Socialist Propaganda League

THE dominant feature of the Socialist Movement in Europe today is the organization of the revolutionary minority into definite groups. In Germany there has been an actual split, and the organization of an Independent Social-Democratic Party. In France the minorty has just organized a sort of Council of Socialist Safety, and is daily becoming more aggressive and definite in its purposes. This tendency prevails equally in the other nations. And everywhere the principles and tactics of the Left Wing are becoming ascendant in the opposition.

The Socialist Movement of the United States has it within its power to make or break the new forces of Socialist reconstruction now active throughout the world. This reconstruction is the historic task of the revolutionary minority, and accordingly it becomes the task of the minority in our movement to organize for definite action.

Never was a finer opportunity offered. The membership of the Party is revolutionary, and has compelled the intelligent and unscrupulous portion of our bureaucracy to adapt themselves to the situation in order to maintain their ascendancy. But the bureaucracy has been badly shaken. Some of its members are being expelled, others are resigning, and the remainder are trying to assume the garb of the lion, while surreptitiously pursuing their opportunistic tactics. The membership is awake, assertive, aggressive. One great struggle, and the party and its future is ours.

In the meanwhile, the minority must organize and act. The Socialist Propaganda League offers the opportunity and the means.

The Socialist Propaganda League is an organization of revolutionary, international Socialism. It is the American expression of the Left Wing in Europe. Its principles are the fundamental principles of Socialism, its tactics the fundamental tactics of revolutionary Socialism adapted to the era of Imperialistic Capitalism.

Ours is not a temporary task. It isn't simply an expression of the requirements of Socialist action during war. War is the continuation of peace, and peace is the continuation of war. The Socialist Movement must be prepared to meet the test of peace equally with the test of war. Our program, accordingly, is a general, comprehensive program for a thorough reconstruction of the movement.

The Socialist Propaganda League, wherever it is, is driving the party on toward aggressive action. It is organizing the minority. It is striking hands across the seas with our revolutionary Comrades.

Our program arises out of the actual conditions of contemporary life, it is not the fine-spun web of a dreamer's imagination.

This program bases itself solidly on the repudiation of all wars waged under the conditions of Imperialistic Capitalism, the necessity for relentlessly waging the class struggle equally during war and peace, and under any and all conditions, international solidarity as the indispensable means of fighting Imperialism and expressing proletarian interests, and the necessity of basing the whole activity of the Socialist Working Class movement upon economic mass action.

The Socialist Party is in chaos. The whole future future of Socialism in this country is in danger. Only the action of the minority can shape events for progress and achievement.

The Socialist Propaganda League has twenty branches in twelve different states. It is growing. Are you a member? If not, join immediately! If you know of five or more comrades who wish to organize a branch get in touch with the Secretary, who will give you full information.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTERS

By JEANNETTE D. PEARL

THE living-room of the Kaufman family was drab. So much was crowded into it to serve the requirements of living-room, dining-room, kitchen and sometimes bedroom, that one felt cramped, though the room was not small.

At a square table between the two windows, Edith and Sammy sat doing their lessons. Mr. Kaufman, pipe in mouth, lay stretched on the sofa, reading the evening paper, while opposite, at the sink, Mrs. Kaufman and her eldest daughter, Lena, were washing the supper dishes.

A tea-kettle steamed on the stove. The grease of dishes, the lingering pungency of cooked food, coal gas and tobacco smoke, mingled and imparted to the air a heaviness through which struggled a faint odor of perfumed talcum powder.

In the center of the room, below the gas light, pretty Beatrice, clad in a white starched petticoat, stood with a hot curling iron waiving her hair. She was humming softly, making graceful little steps, in anticipation of the dance. Joyous pride gleamed on the girl's face and her glances fondly caressed her shapely limbs, clad in pink artificial silk stockings. Some day they would be real silk, she felt it and the gladness of it made her steps more lively and her song more loud.

"Shut up," Mr. Kaufman wearily grunted. "All day long I have the grinding machines, and at night it is squeaching and prancing. Can't you keep still for a moment?"

"She can afford to be happy," Mrs. Kaufman mocked wearily. "She has a new dress and silk stockings. What more does she need?"

"I work for it," Beatrice impetuously retorted.

"Shut up, shut up. It will be better. She works for it," her mother sneered. "We don't work? Lena doesn't work?"

"I want to dress the same as other girls. I am not an old maid!" Beatrice announced with the pride of her eighteen years, eyeing her older sister disparagingly.

Mrs. Kaufman pushed forward, with an arm upraised, ready to strike her. But Beatrice quickly skipped over to the corner.

"Don't mama," Lena pleaded, pulling her mother's apron. "Leave her alone. It does no good."

"No one dast say a word against Lena," Beatrice taunted.

"Just you call her old maid again," Mrs. Kaufman threatened, all flushed. Her weariness gone, stung into a mood of aggression, she was ready to satisfy it, to appease and relieve her pent-up feelings.

As Lena checked her, Mrs. Kafuman calmed down. "A nineteen-year-old girl an old maid," she mumbled, more to reassure herself than her giddy daughter.

"I earn more than Lena does," Beatrice proudly flaunted.

"All the good it does! Of the ten dollars you give, you take back nine. A girl earning fifteen dollars a week—why, you could make us all happy!"

"Now, mama, you know I don't take back nine, and I don't get fifteen. You know very well I only get ten," Beatrice protested very loudly. In reality Beatrice got twelve. Her mother suspected it was thirteen, but for the purpose of reproach, she made it fifteen.

Beatrice was not exactly a selfish girl, just thoughtless. And because she was thoughtless, her austere surroundings left no harsh imprints upon her pretty face, smooth and soft, with a pallor enhancing refinement.

She belonged to a species of beauty that bloom radiantly until their early twenties, then wither and fade. Their emotions are too fleeting, too unstable, not character forming; they make no imprints and leave no traces. For a little while youth distils its fragrance, then the face is left blank, vacant, and soon time hurries up to fill in the lines with ennui, grossness, or both. Their charm is purely physical. And the life-duration of the purely physical is brief.

Mrs. Kaufman thrilled at her daughter's beauty, but turned away to conceal her pleasure, unwilling to lend encouragement to the girl's vanity. Secretly she was proud for she admired style. If only she could have it for all of them!

"Lena dear, you should get yourself such a dress," the mother urged, with her eyes fondly on the dress Beatrice had taken off and spread upon a chair.

"I don't need it mama, I don't go to balls."

"Always in the house with books—you are no longer a school girl. You should consider the future." The future to Mrs. Kaufman was marriage. How she longed for Lena to marry! All her thought, all her hope, was centered toward that end.

Presently Mr. Kaufman and the two younger children left for the movies. Lena sat reading. Mrs. Kaufman was mending and bickering with Beatrice, who was applying vanishing cream to her face, throat and arms.

"I'm ashamed. What kind of a mother will the neighbors think me? To allow a young girl out night after night, with such company," Mrs. Kaufman ended contemptuously.

"I was only out twice this week," Beatrice put in, "and I'm going out with Harry Cohen to-night."

"I believe that! Harry Cohen wouldn't come here for you?"

"O, we have such a beautiful home, I must bring him in at supper time when it is lovelier than ever. I have no home—I can't invite friends." Beatrice began crying. Her tears happily gave her respite. She was really going out with Frank Healey, but rather than be tormented with her mother's nagging, she found it easier to lie. Her parents objected to Frank because he was a Christian. They made him out a pretty black sheep, who spent his money faster than he made it and had nothing to show for it.

Somehow Beatrice stood in awe of her mother. She had often tried to draw nearer, to confide in her, but felt herself chilled. "I guess it's because mama's ideas are old-fashioned," she told herself, and carried her confidences to Lena. Her life flowed so rapidly, she wanted guidance, steadying, and felt the need of throwing off ballast.

Mrs. Kaufman and Lena were remarkably alike. The mother had the more regular features. "She must have been beautiful—when young," people said of her. But drudgery and grief had drawn a network of fine lines over her face and made it rigid. Only the large suffering eyes moved, and moved swiftly. She saw, but the hand was palsied. She had never been trained, never educated, and her great capacities had shriveled up and left her impotent.

Lena's face was plastic, sensitive, an inarticulate current flowing in crests and waves. Her emotions were in the process of refining, like ore in a metallurgical furnace, a molten mass, seething, boiling, sending forth noxious gases, creating and releasing pressure, that registered on her face at times a lethargic gloom, harrassed, strained, indifferent, and at other times the glow of ecstasy. Lena possessed that formative fervor which, if not wrenched awry, evolves, and the plain face of youth ripens into the radiant beauty of maturity.

Instinctively Mrs. Kaufman sensed that beauty in Lena and wished to nourish and preserve it. To her Lena was a delicate flower which must speedily be transplanted to healthier soil, lest she wither. And the mother strained every nerve to influence her daughter into making an advantageous marriage.

"Annie, next door, is engaged," Mrs. Kaufman ventured, furtively glancing at Lena.

"Yes," Lena nodded, continuing reading.

"She didn't do so well," Mrs. Kaufman acknowledged, smiling sadly, with pathetic pride, as she glanced at her two daughters, both of whom she felt confident could do so much better.

"Annie is sensible. What's the use of waiting? When a girl works in a factory, she can't afford to be too particular, and wait, and wait. The factory eats into a girl's health and youth, and leaves her a worked out, withered, lonely thing. It's the same in the store," Mrs. Kaufman concluded, sighing significantly, for Lena was a saleswoman.

Lena was silent. So the mother resolved upon a more direct approach. "Who should you wait?" she pleaded coaxingly. "You are no longer a child. It isn't as if you had rich parents. You have nothing, only your youth; and when that is gone what will become of you? A mother cannot live forever. You will be alone, desolate, in a boarding house, among strangers. A woman cannot work all her life like a man. It's the poorhouse that stares her in the face. O, I might as well talk to the wall," Mrs. Kaufman wailed despairingly.

"I'm listening, mama, I'm listening, but I've heard this before."

"You are a foolish girl with all your learning. When a man comes begging to make you happy—and such a man as Mr. Isaacs, so respectable, he could give you such a beautiful home—ease—you could learn to play the piano—you could. O, he is such a grand man."

"But I don't love him, mama."

"Don't love him? Poor people have no business with love. You'll marry love, and what will you have? Burdens that'll wear you out before your time."

"It isn't written anywhere that I must marry." The mother failed to see Lena's wistfulness, for she did not know of the love-tragedy in her daughter's life.

"A fine future you'll have before you slaving away. It isn't as if I could give you anything. I have nothing, nothing," she said despairingly. "I'm old—nearly fifty—my life is almost over; perhaps I'll drag on another few years. I have nothing to live for. Your father and I—we are strangers; from that vain Beatrice I can hope for nothing—and the others are just as grasping. It's you—you I live for. If you were provided for, I could die in peace. I know you would look after the others," she added parenthetically. The loving concern concentrated upon Lena was for the future benefit of the rest. With Lena provided for, there would be no need of anguish as to their fate. But the children resented this concern and preference for Lena.

"It's Lena, Lena, Lena; you care more for her little finger than——" Beatrice was invariably interrupted with, "Why shouldn't I? Who helps me if not Lena? Would any of you, of your own accord, as much as put a finger in cold water for me? And when I do get you to help, I must first eat my heart out, and then it's all done wrong."

Now the mother was all wrought up over this subject of marriage, and it grieved her to relinquish it altogether. She resolved to pursue it indirectly. "You ought to get yourself a nice dress," she urged, with the vision of Lena appearing to advantage in the eyes of Mr. Isaacs.

"We have not the money," Lena answered, annoyed and anxious to drop the matter. She was struggling hard to conceal her secret pain which made her more moody and reserved when marriage was the subject.

"We'll get the money. Perhaps the lady," the mother indicated Beatrice with a courtly wave of the hand, "will condescend to wait a bit with her things, so you could get yourself something decent to wear."

"She could wear my things," Beatrice offered. "I don't stop her."

"No," Lena mocked. "Then you would have good excuse for slopping out my things, too, the same as you do yours."

Mrs. Kaufman paid no heed to the interruption. With her eyes on Lena, she said, suggestively, hopefully, "You ought to ask for a raise."

Again Irma made no reply. What could a raise mean—a few thing more! Meanwhile the days were slipping fast and left her standing still, harnessed to crushing, stultifying routine. And ahead stretched a barren plain. All her life she had given in. She resented it now. A feeling of hostility surged within her and mentally she began to upbraid her mother. Then as if through a mist, the hardships her mother had endured loomed up. "Poor little mama!" she reflected sorrowfully, "poor little mama!" Her throat contracted painfully and she grew warm with sympathy. Then the tension tightened, her temper rose fell, and again she became retrospective. Nineteen years old, and what had she accomplished? What could she accomplish, when the will and need of others placed further obstacles in her path?

Mrs. Kaufman noted on Lena's face that she had failed of her purpose. "Some children are a joy and a pleasure to parents; mine give me only sorrow and pain. I am counted as nothing, nothing—who cares what the old woman thinks or says? Each one does as she pleases. Why, even little Sammy, who only a little while ago was still a suckling, is already his own boss and wants his own way. A mother is only for trouble," she lamented bitterly.

"You don't appreciate us," Beatrice's voice rang out. "Other mothers would only be too happy with such children," and she proudly drew herself up for approval. She was ready to depart and assumed a conciliating attitude, desirous of staving off a fresh argument. For that reason she had forced herself to silence during her mother's altercation with Lena.

"Good-bye, I'll be home twelve o'clock sure," Beatrice solemnly assured her mother, kissing Lena a sly, mirthful wink.

Mrs. Kaufman received the announcement very skeptically and threatened to lock the door at twelve o'clock.

"If you don't leave the door open, Harry will climb through the transom and open it for me," Beatrice coyly threw out, with coquettishness that hungered for attention.

She skipped out undaunted, confident of getting it elsewhere, and pleased with herself for having "put it over" so neatly this time.

II

Beatrice hurried to the hall, where she met Frank.

"Waiting long?" she pouted, arching her pretty neck and shutting her eyes.

"No." (His arm around her wait.) They ascended the stairs, boisterously greeted by waiting friends. Frank was popular. First in every game, he carried off his victories with that easy grace of sportsmanship that is both the glory and envy of boon companionship.

A girl friend called Beatrice and she emerged from the group smiling, with extended arms artfully setting off her figure. They kissed affectionately and proceeded to whisper earnestly. Their seriousness was interrupted by splurts of giggling which soon burst with cumulative force in loud, uncontrollable laughter.

"Come on," Frank beckoned Beatrice, eager for the dance. And they tripped away, merry, carefree, excited with close passionate body contact and stealthy caresses.

Later in the evening Harry Cohen came in and asked Beatrice to reserve him a dance.

"You're not going to dance with Harry," Frank urged, firmly drawing Beatrice aside, "and you're not going to go out with him," he warned.

"Now you are beginning again. I tell you I was not out with him." Her eyes began filling with tears, so he believed her.

"You won't dance with Harry," he pleaded lovingly, pressing her hand.

"Who said so?" she teased, her face again all smiles. "I'll dance with whom I please," she said playfully.

"No, you shall not," he insisted. They began to wrangle banteringly. Seizing her hands with the right of proprietorship, he told her she was his girl.

She shook her head negatively.

"You'll be all right," he said confidently, "when I make enough money." He eyed her fondly with the pride of anticipated conquest.

"I told you before, Frank, I won't marry a Christian." Their difference in faith was her legitimate excuse. But subconsciously she entertained a mistrust of his gambling spirit. She could not rely upon him. She felt he would never have anything.

"Just you let me make good," he boasted. "You love me, don't you, kid?" he pleadingly whispered.

He was assured by her soft purring look, which entered his body, thrilling and disarming him. He sat trembling, his knees pressed against her, his drooping eyes swimming in passion as he felt himself caught in the undertow of her charms.

"Beatrice," he gasped, grasping her hands, "let us two not fool ourselves." He was like one overcome by heat. His body hung limp and only the fire in his eyes glowed as he sought to hem her in with his look.

"What do you mean?" she asked dubiously, feigning ignorance.

"You know what I mean?" he implored in a tone admitting of no dissimulation.

She watched him with apparent calmness, her body aquiver with longing and restraint, proud of having inspired such passion in him. For a second she wavered speechless, but soon recovered herself. She knew that when a girl yields to her lover, she jeopardizes her chance of marriage. And for a favorable marriage, virginity is an asset.

She drew herself up. "You should not speak like that to a good girl," she admonished.

There was a hesitancy in her voice in which Frank detected a mental reservation. It was Harry—he was sure of it—she was comparing him with Harry. "You are not going to dance with that dirty Jew," he exploded.

"You're filthy dirty yourself," Beatrice answered, coming down upon him with all the fire of her being. He was insulting her, her people, and now she realized the insult of his previous proposal and she was furious. She hated him for it, and hated him for the hold he had on her and because he stood in her way. If not for him, she could be going with Harry. And she stood there cutting him relentlessly with her sharp tongue, for her loss, for his insults and for the love she bore him.

She would not let him apologize. Demanding her wardrobe check, she went to Harry Cohen asking him to see her home.

"I had a fight with Frank," she told him, her face white with visible tension. "He wouldn't let me dance with you," she said indignantly, discreetly concealing the immediate cause of the rupture, thereby making obvious to Harry how much he was being preferred, and this preferment delighted Harry.

Beatrice did prefer Harry—socially. She felt a faith, a security, in that he could be depended upon to take care of her fittingly.

He tucked her in, in his waiting runabout, and drove her off with the delight of a school boy, talking incessantly all the way. He was all flustered, eager to make an impression, while Beatrice for the most part sat in silence, absorbed with her own thoughts and conflicting emotions. Yet, now and then she accompanied his laughter.

A couple in a passing auto stopped them for direction, which Harry gave with voluminous detail, acknowledging their thanks with a bow and a loud, "You're welcome." Frank would have tipped his hat, flashed through Beatrice's mind.

When Harry had stopped his car, he slipped his arm about Beatrice, and she accepted his embrace, but now that he tried to kiss her, she turned away her head. She felt no tenderness toward him, and was anxious not to have him think that she allowed liberties. Her reserve was gratifying to him, it deadened her modesty.

"I wish I had another car, then I'd show you speed," he boasted as a large touring car sped by them. "But this is all right for a batch," he chuckled. "It's when a fellow has some one—then it's a nice big car he wants. Some car I'll get my little girl, and no Ford, either," he assured Beatrice, hugging her closely.

"I'll get a nice little house in Jersey when I get my new car," he asserted with pride, watching her for the anticipated response. But Beatrice showed no emotion. Frank would have said "her car," she reflected.

"Don't you like Jersey?" he questioned with concern.

"Not much," she drawled, lowering her head. "I like the Bronx."

He watched admiringly her shyness. "Any place my little girl likes suits me."

They had stopped at her door and were sitting and talking in the machine. Harry felt nervous and distressed. He did not quite know how to formulate his question. "You'll marry me," he finally ejected, clutching her to him and stopping her answer with passionate kissing.

Beatrice was so carried away by a transport of joy, she had to restrain herself, not to let him think her an easy catch. She accepted him hesitatingly.

III.

Leaving Harry, Beatrice ran up the stairs and bounced into her mother's room with such noisy rapture that her mother awoke with a start.

"I'm engaged to——" Her joy overpowering her, she burst into tears.

The mother sprang out of bed, trembling with alarm which turned to joy when Beatrice sobbed out: "Harry Cohen."

The mother caught and pressed her daughter to her, hugging and kissing her. Such a match was more than Mrs. Kaufman ever hoped for. How proud she felt, and ashamed of her former distrust. She was indeed a fortunate mother, she told herself to have such children. If only Lena would become engaged!

Lena heard the news, but was like one chained, and unable to move from her bed. When Beatrice, with tears of joy, rushed in to be congratulated by her sister, the two girls locked in embrace wept copiously.

"I'll make you all happy," Beatrice promised amidst her tears.

How that promise cut Lena! All she could bring her family was shame and misfortune. What would they say? If they knew. . . .

All the incidents leading up to her shame flashed before Lena like scenes on a moving picture screen. Two years previously, at a lecture, Lena had met Arthur. He was a young insurance agent, working part of the time while studying in preparation for a literary career. He had come into her life, enriching it, opening up to her a new world of books and ideas. Their friendship had been sweet, with walks in the park, discussing, dreaming, planning. And he loved her, he who was to grasp the world to set it free, she helping. And when she saw him swept away by his overpowering passion for her, which interfered with his studies, she felt that by denying him she was hindering his life's work. She was jealous of his time, anxious to conserve every minute of it for what she considered his great tasks. She yielded to her lover to satisfy her sympathies.

And he fed without satiety. There was no glow, no fire in her responses, chilled with the consciousness of wrong-doing. Her passiveness, harrassing and checking his raging, unsatisfied passions, irritated and aroused in him a crudeness sometimes brutal. In the flush of her new experience, Lena was unconscious of this coarseness. But later, misunderstandings arising between them, it stalked forth, sickening her, and this feeling further accentuated their discord. She saw him grow restless, idle, smoking incessantly, sliding down from the heights to which her fancy had raised him. And it tore into her flesh. She began to despair of his ever doing things. His vacillating nature disturbed her. She could not understand that his temperament did not flow with continuous uniformity like hers; but that his intense energy blazed and smouldered, alternately, dampened by the least irritation through undeveloped control. She accused him of being hard, because his surface had congealed. He had shut her out from his inner struggles and she couldn't penetrate to see the turmoil within him. All she saw was his irritability and his vaccilation.

He ceased to be her ideal. And with that cessation, her feelings began to wane. It began to dawn upon her that she had sacrificed herself to no purpose. She lay awake of nights, crying bitterly, with that agony of despair known only to youth. There were tears for the smart of her wounds, and tears for the tears she shed.

The day's work, with its necessary dissimulations, grew hateful to her and she longed for night and darkness. Alone in bed, for Beatrice usually came in late, the warmth of her body all huddled up, lessened the chill of her heart. And tears, the safety valve of the feminine mechanism, eased the pressure.

She saw herself depraved, without honor, and lamented her loss. In truth, she was not mourning her virginity, but her shattered ideals; her own failure to influence her lover's life. But to her the real cause was vague. Disheartened and disillusioned, her feelings waning, she clung to, and found sustenance in, morality. She began to struggle with herself to give him up, to become good. Misgivings assailed her. Her inherited morality showed her the futility of her desire. Virginity, she had been taught, was like china; when broken, the shattered fragments may be pieced together again, but the seams show forever. Her conduct was irreparable. How she longed to be good!

[illegible] to be saved by it. She would swallow her pride and ask Arthur to marry her.

With this resolve, she had rushed, long before their meeting hour, to the park, their usual rendezvous. Her home offered no privacy, and in the park Lena escaped her mother's scathing tongue.

When Arthur sauntered up toward her in the park, Lena ran to meet him.

"You are not angry?" she asked with concern, noticing his gloom.

"No," he drawled, "tired," and extended his hand indifferently.

"Why were you not here last night?" she asked eagerly.

"I had work." She detected a tinge of color creeping over his face. He was lying. He had lied before!

"Arthur"—she paused—"we can not go on like this." He acquiesced.

"What do you propose to do?" He shrugged his shoulders.

He did not know. But she—she knew. "We can get married." The blood rushed to her face. The suggestion shot from her with terrific force and left her breathless, exhausted. She saw him wince and began to eye him with hostility.

He removed his hat, and wiped his forehead. "I would never surrender my freedom," he told her. "Family obligations—would mean the end of my career—I would have to renounce my art, or commercialize it. Sell my soul—for what it would bring," he concluded with scorn.

A warm flush coursed through Lena's body, impelling her toward him. She was inspired by his lofty purpose and affected by his helplessness. Her impulse was to throw her arms about him. But somehow those arms hung heavy and sagged in her lap.

"I made you no promises, . . . we don't owe each other anything, . . . I no longer love you, . . . but we can still be friends."

As when one is shot, Lena felt a sting, but not as yet the pain. She rose dazed, stared at him, and walked away rigid. . . .

The memory of how she had wandered about the streets that night until midnight, reaching home all worn out, sick of every thing, chilled her so that the goose-flesh spread over her body and she drew the bedcovers closer about her. She scarcely heard Beatrice, who sat on the edge of the bed, prattling happily, while lazily undressing.

The break with Arthur had happened several months ago, and Lena was still nursing her wounds, bleeding afresh with each outward contact.

Contemplating her sister's new position, Lena felt herself a bad woman indeed. Beatrice was soon to be an honored wife. What an abyss between them!

"Beatrice," Lena asked with deep concern, "do you really love Harry?"

"Sure," Beatrice answered with easy confidence. "I'll love him all right, if he'll be good to me."