unless the workers seize the power and liquidate the monarchy at the same time. Far from preparing the masses for this revolutionary task, the Social Democracy is rendering them passive. Instead of breaking with the bourgeoisie as the first step in the defense of the workers against fascism, the betraying leaders of the Labor Party have joined in the coalition ministry. The militant workers have demanded straight along that in the political crisis accompanying the economic one, the Labor Party take over the government alone. But there is nothing that socialist leaders fear so much as power, for then they cannot reject the basic demands of the working class without standing naked and exposed. The entry of Vandervelde, De Man and the "leftist" Spaak into the Van Zeeland coalition shows once more how reformism creates illusions among the workers by denouncing capitalism loudly in words in order the better to save the capitalist ("democratic") system in deeds. Vandervelde requires the bourgeoisie in the coalition so as to avoid complete exposure when

he tramples on the needs of the masses.

The Effects...

It is clear from the circumstances surrounding the formation of the coalition ministry that the socialist workers, the rank and file, were opposed to this betrayal and to class collaboration at this juncture. For the entry was in the nature of a coup d'etat, an accomplished fact, put over not merely on the Labor Party, but on the Central Committee of the party as well. This throws the clearest light possible on the attitude of these misleaders towards "legality." They would have the workers follow the course permitted to them by finance capital in the struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie, but they reserve to themselves the right to act "illegally" for the benefit of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the working class. This act on the part of the reactionaries will have wide repercussions. The desertion of the left wing by its leader Spaak, who also joined the ministry (his reward for this foul treachery), prevented an immediate split, since the left forces in the Labor Party were thrown into confusion. Nevertheless the left wing continued its publication of "Action Socialiste" and denounced the coalition government, stating: "We again reaffirm our belief in the revolutionary road to Socialism. Coalition is disastrous." The situation in the Labor Party at present is a real test of the leftist forces and may result in rapid progress to a real Marxist basis. Thus a deputy from Brussels declared in the Special Congress called to "ratify" the fait accompli: "I am convinced now more than ever that with these methods (comprised) capitalism will never be conquered. We have behind us bitter events—Germany, Austria—isn't that sufficient that we should learn? We must have more confidence in the power of the working class—in our own strength—the time will come when our voice will be heard—the voice of Revolutionary Socialism."

The struggle against coalition will tend to unite the left centrist forces and aid them to reach the advanced workers. This also involves the struggle against De Man for putting into effect his entire "Labor Plan" which involves the taking of power by a workers' government, and not merely portions of it, as De Man now proposes. In this fight the Bolsheviks must come to the aid of the revolutionary workers in the Labor Party. In the course of common struggle the Bolsheviks can win over these forces for a real militant struggle against fascism and for workers' power.

The 'American Approach'

(Ed. Note: This is the second of a series of articles by Comrade Muste. The third article will appear next week.)

By A. J. MUSTE

There is another idea advanced by Comrade Budenz which along with certain valuable suggestions exhibits the same individualism, unreality, "other-worldliness," the pioneer's longing for a fresh start, the yearning for the ideal, as the conceptions we have been discussing. The "American approach" means, he suggests, that in building the American revolutionary party we must make a fresh start. The movement in this country must be "foot-loose from the broils of European radicalism." Our workers and farmers are "nauseated with the charges and countercharges of 'opportunism,' 'renegadism,' etc. which fill the radical air." They are "fed up on the neurasthenic fictions which one radical group must, as a matter of duty, create about the other—muddying the waters and hiding the lesson of correct tactics."

There is here, be it said in passing, a hint that it is only European radicalism which is afflicted with broils, that American radicalism would be free of them if these bad Europeans had not brought them over or if, perhaps, foolish Americans had not imitated the Europeans. There is surely no foundation in fact for such an assumption of the peaceableness of Americans, red or any other color, and a tendency is evident here to slip into language which might easily be given a nationalistic interpretation which its author would be the first to disown.

Mud-Slinging Methods

Now there is no question that radical parties and groups have sometimes devoted time and energy to wrangling over non-essentials or issues that had become dead. It is also true that controversy has descended at times to the level of petty sniping. The C. P. has pursued a policy of mud-slinging, character assassination (at this very moment directed against Comrade Budenz), lying, double-crossing, breaking up meetings of other groups, which have introduced a demoralization and bitterness into the radical movement. With any protest against any of these tendencies wherever they may appear, the W.P. will associate itself. It has taken and will take the lead in the effort to eradicate them.

But there is here a lumping together of all controversies in the radical movement and the suggestion that they are not over serious and genuine issues but the product of "neurasthenic fictions" which each radical group has trumped up against the others as a justification for its own existence. Are the dis-

The Use of Polemics In the Labor Movement

ussions which have indeed raged furiously many times in the radical movement thus to be discussed as the ravings of neurasthenics about fictions? Was there not a real issue between Marx and the Utopian socialists? Or Marx and Bakunin? And was it not essential to the advancement of the working class that these issues be fought out and clarified? To take another illustration, comrade Budenz would be the last to argue that there is no real issue as between the Socialist and the revolutionist or that it is not necessary to break the mind of the Social Democracy on the mind of the working class.

The Issue at Hand

It really comes down, then, to the question as to whether the conflict between the C.P. and the W.P., between the Third International and those who have raised the banner of the New, Fourth, International, has to do with significant issues. But to ask this question is to answer it! Conceivably an honest worker may be on one side or the other in the controversy, and we do not class those workers who differ from us as counter-revolutionists and social-fascists (a breed that seems suddenly to be as extinct as the dodo). But every day in the field our comrades encounter those who belong to the C. P. or are under its influence. They must be equipped to reason with them. What else should a responsible worker do with other workers?

Furthermore, the issues of the united front, the trade union policy of the C.P., social-fascism, party and workers' democracy, socialism in one country, the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, cannot be dismissed as unimportant, "neurasthenic fictions," any more than the controversy between Marx and the Utopians, or Lenin and the Social Democrats could be. The advent of Fascism, the reasons why the workers' movement did not prevent it, the debacle of the C.P. in Germany, the fact that in seven years, and such years, the Third International, claiming to be the general staff of the world revolutionary movement, has had no congress—all this, the W.P. claims, can only mean that the working class of the world has entered upon a new epoch, as truly as a new epoch dawned with the debacle of the Second International in 1914.

Confronted with such a situation, the revolutionary vanguard must first decide whether the basic principles of the movement remain or whether a new set is to be worked out. The W.P. bases itself upon the principles of Marx and Lenin. No

one has come forward with any others that merit serious consideration.

The Point of Departure

It then becomes necessary to ask how the basic principles have been perverted, misapplied, departed from. How can the revolutionary movement possibly go on, unless it is simply to make a leap in the dark, save on the basis of an evaluation of the past, its successes and its failures? Since when has it become scientific and realistic for a movement not to strive earnestly to benefit by its own experience? To propose to "start from scratch" with a brand-new revolutionary movement is to cry for the moon. We cannot wipe out history. Our opponents will talk about it if we do not. It is not even true that the workers of the U. S. are nauseated with discussion of these issues. Most of them do not know anything about them, it is true. They are uninterested, rather than nauseated. But will any one say that there is less discussion in the S.P. for example, or among the more advanced workers generally, about revolutionary principles and the evaluation of European events, etc. than a few years ago?

Less now than ever before is it possible or advisable for the revolutionary movement in the U. S. to ignore or isolate itself from European or world-experience. As capitalism in the U. S. rapidly approaches the same stage of development as in European countries and resorts to much the same devices to thwart the labor movement, we can learn very direct and specific lessons from European experience. Fascism is not a remote or abstract issue for us. Furthermore, they are international, not national issues. Still further, it is utterly impossible to comprehend what is happening to the pocket-book, the home, the dinner-table of American workers and farmers, or to devise a way out, save by an understanding of what is happening to world-capitalism and of what the working class of all lands can do about it.

Unity—Its Real Meaning

One other point in this connection. It is true that the workers desire unity. They must achieve unity in order to win their freedom. But a revolutionist has no business to lapse into sentimentality or middle-headedness. As we have pointed out on other occasions, there was a united labor movement in Austria, but it went down before Fascism because it was united on a false, social-democratic, basis. We must not, therefore, seek to evade the controversy as to what is the sound basis for unity. Rather must we fight with all the mental resources at our command for our conception as to what that basis is. Are we then to become a "debat-

ing society" or an "academy of theoreticians"? If by that is meant that we have vigorous internal discussions over real issues, in the national and international sphere, we say, By all means; no organization has any vitality which does not have that sort of internal life. If, however, it is meant that we talk and write, but do not act, that we develop an ingrown party, the answer is that we shall permit that to happen at our peril. Again and again we say, the Party must get into the class struggle, yes, here in the U. S. A. It must prove itself in action, and if it does not, it will be thrown into the garbage-can, where it would belong, by the working class. Theory is with us the guide to action and is to be tested in action.

The Question of Stalinism

Are we to be an "anti-Stalinist" rather than an "anti-capitalist" party? It seems to me that there are certain comrades in the Party who from different angles take an unrealistic view of the matter here raised. On the one hand, there are comrades who to all intents and purposes say that we have to answer the Stalinists' arguments and if we do that we can dispose of them and go ahead, and those who from a slightly different angle contend that until the C.P. has been put out of the running, by whatever means, there is very little we can do.

For one thing, the Stalinist arguments have all been answered, but that has not made the C.P. disappear. The arguments of the capitalists have all been answered too. Only comrades with a very academic, intellectualistic, i. e. non-Marxian, approach could possibly think that arguments, oral or written, by themselves, dispose of institutions and organizations. We have to demonstrate to the workers not only that we can win a debate with the C.P., but that we can offer them a living alternative, a revolutionary party that can actually function in the class struggle. Obviously, if we have to prove that we can function in order to win the leadership of the workers as against opponent parties, we have to function while these parties still exist and are also at work. Who would expect to be otherwise in the world of reality? Who can give the matter a moment's thought and then propose that we put off trade union work until the C.P. has been liquidated rather than contest the field in the unions now with the C. P.? Yes, comrades, again: Project the party into the class struggle!

The Ostrich Method

On the other hand, there are comrades who practically take the position that the Party should ignore the existence of the C.P., "simply go ahead with its work," spread its anti-capitalist message, build branches, help organize the unemployed, enter the unions, etc., but eschew controversy either about principles or practical matters. If the comrades referred to in the preceding paragraph suffer primarily from being academic, these latter comrades are afflicted with a sentimental outlook. It would indeed be pleasant if there were no serious controversies in the working class, if they were all engaged in a united attack on the capitalist system. But then the revolution would be here! The world does not happen to be as we would like it. In the real world we must fight those who mislead the working class in order to fight capitalism effectively. In any event, they will attack us and leave us no alternative but to fight.

And though argument about principles does not of itself suffice to wrest leadership from an opponent party, it is just as true that in order to achieve leadership the Party must do more than conduct plebiscites. It must demonstrate its intellectual superiority. Party because only thus can the most advanced and intelligent workers and intellectuals be won. Chiefly, because the Party's job is not merely to conduct a series of skirmishes with the employing class, but nothing less than leadership in the overthrow of capitalism. The Party must have intellectual competence and satisfy the advanced workers that it has.

The Job Before Us

It makes a tremendous difference, however, whether the attack on Stalinism is regarded as a means or as an end, whether we think of ourselves or act as if we considered ourselves critics of another party which is after all to do the job or whether we are really conscious of being the revolutionary party whose task it is to rally the workers for the assault on capitalism, which justifies itself in action on a broader and broader scale, and pays just so much attention to other parties as may be necessary as an incident in that major task. We are the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, revolutionary Party and our pre-occupation is not with the C.P. but with the capitalist system in the U. S. and throughout the world—the system which with our sister parties we aim to overthrow.

(The third article of Comrade Muste's series will appear next week.)

Question Box

By A. WEAVER

S. W. PHILADELPHIA— Question: Do not Stalin and other of his followers prove that Lenin claimed that it was possible to completely build a Socialist society in the Soviet Union alone?

Answer: The sole theoretical justification given by the Stalinists for the "theory of Socialism in one country" consists of two quotations from Lenin, one from his article on the United States of Europe, written in 1915, and the other from his unfinished article on Cooperation, written in 1923. Everything else, that Marx, Engels and Lenin said, wrote, or did is ignored, as are the programs of the Party and Young Communist League during the October period and all the opinions expressed by the Party leaders during that time, including those of the now-supporters of the "theory."

Space does not permit a demonstration of the fact that even the quotations adduced by the Stalinists do not permit them the claim that Lenin was an advocate of the "theory" which Stalin first advanced in 1924, but if you will refer to "The Draft Program of the Communist International, a Criticism of Fundamentals" by Trotsky, a copy of which is available from almost any of the former C.L.A. members, you will find a complete analysis of this question under the chapter headed "The Theoretical Tradition of the Party."

(H), NEW YORK— Question: What is the difference between a "minimum" and a Marxist program?

Answer: The posing of the problem in this manner puts the entire question in a false light. The confusion surrounding the term "minimum," where the program of the political party is concerned, flows from the attempt to decree history, i. e., to set up, a priori, and regardless of time and space, the concept of what a program must be, and to label this "Marxist." When a program, under definite historical conditions, obviously advances the historical needs of the working class but is nevertheless "less" than that which the historical ultimatism would "like," it is sometimes accepted by them but labelled "minimum" IN CONTRAST TO "Marxian." Actually such contrasting is impermissible because that program, conditioned as it must be by the life process, which moves social forces in a progressive direction, IS MARXIST.

Let us recall a historical example. When the Bolsheviks, under Lenin, divided the land equally among the peasantry, this was sharply criticized by Rosa Luxemburg as having nothing in common with Socialism. The progressive character of the program of the Bolsheviks is now obvious so that if we were to follow the methodology of those who contrast "minimum" with "Marxist" we must necessarily conclude that the Bolsheviks had such a non-Marxist "minimum" program. Actually it was Marxist in the fullest sense of the word and Trotsky had occasion to point out that if they had followed Rosa Luxemburg's "Marxism" they might have been left with this but in all probability without the proletarian power.

"It would be possible to speak of Socialist perspectives only after the establishment and successful preservation of the proletarian power. And this power could preserve itself only by giving determined co-operation to the peasant in carrying out his revolution. If the distribution of the land would strengthen the socialist government politically, it was then wholly justified as an immediate measure. The peasant had to be taken as the revolution found him. . . ." ("History of the Russian Revolution").

The gist of the matter is this: Revolutionists may, without illusions, adopt a program which does not contain all that they would like to see fulfilled but which advances the historical needs of society under a given set of circumstances, and such a program IS MARXIST even if it be labelled "minimum" to show its historical conditioning.

Question: Is the "Declaration of Principles" of the Workers Party a Marxist document?

Answer: YES! The "Declaration" contains the following points which are essential prerequisites for advancing the historical needs of the proletariat under present-day historical conditions: The recognition of the decline and reactionary nature of present day capitalism (imperialism); the recognition of the nature of the capitalist state power; the need for the overthrow of capitalism through a revolutionary struggle for power; for a vanguard party; for the dictatorship of the working class; for workers' councils (soviets); for a classless society; for a new International, for the defense of the Soviet Union; for a struggle against imperialist war and fascism; for a program of immediate demands and the united front; against reformism, Stalinism and centrism.

The Forgotten Men in America's No-Mans Land

Ward H. Rogers Tells Stirring Story Of Share-Croppers Battle

By HARRY STRANG

"The plight and struggle of the exploited sharecroppers of Arkansas are an integral part of the whole American working class. It is quite logical, therefore, that the Non-Partisan Labor Defense should be part of the committee supporting my appeal against a six-months sentence for 'anarchy.' The Southern Tenant Farmers Union appreciates this support. I wish the Non-Partisan Labor Defense every success in its effort to build a nation-wide, fighting defense body including workers of many political affiliations."

Thus Ward H. Rogers, class war victim of the Arkansas plantation struggles now touring the East on behalf of his union, of whose executive he is a member, wound up a brief address to members of the New York N.P.L.D. at their reorganization meeting last week. Rogers, who will speak in many eastern cities during the next two months, was unanimously elected an honorary member of the new Executive Board of the N.P.L.D. at this meeting.

Interviewed after the meeting, Rogers told something of the situation in Arkansas, the fight of his union and his own persecution at the hands of the landowning class. "Our union is made up of sharecroppers. A sharecropper is a man who owns nothing but his own labor-power. Generally, whether Negro or white, he has no vote. He lives on a great plantation and farms a little corner of it. The plantation owner furnishes him, that is gives him seed, a mule, tools and food, as well as a rotten club-board shack. The cropper and his family work all year, planting, cultivating, picking."

NRA a New Burden

"He is supposed to get half the market price brought by the crop. That would be little enough. . . . but by the time the landlord gets through with his 'deducts'—whether reckoned honestly or with a

crooked pencil—the cropper gets next to nothing. The new policies of Roosevelt mean nothing to the cropper—except that some of the most energetic among them have been forced off the land altogether to starve with the urban unemployed.

"Poverty, illiteracy, tuberculosis, pellagra, malarial, starvation. . . that is the life story of the sharecroppers of Arkansas as well as of other parts of the country. In Arkansas the average family earns about \$300 a year. Half the population of the state are living off that much—if you can call it living."

The croppers have been promised salvation a thousand times, but they never got a step nearer until they began to take their fate in their own hands. When Rogers and others began to organize the Southern Tenant Farmers Union last July, the croppers at Tyroneza went for it in a big way. Today, according to Rogers, there are 10,000 members in 50 localities in eastern Arkansas, with a few in southern Missouri and eastern Oklahoma. It has held the largest mass meetings ever held in the history of Arkansas—and held them in the face of a fierce government-backed terror campaign launched by the landowners.

Color Issue Raised

"I used to hitch-hike when I went out organizing," Rogers related, "and it was quite safe. We started in the summer and the owners thought it was just a little pre-election stunt by political fakery. Election passed, and we went on organizing the union. We took in Negroes and white, mixed up in the same union. We showed the croppers that militant unity is the only road, that class matters rather than color. The union grew."

"Then the owners changed their attitude. They did not wait for us to strike. They raised the color issue. Then, before we could even pose demands, the terror began, and now I can't move around in North Eastern Arkansas safely even in a

high-powered car. Deputies, night-riders, vigilantes are the exploiters' answer to the croppers' first move to improve their living conditions."

Rogers outlined some of the acts of terror perpetrated by the agents of the landowners. A few of them follow.

On November 20, 1934: W. H. Stultz, President of the Union, and three organizers were arrested and jailed while organizing Cross County. They were held in jail for 40 days. At the trial in February the judge ordered a verdict of "Not guilty." The union meeting was broken up by Sheriff Stacy who acted on orders from plantation owners near Parkin and Earle, Arkansas. A gang of gunmen accompanied Sheriff Stacy, including Floyd Roberts, planter, O. R. Belford, plantation rider (foreman), W. W. Hazlip, Justice of the Peace, and Walls Campbell, Justice of the Peace at Parkin, Arkansas. O. R. Belford took charge of A. B. Brooks, Negro minister and Chaplain of the Union and beat him so badly that it was necessary for Sheriff Stacy to secure medical treatment.

On January 26, 1935, Rogers was arrested at Marked Tree, while addressing a meeting of Negro and white croppers. Fred H. Stafford, deputy prosecuting Attorney for Poinsett County had been stationed with his stenographer at the edge of the crowd with the evident intention of framing someone. Rogers was tried for "anarchy" by a jury composed of 11 planters and business men and 1 tenant farmer. He was sentenced to six months and a fine of \$500. The case is now on appeal.

Threaten Lynchings

On February 1 Lucien Koch and Robert Reed, both of Commonwealth College, Ark., were forcibly taken from a church at Gilmore, Arkansas by an armed mob lynching a rope with which to lynch them. Both were severely beaten and "pistol whipped." The mob was led by Jake Lewis, a plantation rider and Benton Moore, formerly an officer of the law in Crittenden County.

On February 2 Rodgers, Koch, Atley Delaney and Robert Baker were arrested and jailed by J. Mays, city marshal of Lepanto, Arkansas.

They were terrorized while in jail by a mob of planters who threatened to lynch them. They were held in a flooded cell for three days without adequate food or fire.

On February 9 Powers Haggood, of the Socialist Party and several union officials were prevented from holding a meeting at Birdsong by planters and officers.

On March 6 Will Irving, sharecropper and union member was shot in the arm by a plantation rider named Lancaster.

On March 16 Norman Thomas, H. L. Mitchell, John Herling and Howard Kester were manhandled and slugged by a drunken mob of planters and officers at Birdsong. Bob Frazier of Tyroneza, Arkansas, reported head of the recently organized Ku Klux Klan was in the mob. There were many prominent planters in the mob who took no active part except to encourage the others.

On March 21 a mob, many of whom are identified, attempted to lynch Rev. A. B. Brooks, Union Chaplain and organizer at Marked Tree, Arkansas. After the mob had failed on four occasions to lure Brooks from his cabin they turned their guns upon his home and riddled it with bullets. Brooks is in hiding.

On March 22 W. H. Stultz was taken to the office of Chapman-Dewey Land Co. in Marked Tree by A. C. Spillings, Fred Bradsher and Bob Frazier. Stultz was told by Frazier and Bradsher that they would personally see to it that "Your brains are blown out and your body thrown into the St. Francis River."

On March 26 the home of C. T. Carpenter of Marked Tree, attorney for the union, was fired upon by vigilantes in Marked Tree.

Shoot Union Men

On April 1 Walter Moskop, one of the members of the trio which toured eastern cities in behalf of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, escaped from his home when he was told by his eleven year old boy that the vigilantes were closing in on him to kill him. Andy Smith, riding boss for Chapman-Dewey, lay in hiding throughout the day near Moskop's home. Moskop is a native of Arkansas and has had his home in Marked Tree

for years.

On April 2 the home of E. B. McKinney, another member of the party which toured the east in the interest of the union and vice-president of the union, was riddled with more than fifty bullets while his family and some friends were inside. Two men were badly shot and the entire household terrorized when the mob told them that unless they all left Marked Tree within 24 hours they would be killed.

The Federal government, sent an investigator to Arkansas, Mrs. Mary Connor Myers. She didn't like to make trouble for the plantation owners, but so terrible is the plight of the croppers, so obvious the crimes against them, that her report necessarily reflected some criticism of the landowners' methods. As a result, the Department of Agriculture and the AAA have suppressed the Myers report. Senator Robinson of Arkansas, Roosevelt's floor-leader in the upper House of Congress, uses his power to block all requests for the publication of the report. He vetoes any Federal intervention on behalf of the croppers.

The Federal government knows what is going on in Arkansas, and it wants nobody else to know about it or to do anything about it!

N.P.L.D. Aids Defense

Rogers stated that the only solution is further organization and further struggle. He said that since the terror was loosed against the croppers, the union has moved ahead. "Down in Arkansas we are fighters," he says. "When the owners began to fight the union, the croppers came to the sensible conclusion that a union must be a good thing for the croppers. So in they came, and no terror can stop them."

Rogers case comes before the higher court of Arkansas in October. His defense is being handled by a union committee which has the backing of the Ward H. Rogers Defense Committee, a joint body including the Workers Party, the Socialist Party, the I.W.W., the Non-Partisan Labor Defense, unions and other bodies. If this committee succeeds in raising the needed funds and bringing aggressive pressure