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THE FOURTEEN POINT PROGRAM OF THE
PROVISIONAL INTERNATIONAL CONTACT COMMISSION
FOR THE NEW COMMUNIST (4th) INTERNATIONAL

The signatories submit the following political statement which as briefly as possible presents a Marxian position on the basic questions of the day, separating the forces for the New Communist (4th) International from the reformists, centrists, and ultra-lefts. This document is the statement of the groups forming the Provisional Contact Commission for the New Communist (4th) International. The statement shall be the political axis for the International Bulletin which the Contact Commission issues.

1- IMPERIALISM AND THE TASKS OF THE PROLETARIAT

The decay stage of capitalism is one of wars and revolutions, the violent eruptions of the dying capitalist system revealing the inability of the exploiters to solve their contradictions on the one hand, and on the other hand the inability of the proletariat to fully utilize its powers - because of a lack of leadership - to establish the World Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The basic antagonism of society is between world capitalism and the proletarian revolution (the extension of the October Revolution). The struggles among the imperialists are secondary to this basic antagonism.

2- THE REVOLUTIONARY MARXIAN ORGANIZATION

The Marxian organization, if it is to unify the proletariat in a struggle against capitalism, must remain politically and organizationally independent of all other organizations, including the reformist and centrist parties, such as the Labor Party, Social Democracy, Stalinism and the various centrist organizations. The Revolutionary Marxian Party must be international in program and organization, providing democratic discussion and rights in arriving at all policies, but unified in carrying them out, with the decisions of the higher bodies, up to and including the International Buro, remaining in force until over-ruled by still higher bodies.

3- PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE.

The Marxian Party fights for the day to day demands of the working class, but at no time separates them from the object and aim of the ultimate demands for the overthrow of capitalism. The immediate needs can be solved finally and conclusively only by the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

4- REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM

The Marxian Party fights for the class war against capitalism, and against all imperialist wars, no matter which nation appears

to be the "aggressor" or the "defender"; no matter whether allied or not allied with the Soviet Union; no matter whether bourgeois "democracy" or a fascist state. In an imperialist war Marxists on both sides must work through revolutionary class action for the military defeat of their 'own' army and bourgeoisie during the war time, even if this means the temporary "victory" of the "enemy" bourgeoisie. Only on the basis of the disruption of the bourgeois state and apparatus by the strategy of revolutionary defeatism can the proletariat, under the guidance of its vanguard, turn the imperialist war of the capitalist brigands into a civil war of the proletariat to smash the whole capitalist system.

5- THE U.S.S.R AND THE EXTENSION OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat still remains in the Soviet Union although in warped form, with a rising bourgeois stratum within the bureaucracy, with enormous inroads of private property, and the liquidation of almost all of the proletarian state forms, Soviets, Workers Militias, etc. The Stalinist bureaucracy is not a separate class. Stalinism today is a social reformist force resting on the material base of the October Revolution and its property relations, objectively aiding the restoration of capitalist rule in the S.U. and counter-revolution on a world scale. The theoretical base of Stalinism is the nationalist concept of Socialism in one country. Marxists will support the Soviet Union no matter in what kind of a war the U.S.S.R. is involved. But such support and defense of the U.S.S.R. can be accomplished only on the revolutionary line of the extension of the October Revolution and the re-establishment within the Soviet Union of full workers democracy and the soviets, a political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Soviet Union can be defended only by a struggle against world imperialism and its Stalinist and other agents within the Soviet Union. Revolutionists give their political and material aid within the Soviet Union only to the Marxian 4th Internationalists and to those mass organs, Soviet, Workers Militias, trade unions, etc., in which the masses are able to carry out independent working class action.

6- THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITALISM

The struggle against capitalism can be waged only on the basis of independent working class action in opposition to all forms of class collaboration, parliamentary cretinism and reliance on bourgeois democracy. The struggle for democratic demands is part of the revolutionary struggle against bourgeois democracy itself, as well as all other forms of bourgeois rule (military dictatorship, constitutional monarchy, fascist state, etc.). Fascism can be defeated only by the defeat of capitalism. Marxists participate in parliament only as an auxiliary to independent class action, as a forum to expose bourgeois democracy. Support of bourgeois democracy in any of its varieties including the Peoples Front, so-called Labor governments (MacDonald, Bauer), so-called Workers and Peasants governments

(Bulgaria, China 1925-1927, Thuringia 1923) helps pave the way for fascism. Under certain conditions where the breakdown of the economy creates an armed struggle on the part of certain sections of the bourgeoisie to crush the rising proletarian threat, certain other sections of the bourgeoisie for their own economic and political interests, may be forced into an armed opposition to the decisive section of the bourgeoisie. The working class may use parallel action with such "democratic" sections of the bourgeoisie as did the Bolsheviks in 1917 in the struggle against Kornilov. "March separately and strike together," unlike Popular Frontism, involves political and organizational independence from the bourgeois democratic forces, independent organizations of the proletariat (the Party, Soviets, Workers Militias, etc.); no support material or political to bourgeois democracy, unrelenting exposure of the bourgeois forces in preparation for armed struggle against them as well.

7- THE CHARACTER OF THE STATE

The state is the product of irreconcilable class antagonisms. It is the instrument by which the ruling class suppresses other classes. Under capitalism it is the instrument of the capitalists for the exploitation and subjection of the proletariat and oppressed. This is true of the colonial and semi-colonial countries as well. There can be no "anti-imperialist", "non-capitalist", "workers and peasants" state other than the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. There is no state in between the Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. No matter what the composition of coalition governments under capitalism (POUM, Anarchist, Socialists, left Republicans in Spain, in 1937; Social Democrats and Independent Socialists in Germany in 1918-1919, etc.), they can only serve the interests of the capitalists. Marxists reject all co-operation with or participation in bourgeois ministries.

8- STATE POWER

The basic question in any revolution is that of state power. Marxists fight for the proletarian revolution which will establish the workers rule, and change decisively the mode of production, replacing the profit system with production for use. But this can only be accomplished through the destruction of the bourgeois state and the establishment of the Workers State during the transition period the Dictatorship of the Proletariat against the bourgeoisie and its remnants.

9- THE ROAD TO POWER

To overthrow capitalism it is necessary for the working class to defend itself against the forces of counter-revolution by the use of revolutionary force, by armed insurrection. Without a Party, a vanguard on a Marxist program, a successful revolution is impossible. Every proletarian revolution has a certain period where

side by side with the government of the bourgeoisie there develops the dual power of the proletariat - the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies (Workers Councils). The backbone of dual power and later of the Workers State are the Soviets of democratically elected delegates from the factories, mines, mills, battalions, farms, etc., and the Workers Militias. In colonial countries and economically backward countries, the first phase of the social revolution will be bourgeois democratic (agrarian), but this phase will continue into the proletarian phase. The problems of the bourgeois revolution in the present epoch can be solved only by the proletarian dictatorship. There can be no struggle against imperialism without at the same time actual aid to the colonial peoples for their liberation from the yoke of imperialism. Marxists fight for the right of self-determination for the oppressed minorities and national minorities as an auxiliary slogan. They work to win the proletariat of the colonial countries as workers, for the proletarian revolution. The oppressed agrarian masses, the colonial masses and sections of the urban middle class must be won over to the proletariat as allies in the proletarian revolution. After power is seized in one country, socialism can be built only by utilizing the isolated Soviet State as a center for world revolution. Only by pursuing the program of the extension of the revolution to one or more countries as the "long lever" and the industrialization of the Soviet State as the "short lever", can the single Soviet State continue its growth and development toward Socialism.

10- THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT AND WORKERS DEMOCRACY

The ruling organ of the Workers State is not the Party but the Soviets of delegates from the factories, farms, etc. The Marxian Party is the guiding force of the Soviets. The Soviets are the instruments through which the class exercises its Dictatorship. Workers Democracy under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is exercised through the organs of the state, the trade unions, and democratic centralism within the Marxian Party, including the right of all factions within the Party at all times, within the framework of democratic centralism. Those parties which after the establishment of the Workers State do not accept basic principles must be suppressed. However, certain parties, groups or factions which in the first period of the Workers State accept its foundation principles will continue to exist with full freedom of expression within the bounds of the new society until they are by a natural process merged with the Marxist Party, or until their policies drive them into fundamental opposition with the new society, at which point they must be suppressed.

11- THE CONTRADICTIONS OF CAPITALISM

The fundamental contradiction of capitalism is the contradiction between socialized production and capitalist individual appropriation. Having been deprived of the ownership of the means of

production, the proletariat owning nothing but its labor power, is forced to sell that labor power at its exchange value. This value is less than the value of the commodities produced by the labor of the proletariat. The difference between the value of labor power and the value of the commodities produced by use of that labor power is surplus value. This surplus value is the basis of all capitalist accumulation.

12- THE NEW COMMUNIST (4th) INTERNATIONAL

The establishment of the New Communist (4th) International is the basic need of the proletariat today. The 2nd and 3rd Internationals are parties of social patriotism, of betrayal. The road to the New Communist International cannot be achieved on the basis of organic unity of these two internationals. Organic unity on an international scale is excluded because the 2nd International is a social reformist force resting on the bourgeois national states, while the 3rd International is a social reformist force resting on a warped Workers State. Organic unity of parties of these two internationals would only further enmesh the proletariat in the clutches of the bourgeoisie. The Fourth Communist International must be built on the line of independent action in the class struggle, on an anti-capitalist, pro-communist orientation. The 4th International cannot be built on the line of unification with the left centrist groups on a "minimum" program. Revolutionary unity of the Marxists in the New Communist (4th) International can be achieved only by the political and organizational separation from the reformist and centrist organizations - the 2nd and 3rd Internationals, Trotskyites, Brandlerites, London Bureau, etc., and by carrying out the Marxian line in the class struggle against world imperialism and its agents in the workers' ranks. The "Fourth International" established in an adventurist way by the Trotskyites is a new centrist international built on a centrist program slightly to the left of the IAG. The Fourth MARXIST International, the New Communist (4th) International, is still to be built. Centrist organizations cannot be reformed. Their membership can be won over to Marxism only by a rejection of the centrist organization's whole past course, a purging of its leadership, a re-education of its membership, and a radical reconstruction of its structure and program. Unification is sometimes permissible with a centrist force moving to the left, but only on the basis of a Marxian program and as an auxiliary to the general line of the Marxists for building the revolutionary Marxian Party.

13- COMMUNISM

The goal of the Marxists is the establishment of a world Communist Society with the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

14- MARXISM

The New Revolutionary World Party must be built on the principles of Marxism. Revolutionary Marxism represents the interests of the international proletariat as a whole, organizing independent class action of the working class, unifying its struggles on a national and an international scale, thereby placing the proletariat at the head of all the oppressed masses against imperialism. Its aim is the forceful overthrow of the capitalist system and the building of a socialist society.

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The fourteen points are republished today, in the midst of the imperialist war and the growth of revolutionary tendencies, as a basis for further consolidation of the revolutionary Marxists.

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THE ROLE OF RELIGION
IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE

The recent Vatican-inspired visit of "Father" Orlemanski to Stalin, taken in conjunction with the far reaching concessions of the Stalinist bureaucracy to the old Orthodox Church, helps to focus attention on the whole question of the relation of religion to the struggle of classes. In order to properly consider this, it becomes necessary not just to look empirically at one or two manifestations of the relationship, but to consider the origin and development of religion.

ORIGIN OF RELIGION

Let us first define religion. What is it that is common to such diverse forms as Christianity, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Brahmanism, the religions of ancient Greece and Rome, animism, deism, modern Unitarianism? The belief in another world than that perceptible by the senses, in a god or gods of some sort, anthropomorphic in some religions, very attenuated in others, and the belief in at least the possibility of an immortal soul. Now just what gave rise to these beliefs? In the latter part of the last century such people as Robert Ingersoll and others of the sort attempted to explain the origin of religion essentially by the guile of the priests and the gullibility of the masses. According to these "professional atheists" as Engels called them; it was just a plain case of ignorance and stupidity. But this easy theory neither explains the absence of religion among primitive men for thousands of years, nor the presence of religion in formally highly cultured people such as James Jeans or Albert Einstein.

As in all questions the solution of the origin and development of religion lies in actually tracing the history of the thing with relation to its environment. In one of the most fascinating works of anthropology extant Sir James Frazer in "The Golden Bough" conclusively establishes that before religion there was magic. In the very beginning the practically simian man had all his efforts absorbed by the direct struggle for living. In that period, which has long since passed away all over the earth, we may legitimately surmise that there was neither magic nor religion. Certainly there was not the latter. Even today among certain peoples in Africa, and the bushmen of Australia religion is unknown.

Magic differed from religion in two ways. First, magic is divorced from the concept of a personal deity or deities based upon the dead slavemasters, etc. Second, it is based upon the following out of certain superstitious imitation of natural processes, instead of supplication and prayer to a god. It reflects the great dominance of nature over man in the first place, and the absence of classes in the second.

Religion really makes its first definite appearance at the time of the patriarchy. Primitive society was not divided into economic classes. There was neither state nor religion nor monogamy. Although anthropologists differ as to the exact form of relation between sexes there is practical unanimity to the effect that the organization of the societies of the time was in the form of gentes as set forth by Morgan in "Ancient Society" and Engels in "The Origin of the Family, Etc.". Under this arrangement the women, the mothers (hence the term "matriarchy") although not possessing any state power did enjoy a great amount of respect for two reasons. The first was that they were the only sure parents of the children of the tribe. The second was that they had control over the permanent articles of the tribe, the houses and housing appurtenances.

With the rise of cattle raising the situation changed. This was the function of the men. This represented wealth that far surpassed the wealth controlled by the women of the tribe. Among every primitive people a revolution occurred in which the matriarchy was superseded by the patriarchy, polygamy by monogamy (only for the women), the tracing of descent through the mother by the tracing of descent through the father. It is precisely at this period that we find the first records of religion. Let us just take one people, the Greeks. In Hesiod, in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, we find traces of this overturn in the real world mirrored in the mythology of the overthrow of the female deities by the male in the imaginary world.

Before further tracing the development of religion, let us first survey the respective theories of Cunow and Bucharin with regard to the very origin of religion. Cunow, a right-wing Social Democrat, advanced the theory that religion was due to the ignorance of man of the nature of dreams, etc. According to this theory religion arose independently of the division of men into classes. In "Historical Materialism" Bucharin aptly pointed out that such a theory does not and can not account for the absence of religion among primitive man for a long period. Bucharin pointed out that, although it is true that the germs of religion were present in the furthest primitive times, religion only appeared when the clans began to break up into classes. The patriarch of the tribe, when dead, became a minor god for the people of that tribe. This was a reflection of his superior position in actual economic-social life. Then, and only then, did such phenomena as dreams assume importance. The savage or the barbarian was unable to explain dreams except by a hypothesis of "a little man inside" who got out of the big real man either in sleep or in death. The development of religion proceeded side by side with the development of the state, arising at the same period.

POLYTHEISM AND HENOTHEISM

Further substantiating the materialistic interpretation of the history of religion is the form assumed by religion at the time. Mirroring the social structure in the real world we find polytheism or the recognized existence of many gods within each national group. See in this connection the many gods and goddesses of Egypt, Greece, Rome, India, etc. This came about mainly through adoption. As the separated territorial groups, each with its own god or goddess, merged into a higher territorial and social group, the deities were also merged. This was particularly the case in Rome which allowed the placing of practically any god into the collection in the imperial city.

Then there took place a further development, henotheism. With the spread of commerce in the ancient Mediterranean world there was substituted for the former domination of natural forces and the power of the old man of the tribe the domination of an impersonal, social force, the market. This development in the real world again mirrored itself in religious form. Instead of a collection of many tribal or group gods there emerged the concept of one god for each economic division. A striking example of this is the words of an Old Testament character "Choose ye, men of Israel, whom you will serve, but as for me and my people, we will serve Yahveh". The speaker recognized the existence of other gods such as Dagon of the Philistines, whose existence was as real to him as Yahveh. He recognized that for other people it was all right for them to worship their god, as for Israelites to worship Yahveh, an ancient volcano god of Arabia, who had been taken over by the Jewish people.

THE GODS AND THE EARLY CLASS STRUGGLES

Religion, as can now be easily seen, is part of the superstructure of any class society. It always arises on the basis of definite material conditions and in correspondence therewith. Like the state, having arisen on the basis of the emergence of classes, it nearly always reflects the ideology of the dominant class. This is seen most vividly in Brahmanism. Society in India in ancient times, and up to the recent present, had a rigid, essentially feudal structure. Corresponding to this structure of the real world was the structure of the imaginary world of religion. The petrification of economic categories into castes was given a religious signification. It was taught that people were born into upper or lower castes on account of their behavior in previous lives. For instance, if in one life a man were born into the merchant caste, if he acted in accordance with the mores of that caste, upon his death he would be reincarnated into the soldier caste, a higher caste in Hindu society. If, on the other hand, he were rebellious, did not "know his place", then he would be reincarnated into a lower stage of existence, finally winding up as a worm in the belly of a dog or something of the sort. It can easily be seen that this

was a perfect instrument of the ruling classes for the maintenance of their positions. But further development in India is very instructive and significant. Within the interstices of the feudal economy there developed a merchant class. Classical Brahmanism did not correspond in any way to the needs of this class. As a result there was born Buddhism, corresponding to the intellectual needs of the new class. But Buddhism never gained a great sway in India for the reason that the economic structure remained so stagnant. On the other hand, and on account of the more far-reaching and rapid development of commerce in China and Japan, it assumed considerable importance there.

Let us glance briefly over what we have learned so far in order to assist us in our further studies. We have learned that religion arises at a definite stage in the history of society when the primitive clan structure is breaking up into economic classes, that the imaginary world of religion always mirrors (but never mechanically) the real world of man, and that the dominant religious ideas of any period are the ideas of the ruling class. We may add to this one more point. In the early stages of religion man is still terribly under the domination of natural forces, and for that reason we find, as we might expect, the religious reflection of this phenomenon.

DIVERSITY OF RELIGIONS

If we take a look over the world at the present time we see scores of religions differing in their mythology, their ritual, their ideological forms, etc. But at the same time we see quite a similarity in these same differing religions. Particularly do we see similarity in their development. For that reason we may select any large religious body, and by analyzing it, get a good general idea of the others. We have decided to select Christianity for the reason that its history best exemplifies the developmental features of all religions, it having arisen and spread in that section of the world where historical development was most rapid.

JUDAISM

An analysis of Christianity must start with an analysis of its predecessor, Judaism. We find the class struggle in the very first book of the Jewish Bible, of course in mythical and concealed form. The story of Adam and Eve shows that it was written when the patriarchate had already been established for a long time. According to the story Adam was created first by a male god, and the woman Eve is already subordinate in all respects. It is very significant that the more ancient mythology treats of Lilith as antecedent to Adam. In the Biblical story Lilith is eliminated. What do all these stories show? That in Hebrew primitive society, as in all others, there was first the matriarchate, that this was overthrown by the patriarchate, and that the patriarchate had existed for such

a long time before the writing of the first books of the Bible that all memory of the original "rule of the mothers" had been lost or deliberately suppressed.

CAIN AND ABEL

We next come to the very interesting story of Cain and Abel. These two were supposed to be the sons of Adam and Eve after the expulsion from Eden. According to the story both made offerings to Yahveh. (In this connection it should be remembered that the first five books of the Bible were written quite late in the social development of the Jewish people and therefore contain numerous anachronisms such as the alleged worship of Yahveh by the primitive Jews, an obvious absurdity as we shall see later.) Yahveh accepted the offerings of the agriculturist, Abel, and cursed and refused the offerings of the huntsman, Cain. Why? The fable does not give any adequate reason, but the materialistic conception of history does. This myth is a reflection of the actual victory of agriculture over man's first form of struggle with nature, hunting and fishing. Here again we see that the religious superstructure reflects the change in the mode of production and places the blessing of its god on the new class.

PRIMITIVE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The two examples above illustrate the method to be pursued throughout this whole article, the materialistic method of relating the thoughts of men to the material environment antecedent to and determining those thoughts. Thus, in order to understand the Jewish religion, we must understand the whole social development of the Jewish people, rooted in the varying economic structures. Like all other peoples the Jews, apparently originally located in Asia Minor, commenced the struggle with nature for a living, with appropriation of what was at hand, nuts, fruits, roots, etc. Then came hunting and fishing, followed by agriculture and breeding of cattle. Every one of these changes since the dissolution of the primitive society into classes, was mirrored in religion.

It is not exactly clear whether the Israelites migrated into Egypt and were then enslaved, or whether they were taken captive by the Egyptian army and moved into Egypt to perform slave labor on the vast enterprises of the Pharaohs. The former seems to be the more likely, but the matter is not too important. Suffice it to say, that we can not accept verbatim the historical account given in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Undoubtedly during the slavery in Egypt the Jewish slaves were polytheists, worshipping many gods. A trace of this can be found in the very first verse of the Bible in the original Hebrew. The translation, as it is given today, is a mistranslation. "In the beginning God created heaven and earth". It should read "In the beginning the

gods created heaven and earth". It is just such little things as this that demolish the myth of the Jewish people having been monotheistic throughout their entire history.

After some time there occurred the exodus from Egypt of the Jewish slaves, in reality a slave revolt and migration under the leadership of Moses, apparently the illegitimate child of a Jewish slave and an Egyptian princess. In all probability the exodus under Moses was but one of several slave revolts, migrations, mass flight and individual flights. At any rate the fleeing slaves, loosed from their former ties, became nomadic herders. This condition no doubt lasted for several centuries rather than the forty years spoken of in the Pentateuch. It was probably during the course of these wanderings that a section of the Jews adopted Yahveh, a very fierce old Arabian volcanic god. Some time later we find the Jews in present day Palestine fighting the indigenous Philistines for the possession of that country. The fact that the religious and ethical ideas of any age are moulded by the dominant economic needs is shown by the command of Yahveh through his priests to the Israelites as follows: "When you go through the land of the Midianites put all the men to the sword, and all the women to the sword that have known men by lying with them, but the virgins, keep ye for yourselves". Obviously we have here a very low level of economic development. Productivity is so low that there is no point in making slaves of the conquered. The god Yahveh mirrors the ideology of the Jewish people at the particular social level. It is important to note that the Jews were certainly henotheists at this time. Yahveh was their god, but they recognized as equally real the existence of other gods for other people.

After the conquest of Palestine and the development of agriculture the semi-equality of the former nomadic horde gave way to increasing economic differentiation. Cities made their appearance. Handicraft and commerce developed. Polarization into rich and poor took place. And the religious mirror reflected all these changes. The old life had been nomadic, rude, fierce, and so had the religion. The new life was more urban, cultured, suave, and the religious reflection was more refined and subtle. But the latter were only the more superficial aspects. The new religion was the religion of the landlords and the slaveowners of the cities, the religion of the dominant economic classes. Between the old beliefs, clinging to the more backward sections of the countryside and also finding support in the slave population, and the new system, there raged a long and bitter conflict. The record of this is to be found throughout the Old Testament. Contrast for instance the essentially reactionary fanaticism of an Isaiah or Jeremiah with the urbanity, almost the Voltaireanism of Ecclesiastes. We have here not just or merely conflicting temperaments and personalities, but above all, the clash of whole ways of life with each other resting on different economic foundations.

We do not propose to follow all the changes in Jewish economic life and their reflections in the religious superstructure. This alone would make a volume in itself, and we are principally interested in Judaism as a prelude to Christianity. Suffice it to say that just before the advent of Christianity the Jewish people had been put under the yoke of the Roman Empire. Before going into the question of the birth of Christianity, it is necessary to touch further on some phases of the Jewish religion just prior to Christianity.

As we have already seen Judaism attained to henotheism at a comparatively early period. Crushed and subdued more than once, incapable at times of armed resistance, the Jewish priesthood maintained its hold by the doctrine of the Messiah. Yahveh became not only the god of the Jewish people, but the sole god of the whole world, who in due time was to send a savior, a Messiah, who would place Judaism dominant over the whole world. The material base for this monotheism was the unity of the whole world of the time in the Roman Empire. Why, it may be asked, was this monotheism manifested in a comparatively insignificant people living in a remote corner of the empire rather than in Rome itself? Here we must seek the aid, not of the evangelists, but of Karl Marx. In his brilliant monograph "The 18th Brumaire" Marx gives in the very first pages an appreciation of the function of past periods of history with relation to the present. He brings out clearly the force of tradition, as he expresses it, "the weight of all past history rests like a nightmare on the brains of the living". Particularly the form of the present can not be understood without reference to the past. Let us apply this to the present problem. In the past the tradition of the Jewish people had been henotheism, that of the Romans, polytheism. As the Roman Empire expanded it pursued a policy of leaving untouched the religious views of its subjects, provided they paid taxes and did not revolt. It even placed their gods on the pantheon. This religious reflection corresponded again to the real world. In the real world there was a gradation extending from the wealthy Roman citizen to the slave. In the world of religion there was a similar gradation in the rank of the gods. This system of religion corresponded with the material conditions of society at large and also, which is not always necessarily the case, with the material interests of the ruling class.

On the contrary monotheism was a natural result both of Jewish past social life and the interests of the ruling class, particularly of the priesthood and rabbinate at Jerusalem, which, as Kautsky points out in "The Economic Foundations of Christianity", had not only a religious, but a strong economic and political role.

CHRISTIANITY A SLAVISH RELIGION

The Christian religion originated in or around Jerusalem at the very zenith of the Roman Empire. It is very significant that the

semi-mythical founder, Jesus, is supposed to have gotten most of his recruits and done the major portion of his work in the province of Galilee. This province had been the scene of some of the most bloody revolts against Rome, fourteen insurrections some historians say. As is inevitable after defeated revolts, reaction set in. The masses despair of saving themselves, they have no more confidence in the use of physical force, and at the same time, the desire for revenge flames. It was upon this scene that there appeared a confused "prophet", embodying all the conflicting elements we have set forth above. Of course, in this connection we should remember that probably Jesus was not the muddlehead that the four gospels make him. For several reasons - the gospels were assembled and "doctored" long after they were written, and written long after the events and speeches they were supposed to report. Nevertheless there was inevitably great confusion on account of the events preceding the preaching of Jesus, adverted to above. As a result we find a strange combination of hatred of the ruling class combined with the most cringing slavishness. Compare for instance the verse from the "Magnificat": "He (Yahveh) has put down the mighty from their seats, and has exalted them of low degree" with such verses as "He that taketh up the sword shall perish by the sword", "If a man strike you upon one cheek, turn unto him the other."

Historically Jesus was of little importance, an itinerant, mendicant, soft-hearted, soft-headed visionary, whose death would have been of no importance, but for the fact that a certain portion of his ideas were perverted and transmitted to a receptive world by a keen thinker and able organizer generally known as Saul or Paul, significantly a Roman citizen and a Jew.

Throughout the Roman Empire millions of slaves literally groaned in agony. To them, deprived of arms, the memory of crushed slave revolts fresh in their minds, the idea of a Messiah was solace. To the decaying and sated ruling class of Rome, bored with life, satiated with hedonism, the doctrine of Stoicism that life was just something to be endured could not long appeal.

On this social scene appeared the ideal religion for slaves and masters, Christianity. To the slave such a religion could utter the consoling lie "It is true that you are a packhorse, but you have a soul the same as the patrician born to the purple". To the ruling class such a religion was invaluable in that it could assure him safety of his property on the earth and a chance at heaven later.

EARLY CONFLICTS IN CHRISTIANITY

But to arrive at this fortunate state for the slavemasters a whole period of struggle had to be gone through with. Within the early Christian church there were three groups. One represented by James

had visions of an early return of Jesus, a putting down of the rich and powerful, an exalting of the poor. All this, of course, in religious form, all this depending upon the action of Yahveh and Jesus, and therefore really impotent. Nevertheless such a group was potentially dangerous to the ruling class, as the example centuries later, of Thomas Muenzer and the Anabaptists in Germany showed. Then there was a ruling class group, not satisfied with paganism, desiring an individual Messiah, but discontented with the early primitive communism of the Christians and frightened at the fulminations of the "leftwing". Between these two vacillated the usual centrist group headed by the typical vacillator, Simon, or Peter.

Paul allied himself with the second group. He preached a "spiritual" doctrine, so involved and metaphysical in nature that it is today the source of tremendous clapper-clawings among "theologians" as to what he meant. The real nature of the doctrine of this fellow can best be shown by one incident. When a fugitive slave fled to Paul, the "good brother" sent him back to his master. Although very unclear in his messages as to "grace", "free will", etc., Paul was very clear in saying "Render obedience to the powers that be for the powers that be are ordained of God". And it should be remembered that this was said at a time when the "powers that be" were so corrupt and vile that one has to come all the way up to the modern imperialists and Stalinist bureaucrats to find a peer for them.

Christianity also conquered the Roman Empire by adapting itself to paganism. Both the doctrine of the trinity, three gods in one, and the making of lesser deities, called saints, was a concession to polytheism. As Paul Lafargue reveals in his fascinating book "The Origin and Development of the Idea of the Soul" throughout the whole Roman Empire, and particularly in the East there were many secret religions that still preserved the very ancient traditions of the matriarchate, worshipping feminine deities. These were taken over by the practical elevation of Mary, the mother of Jesus to position of a goddess, a position the lady still retains in the Roman Catholic Church. Paul also helped to clear the way for the spread of Christianity by fighting against James and Peter for the non-Jews to come into the Christian fold without going through circumcision or observation of the very strict ritual rules of the orthodox Jews.

By the time of Constantine, "saint" Constantine, the "gentle" convert to Christianity (at a time when most of the soldiers had become Christians) who successively strangled or drowned his mother, his son, and his wife, Christianity had triumphed, but the Pauline faction within Christianity, the ruling class faction, had also triumphed. Constantine's stooge, Athanasius, at the Council of

Nicaea, routed the Arians, a more "left" faction with the help of the soldiers of the "saint", and laid the theoretical and organizational foundations of the Roman Catholic Church.

So we see that what started out as a confused religion of slaves inevitably ended as a church of the ruling class, an actual part of the state machinery, fighting the Empire only on the question of the division of the spoils.

FEUDALISM

At the time of the overthrow of the Roman Empire a phenomenon occurred referred to by Lenin. The barbarians overcame the Empire, but being at a lower cultural stage, were themselves conquered by the Roman culture including the religious superstructure. They took over wholesale the Christian Church, the teachings and structure of which were admirably adapted to feudalism. During most of feudalism the Catholic Church was not only the "spiritual" protector of feudalism, but was itself one of the greatest feudal lords, holding about one third of all the lands in Europe. During the reign of this holy institution exploitation and oppression were covered with a saintly halo, learning was suppressed, and the science of the day (such as was not underground) consisted in wise discussions as to how many angels could dance on the point of a pin. This whole period in which the economic base remained almost stationary has become fittingly known to history, as the "Dark Ages".

It was during this period that there occurred one of the most striking manifestations of the correctness of the materialistic conception of history in the sphere of religion that has yet been seen - the Crusades. In our history books that we used in school we were told that the crusades were a pure pouring forth of the religious impulse in man, that millions of people sacrificed themselves in order to free the tomb of Christ from the Saracens. No such thing. It was the riches of the East, not the mythical tomb of the long-deceased itinerant that attracted the attention of the feudal lords of Europe and their retainers. The Crusades were immense looting expeditions. So crass was this character that it was finally baldly expressed when one of the crusading expeditions forgot all about Jerusalem, stopping off at Byzantium or Constantinople to plunder that Christian city, and never getting any further.

THE REFORMATION

But history is never entirely static. Within the interstices of feudal society there developed the germs of the capitalist mode of production and of course, the germs of the bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie had to break the fetters of feudal production. Standing in its way was a most formidable opponent, the Catholic Church. Feudal in structure, tied in with the feudal nobility, itself the feudal owner of one third of the land of Europe, the first assault of

the bourgeoisie naturally assumed a religious guise. Not that there was conscious deception on the part of the bourgeoisie. Like all other exploiting classes, the bourgeoisie is unable to explain its social environment without resort to the imaginary world of religion. So when it came in conflict with the Catholic Church and itself still needed the aid of religion both to keep the masses satisfied with their lot and as its own intellectual tool, it formed a new church with new beliefs suited to the new conditions. Lutheranism made the first assault on the Catholic Church. Luther represented the interests of the German princes, whose main desire was to cut down the exactions of Rome and to transfer the loot going out of Germany to Rome into their own pockets. Many efforts have been made to extol Luther as a courageous popular figure fighting for the masses. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This sycophant of princes advised one of the German electors that it would be perfectly religious and proper for him to have two wives at once, at the same time advising that the circumstances be not made public. When the peasants revolted this foul scab wrote a pamphlet urging the nobles to "kill these dogs". Luther endeavored to keep as much of the doctrines and ritual of the Catholic Church as would serve the interests of the princes. Lutheranism, like the Church of England, was really more of a national Catholic Church than anything else.

The bourgeoisie really found its religious expression in Calvinism. John Calvin, a reformed Catholic priest was not only a religious leader of the bourgeoisie of all Europe, but still more, a political leader. The political activities of Calvin would serve for a whole pamphlet, but here we can do no more than point it out. The Calvinist doctrine of predestination again serves as a confirmation of the materialistic conception of history. The whole world was in a state of turmoil. No one could know what would come out of any enterprise. Apparently it was at the whim of a superior power, "not of him that willeth or him that runneth". Calvin's doctrine that God, from all eternity, had destined all things, some to riches, some to poverty, some to salvation, some to damnation, fitted the harsh needs of the times. But still more important by imbuing the bourgeois revolutionaries that they were the elect, Calvinism led to the development of the Huguenots in France, the Ironsides in England, etc., fighters against feudalism and the absolutist monarchy.

When we come to the time of the French Revolution we reach the apogee of the bourgeoisie. The "Enlightenment" period just before the Revolution, discarded all religious guises and came out with materialistic critiques of all existing society. It is true that this materialism was a mechanical materialism and therefore faulty, but it represented the peak of bourgeois divorce from religion. But this bourgeois materialism was only a St. Martin's Summer. With Thermidor, bourgeois "free thought" also went under the guillotine, never to return.

RELIGION TODAY

Subsequent developments in religion, though individually important, are not particularly pertinent to our discussion. As substantiating our thesis, however, we can not refrain from calling attention to such phenomena as the split between the U.S. Northern and Southern churches over the question of slavery. Here we have a palpable example of religion reflecting the material interests, not alone the conditions, of differing economic societies. In all history, and this is as true of the other religions as of Christianity, religion has functioned in one of two ways, often both at the same time. Sometimes as the direct spiritual policeman of the ruling class, inventing hell for the rebellious, standing shoulder to shoulder with the exploiters in actual battle with the oppressed. Or it has a more subtle and more dangerous role, haranguing against the rich and powerful, telling the poor to bear their burdens patiently on this earth because they will be rewarded and the oppressors punished after death. In either case religion can offer nothing to the proletariat. The proletariat is impelled to build a world in which social relations will be clear. There will be neither exploitation nor anarchy of production. There will therefore be no need of the hypothesis of a god to explain social relations, just as long ago the concept of a god became unnecessary to explain thunder and lightning.

RELIGION IN THE PERIOD OF WAR AND REVOLUTION

But that time is still in the future. What is the role of religion today? Look around you. Where can one find more degenerate flunkies of imperialism than in the churches? In each country these "gentlemen of the cloth" ascend their pulpits and urge their "flock" to slaughter fellow Christians and Jews and Mohammedans and Buddhists for the "greater honor and glory of God" - and imperialism, they should add. Not to be outdone by their colleagues in the capitalist world, the "holy fathers" in the Soviet Union call for the defense of the privileges of the Stalinist bureaucracy, hoping that they have achieved their own little niche in the corroded structure of the rotting workers' state. Let them howl to their various gods: The vanguard of the proletariat will forge a Fourth International that will lead the masses of the world, not to an imaginary religious world, but to a full, free, clear world where religion will be heeded neither for repression nor as opium, where it will disappear in favor of science.

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INTERNATIONAL NOTES

TEAPOT TEMPEST OVER WALLACE

Resistance to the appointment of Henry Wallace as Secretary of Commerce and administrator of the giant Reconstruction Finance Fund, comes from two capitalist sources:

- 1- Those capitalists, i.e. the Southern industrialists who now have lush opportunities to grow and are opposed to any discipline over their activities, even by their own government; and
- 2- Those capitalists who are in favor of disciplining their own class, but who are opposed to the Wallace brand of discipline on the grounds that it does not sufficiently permit the "big fish to eat the little fish" and that it favors other groups within the capitalist set-up more than it favors them; they are represented by the Republican group.

This bloc of forces has been able to upset Wallace's applecart. But it is a very tenuous bloc. Eventually the Northern finance capitalists must break with their Southern brethren. They are only looking for concessions from Mr. Roosevelt and as soon as they get them, they will get on his bandwagon.

Henry Wallace is 100% for the system of private enterprise. But he is an exponent of government spending (which boosts taxes) and favors a number of minor measures which can give a little breath of life to the small capitalists - over a million of whom have been thrown out of business in the past three years. Wallace is trying to dam the river against a more rapid consolidation of finance capital. In that way he is making enemies, even within his own class.

But the important thing to remember is that there is NO DIFFERENCE IN PRINCIPLE between any of the three groups now at loggerheads. All favor the retention of the system of private enterprise. One (Wallace) wants a modified system, with full control of cartels and a sort of status-quo in the relationship between little business and big business. Another group (the Southern industrialists) wants no control of business, since it operates in a low wage area, it has new and modern equipment just bought for it by the government, and it foresees great prospects of growth IF LEFT ALONE. The third group (Republicans) is the old "big fish eat little fish" group, that wants greater government control OF LABOR, and greater monopoly.

The supporters of the Wallace ideology are fighting a losing battle. Not that Mr. Wallace's personal star is going down. On the contrary Wallace will become a rallying point for Popular Frontism (Labor Partyism) in America. But the idea of reconciling the interests of Big Business and Little Business (and giving labor a few reforms out of the deal) is an impossibility as a long term perspective.

The present battle is only a tempest in a teapot. The issue is not over fundamentals. It is only a struggle within the ranks of the bourgeoisie on HOW TO PROCEED AGAINST THE IMPENDING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CRISES.

None of the three groups really has a solution. The only solution of the problem lies in the overthrow of all capitalist groups, the whole capitalist system, by the Social Revolution and the development of a Socialist Economy.

ANTI-SEMITISM BECOMES OFFICIAL

Hull and Roosevelt periodically weep over the plight of the Jews. But their sincerity is belied by what the allies are doing in Italy. Under orders from the Allies the Italian war ministry issued an order for the mobilization of all Italian Gentiles between 20 and 30, but called only those Jews who are between 25 and 30 years old. The Italian war ministry and Allied headquarters refused to explain or comment. This measure is the first example of official Allied anti-semitism in Italy.

Emigration to Palestine is no solution for the Jewish question. Great Britain is using the Jewish settlement there as a pawn in its conflict with the Arabs and in its struggle for control of the Middle East. The two Palestinian terrorists who assassinated Lord Moyne in their fight against British oppression were sentenced to be hanged. Ben Hecht, exposing British censorship which stopped correspondents from informing their papers of what went on at the trial, said: "The world was thus robbed of a chance to hear the defendants' case which we believe would have been an exposure of the ruthlessness of British occupation of the mandated territory of Palestine".

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