

DEFEATIST TRENDS ON THE "LEFT"

"THE left, and within the left the intellectuals more than the workers, shows the same unhappy inclination it has had for the last two decades to raise the white flag before the battle has really started." So writes J. Alvarez Del Vayo, in the *Nation* of March 17. "Here, indeed, is a dangerous tendency," he continues, "for it demoralizes and consequently weakens the left at the very moment when the real struggle between progress and reaction, inside the victorious coalition and inside almost every European country, has been made inevitable by the approaching end of the war."

This is a very healthy note of self-criticism to be sounded today among American liberals. Defeatism is the abiding danger in the non-Marxist "left"; of this we witnessed an example in our country when, within sixty days of the glorious victory in the national elections, a panic swept through our liberals under the slogan "Who won the elections?" We see smaller examples every day.

Unfortunately, Mr. Del Vayo has not in his further discussion given a clear lead for the necessary struggle against defeatism. In fact, at the close of three pages (which contain many sound observations as well as some confusion) he himself accepts the defeatist line in the matter of the stability of the Anglo-Soviet-American coalition. He already accepts as determined the postwar dissolution of the coalition. This idea is the very core of "defeatism on the left," but Del Vayo seems to have accepted it as his basic point of orientation. For he sums up: "Only through a planned economy and through solutions very close to socialism have the rebuilders of Europe any reasonable chance of success. The day of effective capitalist control is over; the trend of Europe is toward the left. If the democratic powers had been willing to gear their foreign policy to this trend, the change to a socialized society might have been a peaceful one. They have not done so; instead they have moved from one costly experiment in reaction to another, and in doing so they have only promoted revolution."

Now if this is to be taken as a correct description of the dominant current in world affairs, then indeed the military victory over the Axis will be only the curtain-raiser to World War III.

It is my opinion, however, that Mr. Del Vayo has raised the white flag much too early in the battle for a lasting peace as the fruit of victory. That battle should not be conceded so quickly to the powers of darkness. It can still be won. But to win it, it will be necessary to reject the leadership which already concedes defeat and wishes now to reform our lines as if we had been defeated.

Where Mr. Del Vayo switches off onto the defeatist side-track is in his estimation of the world role of America. "The iron hand of capital, particularly American capital," he says, will yield nothing, and will in no way help reconstruct the world "but for the profit and power of free enterprise."

It is my contention that capital, "particularly American capital," knows that it no longer rules the world with an iron hand, and is prepared to accommodate itself to the

reconstruction of a world in which a large part is definitely socialist, and in which another growing part takes a line of development which does not correspond to American definitions of capitalism as "free enterprise." This is the reality that underlies, and gives substance to, the declarations at Teheran and Yalta projecting the war-coalition into the peace which is to be long-enduring.

"The profit and power of free enterprise" in America has no perspective except upon the foundation of this coalition; but once it is adjusted to this coalition and the policies required to preserve and develop it, then this American free enterprise gains a new perspective of life and growth. Both its profit and its power are today realizable only *in partnership* with the socialist sector of the world, and this partnership is stable only with the other countries of Europe free to determine for themselves, on a democratic basis, their economic and political forms.

Of course, this is a new, untried, and difficult course. It will not work out without many conflicts, delays, hesitations, and crises. The first stages will be the most difficult. Greece has already given us a preview of how dangerous and deep these crises may be. There may be other Greeces. Nothing will be presented on a silver platter all polished and finished. It may take a generation to develop the new processes of peaceful economic and political reconstruction of the world which are implicit in the Teheran and Yalta declarations. But they are inherently possible of achievement. And one of the key factors making this course possible is that a large and growing sector of American capital is ready to take this road.

If the political camp of the "left"—only a part of the democratic world, even if a most important one—should follow the line of thought indicated by Mr. Del Vayo, that might be the factor which would defeat this prospect of a stable peace. By raising sharply as the only perspective for Europe a series of violent revolutions for the general establishment of socialism, carried through against the opposition of American capital as a whole, the "left" would surely throw the more enlightened sectors of American capital back into the arms of their reactionary fellows. The old "Red bogey" would again arise from its grave and stalk the world, and might well produce a Hitler for America as it once did for Germany and Europe. The next generation might be condemned to a new round of revolutions and wars. That certainly is one of the possibilities inherent in the world situation. But it is not the only possibility, and certainly there is no reason why the Del Vayos must deliberately choose it. There is another possible course for history, if we can bring together the forces that will fight for it—and if we can dam up all the little springs of defeatism that rise from the difficulties and lack of perspective.

It is earnestly to be hoped that Mr. Del Vayo (who has played a constructive role in Spain and abroad) will think more profoundly on these problems, and bring his political judgments and tactical conclusions into harmony with that excellent warning against defeatism which I quoted at the opening of this article.