

LABOR ACTION

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Program and Policies of the Independent Socialist League

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1 INTRODUCTION

A NEW DAY FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

Socialist Unity: Key to a Major Break-through For Socialist Ideas in America

By H. W. BENSON

New interest in socialism and a fresh wave of hope are apparent, not as a curious accident but, we are confident, as part of the new mood of our times.

Only yesterday, McCarthy was declaiming crudely against "twenty years of treason," classifying his enemies from red to pink, all subversive, pro-Moscow, and un-American. The world of liberalism and democracy looked on with passive perturbation and few dared to risk his unpredictable ire. That is gone. We are far from the atmosphere of truly free democratic discussion, but the wheel is turning. Increasingly, people speak out boldly for democracy. Supreme Court decisions reversing administration policy reflect a new spirit abroad.

Then, there loomed the imminent outbreak of a third war. Everyone fled to one side or the other or looked on with paralyzed horror. Now, world antagonisms persist but the threat of war has receded, not because of wisdom in ruling circles of either camp (of that there is none), or primarily because there is hesitation before the awesome power of nuclear destruction. By now, peoples everywhere have displayed hostility to acts of war and made it impossible to line up a camp of solid support for adventures by either side.

In the Korean War, world-wide protests in neutral and anti-Russian countries prevented the implementation of the MacArthur policy of plunging into a new world war. The Russian camp was first split wide open by Titoism and then revolutionary movements in East Germany, Poland and Hungary proved that Russia could not count on the support of the peoples of its satellites. Simultaneously, the provocations of England and France in Egypt were repudiated by mass demonstrations.

Such was the background. And most recently, wherever democracy exists, there have been popular movements demanding an end to nuclear testing, even in the United States.

Political Balance Shifting

The political balance in America is slowly shifting. The labor movement is united and a mass Negro movement for democracy and equality has arisen. The AFL-CIO moves slowly, too slowly. Still, in the first years of unity the most reactionary, corrupt and narrow segment in the unions is under attack, encouraging militants in every union. For twenty years, the political development of labor has been stalled, among other things by the so-called Dixiecrat-Republican alliance in Congress, prompting labor to cling in desperation to feeble, ineffectual, self-styled liberals in the old parties. The Negro movement portends an end to all this; to the extent that it wins democracy, it undermines the power of the Southern Dixiecrats and with it the power of conservatism in the nation. The fight will be long and hard but the outcome is hardly in doubt.

Everything combines, in the nation and in the world, to stimulate anew the spirit of freedom. This is the opportunity for democratic socialism.

But is it actually possible to build a meaningful socialist movement in the United States? Can it ever be any more than a small circle of admirable but futile dissenters dedicated to private moral and ethical purposes or individual self-expression. Or, on the other hand, can socialism make itself felt as a force in the political and intellectual life of the nation?

We are certain that a movement of influence is more than merely necessary in this country; it is fully possible. In fact, it is virtually guaranteed—if the scattered socialists of today, groups and individuals, act as the times demand.

Why then, is the socialist movement so weak today?

Socialism never became a permanent major factor in American politics but there was always a strong sympathy for it. Socialists were organizers of the early labor movements. Socialism was a respected and powerful force within the old AFL. In the days of Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party organized hundred thousands; won the sympathy of millions; and spoke to tens of millions.

If, in the last 20 years, the democratic socialist movement has remained impotent, it was not because capitalism had won total and unanimous acceptance but because socialism was shunted aside by Stalinism. That was in a time of mounting defeats for the world working class by fascism and reaction. The world saw capitalist economic crisis and depression. Some radicals looked toward Russia and Stalinism with hope; but for that, they accepted a monstrous totalitarianism and called it socialism. Others, repelled by dictatorship looked toward the New Deal; but for that they dropped their socialism and reconciled themselves to a bourgeois reformism which became ever thinner.

Socialism in the United States was undermined not by Stalinism alone and not by the influence of the New Deal alone but by the combination of one upon the other. Those who remained anti-capitalist turned to Stalinism; those who remained anti-Stalinist (most, not all) turned away from socialism. In any case, socialism was identified with dictatorship by millions, and they wanted none of it.

This, we believe, is all changing. We are under no illusion that socialism will arise speedily into a powerful mass force, shaking off the affects of pro-capitalism and anti-democratic Stalinism in an instant. There is a long journey ahead; many events and political struggles will intervene and our working class itself will have to move toward political independence before socialism can emerge as a truly popular movement. But, we have at last reached the turning in the long road.

Decline of Stalinism

The Communist Party in the United States is all but wiped out, reduced by increasing resignations to a hardened, oversized Stalinist sect with dwindling influence. We all did our share but it was the working classes of Eastern Europe that finally struck down American Stalinism. At one blow by revolutionary risings they demonstrated that Stalinism was openly anti-labor and that working class socialism was in revolt against it. By destroying the myth of Stalinism, they restored the good name of socialism. Tens of thousands of radicals, formerly disoriented by Stalinism, have broken from it and can be won over to democratic socialism.

The power of pro-capitalist politics, of course, remains. Yet, there has been a noticeable evolution in the attitude of those who want radical changes, but through the old parties. More than twenty years after the start of the New Deal, all the big problems remain: insecurity, lagging civil rights, the permanent threat of nuclear warfare, and now, a new depression. There is no evidence that radicals are ready to leap out of the old parties into the socialist movement; but there is a new critical attitude. Yesterday, there was disenchantment with socialism and the dissolution of socialists into the Democratic Party. Today, there is the beginning of a dissatisfaction with the fruits of 20 years of simple capitalist politics.

But a strong socialist movement will not create itself automatically. Once, one could only wait for a turn in the tide. Now, more is needed than the old familiar motions and habitual phrases. These are new times; we need a new outlook to make a new start.

Yet, we do not discard all that we have learned and forget what we have created. The movement is not re-

quired to begin all over out of nothing. Various groups and tendencies make up the socialist movement today and every genuine socialist group can contribute to the common task provided that it dedicates itself seriously and honestly to the reconstruction of socialism. Each group has been characterized by its own special views and outlook and history. Yet, no declaration of principles or program can last forever unchanged without becoming a set of sterile dogmas; Socialists want to change the world for the better. If they have not succeeded, the world changes nevertheless and with it, all parties, all groups evolve and are transformed. A policy adequate for its day, fades with time as old problems vanish, new ones arise and lines of division cross and crisscross.

Disputes Out of the Past

Some differences in the American socialist movement have their roots in disputes of the distant past. The movement was split into fragments in two world wars; it divided over the Russian Revolution and Bolshevism; it split in many countries when Hitler took power. In the United States it was disrupted by the impact of the New Deal as thousands left organized socialism and others sharply divided over their attitudes toward it. Bitter internal struggles raged over the nature of Stalinism and of the Russian state and its wars. Looking back, we see that crises and splits followed by new crises and splits were inseparable from the retreat of world socialism and its demoralization in defeat.

But times have changed. It is the moment to build the movement anew.

The reason why socialists must unite today could be put this way: we need more than a reorganized sect or group of sects; we need a new government. But the disputes and divisions of the past, even those which remain, cannot serve as an adequate starting point for the political platform of a movement and cannot justify the organizational separation of one group from another. Those who try to construct a platform out of the past are, at best, doomed to sectarian sterility be they "leftist," "rightist" or "centrist." We need a lasting unity on a basic minimum platform of democratic socialism. It will be amplified, clarified and developed as the socialist movement enters into the political arena contending for influence within the great social movements.

What Kind of Movement?

What kind of movement shall socialists try to build? There is no ideal form of socialist organization conveniently prescribed and suited for all times. Socialism is emerging once again from obscurity and it will have to be shaped by the issues and struggles of its day. Above all, it must look toward the great social movements of labor, liberals, and Negroes. The task is to redirect thousands back towards democratic socialism and to educate new thousands in the course of political and working class activity.

For that, a movement must be broad and flexible. It must provide the fullest democracy within its ranks and allow the widest latitude for experimentation by its members and its sections without imposing rigid centralized control from above. It must permit the cooperative coexistence within its ranks of various tendencies and stimulate an active and alert interest in ideas and in principles so that it once again can attract the best representatives of America's young intellectuals. It must encourage its members and friends to participate in all the labor and liberal movements and adopt statutes and tactics which make that possible.

Broad movements of socialism exist in Europe in the parties of the Socialist International and we find within

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2 Eighteen Years of Socialist Evolution

The INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST LEAGUE

By MAX SHACHTMAN

The Independent Socialist League can now mark the eighteenth anniversary of its existence as an independent movement, first under the name of the Workers Party and for the past ten years under its present name.

To those of us who have remained banded together, not yielding to the adverse social winds of our time and not broken by them, these eighteen years have been difficult ones. But they have not been without their reward and their good fruit. We are not of the same mind today on every problem of the working class and of socialism that we were when we began. We have made many and important changes in our thinking in the course of constantly reexamining our ideas on the basis of changing circumstances and of the deep and critical reflection demanded by the long-drawn-out crisis of the socialist movement.

But nothing that has happened in all this time, and no reconsideration of positions that we have undertaken has changed our mind in any way, except to clarify and fortify it, about the fundamental principles and necessity of socialism which we proclaimed when the Workers Party was founded in April, 1940.

Origins of the ISL

That party came into existence out of a forced split in the Trotskyist movement, much in the same way as the latter came into existence a dozen years earlier out of a forced split in the Communist movement. We do not mean to eulogize splits in the socialist movement, even though they have so often proved, even with the best of will on both sides, to be unavoidable. But looking backward, this split has turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Those who were driven out of the Trotskyist movement by a procedure not one whit less bureaucratic than that used to expel the Trotskyists from the Communist Party, took the high road leading away from dead dogma and sectarianism which have for so long helped to stultify socialist thinking and action all over the world, and above all in the United States. Yet, in doing so, we did not travel to that iconoclasm which childishly delights in destroying and discarding the valid along with the invalid, the useful and applicable inheritance of socialist thought along with the outlived and the unworthy.

Thrown upon our own, without an "authority" to perform the function of thinking that devolves upon every socialist, we were absolutely guaranteed a number of mistakes that wiser, older, more talented and experienced leaders might have avoided. But it also guaranteed us against one of the most fatal mistakes a socialist can make: that of getting used to having someone else—no matter how gifted—do his thinking for him; against getting used to answering all problems by reference to an appropriate scriptural quotation, to reserving to himself only the right to agree and to execute orders, or to risk political oblivion.

The net result of this combination of guarantees has been, in our opinion, a plus, and not a small or insignificant one.

World War II and the Third Camp

We founded a new organization right in the midst of the complexities and torments of the Second World War. A more difficult time for such an enterprise is not easy to envisage. It brought confusion, disorientation and even demoralization to many. We did not use the difficult time as an excuse for withdrawing from socialist activity and for confining ourselves to quiet thinking in a quiet corner. We spoke out with the voice of socialist internationalism and independence from the onset of the war to its end. While our comrades, so many of whom were youth, went into the army and fought like the rest of their generation who were called up, we gave no political support to the war.

We proclaimed the independence of socialist policy from the two imperialist war camps. Our break with

Trotsky and the Fourth International served to keep us from losing our heads on Stalinism when virtually everyone else was floundering around from hysterical and unreasoning antipathy to incoherent and unreasoning sympathy. We warned unremittably against Stalinist imperialism when it was allied with Hitler, and we did not change our attitude toward it when it was allied with the Western powers. We were, nevertheless, among the first to present a socialist understanding and support of the revolutionary national resistance movements against Hitlerism and we remained their supporters, as we still are, when they found themselves obliged to extend their struggle to combat conquests and oppressions of Stalinism.

Most comrades who were not in the armed forces, worked throughout the war in the factories and the unions. It is to them primarily that the Independent Socialist League owes its sustained existence throughout these years, and owes above all the good socialist name it deserves. Our trade unionists showed thousands of their fellow-workers the meaning, so grievously distorted by others in the past, of socialist activity in the labor movement. They followed a course which was living disproof of the view that socialists pursue interests separated from the labor movement and hostile to it. They never allowed their loyalty to the working class and its movement to be questioned by anything they said or did. They were in the forefront of every movement to maintain the integrity of the unions throughout the war years, as they have been since, whether it was threatened by maneuvers of the government, the employers or the Stalinist. They were in the forefront of the educational work in favor of independent political action by the unions. They were prominent and tireless in the fight against wage-freezes and the pernicious incentive-pay schemes. They were in every other progressive cause in the unions.

Roots in the Trade Unions

The progressive groups that took shape during the war in a number of the most important unions of the country found our comrades initiating them, in their leadership, or in every case warmly active in the ranks, especially in the Auto Workers union, in the Rubber Workers union, in the Shipbuilders union, in the Electrical union and Radio Workers union, and among the Railroad unions. And we do not ever want to forget the splendid activity of our comrades—and our LABOR ACTION—in the strike of the Southeast Missouri sharecroppers, a small battle in itself but surely one of the most dramatic battles of Negro people in this country during the war.

The work done by our comrades in the broader movements, the trade unions in particular, was invaluable to us in more than one way. They acquired an experience and understanding indispensable to every socialist and to the socialist movement as a whole. One of the defects of many radicals, understandable but perilous, is that they regard the non-socialist working class and its non-socialist organizations not only from the outside but from the standpoint of an abstract radicalism.

This is true not only of many who become socialists before they come into contact with the labor movement but even of many who become socialists after having been in the labor movement for a time. Their socialist political and educational activity is often tinged—one might almost say, tainted—by the attitude of the "outsider" looking down the side of his nose upon the labor movement as it actually is and without an understanding of how to help it become what it ought to be. They leave the non-socialist worker with the feeling that they have no comprehending sympathy for the real and concrete problems of the labor movement to which he is so strongly attached, that they are in that movement only in the interests of an "outside" organization with "outside" interests that are distinct from his own and even alien to them. Such socialists exhaust their radicalism in unrelieved criticism of everything done by the unions as inadequate, false or disastrous and in rote denunciation of every union official as a reactionary bureaucrat who exists solely for the purpose of betraying the workers. By that token, they quickly exhaust their usefulness to the labor movement and therewith to the cause of socialism.

Socialism and Labor Movement

Experience, and our own conscious efforts, quickly rooted all such tendencies out of our socialist activity in the

labor movement. Our comrades soon learned how to make it clear that their ideas are in fullest harmony with the true interests of the unions, that they differ from other unionists only in that they are socialist unionists who represent a movement that does not seek to weaken or replace or dictate to the unions but to help in every possible way to achieve their own stated objectives so that, thus fortified, they can advance to objectives of a higher and more durable kind. From the outset, we have supported every union demand, no matter how modest; defended every gain, no matter how small; taken earnest part in every progressive and democratic movement inside the unions; refused to be silent about shortcomings of the labor movement and blindness and errors of its leadership.

We have proceeded in our attitude toward the unions from the conception that, with all their inadequacies and their seamy sides, they are the principal pillar of democracy in the country. It takes little imagination to visualize what would happen to those democratic rights and prospects we have if the labor unions were crushed or even greatly weakened, or if they became mere instruments or vassals of the government. Our attitude and activity are therefore guided by the long-range aim of helping to develop this main force for democracy to play the decisive part, which no other force can play in resisting the retrogression of capitalist democracy, by transforming it into a socialist democracy. Under our conditions, the first big step in this direction—and it would be a revolutionary step—would be the formation of an independent political party opposed to the existing capitalist parties and challenging them for the right to lead the nation. Of all the liberal, democratic or progressive elements in the country, we know of none that can even begin to compare with the labor movement in its ability to take effective initiative for such a step, or in the social and representative power it has to maintain and stabilize such a party. From the standpoint of labor, of democracy, and of the socialist future, such a step would be nothing short of a political revolution in the United States.

This basic thought has always been foremost in our minds in judging the problems of the unions in this country, and the problems which socialists face in the unions. We long ago ceased to counterpose the socialist movement to the labor movement, or to set up the former as the latter's rival. Socialism in this country will advance only to the extent that it is an effective and respected educational and political force among all democratic elements in the country, but primarily and above all a force in the labor movement. Short of that, it will be a sect, a big sect or a small one, a good sect or a bad one, but a sect nonetheless. And to become such a force, it must work not on the labor movement but in it, loyally and responsibly, with utmost comradeship, sympathetic understanding, patience, and without a trace of supercilious demands, ultimatums, hostility and "outsiderness."

A Revolutionary Era

We live in an epoch of the greatest social and political upheavals in history, revolutionary in all their implications and consequences. We are living through a stage in a revolutionary era in which the helpless decay of capitalism is combined with the rise of Stalinism. A multitude of intricate and thorny problems has been produced by this combination. For these problems, no thinking socialist believes he has ready-made traditional answers long ago provided by the teachers of old. In any case we lay no claim to possessing all the answers. But we are convinced that there is a key, which needs shaping and adjustment for every specific situation and problem, but which is a master key and an indispensable one.

It is represented by the ideas that we developed, as painstakingly and critically as we know how, on the fundamental significance of Stalinism. Our break with the Trotskyist movement in 1940 was only a partial one. Trotsky challenged us, and with some justification, to take a clear position on the social nature, the class character, of the Stalinist state, and not confine ourselves simply to our refusal to support ("defend") Russia in the war. In the factional battle of that day, there was neither the time, the possibility nor the climate for working out our own position. After the split, these all became available. They were utilized by all of us, for each contributed his share of theoretical understanding and the practical experience in the working-class movement without which theories dry up into abstractions.

Socialism and Stalinism

These ideas can be summed up in these words:

Stalinism is not a form of socialism, not even a primitive form "suitable" for backward countries. It is not a working-class road or any other kind of road to socialism or to social progress. It is a new barbarism which does indeed destroy capitalism and the capitalist class but in its essence only as the punishment visited upon the working class and society as a whole for the failure of the workers to fulfill in good time their mission by giving outlived capitalism the last push into the abyss toward which it is itself drifting instead of being dragged into the abyss by it. The new barbarism represented by Stalinism does not so much feed upon the decay of capitalism as it does on the failure of the working class to replace capitalism by socialism.

These all-too-briefly stated ideas correctly indicate, in our view, the interrelations among the big social movements of our time—capitalism, Stalinism and socialism—and along with them, the broad road to the

(Continued on next page)

Independent Socialism: Neither Capitalism nor Stalinism

progress and victory of the modern democratic socialist movement in solving the problems raised by these relationships. If the Independent Socialist League has a fundamental contribution to make to the socialist and labor movements of today, it lies in these ideas, many of whose elements do not originate with us but all of which taken together we regard as the distinctive feature of our political evolution in the past eighteen years. These ideas determine our general conception of the world in which we live and the answer to the problems it poses.

We hold that the Stalinist movement is not a socialist or a working-class movement, even where it is supported by workers and seeks to base itself in the workers' movement. It is a totalitarian movement, the out-of-power embryo-prototype in the capitalist countries of the parties that have established their totalitarian power in the Stalinist states.

Bureaucratic Collectivism

We regard the Stalinist regimes as bureaucratic collectivist states, ruled by a new exploitive class. This class bases its rule on the complete monopolization of all economic, political and cultural power in the hands of the totalitarian state under its exclusive dominion. Its essential characteristic lies in the nationalization of the working classes under the state which it rules exclusively. Its planned economy has nothing in common with socialist planning which is democratic in its entire essence. It is based on the planned exploitation of the working classes, carried on more intensively than in any capitalist country, and all its economic marvels are the product, fundamentally, of this planned exploitation which yields the ruling class a high surplus product entirely at its arbitrary disposal. Democratic rights for the people means the end of this rule, and this fact, this one alone and not some "mistake" of the Stalinist leaders, determines their intransigent and uncompromising resistance to democracy.

The Communist parties outside these states are maintained as an agency of these rulers and in their image. They aim everywhere to duplicate the regimes already established by Stalinism. This determines our attitude toward them, as it should determine the attitude of every supporter of socialism and democracy. We aim to defend and protect the labor movement, even under its conservative and non-socialist leadership, from the influence and control of Stalinism. We unhesitatingly stand by the rest of the labor movement in resisting the efforts of the Stalinists.

The interests of conservative labor officialdom conflict in many ways with the true interests of the labor movement. But the fact nevertheless remains that even the most conservative officialdom cannot exist without in one way or another maintaining the labor movement, which we regard as the principal pillar of democracy and the historical basis of the socialist future. The Stalinists, on the other hand, cannot achieve their social objective without undermining and destroying the labor movement, as is now proved in a dozen countries, big and small. It is this conception that should determine the basic view of the socialist movement toward the Stalinist parties.

Against the Witch-Hunt

Our position completely excludes, however, any support or tolerance for the witch-hunt against the Stalinists, or any attempt to deny them full democratic rights. The maintenance of these rights for the Stalinists, and the Communist movement, must be defended to the full, without entering into political or organizational association with them. Socialists are flatly opposed to any denial of democratic rights to political opponents, including the Communists. We are flatly opposed to any laws, regulations or administrative procedures according to which it is necessary to obtain a government license before being permitted to engage in political activity or being allowed political expression or any of the political rights shared by others. The fight against Stalinism excludes the adoption of the methods which it practices and justifies wherever it has the power to do so.

Our attitude toward Stalinism has nothing in common with that of people who believe that it is no "real threat," or that it can be gently persuaded to become "moderate" and "liberal." We call it a new barbarism not in order to give it a harsh name but because it expresses our objective view of its social meaning, of the dimensions and nature of its great threat to democracy and to the prospects of socialism.

As we understand it, the attempt to combat it by rallying to the support of capitalism, by entrusting the fight against it to the governments, the statesmen, the spokesmen, the military men of capitalism, is doomed to defeat—and to defeat at the very hand of Stalinism itself. If the working classes, stimulated and encouraged by the socialist movement, do not take independent initiative, leadership and action in that struggle for democracy that culminates in good time in a socialist government, it is not capitalism that will triumph over Stalinism but Stalinism. Those who try to construct a platform out of the past

that will destroy capitalism—and subjugate the working class and all the people to a totalitarian tyranny.

To us, the question so often asked: "Do you not prefer capitalist democracy, where you have some rights and prospects, to Stalinism, where you have no rights and greatly restricted prospects?" misses the mark. It separates problems that are inseparable. We are not blind to the fact that in the United States, above all, where capitalism is still so powerful and the Kremlin is so far away and its representatives here so small and discredited, the question seems to be overwhelming in the answer it already implies. But that is a narrow ledge from which to view a problem of such decisive and urgent importance for the world from which the United States is anything but removed and uninvolved. Without a broader and deeper view, the fight is as good as lost.

What Is the Choice?

Capitalism is today represented primarily by American capitalism, for it does not take too much understanding to see that if the United States were somehow to be removed from the earth, the rest of world capitalism would not last out the year. And it is precisely the United States, in its capacity of leader and spokesman for the capitalist world, that is displaying its inability to overcome the decay eating it way from the roots up. The vigor and resourcefulness of its robust youth are not altogether gone but they are clearly dwindling. It should really be enough to see and understand why, faced by the growing power and threat of Stalinism, its voice gradually loses the note of sure confidence, that it is forced to give up one position after another in the international political field.

Against what? Against a reactionary totalitarianism that is abhorrent to anyone who knows even half the truth about it. Does it feel assured against this menace by its economic superiority? Less and less. By its political superiority? Less and less, and sometimes not at all. The only real assurance it invokes is superiority, or hoped-for superiority, in a new weapon which it knows, as does the world, promises no victory if it is actually employed, but does promise a vastness of world destruction from which it cannot even dream of escaping. It would not have been easy, only a generation ago, to imagine such a thorough acknowledgment of the helplessness and hopelessness of capitalism. By comparison, its bewilderment and impotence in the face of the "recession" is almost a trifle. In the fight against Stalinism and for a "free world," capitalism now has little to offer except a world to die in.

To assign to it the hope for the future, or even for tomorrow, is to assure the eventual victory of the new barbarism.

The Future of Socialism in the United States

Our own confidence in the future reposes entirely in our conviction that the working class can and must be aroused to assume the political leadership of the nation in every country, the United States not excepted, by a declaration of independence from the political representatives of capitalism and a militant championing of the cause of democracy in every field of social life. To promote this is the main job of socialism today.

We are prepared and eager to contribute all our energies and capacities to this task. It can best be done by concentrating today on the upbuilding of a strong, effective, united democratic socialist movement. In this, we have no narrow or sectarian interests or aims, and we pursue none. We have endeavored to examine and reexamine our own past, including many views which we inherited uncritically from older times. In the freely and warmly conducted discussions among ourselves, which we always made accessible to those outside our ranks because we have neither secret opinions nor secret debates on the problems of the socialist movement, we have modified some of our views and discarded others.

It was ten years ago that we gave up any claim to being a "party," and acknowledged that we were only a propaganda group. It was at that time, too, that we all agreed to urge all socialists abroad, especially in Europe, to abandon the attempts to maintain small and ineffectual socialist groupings of their own and to unite their forces loyally and without narrow factional designs with the broad representative traditional socialist parties. Now in the United States we are urging the consolidation of all democratic socialists into a single, broad, united socialist movement.

A United Movement

Our view in this respect, too, was not reached overnight and all of a sudden. It is part of the evolution of our poli-

tical thought. We reject the conception, so stoutly held by radical or left-wing socialists for the past few decades (still held by many of them) that they must constitute themselves as a separate and independent political organization from which socialists with different theoretical or political opinions are excluded by programmatic or statutory declaration, regardless of time, place or circumstance. This conception assured the division of the socialist movement into separate and hostile camps—reformist and revolutionary, and often one or more in between to boot. The revolutionary or left-wing socialists—whether they were such in fact or only by self-designation—thought to establish what was by their standards a pure socialist movement by mechanical means—by organizational devices and programmatic formality.

We cannot think of a single important instance where positive results for the socialist movement were yielded by this conception. In many countries, the consequences for the trade union movement were even worse. The theory of schism and separatism in the socialist movement as an indispensable virtue helped to promote and eventually went hand in hand with conceptions about socialism and the road to its achievement which we noted above only to reject as incompatible with the democratic essence of socialism. The idea of a "genuine Leninist" or genuine "Trotskyist" (to say nothing of the genuine "orthodox Trotskyist") party, to be established and maintained everywhere and always, with one of its aims proclaimed to be the destruction of the traditional socialist movement, ended in failure everywhere. It deserved to fail. We want no further experiments in that direction.

A Democratic Movement

More than ever before, we need a broad and united and democratic socialist movement. We need, and it is now possible to reestablish in the United States, a socialist political movement, and not a sect. It must be a democratic socialist movement not only in its social aims and policies, but in its own inner life. It must shun the monolithism and super-centralism that helped destroy the Communist movement. It must allow free room for the comradely exchange and discussion of the views of all democratic socialist tendencies that it embraces, for that is one of the pre-conditions for the maintenance of socialist unity. It has a right and duty to guard itself from incorrigible schismatisms and raiders; to guard against being converted into an endless debating society which paralyzes and sterilizes its educational and political activity; and certainly to make sure that it does not become a mere battleground for perpetually warring factions.

A living, healthy socialist movement cannot and does not demand of every member—in the apt phrase of a good friend—"creedal conformity" on all aspects of theory, policy, history, philosophy. But it has the duty to call for loyalty to the cause of democratic socialism, to the democratic road to socialism, and to the movement that represents it.

It is with these ideas that represent the evolution and position of the Independent Socialist League today that we look with new hope and confidence toward the renewal and rebuilding of an effective socialist movement in the United States, a worthy companion of the armies of socialism all over the world. We look upon the union of all democratic socialists, and concentration of all efforts to bring new and fresh strength to it, as the most important task of the day. How rapidly the performance of this task can be advanced, depends upon all those who remain devoted to the socialist cause. The comrades of the Independent Socialist League cannot contribute more than their share. But that share they are ready to contribute to the full.

LABOR ACTION

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What Will Take Its Place?

SOCIALISM vs. CAPITALISM

By ALBERT GATES

The current recession in the United States has come upon the nation, some say, a temporary adjustment to budgetary changes in Washington. It has not taken very long however for the recession to assume the form of a small crisis and to become deeper despite the mumbling incoherencies emanating from the White House and the team of experts that swarm its corridors and various golf courses. Like their ghosts of 1929, these experts issue prophecies on the shallow depth and temporariness of the recession, which they insist is not a crisis at all. And like their predecessors, they cannot explain why this recession came, nor can they then decide what to do about it even though they have presumably been fully prepared to meet precisely this kind of emergency with "built in safeguards."

The significance of the failure of American capitalism to avoid economic crisis in the midst of the greatest production in the history of any country, a production fortified by an enormous investment in the production for war, is that it tells the fundamental failure of capitalism as an economic order. Since the end of World War II, a wealth of literature has been written about the "peoples' capitalism" of the United States; it has even been said by a Madison Avenue savant that this was not capitalism but "consumerism," a society devoted solely to the welfare of its people! The economic crisis of the Thirties would never occur again; that was an inheritance from Europe.

So long as the war economy operated on the grand scale it assumed after the war and the needs of the world remained at peak levels the profit economy of American capitalism experienced an unheard of expansion. The whole nation, in varying degrees to be sure, enjoyed this unprecedented prosperity.

Convulsions in Narrow World

Economic revival in Europe and the general improvement that came to other countries in the flush post-war years was bound to be reflected in the United States. That would normally be true, but in our time world Stalinism has wrested so much from capitalism, narrowing its influence and economic breadth, that the economies of the West became more closely meshed with that of the United States. The slightest impact to this delicately balanced structure produces convulsions of both an economic and a political character.

On the home front, the huge production of the post-war period has run a cycle. Economic sickness is symptomized by the swift rise of unemployment, the decline of production, and the inability of the government to put into motion important measures of alleviation.

This is not yet a crisis of collapse. But it points out that, whatever changes have occurred in the capitalist economy in these recent decades, the fundamental character of the system remains unchanged. The present situation may be a new experience for the generations that have grown up since the thirties and to those who have forgotten it, but those of longer memory will understand what we mean. Certainly the men of Detroit know what we are talking about.

Whatever the depth of the present recession, it has already evoked the specter of capitalist collapse for the nations of the West. While they may understand that this recession may not go too deep, they remain fearful that any intensification of the present dislocation into a deeper crisis must drag them down to new ruin, so dependent are they upon the well-being of American capitalism. And they are absolutely right.

Constant Crisis

One can hardly speak of world capitalism today. At any rate one cannot speak of a vigorous, vital and vibrant world capitalism, because then it means the United States. The progressive and dynamic world capitalism about which its most enthusiastic representatives once sang so lyrically has been in a state of decline since this first shot fired in the First World War. The very fact that the capitalist world engaged in two self-destroying mass wars was the mark of the inability of this productive system of private profit to transcend its inner contradictions.

On a world scale, capitalism has been in continuous

crisis for over forty years. There have been periods of stabilization, expansion and economic growth in one country or another. In many cases, the growth has been extensive as well as intensive, sometimes phenomenal, sometimes ordinary. Even so, the capitalist world has now been considerably confined and the system maintains itself by enormous compromises and heroic measures violating its most cherished "principles."

Colonialism has died hard. France alone assumes the mantle of the old imperialism and her struggle for empire is dictated by a miserably outmoded domestic economy. With the passing of the old colonial system, gone for all time, a large sector of world capitalism as we have known it has disappeared, giving rise to "neutral nations" whose economies are mixed and undetermined, and who remain independent.

The expansion of world Stalinism has been a blow to capitalism of incalculable proportions. China with a population of more than four hundred millions, and the whole of Eastern Europe have been added to the immense Russian land mass and its millions of people. These areas are now barred to capitalist enterprise and exploitation, though these peoples have exchanged one form of economic exploitation for another.

While the expansion of Stalinism has narrowed the economic and political base of world capitalism, it has, at the same time, given the capitalist world the rationale for its struggle to justify itself in the eyes of its own peoples. The vast military expenditures which have been the main prop of American and hence world capitalism for the past decade have been justified to the American people by the threat of Communist expansion. And in the lands of Stalinism, the oppressive regimes which sacrifice the peoples' standard of living to military production, and which enforce a totalitarian political regime justify their actions by pointing to the military build-up in the capitalist world.

Without the justification of "capitalist encirclement" the Stalinist regimes would find it far more difficult to keep down the struggle of their peoples for democracy. Without the justification of the danger of "Communist aggression" the leaders of the capitalist world would find it far more difficult to maintain their economies on a going level, and to resist the popular demand for a social order which could offer the peoples security, prosperity, liberty and peace, namely for socialism.

Competition of Stalinism

Everywhere that capitalism turns, it faces the competition of a Stalinism which employs slogans of freedom and independence in a way that capitalism cannot or does not do. The cry of universal freedom which could rally the millions of peoples throughout the world against Stalinist totalitarians is a weapon of struggle which capitalism by its very nature uses little, halfheartedly, provisionally, and in the hope that it can be quickly withdrawn.

The fight of the capitalist West against Stalinist totalitarianism, is therefore, not taken too seriously by a large part of the world. Dulles cannot convince these peoples that General Franco, Sygman Rhee, Dictator Trujillo, Chiang Kai Shek, the French in Algeria, the British in Cyprus, and American policy in Indonesia, Viet Nam, and Latin and South America represent the forces of world democracy. They clearly see the hypocrisy of the capitalist West.

Americans, prone to be pragmatic, generally ignore theory and principle. Thinking about the social order has been provincial, insular, and narrowly sociological. In sum, American capitalism is considered something altogether different from the European; its principles and practices wholly unique. Nay, there is denial that it can even be called capitalism, for even though it was and is a profit and market economy, American society is a peoples' society, unencumbered by class divisions and class struggle. Though none of this was or is true, the enormous development of American capitalism based upon its fortunate relationship to world capitalism helped to produce and fortify these illusions. Such thinking remained strong until the crisis of the thirties and war revived again during World War II and in the post-war period.

A Unique Capitalism

Everything rotten under capitalism was attributed to Europe. Everything good, progressive, and dynamic was attributed to something unique about the United States. True, American capitalism was unique, but not for all the reasons stated by its advocates. They ignored some very important ones that help to explain not only the prosperity of the system but its contradictions as well.

The enormous frontier, wealth of natural resources, endless immigration providing a continuously increasing cheap labor force, building upon the experience of European capitalism and beginning anew in a virgin country ripe for exploitation—these factors explain the then swift expansion of the nation. Yet for all its isolation, American capitalism became inevitably and inextricably part of the capitalist world economy. It prospered from the First World War as its allies suffered; it prospered in the Second World War as its new allies (with the exception of Stalinist Russia) were nearly annihilated. At the same time, isolation had to die in the United States.

That the United States is the leader of world capitalism is undisputed. But it has risen to the leadership of a declining and narrowing capitalism; it has risen to this leadership when the problems of world capitalism have become fatally complex. And it has risen to this leadership not by virtue of its maturity and experience in the field of world politics and diplomacy, but by virtue of wealth, and wealth alone.

The difficulties of American leadership of the capitalist world are compounded by the fact that the West is no longer the bearer of a young, progressive and vital social order. Once possessing the world, western capitalism has been driven back almost to its own borders. Having twice nearly annihilated itself through totalitarianism and its collectivist drive and appeal.

This narrowing capitalist world depends for its very existence upon the well-being and open-handedness of the United States, which must act as the international pawnbroker for society, with, however, one difference, that in this era there will be no tickets to be redeemed. So that while much is made of capitalist revival in Western Europe, this revival is due entirely to the fact that the United States is the underwriter for that capitalism. Without the United States, there would be no capitalism in Europe today.

Old and Weary

Capitalism has become old and weary and so far as its profitableness and prosperity go, these are shared by fewer people. The world no longer belongs to it. The question is whether the world needs capitalism any longer, for the surest sign of its fatal decline is that it lacks the ideological vigor to mount a successful struggle against totalitarian Stalinism. It cannot fight with ideas; it can only posture with hydrogen bombs and, together with Stalinism, threaten to annihilate the world physically.

If the world were divided solely and simply between western capitalism and world Stalinism, it would be in a rather hopeless state. Fortunately a large part of the world rejects both Stalinism and capitalism. That large part of the world is not, unfortunately, socialist, but socialism makes up an important, significant and powerful force within independent areas of Asia and western Europe. These socialist movements and the neutral peoples, are among the most important reasons why the world has not yet been torn apart by the explosions of nuclear warfare.

If there was any doubt that socialism is the hope of humanity, the means of universal security, peace and freedom, the present world social crisis erases that doubt. Society will either be transformed into a humane society in the interests of all the people, i.e., a socialist society, or there may be no society left to organize.

No Security, No Peace

Capitalism offers no security, no peace, no freedom. Stalinism offers only totalitarian enslavement. The mass of humanity faces the specter of a new world war arising out of the world contradictions of two competing exploitive societies. Either or both could unleash the forces of world destruction in behalf of their anti-human social orders. Stalinist expansion runs headlong into the capitalist world. Capitalism threatens retaliation. Mr. Dulles practices the dangerous, crude and belligerent policy of "brinkmanship." The United States professes to fight for democracy against dictatorship with a host of dictator allies. Russia fights for "the freedom of the peoples" by imposing the system of totalitarianism wherever it attains power.

Today, Socialism means literally the defense of the world and its peoples. The need for socialism is not for the future. It is now. Socialists everywhere seek the abolition of capitalism and its replacement with democratic socialism not for unborn generations but for the living. The fight for democratic socialism particularly in the United States, is more important than ever. It is a struggle that calls for the common resources of all democratic socialists, for the world is truly on the brink.

We are fighting for the survival of all humanity.

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4 A Form of Socialism, Or the New Barbarism?

SOCIALISM vs. STALINISM

By **MAX MARTIN**

What is the nature of society in Russia and the other Communist countries? Socialist? Socialist with deformations? A workers' state in transition towards socialism?

There was a time when most people in the United States who thought of themselves as socialists or radicals, would have answered all of the fundamental questions about the character of the Russian social system and political regime in one of these ways, or with some variant of them. Today, however, many are taking a new look at the problem.

In the 1930's and early 1940's most radical and liberal opinion in this country not only identified Stalinism with socialism, but insisted that the Russian system was one of equality, democracy and brotherhood, or at least that it was on the high road towards these basic goals of socialist emancipation. Today, however, in the light of the Khrushchev revelations at the Twentieth Congress, and in the light of Hungary, there are few people left in the United States who deny that despotism, brutality and inequality are the hallmarks of Stalinism.

Yet the idea that Russia somehow remains socialist and progressive persists. One of the most common forms taken by this view contends that the Communist countries are socialist in their fundamental economic and social features despite the anti-democratic character of political life; that the economy of Russia, China, Hungary and all the others is socialist or socialistic even though the political forms of rule are dictatorial. Hence, this view argues, despite the murders and frameups, despite the absence of freedom, Stalinism remains progressive and worthwhile.

This idea, espoused by those political tendencies which call themselves "pro-Soviet," has been firmly rejected and combatted by the Independent Socialist League almost since its foundation eighteen years ago as the Workers Party.

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IS THIS SOCIALISM?

Our concern with this question does not stem from any academic prissiness, nor from an exaggerated interest in theoretical matters. Nor does it flow from a desire to exact the last full ounce of renunciation from those who once totally identified their socialist aspirations with the Russian system. Independent Socialists are so deeply concerned with the nature of Stalinism because involved in this problem is one of the fundamental issues of our time.

If the slave camps, the police terror, the frame-ups, the lies, the butchery of millions and the brutal dictatorship are socialism or a variety of socialism; if they are the consequence of the effort to establish socialism; then all of those who have argued that socialism is a new slavery are right. Then all of those who have claimed that capitalism may have its imperfections but is preferable to the vast prison socialism represents have a degree of truth and reason on their side. Then those political thinkers who have maintained that the socialists can eliminate capitalism but will only succeed in replacing it with a new oppression, with a new prison, and that the socialist ideal of freedom, justice, equality and brotherhood are unattainable, have been proven correct.

And even if it be maintained that Stalinism, and all that it entails, is not the inevitable concomitant of socialism everywhere throughout the world and for all time, but rather a stage which socialism must pass through in the underdeveloped or less-advanced countries of the world, then it follows that socialism must condemn the better part of mankind to a hellish existence for a period of time whose duration is not foreseeable.

Such a prospect would raise, and should raise whether it actually does or not, in the minds of all sensitive and thinking people, in the minds of all of those for whom socialism represents the expansion of human liberty and the flowering of the human personality, the most insistent and unanswerable doubts about the validity and desirability of the socialist alternative to capitalism.

A NEW RULING CLASS

Fortunately for mankind, however, the Stalinist barbarism which prevails in a large section of the world today is not socialism and has nothing in common with it. It is a new social system, a new and oppressive class society, anti-socialist and anti-working class to the core; one which results not from socialism but rather from the failure to establish socialism; one which developed precisely because the attempt to construct socialism in Russia was hurled back, defeated and crushed.

To be sure, Communism did destroy capitalism and feudalism in Russia and everywhere else where it took power. The character of Stalinism as an anti-capitalist movement and system helps account for much of the false identification between it and socialism. For did not socialists in the past almost automatically assume that all anti-capitalist measures had to necessarily be socialist or lead towards socialism? Where did they allow for a non-socialist alternative to capitalism?

In the first place, Marx and Engels on more than one occasion posited the possibility of either socialism or barbarism replacing capitalism. Indeed, they insisted that if the working class, which together with its allies constitutes the

majority of the population, would not be able to take the democratic leadership of the nation and establish a socialist order, then a barbarous retrogression lay in store for mankind. They could not envision the nature of that barbarism a hundred years ago. But we living today can see that Stalinism is at least one of its names and faces.

NATIONALIZATION

But even if the socialist thinkers of the past had not conceived of the possibility of an alternative to capitalism other than socialism, even if they had not considered the development of a non-socialist, non-capitalist social system out of the decay of capitalism within the realm of possible occurrences in the history of mankind, we living at the present time have to reckon with such a phenomena, given our experience with Stalinism.

The new social system is based upon the nationalization and statification of the means of production and exchange. Those who regard Communism as it exists in Russia and the other Communist lands as a form of socialism base their view of Communist society on this fact. Did not our socialist forerunners insist that the abolition of private property in the means of production and its replacement by a planned, statified economy was the essential task and aim of the socialist movement?

Socialists in the past did frequently seem to indicate that the achievement of these tasks was identical with the establishment of socialism, or of the foundations of a socialist society. But if this was true it was because they tended to assume that socialism was the only alternative to capitalism, that socialism and only socialism could be built on the basis of wresting the means of production from the hands of the individual capitalists and placing them under the control of society as a whole.

SOCIALIZATION

Socialism is based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and exchange by the people. This indeed requires their nationalization. But nationalization is not necessarily socialization. It does not inevitably equal common ownership by the people nor guarantee that the aim of production will be the creation of goods and services for use by all members of society.

If ownership of the means of production is vested in the state it does not follow that we have an economy which is socialist; that is, one which is socialized; that is, one which is in the hands of society. For that something additional is necessary; namely, that the state be in the hands of society as a whole so that the people themselves control the means of production for the welfare of all. In a word, democracy must exist.

Indeed, socialism involves the widest extension of democracy into all spheres of life in which it does not exist, or partially exists, under capitalism, and into the economic realm primarily. The essence of socialism, after all, is the subjecting to the democratic control of so-

ciety, that is to say, of mankind, of that aspect of man's life which is concerned with the production and distribution of the material means of existence — the basic foundation upon which all else arises and from which the intellectual, cultural and spiritual development of humanity becomes possible. Then will the production of such an abundance become possible that the struggle to satisfy man's material needs will be eliminated.

A HUMAN SOCIETY

Such a condition will sound the death knell for all classes, class divisions, class privileges and class rule. Mankind can then be liberated from exploitation, from oppression, and from coercion. A truly human existence for mankind will then for the first time really become possible. Recalling this fundamental aim of the socialist cause, its *raison d'etre*, at once renders preposterous all claims of identity between Stalinism and socialism.

The economy in the Communist countries is collectivized, but this collectivization has nothing in common with the democratic collectivism of socialism. It is a bureaucratic or totalitarian collectivism. The means of production in Stalinist collectivism are not socialized because they are not owned by society as a whole. They are "owned" by those who "own" the state; by the bureaucrats who rule politically. Unlike under capitalism, economic and political power are fused in societies with statified economies. Those who rule politically necessarily rule society and the economy.

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

Under socialism the people "own"—more accurately, control or rule—the economy through wielding political power. In Stalinist society those who have political power organize, manage and dispose of the fruits of the economy. The rise of Stalinism involved the rise of a new ruling class, one never before seen in history, which shaped a new, non-socialist social system based upon a statified economy.

The mode of life of the members of this new ruling class is as different from the mode of existence of the workers and peasants as day from night. The rulers of Russian society enjoy all of the material privileges enjoyed by all previous ruling classes. The method by which these privileges are acquired differs greatly from that by which the ruling class in capitalist society achieve their privileged position. Like the capitalist class and all other previous ruling classes, however, it utilizes its monopoly of social power to gather up for itself the choicest fruits of the production of society. It is no wonder that one of the slogans which the Stalinist bureaucracy inscribed upon its banner during its rise to power was an attack on the idea of equality.

SOCIALISM'S OPPOSITE

The new ruling class organized and developed the productive forces of Russia to an enormous degree. It built giant industries, it created a modern working class, it lifted Russia into the position of the second strongest power in the world. It did so, however, with barbarous, bureaucratic, anti-socialist methods, by introducing and reinforcing inequality, and through a super-exploitation of the workers and peasants not even matched by capitalist exploitation. It produced a tremendous rise in Russian economy and in the process reduced a great nation—indeed, many nations—to slavery.

These developments have nothing in common with socialism; they represent its antithesis.

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5 A New Look at a Basic Socialist Assumption

SOCIALISM and the WORKING CLASS

By H. W. BENSON

Socialism has been variously defined to suit the tastes and needs of widely ranging and mutually hostile opinions. In this respect it has suffered the fate of every popular ideal appropriated in time to serve the needs of its own mortal enemy. It is fitting now to recall that modern socialism came into being as a working class movement for the realization of authentic democracy. Since then: wars, cataclysms, horrible dictatorships and terrible reaction, the disintegration of old social systems and the rise of new. In our new world, the goal and meaning of socialism must be adapted to the unique problems of our day, reshaped in the light of experience.

Yet the moving spirit which inspired it remains. Even while reexamining the policies and program of socialism (our own and others'), it is this which we reaffirm: the striving of the working class everywhere for democracy, in all its fullness, in all its aspects. And it is this principle, advanced with increasing urgency and consistency, which inspired the formation of the Independent Socialist League and governed its evolution.

The expansion of commerce and industrialism and the growth of a bourgeoisie toppled kings from thrones, ended absolute monarchy, and destroyed emperors. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity was the watchword of millions. It seemed at last that the rule of a tiny privileged minority of aristocrats had yielded to rule of the people. But it quickly became evident that this democracy was restricted and defective; for it coincided with the rise of a new social system, capitalism, and the strengthening of a new privileged class, the capitalist class. A new minority held as private property the machines and factories and raw materials and resources. And with that ownership went the accumulation of huge fortunes while the mass of people increasingly became hired wage hands; and others courtiers and dependents.

MOCKERY AND DECEPTION

Liberty was a deception when only the rich could afford it in full. Equality was a fraud when the mass lived in poverty and the few in luxury. Fraternity was a mockery when the few exploited the many; when class was ranged against class, and nation against nation.

It was to transform democracy from a cruelly mishapen ideal into a reality that the modern socialist movement arose, calling for social democracy. Political democracy alone was not enough. It was not enough for each citizen to enjoy the right to elect the government each with one equal vote, when in the factory the owner remained king and the worker subject.

And with capitalism, there had come into existence the modern working class, the proletariat. For centuries, far-sighted men had dreamed of a new life for mankind, of cooperation instead of exploitation. Now a new social class gave substance to this age-old yearning. Socialism was united with the labor movement.

The capitalist class dominated the government. The working class must replace it. This transfer of power, nothing less than a social revolution, would open up the road to democracy. If democracy was to prevail, capitalism had to go. And if capitalism was to be ended, the working class was decisive, not alone, but with the aid of other social groups and classes that would find leadership from the working class movement.

Why the working class?

1. The working class, by its very nature, was a non-propertied class with no stake in the perpetuation of capitalism. It was outspokenly hostile to the capitalist system and remains so to this day,

everywhere except in the United States.

2. Its very existence made it possible to identify socialism with democracy. It was a vast and growing section of the population which itself requires the expansion of democratic rights.

3. Of all popular social groups, it was the most powerfully organized. It was mobilized by the factory system and it founded massive trade unions, parties, co-operatives and fraternal organizations.

When the socialist movement was young and robust, each of these precepts was common coin almost everywhere in theory and everywhere in practice. They represented the consistent union of socialism, democracy and labor.

PRINCIPLES CHALLENGED

But in three decades after the first world war, in the days of socialist decline, defeat and disintegration, each of these founding principles was challenged, attacked or discarded inside the socialist movement and without, some denying its working class character, others repudiating its attachment to democracy, still others repeating as Utopian the very possibility of a socialist, democratic and working class movement. Now, in the era of socialist revival it is these ideas which must be restored again to their rightful place.

The working class, which once aroused such hope seemed to have lost the powers once ascribed to it. A half century ago, the proud international socialist movement seemed to be a bulwark against world war, enrolling millions in every European nation behind its banners of peace, democracy and socialism. But that movement fragmented instantly upon the outbreak of war, each section rallying to the side of its own capitalist class, as worker slaughtered worker.

AFTER THE WAR

In the aftermath of war, hope again focused on the labor and socialist movements which were on the edge of victory in many countries. Perhaps, was the fervent hope of millions, humanity might avoid new years of senseless suffering. But it was not to be. Militarism was reconstituted. Dictatorship came to power in Eastern Europe; Fascism took over in Italy, Hitler in Germany, a Dollfus dictatorship in Austria, a Franco regime in Spain. The working class could not stave off the march of reaction and tyranny.

And then? A new and even more devastating world war; this time involving the very life and death of whole races, nations and social systems. Through it all labor and socialism, or movements which spoke in their name, supported one side or another, but not as an independent vigorous force for socialism and democracy. Then, for ten years the international working class seemed stunned and impotent as it faced the rise of Stalinism, which dominated the working class in Italy and France, and which succeeded in crushing capitalism in country after country, only to wipe out democracy and destroy the labor movement along with it.

Where, came the insistent query, where is your working class?

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

For a passing historical moment, the world of labor and socialism had been

encouraged when in Russia, in November 1917 one of the socialist parties came to power. It took the initiative in calling for an end to the war; it proclaimed freedom for small nations; it proposed to build a new, democratic form of government.

But that socialist and working class government was overthrown. It was a setback from which the socialist movement has not yet recovered. A repulsive tyranny overwhelmed socialism and the labor movement in Russia from within like a cancer or parasite that appears to be part of the body but consumes and destroys it. By conquering from within the ruling party in Russia, Stalinism was able not only to wipe out and destroy socialism, but to parade fraudulently in its name. Hundreds of thousands of radical socialists throughout the world faced a monstrous dilemma. If they rejected, fully and completely, the regime in Russia, they feared that they would be rejecting the working class which had made a revolution in the name of democracy and socialism. But, if they associated themselves with it, however critically, they could only identify the rule of the working class with a conscienceless tyranny!

It was thus that socialism was hacked to pieces in Russia and at the same time whole sections of the working class movement all over the world were disoriented and demoralized. In any case, the name of socialism and the rule of the working class with which it was associated, became offensive to millions, above all in the United States, where socialism had never established deep and permanent roots.

APPEAL OF STALINISM

But on a world scale masses of people under the heel of capitalist imperialism and crushed with exploitation by the old ruling capitalist class looked to Stalinism with hope. It rallied professionals, intellectuals, peasants, workers. It promised a new society. But where it took power, it ended capitalism only to install a monstrous dictatorship. The future of the world seemed fixed in gloom; totalitarian collectivism cast a baleful shadow. Liberals, democrats and socialists everywhere were paralyzed intellectually by this incredible tyranny which, when in power, monopolized control over every sphere of social life. Clearly, 1984 loomed. How could mere mortal man pit his puny self against such unbridled power?

In sheer desperation, not with real hope for the future but only for lack of any apparent alternative, opponents of Stalinism turned to the only seemingly tangible counter-power: the military and material might of still-capitalist United States. What idiot could rely on the working class, was the theme. Better guns, bombs and money than vain illusions about the power of labor. Yet, in the end, it was the working class which burst through and restored faith in the possibilities of world democracy and socialism.

The gleaming surface smoothness of Stalinism was cracked; the same powers of mass resistance which had gathered beneath the rigid rule of the Nazis gathered under Stalinism, rumbling in Stalin's lifetime and breaking through instantly after his death. Two world-shaking truths were now available to all when the Stalinist monolith was revealed to be torn with internal dissensions: 1. Stalinism was lies, assassination, frame-ups, exploitation, and terror; 2. The workers in the very slave camps of Russia, in Poland, in East Germany, and finally in Hungary were seething with hatred of dictatorship and ready to revolt against it. Stalinism in power had been effectively challenged only by the working class!

The social system of capitalism is already doomed in most of the world. The capitalist class has been wiped out in the countries taken over by the Communists and when the rule of Stalinism ends capitalism will never return. In Western Europe, where capitalism remains it cannot depend upon the loyalty and support of a firm majority of the people. If the working class was weakened by forty years of social convulsions, capitalism has been discredited as never before. If Germany is united under a truly democratic regime, a pro-socialist majority is guaranteed from the outset. In France and in Italy a majority votes for parties considered to be anti-capitalist. In England, the parliamentary majority teeters back and forth between socialists and anti-socialists and there is no reasonable prospect for a resurgence of deep-going pro-capitalist sentiment.

Only in the United States of all major countries does capitalism remain strong and unchallenged as a social system.

But that simple and incontestable fact, taken by itself, is somewhat misleading. Other nations look to the United States today not out of hope but out of fear. They are not enamored of our social system but they seek a counter-weight to the power of Russian imperialism. From our capitalist class, they expect no solution to the crisis of our times: how to avoid atomic war; how to preserve democracy; how to end imperialism and dictatorship everywhere. Capitalist America to the people of the world is a momentary stop-gap in the absence of a genuine road to peace and freedom.

A WHOLE CENTURY

We look back now upon a century of working class activity. What comes to mind is its amazing vitality under all circumstances, from days of placid growth through the times of torture and travail. Always and everywhere, the working class, even beaten to the ground, springs to life again. Out of the rubble and devastation of the last war, seemingly wiped out in whole nations as an organized class, the working class reassembled quickly as the most impressive force apart from the governments themselves. In Italy, after twenty years of fascism; in Germany after twelve years of Hitlerism, in all Europe after brutal occupation under the Nazis, the unions and parties of labor reappeared.

And finally, it came to life under the menacing power of the Communist tyranny. In Hungary, the working class rose in rebellion, demonstrating anew that it alone had the capacity to lead the nation in the fight for democracy under what had seemed to be insuperable odds. It was defeated. But it was not a defeat like others inflicted upon other working classes in other times. This signalled not the final, long-term crushing of rebellion against Communist rule, but only its beginning. The era of working class resistance to Stalinist domination has begun and will not close, we are confident, until Stalinism like all its tyrannical predecessors is brought down.

LABOR IN THE U.S.

While in Europe the socialist-minded labor movement went through the ordeal of shattering wars, counterrevolution and Stalinism, the labor movement in the United States remained aloof, protected from the great shocks of half-a-century, preoccupied with its own immediate problems. Yet, it was indirectly affected; for the same factors that forced European socialism back demoralized, perverted and disorganized the socialist wing inside the American labor movement. And as socialism went into decline the unions lost the spark of idealism and the attachment to great political principle. Without its socialist wing, the narrowness and shortcomings of our union movement show up in a harsh glare.

To understand what the American labor movement is, we must remember what it once was. If we look back a generation or two, we might perceive more democracy, more militancy, more independence and more socialism within the labor movement. But that labor movement represented only a small section of a working class which in its overwhelming majority was unorganized, incapable of offering resistance to employers, dominated by crude and corrupt political machines,

Turn to last page!

**6 There Can Be No Democracy Without Socialism;
No Socialism Without Democracy**

SOCIALISM and DEMOCRACY

By JULIUS FALK

From its beginnings the socialist movement has been committed to democracy. The right to vote, freedom of speech, press and assemblage—these were among the most cherished democratic principles for which socialists fought. This was only normal as socialism implies nothing more or less than the continuation and widening of political freedom, and the extension of democracy into economic life.

It is this concern with and allegiance to democratic concepts which has led socialists to decry "bourgeois democracy," counterposing to it workers' or socialist democracy. Our objection is based primarily on the tenuous relationship between the "bourgeois" and "democracy"; the adjective not only describes, it also circumscribes the noun. Unfortunately, symptomatic of the times in which we live, this simple idea is missed—intentionally or otherwise—by scholars and men of letters who, in an effort to show that Marxian socialists are totalitarian at heart, point to the frequent denunciation of "bourgeois democracy" that can be found in the socialist press. Yet when democratic socialists have criticized "bourgeois democracy" it was never with the thought in mind—or on paper—that there is something wrong with the right to vote, the right to join political parties, the right to assemble, etc.

CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY

Our misgivings over capitalist democracy stem generally from our knowledge that democracy is a precious value which is too often treated as a commodity by the bourgeoisie, something that can or must be traded off, exchanged, bought or sold, in part or whole depending upon

what social advantage it feels can be achieved by the transaction. We saw this in Germany where the world's most democratic bourgeois constitution was hardly a decisive political or moral consideration for a bourgeoisie which, faced with a profound social crisis, traded off democracy for Hitler in the vain quest for stability.

Germany and Italy are all the proof we need that democratic values cannot be trusted blindly to the capitalist class. And if we were to examine the histories of all other bourgeois nations the evidence would only mount. The United States is no exception. The capitalist class here has seldom gratuitously granted democratic rights. Universal suffrage, free education, labor's right to organize were neither god-given nor gracious bourgeois gifts; they were rights won by militant masses in struggle. And racial equality remains yet to be won from a bourgeoisie which is unique for its primitive prejudices, its primitive lack of culture and its absence of moral conscience.

SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY

We have said that socialists have always been committed to democracy in the past. In a manner of speaking, however, it is necessary today to be more committed to democratic principles than ever before. For two reasons:

1) In the past twenty five years the numbers of peoples who have been subjected to colonial violence, authoritarian rule and totalitarian terror has grown to a staggering and terrifying figure. If one were to look just at Europe—we see that in recent times the vast majority of its peoples have been deprived of their political rights. The combined population of Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, European Russia and Russia's East European empire comprise three-fourths of the continental population. And even if we look at Europe today we are able to strike off the list only Italy (after twenty years of fascism) and but the Western portion of Germany (after 12 years of Nazism). The majority of European people—for all their restiveness and rebelliousness—are still ground under the malignant heel of despotism. If one were to add to the European figure the hundreds of millions of peoples in Asia, Africa, South America subjected to one form or another of dictatorial rule the inescapable conclusion is that the majority of the world's population are deprived of democratic liberties. In China alone 700 million souls are forced to live under a Stalinist dictatorship, not one whit more gentle and much more thorough than its reactionary nationalist predecessor.

The statistics are appalling. They are also instructive. If this is not only an era of war and national revolutions, but of totalitarian expansion as well, then socialists must become ever more insistent, ever more demanding and yes, more dogmatic, in their insistence on the preservation of democracy as a political objective and an operational principle.

2. The expansion of totalitarianism is one reason for the new emphasis socialists must give to democratic values. The second reason is the unique character of Communist totalitarianism which has served to distort and corrupt the working class movement.

STALINISM

Stalinism—or Bureaucratic Collectivism—is the only totalitarian movement

which uses the language of Marxism and poses as the heir and continuator of revolutionary socialism. It appeals to the French working class by pretending to champion its legitimate grievances against an inept and spineless bourgeoisie; it seeks support from the Asian masses and their leaders by proclaiming its support of national independence movements. The Bureaucratic Collectivists are for democracy in the United States, for socialism in Europe and for national independence in the colonial world. And the pose is effective. Millions throughout the world vote Communist or look with favor on the Kremlin.

But the democracy that the Kremlin finds deficient in the United States is totally absent in Russia; the working class movement it encourages in its own way in Europe is non-existent in the "Socialist Fatherland"; the extent of its fealty to the democratic principle of national independence was proven in Hungary. Despite this flagrant contradiction between its propaganda and its deeds the Kremlin remains a world movement of massive popular force. The sad truth is that even the Hungarian experience did not take the political toll in the Stalinist world that democratic socialists hoped it would. The Kremlin has managed to recoup many of its losses since October 1956.

ECONOMICS AND POLITICS

To rationalize the contradiction between its "socialist" propaganda and totalitarian deed, the Communist world has instinctively dichotomized the relationship between socialism and democracy: There is economic socialist democracy which belongs in one compartment; and there is political socialist democracy which belongs in a different compartment. It is possible to have the former without the latter. More than that it is possible to have a socialist economy and a political dictatorship.

Democratic socialists, reject in toto the theoretically mistaken and perniciously applied doctrine which divorces political democracy from socialism. This view has served to corrupt the working class movement and obliges us to make explicit and underline what once had been an assumption in the socialist movement: the inseparability of political democracy and economic freedom.

DEMOCRACY ESSENTIAL

Contrary to this Stalinist theory, democracy is precisely the element required to make socialism work and which provides it with its socialist economic character.

In capitalist society economic activity is not carried on in a conscious and planned way. Production is "anarchic" because it is regulated by an uncertain market. The economy and the government, the industrialist and the politician are not single entities under capitalism. In a society, however, where the economy has been nationalized the distinction between economic manager and political leader no longer can be made. Politics and economics are fused. Under capitalism the gap between economics and politics permits one to accurately speak of economic base and political superstructure. But where the gap is closed, where politics and economics are synthesized this duality becomes a thing of the past.

The means of production and distribution, taken over by the state, must be regulated and consciously planned by the state. But this economic planning is organized by the same state which adopts political policies, which negotiates with foreign powers, etc. There is not and cannot be in any nationalized economy one state for planning the economy and another state for planning politics. That is absurd on the face of it.

In a nationalized economy, then whoever,

controls the state controls all political and economic life. That is why when a socialist speaks of socialization he means nationalization plus democracy. For the working class can control or own the state only through its mass political organizations and these mass organizations of the working class have meaning only if they are controlled from below. To effectuate this control, democracy is of the essence, for the working class is the only class which cannot rule—either politically or economically—except on the basis of democracy. Capitalism can do without democracy and for Stalinism democracy is anathema. But for the working class and for socialism, democracy is as oxygen to life. Where the working class—and the people as a whole—are deprived of democracy in a nationalized economy there totalitarianism rules.

REGIME OF TERROR

We have said that democracy is not only essential for defining socialism but that it is precisely the element which can make socialism work. The reason:—democracy makes for efficiency whereas dictatorship makes for enormous waste. In Russia, the economy is enormously handicapped by the regime of terror. A factory worker deprived of any real voice in the problems of his shop or community has little to offer in the way of constructive suggestions. The instinct of self-preservation tells him to keep his eyes on his work and his mouth shut, unless it is to mechanically endorse some plan or other that is put to a "vote."

But it is not only fear which loses for the totalitarian nationalized economy the invaluable services that could be performed by a free worker living in a workers' democracy. Essentially it is the same problem of alienation which exists for the worker under capitalism. Deprived of all freedom—the worker under Stalinism is naturally deprived of any interest in his job beyond getting through with his day in the shop or the mill. Where the economy is socialized—not nationalized—where the individual worker has a genuine voice in the affairs of his shop, a voice in economic planning on a local level and a voice in national planning through his active participation in his economic and political mass organizations which control the state, there, we believe, the worker would no longer be oppressed by the same sense of remoteness and indifference and frustration that typifies the worker under capitalism and Stalinism. Socialism must provide the individual worker with the leisure, comforts, rights and will to improve the operation of his shop and his community.

The goal of socialism is to establish democracy in all spheres of social life. The method of socialism is to practice democracy in its own movement, and to struggle for democracy wherever it is denied, restricted, or abolished. If socialists have learned anything from the history of the past thirty years it is to stress more heavily than they ever did before the inextricable relationship between socialism and democracy.

The ISL Program in Brief

The Independent Socialist League stands for socialist democracy and against the two systems of exploitation which now divide the world: capitalism and Stalinism.

Capitalism cannot be reformed or liberalized, by any Fair Deal or other deal, so as to give the people freedom, abundance, security or peace. It must be abolished and replaced by a new social system, in which the people own and control the basic sectors of the economy, democratically controlling their own economic and political destinies.

Stalinism, in Russia and wherever it holds power, is a brutal totalitarianism—a new form of exploitation. Its agents in every country, the Communist Parties, are unrelenting enemies of socialism and have nothing in common with socialism—which cannot exist without effective democratic control by the people.

These two camps of capitalism and Stalinism are today at each other's throats in a worldwide imperialist rivalry for domination. This struggle can only lead to the most frightful war in history so long as the people leave the capitalist and Stalinist rulers in power. Independent Socialism stands for building and strengthening the Third Camp of the people against both war blocs.

The ISL, as a Marxist movement, looks to the working class and its ever-present struggle as the basic progressive force in society. The ISL is organized to spread the ideas of socialism in the labor movement and among all other sections of the people.

At the same time, Independent Socialists participate actively in every struggle to better the people's lot now, such as the fight for higher living standards, against Jim Crow and anti-Semitism, in defense of civil liberties and the trade-union movement. We seek to join together with all other militants in the labor movement as a left force working for the formation of an independent labor party and other progressive policies.

The fight for democracy and the fight for socialism are inseparable. There can be no lasting and genuine democracy without socialism, and there can be no socialism without democracy. To enroll under this banner, join the Independent Socialist League.

Get Acquainted!

Independent Socialist League
114 West 14 Street
New York 11, N. Y.

I want more information about the ideas of Independent Socialism and the ISL.

I want to join the ISL.

NAME (please print)

ADDRESS

CITY

ZONE STATE

In a nationalized economy, then whoever,

7 CIVIL LIBERTIES, CIVIL RIGHTS

The Socialist Goal and the Immediate Program

The Struggle for Democracy In America Today

By MICHAEL HARRINGTON

During the past decade, there has been little opportunity for socialists in the United States to argue effectively for a specifically socialist point of view before significant sections of the labor movement or of the society as a whole. The general conservatism of the United States, primarily a function of the cold war (and of its most extreme manifestation, McCarthyism), effected every class and stratum in the nation. And the socialist movement, as is well known, reached the lowest ebb in fifty years.

And yet, this same period has presented a whole series of problems which demanded immediate answers. They forced the Independent Socialist tendency to define the relation of their worked-out program to these issues and this was, to say the least, a difficult task. On the one hand, it was necessary that the socialist movement act effectively and in terms of the actual social reality before it; on the other hand, the socialists had to make their own particular contribution to the mode of struggle. They could not view each situation in isolation but saw it as part of a larger social development.

This meant, of course, that the position of "vulture socialism" had to be decisively rejected. That peculiar form of sectarianism which sees the immediate problem, especially if it leads to social misery, as a mere instrument for the creation of socialist consciousness, is both theoretically and practically an abomination. For one thing, non-socialists who form the overwhelming majority of the American population can understand the difference between genuine and loyal commitment and "using" a situation for some ultimate goal. And then, such an approach is a contradiction of the most basic socialist concern for helping actual, living human beings to improve their lives through associated human effort.

On the other hand, it imposed upon the independent socialists the difficult job of relating their action in immediate situations to their ultimate conceptions of a world in crisis. Other articles in this issue treat with the various means which the Independent Socialist tendency has employed to achieve concretization of their full and rounded views in terms of the immediate problems in foreign policy, with regard to the labor movement, etc. This article proposes to deal with two very important areas, civil liberties and civil rights.

Civil Liberties for All

The practical and immediate program of independent socialism with respect to civil liberties was the principled defense of the rights of all. In a period which saw the liberal movement, as an organized tendency, retreat from its similar position, this was a minority position in American society. It was focused most importantly on a symbolic issue: the right of the Communist Party member to teach. For it was on this question that the traditional forces of American liberalism made their most open surrender of principle. It became a sort of litmus test for the civil libertarian.

The main theoretician of the liberal retreat—and consequently the figure upon whom the socialists concentrated their criticism—was Sidney Hook. In his book, *Heresy, Yes—Conspiracy, No!* Hook argued that the conspiratorial character of American Communism unfitted its members for teaching and placed them beyond the pale of the rights of advocacy which liberalism normally defended even for its foes. The independent socialists pointed out that this analysis grossly oversimplified the reality of the Communist Party—in particular, that it imputed a degree of conspiratorial participation to every member of the Party which flew in the face of all evidence and experience. But beyond this, the chief argument was that the traditional rights of those with whom we most basically disagree—Communist or fascist—must be defended at all costs.

This was the immediate program. It placed the independent socialists in a general community of various left liberals, spokesmen of the labor movement, etc., and in this sense it did not differentiate them from various principled non-socialist liberals and laborites. But there were differences. For in arguing for their point of view, the socialists put forward an extended analysis of the problem of civil liberties in the United States.

Witch-hunt and Cold War

The key conception of the socialist analysis was the relation of the witchhunt to the cold war. It was pointed out that the repression really began in earnest with the outbreak of that conflict; that it intensified and took its most extreme, McCarthyite form during the Korean War; and that it began to "normalize" with the settlement in Korea and Indochina. But more than this chronology, there was the demonstration that the repression was of a piece with the general tendency of the American camp in the cold war: an inability to meet the political challenge of Communism with a democratic political program and a consequent reliance upon military alliances and repression. This over-all tendency of American capitalism in the Cold War was seen as the background for the domestic witch-hunt.

Given this analysis, independent socialists were able to make a significant and unique contribution to the struggle for civil liberties. They did not, for example, see McCarthy as a fascist (as the Socialist Workers Party did), and neither did they adopt an attitude of "critical support" of the witchhunt as so many liberals and some socialists did.

In addition, the Independent Socialist League has waged a long, difficult and costly struggle against the fountainhead of organizational and hence personal blacklisting in America, the attorney general's "List of Subversive Organizations." While this struggle has assumed the form of the demand that the ISL be removed from the list, its broader purpose is to strike a decisive blow at the list itself.

During the McCarthy struggle, socialists played an important and honorable role in the fight. But now, our analysis must take us one step further. The witchhunt has become less hysterical—but its institutions remain. Currently, there is an all-out attack upon the Supreme Court, partly because of its decisions on civil liberties, partly because of those on civil rights. Our more general conception—that the attack on freedom is a general characteristic of our society at this time; that the tendency toward the garrison state is a permanent threat in the era of the cold war and war economy—is more relevant than ever. It must be argued to those liberals who think that the whole problem ended with the defeat of McCarthyite power.

Struggle for Civil Rights

The burst of Negro consciousness which took place following the Supreme Court decision on school integration in May, 1954 was, of course, one of the most important social phenomena in recent American history. In terms of mass action, it represented the only significant movement in the United States in the recent period. And here again, the problem of the relation between the immediate fight for this or that piece of legislation and the over-all struggle for actual Negro emancipation was posed.

The independent socialist movement was committed to participation in the day to day struggle. In a series of important actions—most particularly, in the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom last May—there was very real participation. Throughout the country, independent socialists were involved in aiding in the work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The old sectarian attitude toward the NAACP vanished under the impact of the developing movement for civil rights.

But even as socialists attempted to act as loyal and militant adherents of the organized movement for civil rights, they also tried to help carry that fight to a higher level. On the one hand, this meant welcoming the great mass influx into the civil rights movement and particularly the great campaign in Montgomery, Alabama and all that it signified. The NAACP had been criticized by socialists for some years because of its bureaucratic tendencies, the sometimes timid attitude of sections of its leadership, the refusal to mobilize the mass support which existed for its cause. In more recent years this generalization, whatever force it had in the past, had become quite uneven. In some areas, especially in the South, the great upheaval made the NAACP a focus of militant popular action. In every area, this organization had won the support of Negroes as the instrument of their struggle. Thus socialists fought for and within the NAACP, even as they tried to make it more of a membership organization.

But there were even deeper ramifications of the civil rights struggle. And here, the Independent Socialist demand for political realignment through the creation of a labor party took on a much deeper significance. For the civil rights movement ran into the bipartisan nature of American reaction as an immediate and obvious problem. The defection from the Democratic Party in the 1956 election reached considerable proportions, and the numbers were even more significant in the South than in the North. At the Prayer Pilgrimage meeting in 1957, every spokesman of the Negro movement—from the NAACP, from Montgomery, from all tendencies—commented on this fact in outraged terms.

In more recent times, the civil rights struggle has subsided from the levels which it reached during the Montgomery boycott. Yet it is obvious that the issue cannot be wished away by politicians seeking to cloak their standpatism in calls for "moderation." Next September, the problem of integration will be posed once again—and in an election year. And once again, the politicians will try to double-talk their way around the obligation of every decent and democratic-minded person to give the moment for integration full and unambiguous support. In this area of American life, the gap between specifically socialist demands, in the main that of the labor party, and the immediate issue is not great. It is clearly impossible for the Negro movement to develop such a party on its own—yet it is also obvious that this tremendously important social movement may well be the spark which sets off political realignment—and the result will indeed be explosive.

Significant Contribution

Thus, in the area of civil rights, independent socialists were able to make a significant contribution both in terms of action for immediate goals and as a force which sought to help bring the movement to a consciousness of the more far-reaching changes which are necessary to insure a real and lasting victory.

These two cases give us the opportunity to generalize on the experience of independent socialism in the last decade—to understand more fully the practical problems of the socialist movement as it attempts to become once again a factor in American life. And in every instance, the conclusion imposed upon us by our work is that socialists must root out every bit of sectarianism that is left in us.

It was one of the tragedies of American life, for instance, that the Communist Party, of all the radical and radical-seeming organizations, was for years the most successful and determined group in terms of fighting for and influencing America's Negroes. Even with its slogan of "self-determination," even with its countless sell-outs (including sabotage of the March on Washington movement in the Forties), the Communists were able to make an impression. And they did so because they did not disdain the hard, day to day work for the undramatic but necessary demand. In so far as they were successful it was because they won a certain respect in action. And often enough, this compensated for the losses which they suffered because of their slavish adherence to the dictates of Russian foreign policy.

Looking back upon a decade, we can say that the independent socialist movement developed the right position; the abstract formulation which was adequate to the situation, but that it failed to find deep roots in the daily life of the civil rights struggle. The general reasons which led to the isolation and decline of socialism in America were too powerful to be overcome in this single field. However, in looking forward to the reconstruction of the socialist movement it is clear that one vital condition for its success is that socialists must become a loyal, indigenous tendency within the civil rights movement.

Something to Offer

One of the ways guaranteed not to achieve this is by having socialism become a parasitic growth on the actual civil rights movement. Until American socialism has something to offer—financial aid, numbers of active workers, immediate and realistic policies for actual problems—it cannot speak with its own voice in the civil rights movement. Socialists must work for civil rights, of course, but they cannot become a burden to that struggle. Those socialists who "attach" themselves to this or that battle, who push socialist agitation without being able to give socialist aid—they will not aid the civil rights movement, and neither will they aid socialism. The problem, we must repeat, is that socialism becomes a positive, indigenous force within the civil rights movement.

All of this adds up to a series of important propositions. First, that the socialist movement is not a "vulture" which simply "uses" issues to push socialism, but that it seeks to be a loyal and indigenous tendency concerned with the immediate problems of life in our time. Second, that socialists must not simply be activists (though that is, of course, the precondition of socialist effectiveness); but that they must make their own particular and unique contribution. In the past decade, independent socialism has achieved an understanding of this in a theoretical way and it has made practical strides. But now, with our conception of a broad, Debsian movement, there are greater possibilities, real potentialities for practical work. And we shall succeed, both in solving the actual, immediate problems and in raising the level of understanding of them, as we break utterly with all past sectarianism and turn toward genuine cooperative effort with the millions in America who are confronted with the threat of the witch-hunt, with the anti-democracy of Jim Crow.

8 A Discussion of Socialist Electoral Policy Today

The Next Step For America's Workers:

A LABOR PARTY

By GORDON HASKELL

At the risk of over-simplification one might say that the American people are confronted with three major political issues today. These are the recession and all the allied and connected economic problems; foreign policy, which includes also armaments and all aspects of preparation for nuclear warfare; and civil rights, which embraces the whole field of discrimination and inequality.

Now, whatever may be said for the two-party system which dominates American political life, it would be difficult to argue that it offers a clear-cut and effective political instrumentality by which the American people can grapple with these problems. To be sure, the Democrats tend more than the Republicans to favor large-scale government intervention to offset the recession, though the pleas of the unions for swift and massive action have met with almost the same glacial response from the Democratic leadership as from their colleagues across the Congressional isles. On foreign policy and armaments, both parties are hodge-podge of conflicting counsels and tendencies. On civil rights, Republican espousal of the struggle for Negro equality is belied by their general indifference to the plight of the underdog in American society, while the Solid South continues the wide-open cleavage in the Democratic Party which paralyzes it on this and many another issue on a national scale.

The confusion within both parties on the major issues of the day reflects, to a certain extent, the confusion which prevails among the American people as a whole. But one of the reasons for the existence of political parties is, or should be, that they serve to clarify issues, to shape and lead public opinion to the formulation and execution of policy, to present the people with alternatives around which they can rally. The institutional organization of American politics seems as if designed to frustrate rather than to facilitate the clarification of issues, the counterposition of programs, and the assessment of responsibility for their implementation and execution.

PARTIES IDENTICAL?

The fact that the major issues cut across the two mass parties does not mean that these are in all respects identical. For there is an additional fact about American politics which should never be ignored, specially by socialists. This is the fact that the American working class, organized and unorganized, is overwhelmingly committed to the Democratic Party. The reasons for this are many, and cannot be dealt with in this essay. But it makes a certain sense to say that the workers and their organizations support the Democrats not because they are the party of the "common man," but that the Democrats tend to remain the more plebeian of the two parties because the workers and their organizations continue doggedly to support them.

The cry for a radical re-alignment of American political life has waxed and waned for decades. Such developments as the Dixie-GOP lineup in Congress which repeatedly frustrated social legislation under Truman; the bolt of the Dixiecrats from the Democratic Party in 1948; the defection to Eisenhower of large segments of the Democratic machines in the South have been only the most recent demonstrations of the persisting tendency toward such a re-alignment. Many more could be pointed to in earlier times. But the binding forces inside both parties, their function as vast job, power and influence trusts which tie the professional politicians and all their benefactors and beneficiaries to each other, have so far proved stronger than the centrifugal forces which tend to di-

vide them along the lines of class and social differences.

FOR LABOR PARTY

For a long time a section of the socialist movement in this country has called for the formation of a labor party as the next great step forward for the American working class. Though this call has found its echo in one or another section of the labor movement, for the most part it has been rejected as premature, impractical or basically wrong by the bulk of the labor leadership and of the organized workers who follow them. Their chief argument against it has been that the formation of a labor party would isolate the labor movement politically and reduce its effectiveness rather than enhance it. In addition, many who in the past were willing to accept the idea of a labor party as a long-term possibility for the United States, rejected it as a practical objective on the grounds that the organized labor movement which would necessarily have to be the base and backbone of such a party was itself divided politically and organizationally. If the unions can't get together on pressing trade union questions, the argument went, how can anyone expect them to pull together politically?

Today one of the biggest obstacles to the formation of a labor party in this country has been virtually overcome. The labor movement is now overwhelmingly organized in a single, centralized federation. Though individual unions still have the possibility of opposing the political policies of the AFL-CIO, labor is in a position to speak with a single voice as never before.

LABOR IN POLITICS

Further, the American working class is now in politics in a way in which it has never been in all its previous history. In one major political center after another, it is an open secret that the labor movement has taken over the burden of maintaining and running the Democratic Party as this becomes too much for the outmoded and discredited political machines of the past. True, since the unions feel they must do this in a shamefaced, almost underground manner, the power and authority they actually assert in the party never corresponds to the forces they deploy in its battles and the credit they deserve for its victories.

The fact is that the labor movement suffers from cultural lag in the political sphere. Today, with its fifteen million members in every key industry and center in the country, it has very much the same political feeling of isolation, of being a "minority movement," of being perpetually on the defensive as it had when it represented only a small part of the working class and an insignificant part of the nation. Since its position in the Democratic Party binds its political strategy and appeal within the narrow limits acceptable to the "respectable" elements in the party, and since it voluntarily assumes all the political burdens which go with identification with the Democratic Party (responsibility for Jim Crow in the South, and hence nationally; responsibility for political double-dealing and corruption; responsibility for the do-nothing Democratic "opposition" leadership in Congress), the labor movement dooms itself to remaining on the defensive on all matters pertaining to its most narrow interests, while begging the party leadership for adequate policies on such

vital national issues as the current recession.

CULTURAL LAG

It is not at all excluded that some crisis in American political life may speedily force the labor movement to overcome the cultural lag which still binds it to the Democratic Party. Adherent refusal of sections of the party to respond to the crying needs of the people in an extended recession; another major flare-up of the struggle for Negro equality; an ill-advised attempt of big business to curb and "domesticate" the labor movement in which its liberal "friends" refuse to stand up and be counted—any one of these, or a piling up of all of them on top of each other could force the labor movement to gather its real allies around it in a new political formation. Call it what they might this would be in essence a labor party, or the beginnings of one.

If that should happen, all socialist groups, tendencies and organizations would have to define their attitude and their relations to such a new political party. But even if it turns out that such a development is some way off, the socialist movement in America is compelled to relate itself to the politics of the working class. Any renewal and growth of the socialist movement in the period ahead makes the way in which it approaches this problem more important for its future than it has been in the era of stagnation and decline which we all hope is now coming to a close.

SOCIALISTS AND LABOR

The attitude of American socialists toward the politics of the working class in this country, including toward the idea of a labor party, has been varied and changing. Since it was founded as the Workers Party in 1940, the Independent Socialist tendency has been fairly well united on its belief that the formation of a labor party is the next necessary and ardently-to-be-desired step for the American labor movement.

This view has not been shared by all socialists. Some have felt that the only party which socialists can support, regardless of time or circumstances, is one clearly committed to the goal of socialism, and that the rise of a labor party which would, in all likelihood be at its inception a reformist party, would merely mean one more obstacle between the workers and the only party which could lead their emancipation.

Other socialists, in the long period of the decline and isolation of socialism in America, decided that there was no point to maintaining a socialist political movement at all, and sought to achieve their objectives through the Democratic Party (or the Liberal Party in New York). Many who shared this opinion dropped out of any and all socialist organizations, and either abandoned socialist ideas altogether, or sought to hang on to their socialism as a private and often closely guarded (though seldom defended) personal conviction. But others were led to adopt this course primarily because they believed that the socialist movement in this country was doomed for a long time to be isolated and impotent, and because, rightly or wrongly, they placed primary emphasis on working in the mainstream of American labor politics rather than on seeking to influence its direction from a socialist base.

ISL POLICY

When the Workers Party changed its name to Independent Socialist League in 1949, one of the considerations which motivated its members was the recognition that neither in size nor in function were we a "party" in any sense in which this word is understood by most people

in America, including the more politicalized workers in the labor movement. Hand in hand with the desire to bring our title in closer conformity to our actual function, went the decision in general to stop trying to act like a party, that is, to stop the exhausting and fruitless attempt to run candidates in elections.

The factors of numbers and resources which led the ISL to adopt this attitude have applied, in our opinion, to all socialist groups in America for some time, though to some less than to others. As long as the socialist movement as a whole remains tiny, its relations to the vast labor movement are not likely to be affected by one or another decision on this question, at least not vitally. If it runs candidates, both its members and those they appeal to understand that this is simply a means of carrying on its educational activity, of gaining publicity for its ideas. If it does not, its members and those they appeal to understand that this is not because socialists have decided to abstain from politics, but because they do not see how their direct intervention in the election by means of running their own candidates can advance the propagation of their ideas under the given circumstances.

Of course, such considerations only dominate when the movement is tiny and isolated, when there is little or no chance that the number of votes cast for its candidate will influence the election in any way, let alone that they will be elected. But it is quite clear that if the democratic socialist movement succeeds in uniting and regrouping itself, if it begins to emerge from its isolation and to assume a real role in the life of the American working class and of American society as a whole, these considerations must yield to other ones in the formation of socialist electoral policy.

ELECTORAL ACTION

While the Independent Socialist League has begun to consider the new problems which may arise out of the revival of the American socialist movement, and specifically in the field of electoral policy, the discussion has not yet jelled sufficiently for us to be able to say that we have a "position," however tentative and subject to later modification, on all aspects of the question. All we can do at this time is to present conflicting arguments which have been put forth in our ranks with the hope that discussion on this vital question will take place among all democratic socialists.

One line of reasoning has it that as long as the labor movement remains in the Democratic Party, socialists have no alternative but to urge abstention from electoral activity where they cannot fruitfully run candidates of their own, or to run candidates against the Democrats wherever their forces and resources make this possible and profitable. According to this view, to support candidates in the Democratic primaries or elections, or to refrain from opposing them, no matter how "laboristic" they might be, or how heavily supported by the labor movement, is to cross the class line in politics and to become supporters or at least apologists for a party which is fundamentally tied to and fundamentally represents a section of the capitalist class.

SOCIALISTS ON BALLOT

According to this approach, the relation of forces between the socialist movement and the labor movement is virtually irrelevant to a correct decision on socialist electoral policy. It is the job of socialists to influence and educate the workers and the labor movement by all means at their disposal. Election time is one during which interest in political ideas and issues tends to be at a peak. Correspondingly, the means for reaching people, both technical and psychological, are most open to socialists at that time. But they are only open to organizations who get their candidates on the ballot and who act as if they were seriously seeking to get the vote out for their candidates. To fail to take advantage of such golden opportunities for socialist education for fear of antagonizing some labor leaders or even workers verges on criminal neglect of socialist duty.

Adherents of this point of view in the socialist movement may differ on such questions as what the attitude of socialists should be to such semi-independent laboristic political formations as the Liberal Party in New York, or even toward a party arising out of a re-align-

(Turn to last page)

9 A Socialist Program for Peace and Freedom FOR A Democratic Foreign Policy

By SAM BOTTONE

"United States Launches Peace Offensive." This is one headline which has hardly been seen within the living memory of man, and certainly not in the last decade. It is also difficult to recall an article entitled "What's Right with U.S. Foreign Policy: Why the West Maintains the Initiative in the Cold War." Political initiative has been elusive; dynamism at most verbal; mass appeal a figment of the imagination.

Conservatives, liberals, and radicals while opposing Russian aims have all been critical of U.S. foreign Policy. In fact no one is satisfied. This feeling is about as close to a common denominator in American politics as anything can be. The reasons for this dissatisfaction stem from all points of the political compass. The diagnoses, prognoses and prescriptions may be different, but the symptoms are widely recognized.

Last December C. L. Sulzberger, chief foreign correspondent of the New York Times, wrote a series of articles on "What's Wrong With U.S. Foreign Policy." Considering the source from which it comes it is exceptionally thorough. Here is a partial listing of things wrong with American foreign policy extracted from Sulzberger's article:

Indictment of U.S. Policy

- Negative anti-communism . . . overestimated U.S. technological superiority over Russia . . . engaged in diplomatic sermonizing . . . meddle in the affairs of other countries like the 1948 elections in Italy and Guatemala . . . preach democracy and support dictatorship . . . vestiges of McCarthyism have stifled independence and boldness of thought . . . underestimated the effect of Sputnik, although State Department knew about it in advance . . . tied our relations with Japan to a veto held by Chiang, specifically on Formosa and Okinawa.

- Pactomania—military pacts placed above all other considerations and consequently "we have strayed into an apparent dead end from which neither of our favorite policy slogans—containment or liberation—can extricate us. . . ."

Weighted down foreign policy orientation by military considerations . . . underestimated Russia's ability to provide economic aid . . . used our economic aid mainly to support military establishments . . . helped to build military establishments incapable of fighting modern wars upon economies incapable of supporting such establishments.

- Channeled our economic aid through unpopular and often reactionary governments thus tying U.S. to status quo while Russia opposed it . . . places guns before butter for the underdeveloped countries as the determinant of our policy . . . China policy tied to Chiang when it is clear that Chiang will never return to the mainland, and if he did would not be popular . . . German policy places low priority on reunification in favor of a re-armed Germany.

- Southeast Asia Treaty Organization is designated to meet a military problem when the real problem is that of Russian economic and political penetration . . . ditto the Middle East Treaty Organization . . . Eisenhower Doctrine has no mass support among Arabs and is tied to an untenable status quo . . . in short the U.S. has no Middle East policy that makes sense to anyone, especially our allies . . . the U.S. has permitted crises among allies, like Algeria and Cyprus to fester and threaten disunity in the NATO alliance.

Sulzberger's list is long and impressive and it does not begin to exhaust the problem. It states these as facts which only need to be enumerated, not proved, for their validity is self-evident.

Why This Dismal Record?

Finding an explanation for this state of affairs has caused much anguish among administration supporters and liberal critics alike, and various theories have been suggested. Many have questioned how the U.S., a country with a former reputation for anti-colonialism is now charged with imperialism throughout the underdeveloped part of the world. Why have the staunchest supporters of U.S. policy reactionaries like Chiang, Rhee and Franco? Why has a totalitarian system like Stalinism been able to win masses to support of its proposals?

If the struggle is between democracy and the free world, totalitarianism and slavery, then it would be expected that the mass of the colonial peoples would be flocking to support of U.S. policies and those of its allies. Stalinism would be dealt one crushing blow after another. Instead what setbacks have been experienced by the Kremlin have had less to do with Washington's policies than with the struggles of the subjugated peoples of Eastern Europe for freedom from the Stalinist empire.

In the United States there has been a painfully slow growth in understanding the reasons for the relatively dynamic character of Stalinist policy as against the

static policy of the State Department. It has become almost axiomatic, specifically among liberals, to point to the revolutionary nature of the age we live in. It is recognized as a period of the decline of the old colonial empires and the triumph of the strivings of the former subjected peoples to win nationhood and self-expression. And it is ruefully acknowledged that although the U.S. does not have a major colonial empire of its own, it supports the colonial empires of its NATO allies. Therefore it is the chief defender of the status quo in the world against a force which, although it is totalitarian, represents change from the old forms of bondage.

The Liberal Proposals

This recognition has led many liberals like Chester Bowles, Justice William Douglas and even Adlai Stevenson to stress that the U.S. has to recognize the revolutionary period in which we live and to support the democratic aspirations of these new revolutionary movements.

This is a big advance over theories which attribute the crisis in American foreign policy to traitors in the State Department, the diabolical cleverness of Communists, or the moralist preaching of the Secretary of State. It could get us much farther than the complaint that Russia is undemocratic and consequently can maneuver at will without having to account to public opinion, while the U.S. is burdened with a democratic form of government.

It has often been perplexing if not an outright mystery to many liberals: men in high office or near high office make seemingly knowledgeable speeches about how the U.S. must expand Point Four, support the revolutionary aspirations of the Asian and African peoples; and not oppose social reform of feudal and semi-feudal societies—yet nothing seems to happen. The same old policies remain. Sulzberger's catalogue of what is wrong was written after years of such speeches. The United States still appears on the side of reaction against the mounting cries for change and reform.

For to emphasize the need for social reform in this way leaves out a vital part of the formula. It is that the U.S. is the principal support of the status quo outside of the Stalinist world. The status quo is capitalism with its spheres of influence and remaining colonial empires, and the U.S. is the most powerful of capitalist powers.

The revolutionary demands for self-determination and a better life are not directed against the status quo in general, but against specific governments most of whom are Washington's allies in a series of military pacts stretching around the world. Thus they inevitably affect the strength and stability of these alliances.

Because these revolutionary movements as a rule do not want to line up inside of a military alliance, and even upset the existing military arrangements either directly or through weakening some of the NATO allies, the U.S. has viewed them with suspicion and even outright hostility. The effect has been to push much of Asia and Africa into a neutralist or even pro-Russian position, in defense against political and economic arm-twisting by the West.

There is little doubt that the U.S. would prefer to have more democratic regimes in Formosa, South Korea, Spain, Pakistan or in many of the South American republics; regimes that are more responsive to the needs and desires of the people. But it will do nothing to support or encourage democratic movements out of the fear that they will move beyond the limits of a capitalist society or oppose participation in one of the military alliances, or destroy the economic privileges of American or allied businessmen. While many recognize that economic development in much of the world is intimately connected to political and social development, very little is done beyond deploring the fact that what economic aid is sent to the underdeveloped countries can not be used effectively without fundamental social reforms. The consequence of this kind of economic aid is that it benefits primarily the few, supports the status quo, and prepares the ground for a bitter anti-Americanism among the masses, in fact among all but a narrow circle of compradores.

The foreign policy of a country tends, by and large, to mirror its internal social relations. It would indeed be an anachronism if the socially conservative capitalist class which dominates both the government and the ideology of this country were able to develop a foreign policy in tune with the dynamics of the revolutionary age in which we live.

Conservative Ruling Class

In its overwhelming majority and bulk, this class continues to oppose the expansion of social legislation in America. It is not yet reconciled, if it ever will be, to the existence of a powerful labor movement. After decades of struggle it has reluctantly acceded only to the most elementary demands of the Negro people for democratic rights. While willing to spend lavishly for armaments, it tight-fistedly resists pleas for adequate expenditures for education, health and housing.

To expect that such a class, or a government inspired by it, can develop a dynamic program which is based on and seeks to stimulate the creative, revolutionary energies of millions of people throughout the world is utterly unrealistic.

Progressive proposals and criticisms of various aspects of American foreign policy have come from the labor movement and from those liberals whose particular characteristic is distrust of the business and corporate executives who run the affairs of this capitalist society. In their own way, such liberals work for a democratic foreign policy. But they are blocked at every decisive turn by the social conservatism of the capitalist class in this country. Further, all too often they combine attack on this or that aspect or result of the administration's policy with tacit or even explicit acceptance of its premises. This not only obstructs their ability to formulate a general or basic critique of American foreign policy, but violates the effect of their criticism and attack on its evident "weaknesses."

Even at the time of the great crisis in the Stalinist empire—Hungary—there was virtual paralysis. It was easy to denounce Russian intervention, but American policy was helpless to exploit the crisis of Stalinism which it represented. For the revolution which shook world Communism to its foundations also delivered a mortal blow to the structure of American foreign policy in Europe embodied in NATO.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is based on the idea that hordes of Russian and satellite armies are poised waiting for the first sign of weakness in order to march into Western Europe. But after Hungary, no one, literally no one believes this to be a possibility. A dynamic and democratic foreign policy would have dictated an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from the continent. These troops do not provide for military defense. Instead they are the political justification Khrushchev uses to continue Russian occupation of Eastern Europe. No greater blow to Stalinist power could be struck than by the withdrawal of these troops.

Only slowly has this idea begun to acquire sufficient respectability to elicit official reply. Former Ambassador George Kennan has articulated the hope of the European peoples for disengagement of the giant powers from the heart of their continent. But his views are resisted by spokesman of both Democrats and Republicans.

Democratic Foreign Policy

For some time the Independent Socialist League has advocated a democratic foreign policy as an alternative to one based on support of outlived social classes and the terror of mutual nuclear extermination. Our fundamental critique of U.S. foreign policy stems from our general socialist analysis and outlook. What we have tried to do, however, is to put forth a series of policies for the solution of some of the key world problems which can be effective, and which can be supported by anyone devoted to democracy and freedom, whether or not he be a socialist.

The central principle of foreign policy which is democratic in substance is, in our opinion, this: that top priority be given to such programs, proposals and actions as encourage and support the masses in every country in the world to work and to fight for their own emancipation, their own progress, their own development. That no support or encouragement be given anywhere in the world to classes or governments which obstruct or suppress the democratic aspirations and movements of their own or other peoples.

Introduction—

(Continued from page 1)

extent that it undermines democracy, it undermines the power them virtually all the tendencies that exist separately here. In the United States, in the absence of any mass party of socialism, there is the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation; it is small and it is weak but it already exists as a relatively broad organization encompassing several different tendencies. The SP-SDF thus has a remarkable opportunity thrust upon it. It can serve to unite democratic socialism in America and begin to restore socialism to its rightful place as a virile movement. It is not a matter of pasting together several small groups into a somewhat larger one but of gathering together all resources toward the aim of breaking out into the wide public arena. The SP-SDF can make a unique contribution to the most speedy and effective break-through and we, of the Independent Socialist League, are ready to unite with it in the common cause. It remains for the SP-SDF to decide to take advantage of the new prospects opening up for rebuilding and reuniting the movement.

We propose to build a broad movement. But it must be a democratic socialist movement, democratic in its inner life; democratic in its principles; and democratic in its conception of socialism. What ruined socialism in the United States was its identification with totalitarian dictatorship. And if socialism is to be renewed, it must come forward without hesitation as a democratic movement.

The task calls, we repeat, for the collaboration of all democratic socialist currents. Here, in this special pamphlet-issue of LABOR ACTION, we present the distinctive ideas of the ISL and underline the contribution which it seeks to make to the restoration and the ideas of that broad socialist movement. We address it to socialists of all tendencies, not with the private aim of prodding a few from one special program into another, but to call attention to our most pressing common obligation.

It is nothing less than the restoration of the democratic socialist movement in America.

10 The YOUNG SOCIALIST LEAGUE: A Look Back And a Look Ahead For the Youth Movement

SOCIALISM AND YOUTH

By MICHAEL HARRINGTON

For over four years, the Young Socialist League has been the organized expression of the independent socialist tendency in the youth and student world. During that time, major changes have taken place in the campus scene; and the YSL itself has undergone a steady and significant transformation.

The last great surge of the American youth movement was in 1948. It was in that year that the spirit of the Thirties—social protest, involvement and commitment—made its last appearance in the United States as an important social force. Truman's victory in the election was a final burst of New Deal politics; and his administration, which failed to legislate a single major plank of his program into existence, was the beginning of the Fifties, of a time of growing conservatism and reaction in American life.

This social change had considerable consequences for the American student movement. In 1948, the Labor Youth League, the major instrument of the Communist Party among the students (and a much more "tight" grouping at that time than in later years, particularly since there was a broader Young Progressive movement simultaneously in the field) probably had over 5000 members. Students for Democratic Action, the youth affiliate of Americans for Democratic Action, was also strong. It counted its members in the thousands, and its level of political sophistication—in part a function of its role as a rallying point for anti-Wallace liberals—was much higher than in later years.

The democratic socialist youth movement was relatively small in this period, yet in comparison to its later course it was enjoying a period of health and growth. At Brooklyn College, for instance, there were some four socialist clubs on campus, and the Students for Norman Thomas in 1948 made a quite respectable showing in campus politics.

Campus Politics Declines

The first half of the fifties saw a decline in all of these groupings. For one thing, American society as a whole was moving to the right. For another, there was a reservoir of sophisticated, disillusioned students on campus, many of them veterans of the YPA, who passed on their anti-political attitudes to the younger undergraduates. Some time ago, the Labor Youth League dissolved, and thus removed the last remnant of a nation-wide pro-Communist youth organization from the campus. This particular disintegration was, of course, all to the good for it meant that the disorientation of radical sentiment which resulted from Communist strength among the students no longer existed.

The decline of SDA was something else again. This organization had attracted some of the more conscious and active student liberals, and it had played an important role in campus politics. But it suffered from the general shift in social mood and from the crisis of the liberal ideology in America. In the last few years it has been confined to relatively weak centers on the East coast, and has not been a meaningful national force in student life. This was a symptom, not of gain as in the case of the Labor Youth League, but of loss, of the general decimation of student political life in the United States.

This was the general context in which the YSL was formed in February, 1954: The delegates to the founding convention were few in number, and a dangerously high percentage were older students, doing graduate work, or recently departed from a campus altogether. It was generally realized by this convention that the great problem for the democratic socialist movement was to re-establish its roots on campus. And this meant a difficult process of recruitment, of re-establishing campus socialist clubs, of trying to make democratic socialism a recognized force, even in a small way, in the colleges and Universities of the United States.

Great Progress Made

Now, four years later, it is possible to see that great progress has been made. There are some fifteen organized centers of the YSL across the nation. And YSLers have played an important role in helping to establish and maintain socialist clubs at schools like Columbia, Brooklyn College, Boston University, the University of Washington, Yale, the University of California, etc. The organization has grown, not spectacularly, but

steadily. Through literally hundreds of meetings, through tours and the distribution of *Challenge* and aid to the socialist student magazine, *Anvil*, the YSL has established itself as the major spokesman for democratic socialism on the American campus.

From this development, we can draw a series of important conclusions which have considerable bearing on the development of the socialist youth movement in the United States in the future.

YSL—Broad Group

First, the YSL has grown because it has learned to work with students of varying politics for goals which are not specifically socialist. And it has been stunted in so far as it has not rooted out all traces of sectarianism.

At the very beginning, the two tendencies which went to make up the YSL, the comrades from the Socialist Youth League and those from the Young Peoples Socialist League, agree to disagree on a whole series of historical and theoretical questions. The main criterion for membership and communal functioning was seen as a commitment to democratic socialism—and not adherence to one or another interpretation of socialist history or theory. This attitude has allowed the YSL to achieve a certain broadness, to unite socialists of a wide range of tradition and opinion.

And yet, it must be frankly stated that the aim of the founding convention of the YSL was not achieved. The broadness which was outlined there—a youth organization which contained pacifists and non-pacifists, Marxists and anti-Marxists, those who considered themselves in the tradition of revolutionary socialism and those who felt close to Social Democracy as a historical current—remained to an unfortunate extent a matter of intention, and not of reality. To a considerable degree, this was a result of the social conditions and the immediate socialist past which were present when the organization was formed. Both of these factors imposed a heavy burden of narrowness on the organization. Over the years, a great deal of this excess baggage has been jettisoned as the organization has grown and as the social context has changed.

In this way, the regroupment position of the YSL is an organic development which emerges out of its entire past. For now, the organization sees the possibility for creating a truly broad socialist youth movement, indeed one that can become a leading component of a revived American student movement. Thus, the YSL's advocacy of the formation of a broad, Debsian Party through the unity of the SP-SDF and the ISL, and the creation of an affiliated youth organization through the merger of the YSL and the YPSL, is the culmination of four years of experience. For here, we see the very real possibility of helping to form a truly broad organization, one which has an appeal to a wide range of socialist opinion, which can awaken a new interest in socialism among new students.

Secondly, the YSL has learned that the socialist youth movement must prove its vitality and viability in terms of the actual questions facing the campus and the nation. In the early period of the organization's history, it was perhaps best known as the champion of a consistent civil libertarian position. This attitude was focused on the question of defending the right of members of the Communist Party to teach, and through this militant and principled stand, the organization was able to make an impact on student life.

Active for Negro Rights

More recently, the members of the YSL have been particularly active in the fight for civil rights and in the campaign to end nuclear tests. In 1956, YSLers played important roles in the great mobilization in New York for a Madison Square Garden rally, in the concert which raised money for the Montgomery boycott and in the Enroll for Freedom movement. In 1957, YSLers were perhaps the most active student grouping which sought to gain campus support for the Prayer Pilgrimage to Freedom, a mass movement of some twenty five thousand Negroes and whites in defense of civil rights.

In the last few months, YSLers have played an important and active role in the growing movement for peace on the campus. In the New York Student Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (which embraces all the campuses in New York City), at Wesleyan College, Yale, at the University of Chicago and at the University of California, YSLers have made significant contributions.

Thus, broadness and a real commitment to immediate action are, in a sense, complementary characteristics; the one cannot exist without the other. But both qualities require still other conditions: the existence of a healthy, adult socialist movement; the rebirth of a serious student movement in the United States.

Youth and the Adult Movement

There is, of course, no youth "class." A socialist student and youth movement is significant in terms of the links which it can forge between the campus and the social movements in the nation as a whole. And this, in turn, means that a socialist youth movement cannot exist "independently," that it must rely, either through affiliation or fraternal relation, upon an adult socialist movement—for practical aid, for political aid, for stability and a relation to the community at large. When the YSL decided not to affiliate to the ISL, but rather to maintain close fraternal relations only, it realized all this and stated it. An "independent" youth group can have no stability; it must rely, openly or covertly, upon adult socialist aid.

For these reasons, the YSL sees the fate of the socialist youth movement as inseparably linked with that of the adult movement. And this is why our perspective of a truly broad, active organization is tied in with our advocacy of the unity of the adult socialist movement.

And then, there must be a rebirth of the student movement as a whole. The years of conservatism, of the move to the right, have depoliticized the American campus and with it the National Student Association, the major student organization on a nationwide scale. The emergence of a strong socialist youth group must be tied in with the renaissance of the student movement as a whole. And indeed, one of the major tasks of the new socialist youth organization will be loyally and energetically to work for this end; to work along with those liberal students who do not agree on socialism but who do see the necessity for the growth of discussion and action in the student community in general.

Finally, how does all this relate to those more precise and worked out ideas which constitute the contribution of independent socialism in particular? We can answer this question with a single, though complex generalization: that the growth of a Debsian adult socialist movement, the emergence of a broad, active and affiliated youth organization, the creation of a student movement, all of these are the precondition for the real development of our Third Camp politics. If the four year history of the YSL, we put forward these ideas from the basis of an independent organization. That was necessary and, in a very important sense, it was highly successful. But now we must go beyond these accomplishments, we must break through to the larger mass of the student population which is still untouched by our ideas and ideals.

We Can Go Forward

And in our summary generalization, we see the end of the independent, organized form of existence of independent socialism among the youth as the means to a further growth of independent socialism among the youth. We are not proposing to end our present organizational form so as to give up our ideas; we do not seek to go over to some "secret" form of organization. Rather, we have learned through all of our campaigns, our efforts, our sacrifices, that the road to a gigantic leap ahead is through the emergence of a really significant socialist movement, a really significant student movement. Within these, acting loyally and always seeking to achieve an unsectarian broadness, we have confidence that the intrinsic worth of our program and the devotion of its adherents will make the "breakthrough" possible.

We seek to unite with all democratic socialists for the purpose of making socialist ideas once again a force among the young people of America. Whether such a unity can be achieved easily and speedily, or whether the weight of old animosities and prejudices delay it for a while longer, we are confident that it will be achieved eventually. Until that day, we will advocate the formation of a broad, united movement of democratic socialists, while continuing to disseminate the liberating ideas of socialism on the campuses of America and to recruit students to the Young Socialist League of today as the best way of winning them to the broader and stronger socialist movement of tomorrow.

ARE YOU FROM

New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, Berkeley, Westchester County (New York), Buffalo, Albany, Pittsburgh, Denver, Cleveland, St. Louis, Albuquerque, San Francisco, Portland*

DO YOU WANT

to fight for socialism on the campus and in the youth movement?

THEN CONTACT

the Unit or Organizing Committee of the Young Socialist League in your area or write directly to

YOUNG SOCIALIST LEAGUE
114 West 14th Street
New York 11, N. Y.

*If you're not from any place where we are, start us where you are. Write to us at above address.

Socialism and Working Class —

(Continued from page 6)

herded to the polls by outright warheelers. That was the American working class, not its organized sector, but the class as a whole. It was backward and ineffectual; it had not yet risen to the level of union consciousness.

GREAT PROGRESS

If the organized minority declined in morale and class-consciousness—(actually we are speaking only of an even smaller minority within the organized minority) the vast majority of the American working class has made enormous progress. It is now overwhelmingly organized, with a sense of class solidarity imbued in it by its unions. It no longer sells its individual votes for cash or petty personal favor; it enters the political scene as an organized social force. It unifies 18 million people; with their immediate families, it represents a huge section of the American population, the strongest and most cohesive organized movement among the people.

With all its shortcomings, the labor movement has transformed American politics. In 1928, politics was a crass rivalry between tweedledee and tweedledum. In 1958, the American people expect politicians to grapple with the big social issues. The existence of a powerful and permanent labor movement is responsible for that change in mood. The principal base for modern democracy in the United States is the modern labor movement. And if this working class movement moves too slowly and displays all its faults too clearly, we must remember that

we are dealing no longer with dedicated thousands of advanced thinkers but with millions and millions of people, an entire social class.

Our labor movement concentrates within itself an enormous potential for social progress but, from its own limited outlook, it has been incapable of releasing that power. Socialism depends upon the working class and the organized labor movement. No less, however, the American labor movement needs the rebuilding of a strong and influential socialist wing to help restore its militancy, democracy and idealism and spur it on to great purposes.

CAN WORKERS GOVERN?

Can the working class be trusted to govern? That is how the issue has often been put. But behind that question lurks another: is democracy possible? For unless the working class can govern, genuine democracy is impossible! In our society, the majority serve as objects of exploitation—however refined and genteel. They report to their jobs ordered about by others, with few rights over what dominates their daily existence: their work. In return, they are permitted to vote periodically on who shall run the government. One day, they act as sovereign political citizens. The next day, they are subjects of an economic master. A working class government, as we understand it, gives these second class economic citizens decisive rights, not merely in politics, but in economics.

Under capitalism, political life remains

a compromise between genuine democracy and autocracy. If the working class renounces its claim to govern, to that extent it reconciles itself to authoritarianism and accepts a limitation upon its political and economic rights.

Yet, there are those, even some socialists, who would have the working class abjure the quest for political power out of fear that it will slip out of their hands to totalitarian bureaucrats. They suggest a self-limitation of the working class to avoid the evils of bureaucracy. But can a curb upon the political aspirations of labor and a check upon the exercise of its democratic rights be the prerequisite for defending democracy? We cannot accept it. Quite the contrary, we content that everything which limits the role and rights of the working class strengthens bureaucracy.

CAN DEMOCRACY WORK?

But, it will be said, look at the working class as it is, not as you idealize it; it is often short-sighted. Its officials are no paragons of democracy. In the United States they are often corrupt. In France some are Stalinists, others support the massacre of Algerian independence.

All that is true, but remember the taunts of those who decried democracy because it meant "mob rule"; who contended that the people could not be trusted; who

warned that democracy meant the rise of unscrupulous demagogues who might play upon popular passion for evil ends. Their arguments were valueless because there was no substitute for democracy except dictatorship. The cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy. Not in a crude and simplistic sense; not that every problem could be instantly settled with perfect equity by submission to popular referendum; not that the majority could not commit atrocities against justice. But in this: the shortcomings of democracy can be overcome only in the constant struggle and application of democracy, for its perpetuation against all assault, for its extension. By fighting for democracy and using it, the people become worthy of it.

The preparation of the working class to govern in every country goes on everywhere in its struggle to expand its rights, each in its own way in the social and political context of its life; in the fight for democracy within its own industrial and political organizations; in the demand for a government of the working people; and even under such a government, in the continuing and permanent campaign for the expansion of democracy. It is this which will make it possible for the working class to govern and it is toward this that the socialist movement should be directed. There is no other way.

For a Labor Party — —

(Continued from page 9)

ment of American politics on a national scale in which the labor movement and hence the working class are clearly the basic and controlling force. They agree, however, in believing that toward the Democratic party and its candidates (and it goes without saying, toward the Republicans) socialists can have only one attitude under any and all circumstances: hostility and opposition in the name of socialism.

ANOTHER VIEW

Another point of view starts with the proposition that one of the fundamental problems which a renewed socialist movement in America will face is its relationship to the working class as a whole, and specially to that section of it organized in the labor movement. They agree, of course, that socialists should at all times seek to present their views and to educate as many workers as possible, regardless of whether or not these views are regarded favorably by the union leadership or even find a wide response in the ranks.

But when it comes to political action, as contrasted with political education,

these socialists believe that the socialist movement should seek to avoid coming into head-on collision with the labor movement. Thus, they believe that a broad, all-inclusive democratic socialist party should permit its trade unionist members wide latitude in their support to the electoral policies adopted by their unions, and should seek to conduct itself in such a way as to minimize the charge of "divided loyalty" which has been so easily hurled at socialists (and so deservedly at Stalinists) over the years.

Supporters of this point of view also tend to believe that in all likelihood a labor party will be the result of a split in the Democratic Party, and that in a certain sense the deeper and more fully the trade unions get into the Democratic Party to achieve their political objectives, the closer they are to the day when a struggle for power will be bound to split that party into its social components. Such socialists believe that it follows from this that while the socialist movement itself should at all times stand for and urge the formation of a labor party, socialists should fully and enthusiastically support those struggle over candidates and policy in which the labor movement is seeking, however, hesitatingly, to assert its political independence and its claim to political hegemony in the Democratic Party.

LABOR AND DEMOCRATS

The isolation of the socialist movement in the past decades has created a host of political and organizational problems for it. Once it begins to emerge from this isolation, and to become a real factor in the life of the working class, the old problems will be replaced by new ones. Though in many respects these may be as difficult and as trying as the old ones, they have one clear advantage over them. They will be problems of growth. While we socialists will no doubt debate their nature and the solution to them with that warmth which invariably attaches to deep conviction, it can be hoped that the new opportunities before us will provide a cement which will hold us as united in action as we will remain free in discussion. With such an approach, the correct solution to all political problems will be furthered, and the damage done by mistakes held to a minimum. It is the best guarantee for the future of American socialism.

For the Third Camp

Since its inception as the Workers Party in 1940, LABOR ACTION and the Independent Socialist tendency for which it has spoken, has been for the "Third Camp." On many occasions we have referred to ourselves as the "Third Camp Socialists."

Through the term "Third Camp" has been used by us and by others to refer to many specific movements and tendencies in world politics, the central idea which the term seeks to convey, as we use it today, is this:

Two vast military machines represent the two great imperialist systems in the world today, capitalism and Stalinism. Each seeks to enlist the sympathy and support of all peoples, all nations, all governments. Each seeks to turn them into vassals or allies, and such has been the apparent power of the two camps that at times it has seemed nothing could prevent their ultimate polarization of the world between them as the final step preliminary to the dreaded trail of military power in World War III.

But inside of each of the two contending social systems the peoples seek a way out. They struggle as best they can against the ultimate horror or nuclear war. They seek to advance their own interests through their own movements and organizations, for freedom, equality and plenty. In the underdeveloped countries they fight for freedom from all forms of colonial rule and exploitation. They resist being drawn into either war camp, into either power-center; they seek to forge their own destiny rather than to be the pawns and servants of masters.

It is this striving for freedom and self-determination, for democracy equality by masses of people by means at their disposal which we refer to as the "Third Camp." It is the content of living democracy which flows forward in its own way, at its own pace. That is what has to be helped and encouraged. That is what is the hope of humanity. That is what will save the world from sinking back into a new barbarism.

The "Third Camp" is not a "movement" let alone an organization, or even a program. It is a principle, equivalent in many ways to democracy itself. It is a way of saying to people who, overwhelmed by a feeling of their own individual helplessness, turn to those, be they the rulers of the capitalist or Stalinist world, who control the heavy battalions and the nuclear weapons for salvation:

Rely on yourselves; fight for democracy and freedom yourselves. If you do that, you will not be alone. You will be part of a force mightier and more irresistible than the tanks and bombers, the planes and missiles of the two imperialist rivals. You will be together with millions and millions of people all over the world who are struggling for peace and freedom.

That is the Third Camp.

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