Has Socialism a Future?

Tragedy of the Labor Movement

A hundred years have gone by since the publication of "The Communist Manifesto." A hundred years is a second if viewed from the background of the evolution of society. But is it a long time for the man in the street?

If we could put ourselves outside the Socialist movement for a moment, and view that movement from the point of view of a detached spectator, we might be able to surmise the events of the past century and arrive at conclusions which are not colored by our own bias, which do not partake of our hopes and apprehensions. But this is impossible. We, just as all other men, have created our own illusions. We think that the Socialist approach is less biased than any other—but we do not claim that it is unbiased. The only unbiased men are dead men.

But, recognizing this, we can all the same attempt to glance at the last hundred years and try to work out what exactly has happened to what is known as the "Labor Movement." By realizing that one is prejudiced, one can help to partly overcome these prejudices.

DIVISIONS.

There have been four main tendencies in the "Left" during the past century: First in historical importance and in strength of numbers come the Social Democratic and Labor Parties. Secondly, running a close rival, may be counted the Communist Parties which claim 16 million members at present. Thirdly, a group which has been labeled "Anarcho-Syndicalist" have played an important part. They have not, in comparison with the first two groups, been able to attract considerable numbers of workers in the heyday of the I.W.W., of Sorel, and of the Spanish Anarchists. Fourth, numerically very small but with little influence on the theories of the mass parties, we may group what is usually called the "Ultra Left". This would include the Spartacists, the German Communist Workers' Party (K.A.P.D.) and a large number of different groups in Holland, France, Italy, and the U.S.A. (Bosa Luxemburg occupies a special position and cannot be "labeled"). As for ourselves, and our comrades, we occupy a rather peculiar position in the sense that we cannot be fitted in any of the main divisions. As far as our theories are concerned, they are, in the main, be traced back to Marx and Engels, but we have added much that is our own and cannot be found in any of Marx's works. With the Social Democrats of the 1890s we have to common the insistence that the Russian revolution was not a Socialist, but a bourgeois one. Sections of the Social Democrats used to emphasize the importance of Democracy. Especially we can find this in the work of Kautsky. In that respect we agree with his theories. But reject this reformism and false conception of Socialism. With the Communist Parties, and their mates out of a job, the Trotskyists, we have nothing at all in common. While we agree with the Anarchists and the Ultra-Lefts on the importance of "control from below", we reject their socialist tactics and their Utopian belief that all the evils of humanity can be traced to the existence of the State. Some Anarchists, though not all of the more recent ones, have advocated theories very close to Bolshevism and totalitarianism. As for the Ultra Left groups, which are being revived in Europe today, many of them agree with us that the emancipation of the workers, if it is ever to be achieved, must be done by the workers themselves. While some of them fancy themselves as new "vanguards", others agree with us that no small group of clever leaders can drag behind them a mass of enlightened followers and thus achieve Socialism. Most of the Ultra-Lefts reject Parliamentary methods and rely on a mysterious "spontaneity" of the masses. Such tactics can only lead to new illusions and consequent failure.

ROLE OF LP AND CP

As far as success can be measured by numbers, and by the achievement of power, it is the Labor and Communist Parties which have been successful. The Labor Parties believe that the present system can be run for the benefit of the workers without altering radically the basis of the system and abolishing the relations of wage labor and capital. By piecemeal reforms they hope to remove poverty, exploitation and war. Though nominally democratic, they are, when in power, forced to admit more and more undemocratic attitudes, because, in reality, they aim at a "State Capitalist" economy. We shall come back to this point in a moment.

The Communist Parties, on the other hand, while they also support moves to reform capitalism when it suits their "line", fundamentally aim at the overthrow of the present ruling class by whatever means expediency demands. But they do not aim at "Socialism" or "Communism", they do not aim to establish a classless society. Rather do they fancy themselves as the new ruling class of the future. Both their aims and their methods are completely undemocratic and they are little more than the "toothpicks" of the Russian exploiting class.

Wherever Labor Parties have achieved power, they have been incapable of making any essential changes in the capitalist system which would have abolished the status of the workers as an exploited class, a class that has no real control over society. What they have achieved, however, is to hasten the processes towards what we call, for want of a better name, "State Capitalism".

Wherever the Communist Parties have come to power, they have done the same thing, only much more violently. In both cases, the social composition of the ruling classes have been changed, and the means by which it controls the ruled class have been modernized. In both cases, the workers, the ruled classes, have found that they are as badly off, if not worse off, than before. They have been told again and again that their leaders will look after them, that there is no need for them to exercise their own judgment, that everything will be lovely in the garden if only they trust their leaders. And just as regularly, they have listened and have been fooled.

"STATE CAPITALISM"

In fact, it is by now abundantly clear, that the past 100 years have been a century which showed more and more the trend towards State Capitalism. State Capitalism means that the individual capitalist is no longer free to act as he likes. His interests are subordinated to the interests of the capitalist system as a whole. He is told where he can invest, and what, he is told which industries are regarded as essential and which are not. Through the control

"In the long run men hit only what they aim at, therefore though they should fail immediately, they had better aim at something high."—Thoreau
SOCIALIST COMMENT

THE POST-WAR WORLD

The post-war world is a world of private investment by the State, of State-owned banking systems, through the transformation of the State itself into a corporation, of the State taking over the management of labor, of all labor. We are not dealing here with a revival of capitalism, but rather with the creation of a new economic order which is the socialist order.

In this world, the control of the means of production is in the hands of the State, which is itself a corporation. The workers are no longer in control of the factories, the mines, the railroads, the utilities. They are the owners of the corporations, but they are not the managers. The managers are appointed by the State. The workers have no say in the management of their own lives.

This system is not capitalism, but it is a new form of economic organization. It is a socialist system, but it is not a perfect socialist system. It is a transitional system, a step towards a more perfect socialist society.

The socialist system is not perfect because it is still based on the exploitation of workers, even if the exploitation is not as severe as in the capitalist system. The workers are still exploited by the State, which is the main economic power in this society.

In conclusion, the post-war world is a world of private investment by the State, of State-owned banking systems, through the transformation of the State itself into a corporation, of the State taking over the management of labor, of all labor. The workers are no longer in control of the factories, the mines, the railroads, the utilities. They are the owners of the corporations, but they are not the managers. The managers are appointed by the State. The workers have no say in the management of their own lives.

SOCIALIST COMMENT

THE POST-WAR WORLD

We have seen the rise of the capitalistic system, which has brought about the exploitation of workers, the division of labor, and the emergence of a classes. We have also seen the rise of the socialist system, which aims to eliminate these exploitation and create a world of equality and cooperation.

However, we must be careful not to confuse the socialist system with the capitalistic system. The socialist system is not a complete solution to the problems of society, but it is a step towards a better future. We must continue to work towards a world where all workers have equal rights and opportunities, and where the means of production are owned by the people.
died in forced mass migrations, in labour camps, in extermination chambers. It would probably not be overstating to put the war's total of military and non-military deaths at 40,000,000.

And if, we remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where 125,000 were killed by two bombs, we will get a picture of what will be the death toll in the Third World War, towards which we are drifting in a state of hopelessness.

From "Peacemaker" Jan. 48.

THE PRICE WAGE SPIRAL.

Letter in Age 22/1/48.

The plea for increased production made by Sir George Wates is not likely to convince many workers. He states that the present 4% rise would be "owed up" and workers would receive no actual benefit.

In the first place, your leading article admits that the worker is constantly behind in the impossible task of making ends meet with living costs.

Surely this is an admission that what we have is a price-wage spiral, and not vice-versa. The 4% increase is supposed to compensate for price increase which have already taken place. It is therefore not retrospective.

Secondly, President Truman recently stated that U.S. production had risen by 76 per cent as compared with the 1938-39 average. Yet American prices are still soaring and real wages are declining. How, then, can increased production be a remedy for high prices?

Thirdly, a report put out by the American Labor Research Association shows that while real wages of the American workers had risen by 72 per cent in the period from 1909-1946, their relative wages (i.e. real wages divided by their output) had declined by 21 per cent in the same period. In other words, they were the worse they were off in relation to their production.

CORRECTION: A printer's error in the front page quote of the January issue, turned the working class from an "oppressed" into an "oppressor" class.

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