

# VANGUARD

A LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST JOURNAL

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## THE "NEW DEAL" AND THE NEW DEPRESSION

UNLIKE the New Deal legislation of the first period, the present measures undertaken by way of meeting the desperate problems raised by the ever growing crisis, lack any coherent set of principles and a genuine faith in their ability to set aright our ailing economic system. They are emergency measures in the full sense of the word, forced upon a reluctant administration, which only a few months ago refused to recognize the existence of a major economic depression comparable in its ravaging effect with the great slump of the Hoover days.

The New Deal measures of the first period, sporadic and unpremeditated as they were in their appearance, were in reality governed by a system of ideas which by now, of course, have shown their utter bankruptcy, but which, at the time of their first emergence as the directing goals of the national administration, held out the hope of a permanent solution of the economic evils brought to the attention of the country by a raging crisis.

Those were the ideas of a managed, controlled capitalism arising out of the united efforts of the united nation, of the voluntary cooperation of all classes of population on the basis of some commonly accepted plan. Hence the enthusiasm, the general faith engendered not only by the pragmatic success of the first measures to halt the toboggan slide of the economic mechanism to a complete standstill, but mainly by the illusory perspective, by the false hope of having discovered a "new deal," a new method of banishing forever the spectre of economic insecurity, class strife and ravaging crisis.

What happened to those hopes is by now known to everybody. The "managed" economy began to degenerate rapidly into a state sanctioned and state-propped monopolistic system, putting an intolerable strain upon the national economy by its inflated and artificially maintained price structure and restricted production. The economic crisis was only checked for a while, resuming its catastrophic sweep with the first sign of a genuine sales resistance. And the cooperation of classes, envisaged by the New Deal

theoreticians, gave way to a class war of the highest tension, with the ruling class assuming an offensive along economic and political lines which for its doggedness and sinister intents has no parallel in the history of the American people.

The administration stands bewildered in face of this political and economic tension brought about by its own pious efforts. It is forced along the lines of greater economic initiative by the sit-down strike of capital, by the growing economic disintegration. Its answer to the economic sabotage of the sixty families is a more intense pouring out of money for the sake of rehabilitation. But what if the relentless grip of the ruling economic oligarchy, firmly set upon bringing the administration to its knees by means of financial pressure, continues in spite of the emergency measures of the government? What will happen after the stimulating effect of the second injection into our sickly economic organism will exhaust itself, as it is bound to happen in view of the utter inadequacy of the means possessed by the government as compared with the resources controlled by the economic oligarchy and deliberately held back by a policy of sabotage?

The administration leaders do not and cannot answer this question. They do not look that far ahead; they hitch their hopes to the coming outlay of government money, as though it were a comprehensive measure and not an emergency solution of a very limited efficacy. Their helplessness and forced myopia play into the hand of the gathering forces of fascist reaction who, whether led by pseudo-progressives of the Philip La Follette type or by demagogues of more outspokenly retrograde views, will come out for a program of unloosing the productive forces through some scheme of social regimentation.

And in that they will be helped not only by the bewildered attitude of the administration, but by the impotence of the so-called radical movement, which gravitates within the same orbit of ideas as Roosevelt's government. Our radical movement, regardless of whether it accepts or rejects the present government, is just as poverty-stricken in its creative solutions suitable for the present moment as the Roosevelt administration. It can adduce all kinds of reasons showing why particular measures are bound to fail, but it cannot evolve a single scheme showing what could be done right now, at the present moment. It is obsessed with tactical problems, with subtle calculations of the potential value of every strategic move, but it does not see that the great masses of people are swept by concrete programs and not by "scientific strategies." And the concrete program for today is not a minimum wage, not social insurance, not even W.P.A. assignments, since this is but temporary in its effect, but **putting our productive apparatus back to work.**

And that can be done only on the basis of a **socialist** program, a program of **immediate realization** of a production-for-use scheme. Let such a scheme be evolved, sufficiently popularized and made into an article of faith on the part of the great mass of people—and the means of realization of this scheme will be found. The molecular pressure of millions of men imbued with the vision of a particular scheme, will find its way through the proper mass organizations. What is necessary is boldness in evolving those schemes, a complete break with the antiquated notion that we are not yet ripe for the new social order, that we have to go through some preparatory stages.

The success of the struggle against fascism in this country, which is just as imminent as elsewhere, will depend not upon the issue of defense of democracy, collective security or other extraneous problems. It will be upon the question of putting the millions of people back to work, of starting the wheels of industry rolling. It will be the issue of production-for-use to be **carried out immediately** or private monopolies assuming, under the guise of the fascist state, the full control of economic and political life.

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## TREACHERY IN SPAIN

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Little by little the true facts of the situation in loyalist Spain during the catastrophic events at the Aragon front are becoming known abroad. In spite of the heavy censorship and self-limitation imposed by the revolutionary organization in the matter of divulging information that might create some confusion at the front, details of the great tragedy continue to filter through the border. And they all confirm the suspicion widely prevalent among the revolutionary workers of the world concerning the role of the Spanish government in bringing about the greatest defeat suffered by the loyalists since the beginning of the struggle.

That the defeat on the Aragon front and the subsequent catastrophic developments were not due solely to the superior equipment of the fascist armies was clear to any one with the least knowledge of the situation. The debacle bore clearly the earmarks of a deliberately provoked and actively promoted demoralization. Now we have the full story of this conspiracy told by one of the active members of the anarcho-syndicalist organization (C.N.T.) of Spain. We quote some passages of this story as told in the French magazine "La Revolution Proletarienne."

### Strange Coincidences

The author of this article qualifies the Negrin-Prieto government as one controlled by the London bankers and he lays squarely upon its shoulders the charge of deliberately starving out the Aragon front in point of armaments.

Added to the lack of equipment there was also the utter lack of foresight in the conduct of the war: the Aragon front had only one line of defense. And while it was obviously too weak to hold back the German-Italian offensive, attempts were constantly made to weaken it by costly and useless diversions. The taking of Teruel served no purpose; it resulted in the extermination of the international brigades and the C.N.T. units. The latter constituted 70% of the troops taking part in the Teruel operation and their extermination was planned with the view of removing the menace of those troops in case of any trouble in the rearguard, as it happened in May, 1937.

"The army is eaten up with the cancer of espionage . . . The police are just as unreliable: at the beginning of March the trade unions and political organizations, fearing a coup on the part of the "fifth column" mounted watch over their locals and headquarters, ready for any eventuality."

The bombardment of Barcelona—the author states—was confined exclusively to workers quarters. The central part of the city where the government buildings are concentrated were hardly touched. This rather more than strange "oversight" on the part of the Italian and German fliers takes on an even more suspicious character from the fact that not a single government chaser, not a single aircraft was sent out to defend the city during the bombardment.

This was no more of a coincidence than the exact timing of the bombardment with the planned demonstration against the openly announced plans for the surrender, advocated by no less a person than Prieto himself. Another circumstance of a highly suspicious character was the strange behavior of the government press, which, departing from its usual manner of reporting military news by minimizing and slurring over any reverses, began sowing panic among the population by displaying very prominently and even exaggerating the reverses at the Aragon front. The purpose was quite clear: it was to create a defeatist mood among the population, favoring the government policy of capitulation.

### Plot to Exterminate C.N.T. Units

That there was a plot on the part of the leading members of the government with the view of exterminating the best units of the army, as the ones permeated with the revolutionary spirit, is attested by a letter from Prieto quoted in the French paper "L'Espagne Nouvelle" (May 13). This letter, written about a year ago to Fernando de los Rios, the socialist ambassador to Washington, is one of the most revolting documents of our time, fully revealing the depths of moral degeneration of socialist politicians who, all their high-sounding professions of democratic faith notwithstanding, are hardly distinguishable from Mussolini and Stalin agents.

In writing of the "marvelous" work achieved in

"cleaning" up the anarchists, this "defender of democracy" refers to the C.N.T. military units as potential trouble makers who, as he puts it, "might come to the assistance of their organizations. We therefore decided to undertake a series of offensives all along the front and to use the C.N.T.-F.A.I. military units as shock troops. Those elements, according to our decision, will be transferred to the most dangerous sectors of the front. Thus the fascists will help us to effect a complete purge of those elements, for which we cannot but be thankful to them.

"In following this line of conduct we shall also delight the three countries who helped us and which only recently demanded that we adopt such a course."

### Communists Turn to the Left

Who are those three powers is know to everyone. They are: England, France and Soviet Russia. And of those three, Soviet Russia played the most heinous role in the working out and developing this diabolical scheme of killing of the flower of the revolutionary army by exposing them to the fascist fire. This is quite in line with the Leninist-Stalinist tactics employed during the Russian revolution. However, when Prieto and the Spanish Communists—that is Stalin's agents in Spain—fell out among themselves; when Prieto leaning heavily upon the British government, began to show his hand in his attempt to force a surrender under the guise of an armistice; when acting under the direct instigation of the Chamberlain government, Prieto began arresting the communists, forcing them out of the government and gradually liquidating their influence,—it was then that the communists turned to the C.N.T. for assistance, begging for pacts and alliances on the basis of a mutual defense of the "elementary conquests of the revolution." And, as is known the C.N.T.-U.G.T. pact came about partly as a result of this solicitude on the part of the communists, who saw themselves cut off and betrayed by the Prieto faction. The pact was concluded in the spirit of a compromise, the C.N.T. having renounced some points of its libertarian program in the economic field, while the communist-socialist leadership of the U.G.T. unions solemnly pledged itself to maintain and defend the social conquests of the revolution.

### Back to The Promise-Breaking Policy

There is no honor among thieves, however. No sooner did the communists get into control than they began to repudiate, overtly and under cover, almost every pledge made during the great crisis provoked by the Prieto-Azana-Portella Valladares faction. (This faction was permeated with elements who by their social outlook were much nearer to the fascists than to their adversaries.) The crisis, as is known, led to the elimination of Prieto from the government. According to the information furnished to the "New Leader" by one of the leaders of the C.N.T., Prieto, who was the real power in the government, was ready to sign

an order for armistice—that is the prelude for capitulation—but that he was opposed by Caballero and Negrin in the Socialist Party, by the Communist Party and the C.N.T. Azana was quite ready to play the same wretched role as during the July days. He was in favor of turning over the power to Martines Barrio and Portella Valladares—politicians of near-fascist orientation—in order to open negotiations with Franco.

The result of this cabinet reorganization was the strengthening of the communists in the government. The place of Prieto, as the actual power in the cabinet, was taken by Alvarez del Vayo, nominally a socialist but in reality a secret agent of the Communist International, or whatever is left of it as a result of the Stalinist purges. The communists have obtained a number of influential positions, among which one has to single out the semi-dictatorial power granted to Jesus Hernandez, one of the communist leaders, as the civil administrator of all the provinces, Catalonia excepted.

This increase of power was not due to any increase of influence among the masses. Quite the contrary: if anything, the communists have lost considerably during the last period. It was the mere fact that Russia could again dictate conditions as she did in the fall of 1936. As the C.N.T. representative put it in his interview with the correspondent of the British "New Leader" "Soviet Russia is the only country that sends us armaments and that places all of us in the position of prisoners."

The most manifest result of the increased Stalinist influence was the formation of the 13 points stating the program of the new government. This declaration goes further than any previous documents of that sort in liquidating the revolutionary conquests of July 19. And, as the correspondent of the "New York Evening Post" already informed us, the work of decollectivization is in full swing, and even foreign trusts of pronounced fascist sympathies, like "Sofina" (the electrical trust) have been invited to assume control of their properties. The correspondent points out that all this represents mainly a gesture on the part of the government, but then the Stalinist counter-revolution in Spain was forced to confine itself to gestures in view of the feeble mass support it has thus far been getting. But the spirit is unmistakable: it is the spirit actuating Stalin in his hatred of a revolution the very existence of which is a living negation of all his claims to "apostolic succession" and the absurd pretensions of his "church."

Not only were the economic provisions of the C.N.T.-U.G.T. pact flagrantly violated, but the promise of political amnesty solemnly granted to the C.N.T. by Negrin and his communist aides as one of the conditions of the C.N.T. support was turned into a mockery by a renewed drive against the P.O.U.M.

*(Continued on page 16)*

I HAVE before me two numbers, February and April 1938, of the *New International*, Trotsky's official American magazine. They contain two articles purporting to be a refutation of the charges made against Trotsky in regard to Kronstadt. One article is by John G. Wright, a full blown Trotskyist, and the other by the Grand Mogul himself.

Let us deal first with the disciple and then proceed to the words of the master.

Mr. Wright claims that *The Kronstadt Rebellion* by Alexander Berkman "is merely a restatement of the alleged facts and interpretations of the S. R.'s with a few significant alterations"—(culled from "The Truth About Russia" in *Volnya Russia*, Prague, 1921). He further accuses Alexander Berkman of "brazenness, plagiarism, and making, as is his custom, a few insignificant alterations, and hiding the real source of what appears as his own appraisal."

I do not think that John G. Wright deliberately lies about Alexander Berkman. I suspect, rather, that he is simply densely ignorant.

Alexander Berkman had a life-long habit of keeping diaries. Even during the fourteen years purgatory he endured in the Western Penitentiary, Alexander Berkman managed to keep up his diary which he succeeded in sending out sub rosa to me. On the "Buford" which took us on our long perilous cruise of 28 days to Russia, my comrade continued his diary and he kept up this old habit through the 23 months of our stay in Russia.

*The Kronstadt Rebellion*, the *Bolshevik Myth*, and the *Anti-Climax* were the offspring of this day-to-day record in Russia.

It is stupid, therefore, to charge that Berkman's brochure about Kronstadt "is merely a restatement of the alleged facts . . ." from the S. R. works that appeared in Prague.

Wright also accuses Berkman of denying the existence of General Kozlovsky in Kronstadt.

*The Kronstadt Rebellion*, page 15, states, "There was indeed a former General Kozlovsky in Kronstadt. It was Trotsky who placed him there as an artillery specialist. He played no role whatever in the Kronstadt events." This statement was borne out by none other than Zinoviev who was then still at the zenith of his glory. At the Extraordinary Session of the Petrograd Soviet, called on March 4th, to decide the fate of Kronstadt, Zinoviev said, "Of course Kozlovsky is old but the White officers are back of him and are misleading the sailors."

Perhaps at this point we should allow the Kronstadt sailors to speak for themselves; something that Trotsky and all other Bolshevik apologists have never allowed

them to do. Below I reproduce a radio message sent to the workers of Russia by the Kronstadt sailors' on March 6th, 1921:

## The Kronstadt Sailors State Their Own Case

"Our cause is just: we stand for the power of Soviets, not parties. We stand for freely elected representatives of the laboring masses. The substitute Soviets manipulated by the Communist Party have always been dead to our needs and demands; the only reply we have ever received was shooting . . . Comrades! They not only deceive you: they deliberately pervert the truth and resort to most despicable defamation . . . In Kronstadt the whole power is exclusively in the hands of the revolutionary sailors, soldiers and workers—not with the counter-revolutionists led by some Kozlovsky, as the lying Moscow radio tries to make you believe . . . Do not delay, Comrades! Join us, get in touch with us; demand admission to Kronstadt for your delegates. Only they will tell you the whole truth and will expose the fiendish calumny about Finnish bread and Entente offers.

"Long live the revolutionary proletariat and the peasantry!"

"Long live the power of freely elected Soviets!"

I leave it with the reader to decide whether this is an appeal framed by a Tsarist general.

Wright further states that Victor Serge in a recent comment on Kronstadt "concedes that the Bolsheviks, once confronted with the mutiny, had no further recourse except to crush it."

Victor Serge is now safely away from the hospitable shores of the "workers fatherland." I, therefore, do not consider it a breach of faith when I say that if Victor Serge actually made such a statement, as Wright charges, he is merely not telling the truth. Victor Serge was one of the French Communist Section who was as much distressed and horrified over the impending butchery decided upon by Leon Trotsky to "shoot the sailors as pheasants" as were Alexander Berkman, myself, and many other revolutionists in Petrograd in 1921. He used to spend every free hour in our room running up and down, tearing his hair and clenching his fists in indignation, and repeating over and over, "something must be done to stop the frightful massacre." When he was asked why he, as a party member, does not raise his voice in protest in the Party session, his reply was that it would not help the sailors and would mark him for the Cheka and even silent disappearance. The only excuse for Victor Serge at the time was a young wife and a small baby. But for him to state now, after 17 years, that "the Bolsheviks, once confronted with the mutiny, had no other recourse except to crush it" is, to say the least, inexcusable. Victor Serge knows as well as I do that *there was no mutiny* in Kronstadt; that the sailors actually did not use their arms in any shape or

form until the bombardment of Kronstadt began.

I, therefore, call upon Victor Serge, to speak the truth. That he was able to continue in Russia under the "comradely" regime of Lenin, Trotsky and other unfortunates who have recently been murdered, conscious of all the horrors that were going on, is his own affair, but I cannot keep silent in the face of his statement that the Bolsheviki were justified in crushing the sailors.

Leon Trotsky is surprised and indignant that anyone should dare to raise "a hue and cry over Kronstadt." It happened so long ago, and it was a mere "episode in the history of the relation between the proletarian city and the petty bourgeois village." Why should anyone want to make so much ado at this late date unless it is to "compromise the only genuine revolutionary current which has never repudiated its banner, has not compromised with its enemies, and which alone represents the future."

It does not occur to him that those whom he asks to come to his defense against Stalin have a right to ask what methods he used when he was in power, and how he dealt with those who did not subscribe to his dicta as gospel truth.

### Where Are Trotsky's "Proofs"?

Apparently Trotsky's inflated ego will not allow him to admit that he is human and hence fallible. Like Stalin he prefers to call anathema on the heads of anyone who foolishly suggests that the great god Leon Trotsky has been, on occasion, in the wrong.

He jeers at the documentary evidence left by the Kronstadt sailors and the evidence of those who had been within sight and hearing of the dreadful siege of Kronstadt. He calls them "false labels" and assures his readers that *his* explanation of the Kronstadt rebellion could be "substantiated and illustrated by many facts and documents." Needless to say he does not present our "false labels" nor his true ones so that the reader might form his own opinion about them.

One might understand such a lack of decency in John G. Wright. He is, as I have already stated, merely quoting holy scripture. But for a world figure like Leon Trotsky to silence the evidence of the sailors seems to me indicative of a very small character. The Calvary he has endured during his years of exile, the tragic loss of those near and dear to him, have taught him nothing. Not a glimmer of human kindness or mellowness has affected Trotsky's rancorous spirit.

What a pity that the silence of the dead sometimes speaks louder than the living voice. In point of truth the voices strangled in Kronstadt have grown in volume these seventeen years. Is it for this reason, I wonder, that Leon Trotsky resents the sound?

In discrediting the motives which conditioned the Kronstadt "uprising", Leon Trotsky records the following: "From different fronts I sent dozens of telegrams about the mobilization of new 'reliable' detachments from the Petersburg workers and Baltic fleet sailors, but

already in 1918, and in any case, not later than 1919, the fronts began to complain that the new contingents of 'Konstadters' were unsatisfactory, exacting, undisciplined, unreliable in battle and doing more harm than good." He further charges that, "When conditions became very critical in hungry Petrograd the Political Bureau more than once discussed the possibility of securing an 'internal loan' from Kronstadt where a quantity of old provisions still remained, but the delegates of the Petrograd workers replied, 'You will never get anything from them by kindness; they speculate in cloth, coal and bread. At present in Kronstadt every kind of riff-raff has raised its head'."

How consistently Bolshevik that is; not only to slay one's opponents but also to besmirch their character. From Marx and Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, to Stalin, this method has ever been the same.

Now, I do not presume to argue what the Kronstadt sailors were in 1918 or 1919. I did not reach Russia until January, 1920. From that time on until Kronstadt was "liquidated" the sailors of the Baltic fleet were held up as glorious examples of valour and unflinching courage. Time and time again I was told not only by "Anarchists, Mensheviks, and Social Revolutionists," but by many Communists that the sailors were the very backbone of the Revolution. On the 1st of May 1920, during the celebration, and the other festivities organized for the first British Labour Mission, the splendid large contingent of Kronstadt sailors were pointed out as among the great heroes who had saved the Revolution from Kerensky and Petrograd from Yudenich. During the Anniversary of October, the sailors were again in the front ranks, and their re-enactment of the taking of the Winter Palace was wildly acclaimed by a packed mass.

Is it possible that all the leading members of the Communist Party, save Leon Trotsky, were unaware of the "corruption and the demoralization" of Kronstadt, claimed by him.

Nonsense!

### Kronstadt Solidarity with Petrograd Workers

In point of actual fact, the sailors met their doom only because of their deep kinship and solidarity with the Petrograd workers whose power to endure cold and hunger had reached the breaking point in a series of strikes in February, 1921. Why have Leon Trotsky and his followers failed to mention this? Leon Trotsky knows perfectly well, even if his stooges do not, that the first scene of the Kronstadt drama was staged in Petrograd on February 24th, and played not by the sailors but by the strikers.

Alexander's Berkman's entry in his diary of this historic day reads:

"The Trubotchny millworkers have gone on strike. In the distribution of winter clothing, they complain, the Communists have received undue advantage over the non-partisans. The Government refuses to consider the grievances till the men return to work.

"Crowds of strikers gathered in the street near the mills, and soldiers were sent to disperse them. They were *Kursanti*, Communist youths of the military academy. There was no violence.

"Now the strikers have been joined by men from the Admiralty shops and Galernaya docks. There is much resentment against the arrogant attitude of the Government. A street demonstration was attempted, but mounted troops suppressed it."

It was after the report of their Committee as to the real state of affairs among the workers of Petrograd that Kronstadt did in 1921 what it had done in 1917. They immediately made common cause with the workers. The role of the sailors in 1917 was hailed as the red pride and glory of the Revolution. Their identical acts in 1921 were denounced to the whole world as counter-revolutionary treason.

The cause of this "treason" was deeply rooted in the suffering of the Russian workers: the city proletariat, Leon Trotsky, not the "bourgeois" peasantry.

To disapprove this contention Trotsky argues that the Petrograd workers did not come to the aid of their Kronstadt comrades: "Hunger and cold reigned in the deserted capital, perhaps even more fiercely than in Moscow. . . . All were hungry and irritable. All were dissatisfied. In the factories there was dull discontent. Underground organizers sent by the S.R.'s and the White officers, tried to link the military uprising with the discontented workers. The Kronstadt papers wrote about barricades in Petrograd, about thousands being killed. The press of the whole world proclaimed the same thing. Actually the precise opposite occurred. The Kronstadt uprising did not attract the Petrograd workers. It repelled them. The stratification proceeded along class lines. The workers immediately felt that the Kronstadt mutineers stood on the opposite side of the barricades—and they supported the Soviet power. The political isolation of Kronstadt was the cause of its internal uncertainty and its military defeat."

### The Suppression in Petrograd

Leon Trotsky carefully omits the most important reason for the seeming indifference of the workers of Petrograd and why they did not rush to the aid of the sailors. It is therefore necessary to point out the campaign of slander, vilification and calumny against the sailors that began on the 2nd of March, 1921. The Soviet press fairly oozed poison against the sailors. The most despicable charges were hurled against them, and this was kept up until they were "liquidated" on March 17th. In addition Petrograd was put under martial law. Factories were shut down and the workers thus robbed of holding counsel with each other.

In the diary of Alexander Berkman, I find the following:

"Many arrests are taking place. Groups of strikers surrounded by Chekists on their way to prison are a common sight. There is a great nervous tension in the city. Elaborate precautions have been taken to protect the Government in-

stitutions. Machine guns are placed in the Astoria, the living quarters of Zinoviev and other prominent Bolsheviki. . . . Many workers suspected of sympathizing with Kronstadt have been placed under arrest. All Petrograd sailors and part of the garrison thought to be 'unworthy' have been ordered to distant points, while the families of the Kronstadt sailors living in Petrograd are held as hostages."

Under these iron-clad rules it was physically impossible for the workers of Petrograd to ally themselves with Kronstadt, especially since not one word of the manifestos issued by the sailors in their paper was permitted to penetrate to the workers in Petrograd. In other words Leon Trotsky deliberately falsifies the facts.

Much is made by both Wright and Trotsky of the fact that the sailors, who, as we insist did not premeditate the rebellion, but met on March 1st only to discuss ways and means of aiding their Petrograd comrades, quickly formed themselves into a Provisional Revolutionary Committee.

The answer to this accusation is in reality given by Mr. Wright himself. He writes—"It is by no means excluded that the local authorities in Kronstadt bungled in their handling of the situation. . . . It is no secret that Kalinin, let alone Commissar Kuzmin, was none too highly esteemed by Lenin and his colleagues. . . . In so far as the local authorities were blind to the full extent of the danger or failed to take proper effective measures to cope with the crisis, to that extent their blunders played a part in the unfolding events. . . ."

This apprentice Jesuit is worthy of his master. To lay the blame on some "bungler" is one of Bolshevism's oldest methods of keeping the titular heads lily white.

Indeed, the local Bolsheviki did "bungle." Kuzmin attacked the sailors viciously and threatened them with dire consequences. The sailors knew what to expect from such threats. This was the reason why the sailors formed their Revolutionary Committee. An additional factor was the news that a committee of 30 sailors sent to Petrograd to confer with the workers had been denied the right to return to Kronstadt, that they had been arrested by the hated Cheka.

Both writers make a mountain of a molehill of the "rumors" announced at the meeting of March 1st to the effect that a truckload of soldiers heavily armed was on the way to Kronstadt.

Wright has evidently never lived under an air-tight dictatorship. I have. When every channel of human contact is closed, when every thought is thrown back on itself and expression stifled, then rumors rise like mushrooms from the ground and grow into terrifying dimensions. Besides, truckloads of soldiers and Chekists armed to the teeth, tearing along the streets in the day, throwing out their nets at night and dragging their human haul to the dungeons of the Cheka, was a frequent sight in Petrograd and Moscow during the time

I was there. It was perfectly natural for the rumors to be given credence.

John G. Wright will have it that there was no trouble in Petrograd until February 22nd. That is on a par with his other rehashing of "historic" party material. The unrest and dissatisfaction of the workers was already very marked when we arrived. In every industry I visited I found extreme dissatisfaction and resentment because the dictatorship of the proletariat had been turned into a devastating dictatorship of the Communist Party with its different rations and discriminations. If the discontent of the workers had not manifested itself before 1921 it was only because they still clung tenaciously to the hope that when the fronts were liquidated the promise of the Revolution would be fulfilled. It was Kronstadt which pricked the last bubble.

### Kronstadt Sailors Defended the Revolution

The sailors had dared to stand by the discontented workers. They had dared to demand that the promise of the revolution—all power to the Soviets—should be fulfilled. The political dictatorship feared the spread of such doctrine because they knew it would mean their undoing. That was why the Kronstadt sailors died . . . that and that alone was their unforgivable offense against the holy spirit of Bolshevism.

Leon Trotsky, is sarcastic about the accusation that he had shot 1,500 sailors. No, *he* did not do the bloody job. He entrusted Tuchachevsky, his lieutenant, to do the job with the aid of cadets from the Communist Academy.

I met one of these cadets a short time after the massacre where he lay wounded in a hospital. I recorded this meeting in *My Disillusionment*. It has lost nothing of its poignancy in the years since:

"Many of those wounded in the attack on Kronstadt had been brought to the same hospital, mostly *Kursanti*. I had the opportunity to speak to one of them. His physical suffering, he said, was nothing as compared with his mental agony. Too late he had realized that he had been duped by the the cry of 'counter-revolution'. There were no Tsarist generals in Kronstadt, no White Guardists—he found only his own comrades, sailors and soldiers who had heroically fought for the Revolution."

Tuchachevsky carried out Trotsky's orders to the last degree. The numbers of the dead ran into legions, and those who remained after the slaughter were placed under the care of Dybenko, "famous" for his humanity and justice.

Tuchachevsky and Dybenko, the heroes and saviours of the Dictatorship! History seems to have its own way of meting out justice.—*London, May, 1938.*

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## DECENTRALIZATION AND SOCIALISM

By SENEX

**H**ARDLY any other idea advanced by the anarchist thinkers was met with as much derision in socialist circles as the idea of free communes, viewed as the nuclei of a new social order federated along political and economic lines. To the great majority of socialists, who fully accepted the political premises of capitalism and who came to regard the latter's centralizing tendencies in the economic field as the necessary prerequisite of Socialism, this emphasis upon political and economic decentralization was to be interpreted in terms of social psychology rather than social theory. To them it was a romantic escape into an idealized past, rationalized by the ideologists of a class which is being displaced by modern economic tendencies and whose inverted social vision has become strongly colored with nostalgic longings for an historically doomed pattern of life.

That there was a solid theoretical foundation to the anarchist ideal of free communes could hardly be gathered from the polemic writings of the Socialist theoreticians, all bent more upon lambasting this idea than taking up its theoretical challenge. How serious this challenge was, is proven by the fact that the sundry elements which went into the building up of this theoretical structure—and taking into consideration the pioneering nature of this work, the structure could not but be loose in

many respects, abounding in brilliant generalizations from inadequate factual material—were independently developed by the respective branches of social science along lines laid down by the anarchist thinkers.

Thus the theoretical analysis of the role of the association in social life, first undertaken by Proudhon, has been furthered by the pluralists, the most progressive school of political science, whose conclusions in respect to the State lend themselves to the ideal of an ex-territorial commune as envisaged by Bakunin, Kropotkin and Reclus. The historic potentialities of the medieval city as a distinct political structure, first revealed to the modern view by Kropotkin in their progressive implications, have by now become clearly established by a half century of painstaking historical research.

And, finally, the decentralizing trend of modern technics, greatly obscured until now by the counter-acting tendency toward economic concentration produced by the abnormal factors operating in the capitalist society, has been asserting itself with such force that even practical people as far removed from any theoretical influences as Ford is, have been forced to reckon with it in their larger plans. There is a great deal of creative stirring in the various projects for the integration of industry and agriculture launched by Ford; and that is, of course,



irrespective of the absurd, socially illiterate, construction which Ford himself tries to place upon his own experiments. The latter show that the idea of an integrated and regionally decentralized economy forming one of the theoretical bases of the ideal of the Anarchist commune has by now advanced beyond the theoretical stage and is forcing itself to the fore of economic actualities. "What was a bold prophecy on the part of Kropotkin," writes Lewis Mumford in his latest book *The Culture of Cities*\* "has become a definite movement, as the technical means of economic regionalism and the social impulses that gave it direction have converged."

And, without detracting the least from the great originality of this book, one might say that the latter has shown the convergence of various streams of modern thought and truly valuable social experimentation upon the focal point of Anarchism-Communism: the ex-territorial commune as the basic cell of a federated society. Mumford uses the term "region" instead of ex-territorial commune, but the connotations of his term are the same. For to Mumford a region is not just a political or geographic unit, but "the basic configuration in human life," and also "a permanent sphere of cultural influences and a center of economic activities." It is "an area large enough to embrace a sufficient range of interests, and small enough to keep the interests in focus and to make them a subject of direct collective concern."

A region thus conceived is something altogether different from the political and administrative divisions which disregard functional boundaries. These divisions are the work of the tyrannous political state whose emergence upon the stage of modern history is viewed by Mumford as a colossal tragedy resulting from the disintegration of the superior social and political pattern of the medieval city. Like Kropotkin, Mumford rejects the pseudo-scientific view of the Marxists which attributes to the State the category of a historic necessity brought about by the nascent forms of modern Capitalism.

To Mumford, the triumph of the tyrannous political State over the medieval commune was no more of a historic necessity than the victory of Fascism, whose role and dynamics, as it is clear to every student of Kropotkin, are similar to the one manifested by the emerging absolutist State. It was the logical end-point of a process of entropy—a "running down" of collective energy, which, *unlike the reverse process of a creative upswing*, is historically determined in its various phases.

Mumford dedicates a considerable portion of the book to the analysis of the general forms of the medieval commune, which to him, as to every libertarian thinker, represents the greatest approach to the natural function of a city as a specialized organ of social transmission. The breakdown of this normal pattern of communal life was the starting point of the process of social disruption,

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\*The "Culture of Cities," by Lewis Mumford. Harcourt, Brace & Co., \$5.00. 586 pps.

of crystallization of chaos now reaching its highest in the development of a functionally perverted city—the megalopolis—and the threatened collapse of civilization.

The development of Capitalism can be understood only in the light of this tragic heritage. The concomitant process of mechanical integration and social disruption, the triumph of untrammelled individualism in economic life, the *laissez-faire* system of economy—whose idealization, according to our author, is "the democratization of the baroque conception of the despotic Prince,"—all take their origin in the historic twist caused by the break-up of the pattern afforded by the medieval commune. In this sense the development of "Capitalism" was not inevitable. Mechanical progress could take place on the basis of an integrated and not a disrupted pattern of social life. Throughout the development of what is called capitalism, Mumford traces the emergence and development of "mutants"—anticipatory forms of the future social life, needing but the strong focusing of social intelligence to bring out their significance for the social order to come.

Mumford also upholds one of the favorite ideas of Kropotkin and Reclus in respect to the role of social intelligence in forestalling the threatened collapse of civilization and the shaping of new forms. Conscious orientation can forestall the tragic end of the downgrade cycle of civilization and turn it into the starting point of a new regeneration cycle. "The rational definition of the ideal framework," writes Mumford, "does not alone effect the necessary transition; it is an important element in changing the direction of the blind process. The strongest social organization and social pressures, without such well-defined goals, dissipate their energies in uneasy random efforts occasioned by passing opportunities."

This conscious orientation will be centered not only upon the very general aims of the socialist ideal, such as the collective ownership of land and the means of production, but upon the evolvement of an integrated form of social life based upon regional units. And contrary to the opinions of the State socialists, this orientation upon regionalism (the Bakuninites in the First International called it Communalism) is much more in consonance with the basic trends of modern technics than the centralized State economic of the Marxists. The ruralization of industry and industrialization of agriculture are assuming the nature of clearly manifested economic tendencies. Mumford quotes to this effect the opinion of the well known scientist, Prof. Russell Smith, who writes in his book *North America*, "It is possible that we are at the beginning of an era of partial distribution of manufacturing over the land where food production, climate and commercial access are good."

Professor Smith's prognostications, made more than a decade ago, were not meant for any other system but private capitalism, which places almost insuperable obstacles in the way of the assertion of those centralizing

tendencies in virtue of the monopolistic concentration of wealth and the terrific pull exercised by the megalopolis upon national life. With the removal of the present system, economic life will shape itself in greater obedience to the demands of modern technics which point in the direction of regional decentralization and integration of economic activities on a local scale. Specialization of industry and gigantic units are a liability under conditions demanding flexibility and ease of adaptation. And they will become superfluous with the growing mobility of power, its wider distribution from central energy stations. Along with that go other factors favoring decentralization such as the greater application of systematic knowledge in the exploitation of resources and organization of work; the growing importance of biological and social sciences; soil regeneration, selective breeding, intensification of crop yields through cultivation of plants in specially prepared tanks, and in general, the raising of agriculture to the status of a scientific industry leading to the leveling of agricultural advantages and the fusion of city and rural areas. Those are technical factors operating at the present, but in sketching the outlines of the collective society of the near future one should also take into consideration the incidence of a technic which is just emerging from its experimental stage: the utilization of new sources of power such as solar energy; storage of electric energy; special energy crops grown under conditions laid down by scientific agronomy; the use of television and the fuller exploitation of the airplane. And it is clear that each of these factors will contribute to the acceleration of the same tendency toward decentralization and wide distribution of agricultural, industrial and cultural advantages now centered only in certain areas.

Mumford effectively disposes of the stock arguments advanced against the idea of regional decentralization which were held up against Kropotkin by the state socialists of a generation ago. Regionalism, he declares, is not synonymous with autarchy, economic and cultural isolation. Nor does it connote the return to the parochialism and political independence of the medieval cities with their mutual strifes. The region will be the integrated cell but not an independent political unit, a miniature state possessing the attributes of political sovereignty. Inter-regional controls will exist, and for the time being, those controls will be vested in the political state stripped of its power functions and transformed into a "service" state. This is quite in keeping with the realistic trends in libertarian thought which is coming to grapple with the problem of the transitional period in a sober fashion. *For political sovereignty can be attenuated but cannot be conjured out of existence by a revolutionary fiat.* This realistic approach to the problem of the devolution of political power or "the dying away of the state" is fully accepted by Mumford, whose seminal ideas on this matter possess a great wealth of valuable suggestions which will prove of immeasurably greater importance for the practical solution of the

problem than all the talmudistic hair splitting of the Marxists over a few scanty passages devoted by their theoreticians to the same problem of the state in a transitional period.

Inter-regional control does not have to coincide with the boundaries of the national state. It will tend to be world wide, just as the foreign trade of the region based upon a special sort of currency directly attached to the commodities exchanged and valid only for this specific function. This, together with free migration, lack of definite boundaries between regions, the extra-territorial linkage effected by the associations within the region and tending to be world-wide with the vanishing of the national state,—all that will gradually create the new world culture, permeated with universal values and shot through with the infinite variety of local *motifs* and cultural idioms of the regions.

This is the ideal of the federalist, libertarian socialism as taught by Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin. And it is toward the reinterpretation of this ideal in the language of modern thought and realities that the latest book by Lewis Mumford—*The Culture of Cities* a book much too original to be forced into the mold of a single doctrine—makes such a powerful contribution.

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## ILLEGAL GERMAN UNIONS ADOPT SYNDICALIST TACTICS

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The following quotations are from a decision printed in the underground paper of the German seamen, longshoremen, inland boatmen, railroad workers, and teamsters, the *Schiffahrt* and reprinted in the *West Coast Sailors*, organ of the militant Sailors Union of the Pacific.

"According to the common interest of all to re-build free labor unions and based on our efforts to guarantee the most safety possible in our work against Nazi stool pigeons and secret police, the "illegal" groups of the German seamen, longshoremen, inland boatmen, railroad workers and teamsters have agreed to the following principle:

1. Anybody who participates in union work in the above named group agrees, regardless of which political party or fraction he at the present belongs, to refrain from all activities in his political group or party.
2. He agrees not to participate in any political faction in the illegal unions and agrees further to drop his membership in any political organization which intends to conquer the unions.
3. All materials which he distributes must have the consent of the above named section and the I.T.F. (International Transport Fed.)"

Apparently, at long last, at least one section of the German working class has been able to learn some lessons from the ease with which Hitler disposed of their immense unions in his march to power and have broken the stranglehold of Marxist—Bolshevik and Social Democratic—thought and action. They have learned that POLITICS AND UNIONISM DO NOT MIX, and that the key and effective point of workers' organization in the struggle for liberty is the industrial union.

WITH a colossal unmatched hypocrisy, the Communist Party is attempting to head the American labor organizations down the road to ruin to the mock tune of "unity." Nowhere is this more evident than in the latest developments among the maritime workers. Goaded to fury by their almost complete loss of influence and power among the West Coast seamen, who see through their false and disruptive tactics and reactionary goal, the Communist Party envisions its salvation in splitting the marine unions, by destroying their sense of solidarity and by the use of dirty political manoeuvring, to gain control of maritime labor. The program of the Communist Party is to gain control of a thoroughly regimented and supine membership which will not provide an obstacle to the war preparations of the U. S. government and which will assure the shipowners against too much labor trouble and thereby dispose them favorably towards the Russian government. Stalin's boys have outdone William Green as capitalism's lieutenants of labor.

## N.M.U. and N.L.R.B. Collaborate To Break Closed Shop Contracts

This struggle for domination has assumed open and violent form in the recent Shepard Line controversy. Disregarding closed-shop contracts which the West Coast seamen's unions had with the line, the National Labor Relations Board, in cahoots with Curran's National Maritime Union, held elections on the Shepard boats to decide which union the seamen would select as bargaining agency, the N.M.U. or A.F.L., *without indicating as a possible choice any of the west coast unions.* The militant Sailor's Union of the Pacific, against whom the election was directed, refused to accept the results of the ballots, and struck the ships. With the support of the rank and file of maritime labor and, it is significant to add, the A.F.L. longshoremen, teamsters and tugboatmen, the S.U.P. gained the victory and placed its men aboard all Shepard Line boats except, at the present moment, only one. In Seattle, Harry Bridges, C.I.O. director, chief of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (I.L.W.U.) and Communist stooge, personally lead his hesitating C.I.O. longshoremen through the picket line. In San Francisco it was his men who, *under the protection of the saved-off shotguns and machine guns of the police,* cajoled and threatened by their leaders, smashed the S.U.P. picket line. There resulted a bloody battle which the West Coast Seamen will long remember and for which they can thank the Communist Party, and its followers.

Bridges, Curran and the Communist Party, who were the brains behind these moves, were discredited. The rank and file longshoremen resented being made to scab against their brothers of the S.U.P. with whom they had worked and fought against their common enemy, the shipowners, for so many years. "What," the seamen on the East Coast asked themselves, "are we to gain by trying to take away ships from the West Coast workers who have contracts calling for closed shop, union hall hiring, high wages which we do not even have? It only means stealing jobs, creating ill-feeling and destroying labor solidarity." The entire unsavory incident became a lesson to the mass of maritime workers on the significance of political meddling in union affairs and its usual concomitant, union-busting.

## The Question of S.U.P. Affiliation with the A.F.L.

But the Shepard Line affairs had more far-reaching consequences. The Communist Party leadership and stooges by no means renounced their reactionary activities. Stalin's orders to capture the basically important field of maritime labor must be carried out. The campaign against the S.U.P. and its secretary,

Harry Lundeborg, whom they labelled "phoney" and "ship-owners agent" was intensified. And the task of preparing for the possible strike next September, when the union contracts with the shipowners expire, were deliberately neglected. There was no adequate strike funds, except among the sailors, and distrust and disunity had been sown. The S.U.P., the Marine Firemen (M.F.O.W.), the militant rank and file will strike, but it is quite certain that they will be left stranded by Curran and Bridges who will sign separate agreements with the shipowners in order to get control of maritime shipping and then close down on the mass of anti-Communist class-conscious militants. In the face of this situation the S.U.P. looked for allies. It saw them in the A.F.L. Without A.F.L. help in the Shepard strike it would have been very unlikely that the S.U.P. would have come out on top. The A.F.L. was playing a card here in its wider fight against the C.I.O. It could use the record and prestige of the S.U.P., which would carry with it the support of the M.F.O.W. and the bulk of West Coast seamen, to bolster its own scabby record. So it offered the S.U.P. a national charter on complete S.U.P. terms—complete autonomy, rank and file control of all activities and strikes and funds.

The Curran-Bridges-Communist Party leadership felt that the S.U.P. would never dare to go back to the A.F.L. and that they could therefore continue in their efforts to isolate and liquidate an independent Sailor's Union with impunity. However, in view of the present events and the coming September showdown the S.U.P. membership, with some uneasiness, will probably accept an A.F.L. charter.

## Bridges "Captures" the M.F.P.C.

The disruption and attempts to capture the unions continued along carefully laid plans. The Maritime Federation of the Pacific Coast (M.F.P.C.) held its annual convention in June. The M.F.P.C., a federation of all maritime organizations on the West Coast, is composed of A.F.L., C.I.O. and independent unions and is to the workers a symbol of the victory and solidarity which was created after the bloody general strike of 1934. By means of political wire pulling, Bridges filled the Federation with shoreside, non-maritime unions that he could control. The convention opened with hypocritical appeals for unity and solidarity, but when it came to seating the militant A.F.L. longshoremen's local of Tacoma, which had aided the S.U.P. in its Shepard Line beef, their delegates were rejected by an illegal vote (show of hands—not per capita vote) without even being allowed to state their case. This infraction of solidarity, democracy and union constitutionality could not be accepted by the M.F.O.W., the S.U.P., the Masters, Mates and Pilots, the Engineers and some Cooks and Stewards delegates, who walked out of the hall. Harry Bridges, unconcerned by the seriousness of the situation, observed gleefully upon the withdrawal of the seamen's delegates, "Let them go; we'll soon have them hanging from the telegraph poles." Harry Bridges succeeded in capturing the M.F.P.C. He captured Bridges and Company.

As a result of the breakdown of the Federation following the rule-or-ruin policy of the Stalinists it seems that the Seafarers' Federation (reported in last issue of the *Vanguard*), which after its first rapid and spontaneous growth went through a quiescent period due to the stresses and strains at play among the maritime organizations, will receive a new incentive and growth. The Seafarers' Federation will also act as a counterbalance to the reactionary influence that affiliation with the A.F.L. involves.

(Continued on page 15)

# CIO, AFL AND SYNDICALISM

WILL the American trade unions of the A.F.L. and C.I.O. logically develop into revolutionary syndicalism? This idea was expressed affirmatively by the editors of *Vanguard* in a note to an article by Joseph Z. Corn under the caption, "A.F.L.-C.I.O." in the February issue of the above magazine. The prediction of the editors is based on the premise that the "unions are not mere derivatives of the capitalist system" and that "into the making of the C.I.O. went tremendous forces of mass resurgence." The logical conclusion from this premise, according to the editors, is that, "not only will the unions have a destructive effect upon capitalist society but will build the cells of the future society."

Not being in entire agreement with the writer of the article in question on the future of the C.I.O.-A.F.L., I nevertheless wish to take issue with the *Vanguard* on its view of the character of American trade unionism as being a mere reflection of their cherished dogma but not corresponding to reality.

## Reformist Unions Bulwark of Capitalism

It is trite that trade unions owe their origin to the struggle of the workers against capitalist exploitation and are not mere derivatives of the capitalist system. This only proves the dialectical nature of capitalist society. In the early stages of capitalism the first beginnings of trade unionism had been subjected to the severest persecution. Special laws had been passed by democratic governments as well as despotic governments against combinations of workers; strikers had been severely punished. At later stages of capitalist development we, however, see not only the legalization of trade unions by capitalist states, but in many cases, like in Tzarist Russia, and imperial Germany, unions are sponsored by their agents, the Zubatovs and Shultze Delitichs. Such unions certainly cannot have a destructive effect upon capitalist society. Their aim is to save capitalism from destruction. The social democratic unions of Germany, the trade unions in England in spite of their origin, have played a similar role. They are steeped in capitalist ideology and through their bureaucracy are closely linked with the capitalist state.

The American trade unions are following the same road. The C.I.O. differs from the A.F.L. only in its more modern method of organization by industry instead of by trade, but not in ideology and aims. In point of fact the C.I.O. has been born of a wedlock between the reformist leaders, the Lewises, Hillmans and the new deal capitalists. That is why the history of the C.I.O. struggles is shot through with betrayals and disappointments for the militant workers, who have joined these unions with virgin energies and false hopes. For a while the elemental militancy and the sweep of the movement influenced by the demagoguery of the Lewises and the Roosevelts submerged the treacherous leadership and held their sway in the great struggles. The situation today is radically changed. There are still heard rumblings of struggling forces, both against the betrayers and the bosses. The sudden onrush of the depression is producing its crushing effect on the rank and file, while the leadership is skillfully diverting the menacing moods of the workers into safe channels of fratricidal warfare under the guise of unity slogans.

It follows from the above that revolutionary syndicalism in this country cannot be based on the A.F.L.-C.I.O., or on unity between them. Both are closely bound up with capitalism and can only prosper under conditions of normal capitalist development but are destined to fall in a crisis. History has sealed its fate, as it sealed the fate of kindred trade unions in European countries. Their fate should be a warning to us to avoid deceptions by demagogic slogans and to build a revolutionary movement on more solid foundations.

The future of revolutionary syndicalism lies not in the established form of a union, trade or industrial. There is no "automatic" development of a trade union movement into a "cell of the future society." History has not shown us a phenomenon of this kind. With the exception of Spain, where the trade unions of the C.N.T. have gone through a long period of revolutionary preparation, trade unionism is a constituent part of capitalist society in its democratic stage and is thrown into the scrap heap with the advent of fascism to give way to fascist-controlled unions. American trade unionism is not likely to avoid the same fate. Should fascism come in this country, the Greens and Lewises can hardly expect to be accorded the privilege to head unions under fascism. It is the task of revolutionary syndicalists to prepare the workers in the trade unions and even in opposition to them, when conditions dictate, to defend the working class against fascism and lay the foundations of a genuine revolutionary trade union movement, which alone can form the cells of the future society.

—ALBERT ORLAND

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

The article is based upon a flagrant misconstruction of the ideas expressed in the brief editorial comment prefacing the article by Joseph Corn on the C.I.O. and A.F.L. in one of the recent issues of the *Vanguard*. (February, 1938.)

The purpose of the comment was to point out the fallacy underlying the author's approach to the struggle between the C.I.O. and A.F.L. viewed as a reflection of the growing rift between the "old" and "new" capitalism. We pointed out in this connection that no union, conservative as it might be, can be regarded as a mere derivative of the capitalist system. Neither the A.F.L. nor the C.I.O. came in response to the needs of the latter. They were essentially the manifestation of workers' rebellion against some aspects of this system. And because of that they necessarily embody a certain element of collective experience which will prove indispensable in the building up of a new society along the lines of a free democratic socialism.

## Reformist Unions Do Not Grow Automatically Into Anarcho-Syndicalist Organizations

That does not mean that the A.F.L. and the C.I.O. unions—or any other reformist union for that matter—will *automatically* develop into a revolutionary organization of the anarcho-syndicalist type. This rather preposterous idea was read into our comment by the author of the article for purely polemic purposes. The *Vanguard* never upheld the fatuous hope, rather assiduously cultivated by a small group of opportunists and union job-holders within our movement, of seeing organizations like the C.I.O. and the A.F.L. adopt the point of view of revolutionary syndicalism under pressure of the developing class struggle and a disintegrating economic system. We never shared illusions of that kind. We realize too well the shock-absorbing power exercised by the apparatus of both reformist groups designed in order to keep the great masses of workers from giving expression to the cumulative lessons of their own struggle.

Whether this apparatus is of the A.F.L. type, hardened in its reactionary mold and very often merging imperceptibly with the underworld, or whether it tends toward the more progressive pattern of the new C.I.O. unions—it is too closely linked, by political and economic ties, to the capitalist system to be able to meet any social crisis which grows out of the total collapse of the latter. Not only is there the complete lack of conscious orientation upon this surpassing crisis—it is the lack of this orientation that mainly distinguishes reformist unionism from

revolutionary syndicalism—but the top-heavy bureaucratic structure, anti-democratic by its traditions and the material interests involved, is bound to form an impassable barrier to any attempts on the part of the forward looking element in those unions to evolve policies that would prove adequate in meeting a situation growing out of a supreme economic and political crisis. And inasmuch as the pressure of this element is bound to grow with the disintegration of our system, it will necessarily lead to a series of explosions within the conservative unions such as we are already witnessing in the sailor's unions, culminating in the formation of revolutionary unions of the anarcho-syndicalist type.

### Anarcho-Syndicalist Unions Only A Vanguard

This is an inevitable development, much as it may be retarded by the influence exercised by the so-called revolutionary parties of the Marxist variety. But granted the most favorable conditions for the growth of such an anarcho-syndicalist union, there still remains the problem of its relationships with the more backward types of unions dominated by the reformist bureaucracy of political parties. This problem is even of greater importance during a revolutionary period, as it has already been shown by events in Spain.

For it is obviously much of an illusory hope to expect the conversion of the greater part of the workers to the idea of revolutionary unionism before the great social crisis arrives. Even in Spain, where anarcho-syndicalism was in the field for more than half a century, the forces were about evenly divided—that is, in point of numbers and not the driving dynamic power—between the revolutionary and reformist unions. That was true of the situation prevailing on the very eve of the fascist rebellion.

History is much less generous in its time allotment as far as the development of revolutionary unionism in other countries is concerned. We have much less than half a century—perhaps even less than a decade—to build up unions capable of grappling with the problem of workers' control and ownership of the industries. And broad as their mass base may be, those unions will still be in the nature of vanguard organizations in relation to the inert backward mass of workers adhering to the traditional type of unionism. What should be the attitude of such vanguard unions to other organizations?

It is very easy to slide down into the dictatorial, essentially non-syndicalist attitude, upheld by the left Marxists. And such an attitude is implied in the rather sweeping statements made by the author of the article "Whither the A.F.L. and C.I.O.?" For if the role of the conservative unions is the same as that of police inspired Zoliatov unions of the fascist prototype, and furthermore, if their accumulated experience has nothing of value as far as the building of the new society is concerned—it follows that the revolutionary minority organized into anarcho-syndicalist unions has but one choice during a revolutionary crisis: to destroy such organizations, which course it will doubtless follow in regard to fascist or company "unions." In other words, the logic of this attitude leads to the Marxist idea of dictatorship by the "vanguards" with all the implications of such an idea now fully brought out by the bloody events in Stalinland.

We reject the premise of this fatal course. We believe that even conservative unions inasmuch as they do not degenerate into the racketeering type, in which case it is but a shell of a union with no power of attraction even for backward workers—weave a net of new social norms at the point of production which forms the indispensable minimum of an industrial democracy—and it is the tendency of every Marxist politician to ignore the indispensable value of such a training—the new social order will be dominated again by a new cast, by the "organizers," the "revolutionary engineers" the "vanguard" and the "select."

Anarcho-syndicalist unions give an incomparably higher training, but not before the process of social transformation has

gone far on its way, can we hope that the great majority of workers will benefit by this superior type of preparation for the task of a genuine industrial democracy. And that is why the proper relationships between the new anarcho-syndicalist unions that are bound to crystalize from the great ferment now stirring within militant circles of American labor, and the more conservative unions, forms one of the important keys to the solution of the surpassing problem of building up the new industrial democracy with which our generation may be faced very soon.

### I.W.M.A. Boycott Plan

The International Federation of Trade Unions (Amsterdam International) has refused the request of the International Working Men's Association for cooperation in putting an end to the Fascist aggression in Spain.

The I.W.M.A. offered a concrete method for dealing a death blow to totalitarian banditry which we sum up below:

- a) An organized boycott and embargo against Fascist countries, laying particular stress upon the basic war materials such as petrol, benzine, crude oil, aluminum, manganese, steel, coal, iron and chemical products.
- b) The boycott and embargo to be organized, not on patriotic lines, but on class lines; appealing to the seamen, longshoremen, transport workers, etc. to refuse to load, man, drive or unload any materials destined for Franco or any of the Fascist countries; industrial workers should refuse to manufacture essential war products destined for fascist countries. Materials reaching their destination despite the vigilance of the aroused working-class should be subjected to a merciless boycott. The plan calls for the establishment of union committees at strategic points to gather and relay information to central bureaus.

They add further that the so called democratic countries have not lifted a finger to defeat Fascism and that the workers themselves must depend on direct economic action if any results are to be obtained. Thus again the anarcho-syndicalists have demonstrated their grasp of realities and their unwavering allegiance to the principles of working class solidarity which are once more being betrayed by the social-democratic labor politicians of the I.F.T.U.

#### SEAMEN STAND BY!

The S.S. Exminister sailed March 25th for Spanish Fascist ports.

The S.S. Exmoor sailed May 28th for Spanish Fascist ports.

The S.S. Examiner is sailing June 30th for Spanish Fascist ports.

These ships are manned by seamen of the National Maritime Union, C.I.O. affiliate, under the thumb of the Communist Party. The C.P. "Anti-Fascist" leadership has not moved an inch to prevent the sailing of the above vessels, knowing that even the threat of a strike would prevent the owners (the Export Line) from continuing in the death traffic.

Seamen, the workers of Spain cry out for your aid! Show them that they are not alone in the battle for a workers' world. Force your leadership to recognize that you will not be pawns in the bloody game of imperialist rivalry.

Direct action on the job will save the lives of countless hundreds. Refuse to man death ships!

## RUSSIA WOOS FASCISM

**A**N irrepressible conflict in the making, a tug-of-war between two mutually exclusive principles striving for supremacy in European life—such is the general opinion of the struggle now going on behind the scenes between the Soviet Union and the fascist bloc of powers. And it is seemingly borne out by such well-known facts as the adoption of the anti-Communist program as the basis for an informal alliance between Germany, Italy and Japan. And, on the other hand, it seems to be confirmed by the ostensibly leading role assumed by the Soviet government in the world-wide struggle against fascism.

However, a closer examination of the nature of this "anti-fascist" struggle and of the Soviet diplomacy during the last decade raises serious doubts as to whether there is really an irrepressible conflict. That is, a conflict of vast proportions in the making, but is it really grounded in mutually exclusive attitudes and principles?

For a number of years the Soviet Union pursued a highly conciliatory policy toward fascist Italy. Not only were normal diplomatic and commercial relations maintained, but there was also an attempt on both sides to create an atmosphere of good feeling by abstaining from mutual criticisms and adverse propaganda. The Soviet press was singularly devoid of any attacks against the fascist regime of Italy, while it was the boast of Mussolini and his lieutenants that they were carrying out some of Lenin's ideas in a form suitable to the Italian soil. And it went much beyond mere expediency, demanding a certain minimum of diplomatic good-will in order to avoid unnecessary friction and forestall any hostile combinations. Certainly Lunatcharsky's mission of establishing closer cultural relationships with fascist Italy was not motivated by diplomatic expediency. Nor was it mere diplomatic courtesy that prompted the lyrical effusions as to the "greatness" of Mussolini on the part of Potemkin, the erstwhile Soviet ambassador to Rome, who, upon assuming his new duties of ambassadorship in Paris, issued an interview to the press representatives highly eulogizing the Italian renegade and his "accomplishments."

But, it is argued, Italy at that time did not harbor any designs upon Soviet Russia, nor was it a party to the encirclement policy pursued at that time by the "democratic" Entente in regard to the Bolshevik government. That is quite true, which only goes to prove that the struggle between the Soviet government and fascism is not one of irreconcilable ideologies. The "ideology" appeared when Italy began to swing nearer to the orbit of Hitler's foreign policies, that is, when it became a party to the historic drive by German imperialism toward the east.

That the fanfares of the anti-fascist crusade undertaken for diplomatic reasons are not taken too seriously by the Soviet press is shown by an article appearing in the leading Communist daily of France *L'Humanité* (April 21, 1938) advocating an alliance between France and fascist Italy.

"... We favor an alliance between France and Italy. We favor it as friends of peace, as Frenchmen, as anti-fascists.

"Yes, as anti-fascists! For we believe that the interests of peace, the interests of Italy and of France demand that Italy break away from her vassal allegiance to Germany. The axis policy is anti-Italian; it betrays the historic interests of Italy and it militates against the Italian national feeling . . ."

This savors very strongly of Chamberlain's "realism," but although paying lip service to anti-fascism, it violates the basic demands of anti-fascist struggle. Italian fascism may not be particularly interested in imperialist ventures thousands of miles away from its base, but it is just as much of an enemy of peace, democracy and the labor movement of the world as Hitler's

nazism, nourished upon imperialist dreams of grandeur at the expense of Soviet Russia. To advocate an alliance with fascist Italy, while the latter is engaged in crushing the Spanish people, is to betray the cause of anti-fascism. It reveals clearly an utter indifference to the vital issues of anti-fascist struggle and an insidious attempt to exploit it for the patriotic aims of defending the Soviet fatherland.

And what, every anti-fascist must ask himself, will happen if Hitler re-orient his foreign policy by re-plotting the main lines of attacks of his military machine along routes which would leave intact the borders of Soviet Russia? The possibility of such a change is being discussed in many a foreign capital. The "Drang nach Osten" may be in line with the historic drive of German imperialism, but stubborn realities may dictate its temporary abandonment. After all, the basic outline of Hitler's drive against Soviet Russia took shape about seven or eight years ago when the latter was in the state of semi-prostration. The road to Ukraine, convulsed by hunger and starvation, seemed to be clear. All that was necessary was to obtain the neutrality of western powers, which could be done by cleaving to a propitiatory line of diplomatic action.

But 1938-1939 is not 1932. The military strength of the Soviet Union has grown enormously during this period. The road to Ukraine is receding into the realm of wishful thinking. It is anything but easy, and Hitler may yet be forced to acknowledge this stubborn fact. He may yet be forced to seek a non-aggression pact with Soviet Russia in order to obtain freedom of action along a more westerly route. And since in totalitarian states ideologies follow the flag, may we not have a right to expect a new "party line" following close upon a change in Hitler's foreign policies, a line which will abandon the ideological struggle against nazism just as the former conciliatory policy toward Italy led to the complete abandon of the struggle against Italian fascism.

During the last decade we witnessed many an astounding turn in the so-called "party line," every one of which marked an ever greater departure from the international ideal of socialism. No one can say that this policy of recessions has to come to an end. The near future may hold in stock even more shocking surprises than the fervent embrace of collective security and national defense. We may yet see—and that depends upon the foreign policies of Hitler's government—the complete abandonment of anti-fascist struggle on the part of Stalin, the withdrawal into the shell of isolationism, the advocacy of a peaceful co-existence of socialism and fascism, and "ideological" revision of the latter and a further accentuation of the nationalist trends within Soviet Russia which, following a logic of their own, will sever the last links binding the Soviet regime to the historic values of socialism.

### WALTER STARRETT

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the loss of our comrade Walter Starrett (Van Valkenburgh) who died of a heart attack on May 22nd at the age of 54. For the past 30 years he had devoted his life to the cause of human liberty. He was untiring in his efforts in behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti and in his last years gave unselfishly of his strength to aid the heroic fight of the Spanish workers. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to his comrade wife. We who are so few can ill afford his absence from our ranks.

## VANGUARD ORGANIZING COMMITTEE REPORTS PROGRESS

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YEARS have passed since the libertarian movement could muster its forces and exert a powerful influence upon the American working class. Until recently the inner shortcomings of our movement and objective difficulties prevented the formation of a well-knit libertarian vanguard movement doing work on a large scale among English speaking workers of this country. Today the libertarian movement is reawakening as are great masses of workers everywhere. In growing numbers workers are beginning to rebel against the rising totalitarian waves of both the rightist and leftist varieties, and the libertarian trend in this rebellion is unmistakable.

The libertarian elements must take up their duties once more! The rebuilding of the movement has begun and the organization of youth is its first great task. The VANGUARD is daily receiving letters from comrades, anxious to help in the work. "Send organizers" "Send speakers," is the cry, and that is just what the VANGUARD is doing. A small organization fund was started, and organizers went out to a few cities.

Our comrades in and around Boston, for example, had started a school. "We wish to call attention to the fact," their letter tells us, "that this is a new departure among the foreign speaking comrades who up to this date never thought of carrying on their activities in the English Language." The VANGUARD GROUP did more than merely congratulate them, we sent two organizers to that city to help them in their work. Last April our secretary went there to gather together a few of the younger elements in a group. The work she started during her brief stay was supplemented by another member who arrived to help them continue their study and propaganda activities. He spoke in various towns and cities nearby, notably Roxbury, East Boston, Fall River and New Haven (Conn.).

In addition to the New England trip the VANGUARD GROUP sent an organizer to Youngstown and Canton, Ohio. Here again was found a foreign language element that had come to realize the necessity for organization. A libertarian group was organized in Youngstown which now contains about a dozen young militant members, and whose work consists in agitating in several social clubs, carrying on group discussions, arranging lectures on libertarian fundamentals, socials, etc. They write us: "Since the reorganization that your comrade helped us with, our meetings have become more interesting and the members are participating more in the activities. We have had lectures by our own members and are doing educational work among the Marxist youth and Jewish youth clubs. Things are exceedingly better in every way. . . . Reading in general has been encouraged and is on the upgrade. The discussions are much more intelligent since the time your organizer was here. The libertarians in Youngstown are rapidly becoming the greatest menace to the reformist Stalinist and so-called revolutionary Marxist movement. . . ."

Canton, Ohio received our organizer with an enthusiastic meeting of a hundred comrades, mostly steel workers, all determined to do their utmost in organizing youth groups. It was most unfortunate that our organizer could not remain in Canton because of insufficient funds and lack of time.

In New York, the VANGUARD GROUP has organized a lively group in Brooklyn that is now functioning and rapidly extending its activity and influence. A special effort is being made to have an active group in Philadelphia. A VANGUARD organizer is now there helping with the work. Moreover, the VANGUARD was instrumental in organizing the Stelton Anarchist Youth, (by now well known for its excellent bulletin *Looking Forward*, and many other fruitful undertak-

ings). In New York, also, a student section has functioned for the past school term, participating in anti-war demonstrations and other activities, selling literature, etc.

This summary of the work of the Organizing Committee of the VANGUARD GROUP covers scantily the first few months of activity since our campaign began. The encouraging results we have obtained spur the group to greater efforts. The partial success of our work thus far must not, however, blind us to the fact that we have not even the foundations for a movement which can do large-scale work among the masses. It must be understood clearly that the establishment of several new groups is only the first step in laying these foundations. One of the major causes for past failures has been the absence of a well-knit, self-disciplined English language libertarian federation acting on the basis of a common program. Our task is now first to form more of these groups, to create a network of active propaganda centers. In the immediate future, that is, the next two or three months, we see excellent prospects of having ten such groups. Then the next step for these groups will be to get together in a conference or convention and work out a common program of action, including among other things: publishing literature (reprints of the libertarian classics and new pamphlets), putting out a regular organ of propaganda which will really represent a federation of functioning units; speaking tours; the establishment of a libertarian training school, etc. With the accomplishment of this task we shall have laid the foundations for a libertarian movement worthy of our ideals and capable of making these ideals a basic element in the struggle of the workers for emancipation.

This pioneering job is necessarily a slow and difficult one. Thus far the VANGUARD GROUP has borne the brunt of the work. We are, unfortunately, the only ones who have actually sent out organizers and formed new groups. We cannot urge upon our comrades too strongly the necessity of carrying out this task rather than repeatedly calling conferences for "building the movement" which never result in any practical accomplishments; it is the hard work of building new libertarian cells that will build the movement we are seeking to create.

We now call upon all those who share our aims to cooperate with us by sharing the burdens this work involves. We need funds and the active cooperation of all comrades and groups who realize the importance of this work. If you want to contribute financially, mail your check or money orders to CLARA FREDRICKS, c/o Vanguard, 45 W. 17th Street, New York, N. Y. If you wish to cooperate in any other way, write to the Organizing Committee, c/o VANGUARD, at the same address.

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### Maritime Unions

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(Continued from page 11)

The coming months will be crucial ones for the American seamen. The disruptive tactics of the Stalinists and their stooges will continue unabated. The September showdown will find the maritime workers less united than on previous occasions. From the outside the government and shipowners will be moving in on them; from the inside Carrin, Bridges and Co. will try to strengthen their weakening stranglehold. The S.U.P., the M.F.O.W. and the rank and file will place some reliance upon an A.F.L. ally that is not dependable and may prove treacherous. The seamen, to hold their own, must move further forward on the road of militancy, class-conscious, anti-political direct action. The Maritime Transport Workers of the I.W.W., through intelligent, untiring action, can help to chart a successful course. The struggle will be a severe and bitter one, but the victory will be the more meaningful and the more lasting.

## THE AUTO WORKERS

The new depression has appreciably checked organization among auto workers. With 70% of the trade unemployed and a like number idle in other industries the capitalists are making a decided onslaught upon the living standards of the workers everywhere. Gains previously made by the workers are seriously threatened.

Will the unions weather the storm? The greatest threat at present does not come from without but lies in the fight between the C.I.O. officialdom and the so-called progressives, notably the Communists, for control of the union.

The Hamer Martin leadership in The United Automobile Workers of America, has utterly ignored the interests of the membership in a mad scramble to sign contracts with General Motors, Chrysler and the rest. Agreements have been signed without a referendum and officers elected by the membership have been arbitrarily discharged. Locals have been suspended. Attempts of the rank and file to make agreements effective by sit-down strikes have been banned as illegal at the behest of the motor companies, resulting in dissatisfaction of the membership with their corrupt leadership. It is this discontent that the so-called progressives are attempting to use to gain control of the Union. While the Lovestoneites support Martin for the sake of "Unity", the Communist Party, also in the name of "Unity" plots to gain control of the Union allying themselves with the notorious red-baiter Frankenstein to whom they have promised the presidency of the Union and the endorsement of his candidacy as Lieutenant Governor of Michigan. Cloaked in the respectable front of Frankenstein, and in the name of combatting the reds, the C. P. hopes to get rid of the influential Lovestoneites and other factions.

None of the opposition groups in the Union, except the I.W.W., have taken an independent stand. There is a revealing difference between the slogans of the revolutionary I.W.W.—"Clean house; take the affairs of the Union into your own hands; stop playing politics and use your economic power to further the fight for real unionism,"—and those of the ultra-revolutionary Trotskyites, for example, with their lame, "Support Martin against the Communists."

Neither the Martin machine nor the Communist machine can bring any real improvement in the lot of the auto workers. A new orientation is necessary as the deplorable conditions existing within the Union are rooted in the failures of both the "progressive" elements and the present leadership to hold the needs of the workers above the dictates of political exigency.

History is repeating itself. When the communists last "bored from within" and formed the Trade Union Unity League it

## Spain

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and C.N.T. oppositionists. Heavy punishments are meted out just for reading the underground paper "La Batalla", clandestine executions are again spreading their terror and a vicious campaign of slander and defamation is again unloosed from high quarters under the instigations of Moscow agents.

Such is the tragic fate of the Spanish workers abandoned by the international proletariat in its nerveless struggle against fascism, are forced to fall more and more upon the mercies of a ruthless power which uses them only as pawns in its drive for world domination and which in the long run is just as inimical to the libertarian aspirations of the Spanish Revolution as Hitler and Mussolini.

split the unions wide open. Today the situation is much worse. Both the C.I.O. and A.F.L. leadership are hastening the collapse of the unions by their struggle for control. Under these circumstances, it is necessary to rally the revolutionary elements of the labor movement to take an independent stand and expose the opportunistic operations of the so-called friends of labor.—S. W.

## COMING EVENTS

*JULY 3rd, Sunday.* Boat Ride and Outing Picnic to Hook Mountain Playground with the Calvert Steamer which leaves Pier 1, at North River at 9:00 A.M. Under the auspices of *Il Proletario*. Admission \$1.25 for adults and .50 for children up to 10 years.

GRAND PICNIC for the VANGUARD at MOHEGAN COLONY, Crompond, N. Y. near Peekskill, on *SUNDAY, JULY 10th*, all day. Swell time for all. Speakers, entertainment and games amid the beautiful surroundings of Mohegan Colony. Admission free. Transportation will be arranged at \$1.00 round trip by automobile, or take train at Grand Central Station to Peekskill, N. Y. and from there take bus to Colony. *JULY 17th, YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO:* Grand Picnic in commemoration of July 19th, arranged for organization work by the Youngstown Cultural Club and Study Circle at the Liberty Park, Stop 28 Sharon Line. There will be an excellent program, dancing, games, races and speakers.

## HELP WANTED

The current deficit of the VANGUARD is \$186.00. Such an amount would just be a tid-bit to the Saturday Evening Post: to us it is a nightmarish figure—the difference between success and failure. The financial problems of radical magazines are well known and hardly rank as news, but you must realize that our situation is even more difficult than that of the usual movement mouthpiece, for not only do we not have a maternal Moscow to turn to in our need, but we lack even the solace that a large and well-knit movement might give.

We are delighted to receive comments and suggestions from all well intentioned people. We are not lacking in moral encouragement: from Alexander Shapiro, internationally known French Anarchist we hear, "I like the VANGUARD very much. I consider it the best Anarchist publication in America."; the Revolutionary Youth Federation of Scotland writes, "VANGUARD is our best seller." Scores of similar comments reach us every month. Six foreign periodicals reprinted articles from our last issue.

But we need more than MORAL encouragement. If we are to keep up the work that WE ALONE are doing in America, we need the FINANCIAL aid of all who are in a position to help.

Below are listed the contributions made to the VANGUARD since our last issue. We are sincerely grateful for the help these comrades have given us. We simply suggest that we must have more.

MAKE ALL CHACKS PAYABLE TO—

CLARA FREDERICKS, c/o VANGUARD

45 West 17th Street, N. Y. C.

VANGUARD SUSTAINING FUND

From April 1 to June 21, 1938

Liza Brilliant (495), 1.00; H. Mathewson (506), .25; I. Radinowsky (515), 1.00; The Young Recruits, Somerville, Mass. (546), 2.00; M. R. (529), 1.00; M. Villanueva (548), 1.00; Dramatic Club of Framingham, Mass. (549), 2.00; A Friend (551), 1.00; Youngstown Ohio Cultural Club and Study Circle (559), 6.00; Anonymous (560), .50; Liza Brilliant (568), .25; Vanguard Group affair with the co-operation of the N. Y. Section of the Jewish Anarchist Federation (570), 18.17.