

NEW MILITANT

with which is merged THE MILITANT Published weekly by the New Militant Publishing Co., 55 East 11th Street, New York City Phone. ALgonquin 4-9058

Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. under the act of March 3, 1879.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In the United States \$1.00 per year; 65c six months. Canada and Foreign \$1.50 per year; \$1.00 six months. Bundle Rates: Two cents per copy.

Vol. 1 SATURDAY, JULY 13, 1935 No. 29

"Progressive"

How history plays pranks on names and makes a mockery of shibboleths is strikingly revealed in a recent issue of the "Progressive Miner," organ of the Progressive Miners of America.

In it is reproduced an article by Eugene Talmadge, the governor of Georgia called the "Cruel Scarcity Policy" which is published under a picture of the Governor and the following note by the editors:

"The following from an article by the governor is charged, by some people, with being political propaganda, and by others with being an attempt to whitewash his labor record.

"We are not familiar with Gov. Talmadge's labor record, nor his intentions in writing this article; but we are absolutely sure that every word contained therein is absolutely true, and that the writer being a Democratic governor deserves a lot of credit for this clear-cut expose of the vicious un-Christian and un-American New Deal agricultural program."

Can it be that the editor of the Progressive Miner is really ignorant of the labor, or more correctly anti-labor, record of Talmadge of Georgia? Is he really unaware that the lowest textile wages in the country obtain in Georgia? Did he fail to see the headlines during the textile strike of 1934 which proclaimed Talmadge as the first governor to call out the militia against the mill workers? Doesn't he know that this southern bourbon bears the unenviable honor of being the first to introduce the Nazi concentration camp in the United States for the purpose of subduing and subjugating rebellious working men?

We can hardly believe it. Every suckling in the labor movement has marked the cross over this reactionary: labor enemy No. 1. The editor of the Progressive Miner, we are certain, is willfully closing his eyes and the eyes of his readers to the union-smashing policies of Talmadge. Opposition to militancy and left wing forces and tactics have driven the leaders of the P.M.A. into a loving embrace with the worst reactionaries in the country. They have, however, one thing in common: they pose as progressives until the issues become too hot.

And what does Talmadge say? First, a plagiarism of the facts long ago adduced in radical circles which marshal figures depicting cotton and live-stock destruction by the AAA and the consequent suffering caused by it. Then a good deal of specious reasoning which space does not permit us to deal with in this editorial. Finally, the conclusion printed in large, bold-face type:

"And the party in power should return to the principles of its founders and fulfill the promises of its platform to eliminate unnecessary and extravagant governmental bureaus and reduce the cost of government."

In short, Talmadge's is not one whit better than any die-hard Tory who speaks for the Chamber of Commerce.

At least this much should be elementary for a progressive. But the Progressive Miner thinks otherwise: "we are absolutely sure that every word (in Talmadge's article) is absolutely true. . ."

And they call themselves "progressive"! What's in a name!

Shall Ethiopia Perish?

(Continued from Page 1) tion, in other words, it is now what it was originally intended to be.

From its very inception, the League of Nations was given a high credit rating by the acting and would-be socialist ministers of the world. No less powerful a pillar of the Second International than Arthur Henderson, the leader of the British Labor Party, adorned its sessions and set its tone. Now that the Italian imperialists are preparing the brutal rape of a far weaker foe, where are the spokesmen of the Second International, the Messrs. Henderson and Vandervelde and all their political kinfolk? What is their League of Nations doing, what does it intend to do, and what do they propose it shall do?

A year ago, the Stalinists drove the Soviet Union into the League of Nations. The self-admittedly beloved leader of the world proletariat, Stalin, told Walter Duranty that the League of Nations was at least a little bump in the road that would prevent war and help strengthen the "peace-loving" countries to preserve world order. What is the Stalin-Litvinov section of the League of Nations doing to defend the Ethiopian people from enslavement to the bastard descendants of the Roman emperors? Time was when the voice of the Soviet Union was heard in the most obscure hamlets

of the world, ringing with challenge against imperialist aggression, ever vigorously articulate in behalf of the oppressed and exploited peoples, of the hundreds of millions of brown and black and yellow serfs of imperialism. That voice is now stilled! The Stalinist press is filled with delirious joy when it reports that M. Maxim Litvinov is chairman of this or that session of the Council of the League of Nations. It has not yet reported that he has uttered a single vigorous note of protest against the infamous villainies of Mussolini—to say nothing of a criticism of that ally of Fascist Italy in the Ethiopian expedition, France, which is at the same time the ally of the Soviet Union.

Neither Kellogg nor Laval, Henderson nor Litvinov, can cover up the true and quintessential nature of the League of Nations. The "thieve's kitchen of Geneva" remains what it was: an association of imperialist bandits for the preservation of capitalist slavery throughout the world. "Any impromptu activity at Geneva is improbable," writes the New York Times. "The League is in the worst dilemma of its career and sees no way out. . . . Not only have the French and the British abandoned a humble fellow-member of the League to her fate, but the League itself is preparing to renew that policy of postponement and masterly inactivity that left China at Japan's mercy and the conflict in the Chaco to settle itself."

Notwithstanding, the case for Ethiopia is far from hopeless, and the prospects for the Fascist regime far from guaranteed. So far as the latter is concerned, it would be well for this murderous Bonapartist regime which seeks to solve its ever-increasing problems at home by foreign aggression, to remember Sedan, Port Arthur and . . . Sadowa. The senseless slaughter of the French masses in 1870 in the hopeless campaign of the little Napoleon to smash Germany led to the uprising of the Parisian masses and the establishment of the immortal Commune. The wanton destruction of tens of thousands of Russian peasants to satisfy the imperialist lust of a degenerate Czar was succeeded by the St. Petersburg Soviet of 1905, just as Kerensky's adventures on the western front in 1917 was followed by the great Bolshevik revolution. The present lord of the Palazzo Chigi might well recall at this time the fate of his equally audacious predecessor, the prime minister Crispi, who fell from power and into disgrace when the streets of Italy were filled with embittered soldiers returned from the humiliating defeat of Sadowa and clamoring for the heads of the criminals who had sent them to die on foreign plains.

And when he thinks of Sadowa, let him remember also that this is 1935 and not 1894. Ethiopia is not weaker, but stronger. Even though it is matched against an army of far superior technical strength, its own forces have an infinitely higher morale. They are fighting for their own independence, for their national integrity. And no longer are they armed merely with primitive spears and knives. We do not refer here to the comparatively insignificant fact that the Ethiopians now have a few thousand rifles and some machine guns. They have at their command—if they will but summon them to their aid—the millions upon millions of other natives of the Dark Continent who have produced fabulous wealth for world imperialism. By themselves, the Ethiopians are no match against the Italian forces, backed as they are by the active or passive support of other imperialist powers.

But they have allies. Their allies are the Italian workers and peasants who are under the Fascist lash, but who await only the moment when their taskmasters have encountered such difficulties as will enable the masses to attack them from the rear. Their allies are the workers of the entire world, whose foe is their foe, who have cause to hate and harry imperialism with the same bitterness and vigor as their African brothers. Their allies are the African masses themselves. Before the first Italian shot is fired, the black and brown masses of the entire continent must be aroused in a sacred war against world imperialism and for their own liberation. When the Bantu in the south and the Berber in the north join their hands and masses rifle and spear with all the other imperialist slaves of Africa, then not only Italy, but France, and England, and Spain and Portugal—all the assassins and exploiters of the African peoples, will have cause to tremble for their empires and to regret the day they aroused the fettered titan.

Therein lies the hope of the Ethiopian people, on whose side we stand together with every honest and conscious working man and woman. Therein, further, is clearly implied our elementary duty. The Washington government has piously and impartially refused to furnish arms to "either side." It is, you see, neutral—that is, it will help neither the heavily armed butcher nor the virtually unarmed victim.

We are not "neutral." Heart and soul we are with the Ethiopian people in their defensive war against the Fascist invader. Heart and soul we are with the Italian masses who have languished for thirteen years in the great prison which the Fascist despots have erected, and from which they are now being conscripted to fight those with whom they have no quarrel, nor can have.

Throughout the length and breadth of the country, in every labor organization, let the voice of the American masses be heard in unmeasured condemnation of the cowardly Fascist butchers, in unmistakable solidarity with the courageous battlers against the enslavement of Ethiopia!

A Reply to Liberal Critics of Bolshevism

The Position of the Workers Party on Proletarian Dictatorship and Worker's Democracy in Light of Recent Events

(Continued from last issue)

By A. J. MUSTE

First of all we may observe that while it is true that we do not have a Fascist regime in the U.S. and that it can only be misleading and silly to talk as if we did have, those who in these days are so vociferously proclaiming the joys of life under American democracy as contrasted with the repressions and horrors under "dictatorship whether Fascist or Communist," are unquestionably unrealistic and sentimental in their view of the United States. We know that the ordinary worker and farmer does not have this sense of perfect liberty and profound happiness. Millions of them are free—free to spend their youthful powers in a few years on the chain-gang in the production line in a mass-production factory; free to eke out an existence "in the midst of plenty" by means of a public works job at the Rooseveltian "security wage" of four to twelve dollars per week; free to organize, strike, picket, vote the ticket of their choice and so on, provided they do not mind being kicked out of a job, seeing their families suffer privation, getting dubbed over the head, thrown into jail, possibly shot in the back. Consider that the economic crisis has not reached any such proportions here as in many other countries, that there is here no such daily and hourly peril of invading armies as many nations have to face, that at the moment there is no force which can remotely threaten the continuance of the existing government. Then recall that every edition of every paper brings fresh stories of clubbing, gassing, jailing, shooting, murdering of men and women trying to assert the right to organize and bargain collectively in conservative trade unions. Then ask to what extent civil liberties are a reality, and not merely a tradition or a myth in "democratic" United States. Consider the economic, political and social disabilities under which millions of Negroes labor. Consider the plight of the Jews and of "foreigners" in a nation where economic tension is as yet a far distance from the breaking point.

Freedom and Fascism

It is, furthermore, a fallacy to suppose that we can retain the measure of freedom we now possess, if only we can maintain our economic system based on free enterprise and our political democracy against both Fascism and Communism. It is precisely the attempt to maintain the capitalist system which leads under modern conditions with fatal precision to the resort to Fascism. Capitalism itself, the present ruling class, will—unless the workers and their allies prevent—in the effort to maintain itself destroy every vestige, every pretense of democracy and civil rights, will appeal to the basest racial and national prejudices, will establish an open and brutal dictatorship. Why? Simply because the time when capitalism can maintain profits and at the same time make concessions to the workers, better the standard of living, is past. Now it maintains itself only by taking away even such concessions as it once gave. It must drive the standard of living even lower. But obviously if the masses have any freedom at all, any means for protest and self-expression, any workers or farmers union, party, press—then no matter how peaceful, legal, respectable, meek they may be, they will at some point offer resistance. They will try to fight for mere existence. But this threatens the existence of capitalism. Therefore it wipes out "democracy", smashes every trade union, farmers' organization and political party, degrades the intellectuals, and hounds and destroys minority groups. It is not by maintaining capitalism that we can maintain democracy and escape dictatorship.

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Those who declaim against "red terror" and present imposing lists of its victims and catalogues of its social and psychological effects need also to be reminded over and over again not only of the numerous instances of "white terror" and the abominable excesses of Fascism, but of that most colossal and obscene terror of all—war. War which in its modern form is the natural and inevitable by-product of capitalist-imperialist rivalries, which kills millions of its victims, itself abrogates all civil liberties and makes the individual the puppet of an absolutist state if indeed it does not demoralize him by its reason negation. This is, however, only the negative side of the case. If we could indeed offer the workers, farmers and the professional and technical groups only a choice of terrors in the future, they could hardly be blamed for emulating Hamlet and clinging desperately to those ills they have under so-called democracy rather than flying to evils which they have not yet experienced. The revolutionary internationalist does offer a positive alternative to the masses—an enhance-

The Workers' State

ment of well-being and of freedom. The Workers' State is a dictatorship. As Marxists we believe that and we do not attempt to conceal it. But it is important to understand the sense in which the term is here used, and Marxists have not always been too careful and accurate on this point. So long as there are classes, every government is in essence a dictatorship—of the ruling class over whatever other classes there may be. Whether at a given moment, however, this rule expresses itself as an open and avowed dictatorship, resorts to open and extensive terrorism, etc., depends upon whether this is necessary to the ruling class. The facts are clearly suggested in that sentence of our Declaration of Principles which says: "The political forms of capitalist society (monarchy, democracy, military dictatorship, fascism) are only the means by which the actual dictatorship of the controlling minority expresses itself."

The political expression of the proletarian dictatorship is the Soviet or Workers' State. Workers of all categories—industrial, agricultural, technical, clerical, professional—will be organized on a functional basis into Workers Councils. Through the Councils functioning in a democratic manner, under the control of their membership, the workers will have a much more direct and simple way of sharing in the determination of the policies which affect their well-being than they have under the farcical electoral system which exists in the U. S. today. Furthermore, in a country with the resources and the technical equipment of the U. S. an immediate improvement of the standard of living and relief from insecurity could be provided if the capitalist brakes upon production were released, and this too would have the psychological effect of liberation on the masses now haunted by the spectre of insecurity and enslaved to fear.

Dealing with Enemies

It is true that parasites will be disfranchised in the Workers' State and that repressive measures will be used against those who conspire to overthrow the new regime and bring back the horrors of capitalism, unemployment, war—that is to say, those who want to abolish the dictatorship of the majority over the minority and bring back the dictatorship of the minority over the majority under which we now live. The extent and the character of these repressive measures, and the length of time during which they may be enforced, will depend primarily, as has been repeatedly demonstrated in revolutionary periods, upon the extent to which the new regime may be threatened with destruction from outside and upon the counter-revolutionary movements within. Life was not altogether peaceful and comfortable in the U. S. during and for some time after the Revolutionary War, nor in France during and after the Great French Revolution. It took four years of Civil War in these United States to smash the slaveholding aristocracy of the South, even after a president and congress representing a new class had been elected by parliamentary methods, and there was a considerable interruption of normal activities. It is thus that social change of a fundamental character is effected. The fact is not usually regarded as an argument for setting the clock back—if that could be done. And, in view of all that has been said, we are not among those who raise pious protests or shed crocodile tears when the Soviet Union takes whatever measures may be necessary against the class enemies, internal

Bureaucratic Regime

What causes us to protest and shudder—what constitutes indeed a tragic menace to the well-being of the masses in the modern world, to the entire future of humanity—is not the proletarian dictatorship, nor the mistakes and excesses which it may have committed, nor the dominant role of the revolutionary party in the Workers' State. So long as classes exist, government will be in essence dictatorship. Human beings are nowhere infallible. Without a disciplined, devoted, heroic party of the vanguard elements the accomplishment of the modern revolutionary task is inconceivable.

The crime of the Stalin regime is that it has abandoned and destroyed the organization principle on which the revolutionary party must be built and thus has corrupted the party and transformed the proletarian dictatorship into a caricature of workers' democracy. No greater crime than this can be committed for it means the corruption of those instrumentalities by which alone the masses can be liberated and a higher stage in human development achieved.

Democratic Centralism

Democratic centralism is the organization principle of the Leninist party. Precisely because there must be the severest discipline in action and because the Party takes upon itself the role of leadership of the workers in the greatest crises, its own inner life must be free, democratic, vigorous. The clearest, straightest Marxian thinking is required; but that involves the right of criticism; and that cannot exist where there is repression.

A healthy revolutionary party which is based on democratic centralism will seek to establish its leadership over the mass organizations of the workers whether before, during or after the revolution, not by cheap political trickery, not by forced and mechanical processes, not by clever yet futile attempts to "capture" organizations, but by what may be rightly characterized as democratic methods. It gains influence in the unions e.g. by the correctness of the policies which its members set forth, by the persuasiveness with which they argue for them, by their devotion to the day to day work of the organization, by the sacrificial and heroic role they are prepared to play in strikes and similar crises. It is in substantially the same manner that a revolutionary party with a democratic inner regime gains and maintains its influence over the mass organizations, the Soviets or Workers Councils, once the workers and their allies have taken power.

Now a vanguard party of this character is constantly subject to check by the mass organizations. It must essentially and most of the time actually serve their needs or it will be rejected. On the other hand, it can afford, indeed it will ordinarily encourage a democratic life in, will seek to educate, the mass organizations because it is well aware that in the long run it is precisely as they are enlightened that the masses will follow them. Exploiters of the masses such as the capitalists today, will do all in their power to keep them ignorant and confused. A Leninist revolutionary party will do just the opposite. Thus our Declaration of Principles can assure the masses in the U. S. that the workers' state does not mean repression, the curtailment of democratic rights for them but, while it functions as a dictatorship against enemies who may want to restore capitalism, will assure and continually extend far more democratic rights to the masses than ever accorded to them under capitalism.

Our Position

We of the Workers Party thus have the answer, as neither the hypocritical reactionary defenders of "American constitutional liberties," nor the liberals of various shades, nor the social-democrats, nor the Stalinists have, to the question of freedom in the modern world. The alternatives before the workers and farmers and before those artists and professionals who are concerned about freedom to create and express are not limited to Fascism and the corrupt version of the proletarian dictatorship which Stalin offers, and the sham democracy which obtains in some countries today under capitalism, but which cannot be maintained if capitalism remains. There is the other alternative of an uncorrupted and genuine workers' democracy under the leadership of a revolutionary party organized under the principle of democratic centralism and based upon revolutionary internationalism. The road to genuine democracy is not away from, but back to Marxism and Leninism; not away from but back to revolutionary internationalism; not away from but through the proletarian dictatorship, i.e. workers' democracy. This is the road to which the masses oppressed in varying degrees under Fascism and capitalist "democracy" are directed by the parties of the Fourth International. In pursuing this course we are also the sole effective champions of humanity, of any idealism worthy of the name in the modern world, and of world peace. For a social order in which human dignity can be maintained and not constantly trampled in the mire, in which the creative energies of mankind can express themselves and not be endlessly suppressed and thwarted, is possible only if capitalism is destroyed, and this deliverance can come only as the result of victory of the workers in a revolutionary struggle.

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