

The American
Socialist

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dissents on CP History

Joseph Clark suggests in his article "U.S. Socialism Today and Tomorrow" [*American Socialist*, December 1957] that the growth of the Communist Party and the decline of the Socialist Party in the decade of 1935-1945 resulted from the contrasting attitudes of the two parties toward the New Deal and collective security. As he put it: "The Socialist Party was reduced to a sect in the thirties when it refused to acknowledge anything progressive in the New Deal on the domestic scene or collective security internationally. The Communist Party espoused these and, emphasizing the politics of coalition, gained influence and became the main bearer of the radical tradition."

I find fault with this explanation of the contrasting fortunes of the party of Earl Browder and the party of Norman Thomas and will set down here the objections I have to it.

The growth of the CP in the thirties and early forties seems not to have depended on the party's attitude toward Roosevelt's domestic and foreign policies. The party grew from 1932 to 1935 while it was bitterly hostile to FDR. It grew from 1936 to 1939—a period in which it toned down its opposition to the New Deal but in which it also clashed with the administration's policies toward the WPA, the Little Steel strike and the Spanish Civil War. In 1939-1941, a period in which it denounced Roosevelt as a war-monger and derided the idea of collective security, the party lost many intellectuals but probably continued to extend its trade union support, thanks to a number of militant strikes in which it participated. And the party seems only to have held its own, or perhaps to have declined slightly, during 1941-1945—a period in which its zeal for *all* Roosevelt policies (including the Smith Act prosecution of the Trotskyists and the proposal to draft strikers) was second to nobody's. The party's defense of the no-strike pledge must have weakened its base in the unions in the last year of the war when a lot of workers were becoming imbued with war-weariness and with a suspicious attitude toward all talk about equality of sacrifice.

As for the Socialist Party, its decline during the years when the CP was waxing strong cannot be attributed to its general hostility to FDR or to its isolationism. This is confirmed by the experience in the thirties of two other radical organizations. The Old Guard Socialists around the *New Leader* were pro-Roosevelt and pro-collective security, but their Social Democratic Federation stagnated, unable to attract the young generation of student- and worker-radicals. And the Lovestone Communists, who adopted New Deal and collective security

policies at the end of the thirties, simply disappeared.

It almost seems as though the CP bore a charmed life and as though its rivals had been hexed. For, in the thirties at least, no matter what the CP said about Roosevelt and collective security, it put on weight. And no matter what the radical rivals of the CP said about Roosevelt and collective security, they were reduced to skin and bones.

How are we to explain this peculiar state of affairs? Did history anoint Browder and Foster with the holy petroleum and ordain the CP to become the main bearer of the radical tradition? In a sense, yes—for a time, yes. That the CP would have a great opportunity in the United States, that it would serve for many years as the chief spokesman of radicalism in America had been a certainty from the early twenties. At its inception the party virtually sucked dry the older radical formations, and the Socialist Labor Party, Socialist Party, and IWW never regained the vitality they had lost to the newly arrived CP. This was the basic cause of the CP's ascendancy in the thirties. It was, of course, the Russian revolution which endowed the party with its power of attraction and enabled it to outdistance from the start all its radical competitors.

The CP entered the thirties with generous reserves of political capital. The party exhausted those reserves in the space of a decade and a half, despite the fact that thousands of Communists had been heroic participants in the rise of the CIO and other great social struggles of the period. The party's record during those years contains more bad than good: it provides more examples of things to be avoided than of things to be emulated. The badness of that record is one of the justifications for the conclusion that the CP will not have an-

other chance in this country. Once this is accepted, it should be possible to review the experience of the CP under Browder with an eye to culling from the debris those ideas and insights of the Communists which have value for a future movement of American radicalism.

Meanwhile, the successes of the CP under Browder should not, I think, be taken as evidence that the CP was basically on the right track in 1935-1945 and that the Communist leaders had more political wisdom than the Thomas Socialists and other radical competitors of the CP.

DAVID HERRESHOFF

Joseph Clark Replies

Let's start with a point of agreement. Neither of us believes the Communist Party bore a charmed life or that its rivals were hexed. How then account for its rapid rise in the middle thirties? Mr. Herreshoff suggests it was "the Russian revolution which endowed the party with its power of attraction and enabled it to outdistance from the start all its radical competitors."

But the Russian revolution occurred in 1917. The CP rose in 1919 and at the start surpassed its radical rivals, partly, I agree, because of the power of attraction of the Russian revolution. Very soon after its birth, however, it declined drastically and soon it was again outpaced by its competitor, the Socialist Party. Had the Russian revolution lost its power of attraction in 1920-21 when the CP lost most of its members? Shall we conclude that the Russian revolution was unattractive when Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin were Soviet leaders, only to become attractive when Stalin was the leader and when he put the Bolshevik leaders in the dock? Obviously, we are back in the realm of charmed life, hexes, and anointed petroleum if we try to explain the rise or fall of the American CP *merely* by the "endowing" power of the Russian revolution.

The CP entered the thirties with very little reserve of political capital. All through (Turn to Page 23)

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The Recession of 1958

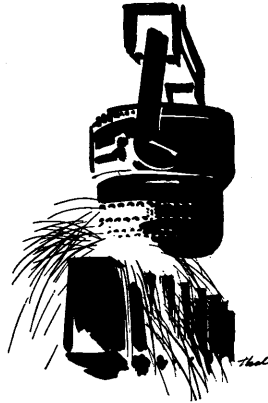
OUR lopsided economic machinery has worked itself into another recession, featuring a decline in industrial production, growing unemployment, and shrinking purchasing power. As we have emphasized repeatedly in these pages, the root cause of the difficulty is the capitalist system's bent, when working at boom pace, to expand production and productive capacity as though there were no limit to the volume of goods that could be sold, while expanding consuming power in a far more limited way. Without an adequate base for the ultimate output of consumer products, inventories started piling up, industrial expansion programs which only yesterday were thought to be dire necessities are today seen as superfluous and are cut back, and a downward spiral is under way. The Federal Reserve Board November index of industrial production is down to 139 from a peak last December of 147, and unemployment has risen to about three million.

Officially, the downslide is being described as a "breather," or "the pause that refreshes." The more one ponders these Madison Avenue phrases, the harder it becomes to make any sense out of them. A person, or a group of people, may feel fatigue, but does an economy get "tired"? Only if it is pushing against the limits of the size of its work force, or if it is restrained by raw materials shortages, or other such tangible barriers. But unemployment is nearly a million above a year ago, and for the first time since 1954 the number of unemployed adult men has been increasing significantly.

Hours of work are down to an average 39.5 a week. Not a single line of production is today plagued by the raw materials shortages which were common several years back; on the contrary, the situation tends towards

oversupply and declining materials prices. In the light of these facts, talk of a "breather" becomes a sort of officialese designed to obfuscate rather than elucidate.

Every feature of the present decline points to a revival of capitalism's classic market troubles. We can produce more than twice as many refrigerators, one-



third more cars, at least one-quarter more steel, and the good Lord alone knows how much more oil, than we can sell. Industry is today working around the 80-percent-of-capacity level, instead of the 90-95 percent favored by business and characteristic of the post-war years. What all this adds up to is the incontrovertible fact, which all can see clearly today, that if there has been any income shift from capitalists to the consuming population since pre-war days, it has not been adequate to correct the major imbalance in our economy.

IN this connection, a very important article by Selma Goldsmith, an economist of the Department of Commerce, appeared recently in the *American Economic Review* effectively exploding one of our biggest economic hoaxes

of recent years. Our publicists and even some uncritical economists, mainly resting upon the work of Dr. Simon Kuznets on income distribution, have made the welkin ring with shouts of an "income revolution" since pre-war years, in which the rich got poorer and the poor proportionally richer. We pointed out several years ago that in large measure this whole "revolution" was a statistical freak due to the fact that the corporations retained a far greater part of their profits than in the past. Due to the higher taxes on personal income, the rich preferred to take a bigger part of their incomes in the form of the greatly added value of their shares in American industry, rather than in dividend checks. Now, Miss Goldsmith has calculated that if the huge mass of undistributed profits had been distributed, no income shift would be shown at all! In other words—and this is what counts—the distribution of income between the major social classes remains what it has been, and when the working-class consuming public comes to match its dollars against the output of American factories (especially against the *potential* output) it finds itself falling behind in the race.

These income trends are now heightened by the effect of the recession. The buying power of factory workers reached a peak last December, but has declined as a result of shortened hours and rising prices since that time. The Commerce Department reports that personal income has fallen for three consecutive months, September, October, and November. But what is most striking is that dividends and interest payments held steady at a peak rate, and that wage and salary payments, in spite of unemployment insurance checks which offset almost one-third of their fall, have accounted for most of the total drop in income.

One of the puzzling aspects of the recession has been the inelasticity of retail prices. Although the supply-demand balance has definitely tipped well in favor of the consumer, there has been no decline in retail prices such as might be expected. On the contrary, prices have been creeping spitefully upward. Industry has claimed that it is egged on by rising costs; the labor movement has effectively documented its case that price increases

came before, and far outstripped, the rises in wage rates, and even the administration's Bureau of Labor Statistics has produced data substantiating labor's claim. But behind the charges and countercharges lurks a far more important issue.

BACK in 1935, when the nation was picking itself up amid the hurricane ravages of the depression and trying to figure out what had hit it, Gardiner C. Means, then economic adviser to the Secretary of Agriculture, appeared before a Senate committee and testified on our monopoly price structure. The price scale, he showed, had a "flexible end" and a "rigid end." On the flexible end, prices fell precipitously, but among the more trustified and concentrated industries, prices fell only slightly. As an example, production of automobiles and farm implements declined by 80 percent, but prices fell only 16 percent in the case of cars, and 6 percent in the case of farm machines. At the same time many other prices were being cut in half, or more. It was this shift to "administered prices," as he called them, that had "destroyed the effective functioning of the American economy."

What he had in mind was that the economy, at its "rigid end," was losing the ability to balance consumption to output by a price adjustment. Monopoly agreements to sustain prices were making a revival of production more difficult. It is easy to see that the price rise of some four percent over the past year, at a time when the supply-demand situation would normally have called for a price drop of at least an equal amount, has been having the same effect. What is most striking about the recent period is that the rigid end of the price scale has grown enormously since the twenties, and has extended to a whole host of food and consumer soft-goods products. In short, corporate monopoly, often boasted of as a means to stabilize the economy and prevent recessions through industry-wide "planning," seems to be having the very opposite effect in the present downturn.

What is being done about the recession? Wouldn't the present be just the moment to swing into action with all the discoveries of the "new economists"? It is true that the decline has

not been very deep as yet. But it is also true that the present drop takes place against a background of over-expansion and unused capacity. Clearly, we have no great capital-spending boom coming to our rescue, as we had some years back. It is this fact that gives the present business troubles a more ominous coloration. The slump may be brief, like those of 1949 and 1954. On the other hand, "a possible cumulation of the downward pressures," as the New York Federal Reserve Bank puts it in its December bulletin, is always possible, and admitted to be so by most observers. Implicit in every downtrend of a capitalist economy is a chain reaction in which effects spread and multiply. Isn't this the time to get busy?

HERE is where a great void opens up which contemporary economics has failed to fill. The economists have been brought down off their high horse since the Great Depression, and most of them now readily admit the lack of balance and depression-tendency of capitalist economy. They have worked out some elements of the imbalance in statistical and mathematical form, which puts them further ahead in knowledge and technical equipment than their purblind forbears. But the breezy assumption that previous depressions were rooted in a "lack of knowledge," and new ones can be prevented by overhauling the school texts and inserting better rules, is far from justified by anything on the record.

Society is not a laboratory where the advance of scientific knowledge more or less automatically assures the solution of a progression of problems. It is a battlefield of contending social and economic interests. Our economy is not run on a central plan, but by the innumerable self-interest calculations of private business interests. Just because the economists have now discovered that these self-interest calculations don't add up to the kind of Invisible Hand keeping us safely prosperous as they used to think, doesn't mean that any new rulership over our economy has made its appearance. As to the government, whoever it may be that is running it, certainly it is not the economists. In a word, the increased economic wisdom produces no great changes so long as decisions in our

socio-economic structure are made in the same old way.

Let us briefly survey the field. We know of no significant economic legislation on our statute books compelling the government to act differently than in the past, as a result of the new economic wisdom. Social legislation such as unemployment insurance is a deposit from the fierce social struggles of the past. It is widely agreed that while such income-boosters can cushion the effect of a downturn, they will not by themselves prevent its becoming serious, and will tend to lose effectiveness the more prolonged and deeper a depression becomes. The sole law incorporating the new economic wisdom is the Employment Act of 1946, a vague promissory note which affords no concrete commitments and has been productive of no definite action.

Despite all the talk, there is no firm assurance of government action, beyond the hope that the politicians will not be able to resist popular pressure. That this hope may sometime prove to have some substance can be conceded; but popular pressure can take quite a while to develop, and may require a lot of hardship and unemployment to get it going in sizable form. In any event, the fact that mass pressure must take the field before economic wisdom makes itself felt only underscores the conclusion that decision-making power is still subject to social conflict, and that the new gifts of the economists turn out to be something less than magical upon closer examination.

IN the past few years, the government has made economic history of one sort by getting more journalistic mileage than has ever been squeezed before out of its manipulations of the rediscount rate. Most of the attention to anti-business-cycle efforts has clustered around that device, with many bewildered citizens even coming to believe that this is one of the chief weapons of the "new economics." In reality, this kind of financial manipulation antedates the last depression, having become popular in the twenties.

Neither by theory nor experience has anyone been able to show a large effectiveness of this method in the economy. If the raising of rediscount

rates has had any results in slowing down our over-enthusiastic investment boom by making money-borrowing more expensive, the effect couldn't



have been very great, as we had the greatest such expansion spree in our history. Corporations, promoters, speculative operators simply weren't deterred, since, in the first place, so large a part of present investment is financed out of retained earnings, and in the second place, the small increases in interest cost are not reckoned seriously against expected boomtime gains. Consumer and small-business spending probably bore the brunt of any effects.

Conversely, to seriously believe that the recent fractional reduction in the interest rate, or any further reduction to come, will decide industry in favor of investment projects which it has turned down due to a stagnant market, is to fly in the face of all common sense and experience. It is doubtful that anything more will be gained from this experiment on the part of the Federal Reserve Board than in previous tries.

Here we have, then, the picture of the extent to which Keynesian anti-depression economics is now in operation as we start sliding downhill. Unemployment insurance and its sister-measures, won by social strife in the last depression, are working to cushion the drop slightly; the administration is tinkering with the interest rate; the rest is silence. During the depression of the thirties, the Democratic Party,

in office under the most liberal leadership it has had in several generations, failed to apply Keynesian spending policies on the huge scale required, and we stayed in the slump until war pulled us out. In the postwar recessions, policy makers both Republican and Democratic have not been stirred to act along "new economic" lines. The question is: Just when can we expect to see the much-touted wisdom of the economists applied?

THE major missing element in all the above equations, as any school-child knows, is the new category of government spending for military purposes. Before World War II this category never rose above a few percent of the national product except in wartime; since the war it has never fallen below 10 percent, and has consequently been a major watchdog and stabilizer of business prosperity. True to form, it is military spending that is again expected to do more than anything else in getting us out of this slump. Conveniently, the Russian launching of sputnik and their intercontinental ballistic missiles have opened the path for a great expansion of our missiles program. We do not doubt that this expansion is dictated by military considerations. On the other hand, it is more than probable that if it had not been for this development, there would still be a strong compulsion to boost military spending.

What is most alarming is to see the extent to which all elements of the population, Republican and Democratic, labor and capital, have come to depend upon new infusions of this deadliest of drugs. While the Republicans are bad enough, it is Democrats and even some union leaders who have been beating the drums most vigorously of late, sometimes whooping it up on patriotic grounds, and sometimes even dropping the transparent veil and demanding more arms spending to keep the economy booming. Leaders of the United Auto Workers, the International Association of Machinists, the shipyard union, and others, by no means the least socially conscious of our unionists, have permitted themselves this dangerous luxury.

But the current recession dramatizes the truth that arms spending, after it helps stabilize the economy on a new

plateau, changes nothing basic. The same laws and disproportions have come into play again, pushing us towards a new slump. Another big boost in military outlays may restore some vigor to the boom, but as we are already spending about 15 percent of our national income that way, there are obvious limits to how far we can go on this reckless road. The artificial military injections grow progressively less effective and reliance on them more dangerous.

No one is in a position to know whether this recession will cut deep or persist long, or whether it will be a passing affair as others since World War II. Increased military spending to the tune of several billion dollars a year more may again have the expected result. But we are all in a position to know that an economic policy which depends upon wasting an ever-increasing proportion of our wealth and output in order to guarantee prosperity, and an arms race which may end in human annihilation, are the road to economic ruin and social catastrophe.

Is there any other way, short of a socialized and planned economy, to get away from the boom-bust cycle? In our opinion, all real—and humane—solutions lead eventually to that, whether one conceives of a transition by stages or all at once. But if the Keynesians and their labor followers were to start battling for their own theories of welfare spending and taxing the rich on a big scale, they would deserve every American's wholehearted support. Whatever fallacies and naivetes there may be in pure welfare-state theory as against socialist theory, such a movement would be infinitely preferable to the present tacit reliance on a voracious permanent war economy. And the movement for more welfare-statism would show the American people the need for more social control of the economy if it is to be operated for the common good.

We are pleased to announce that Mr. Reuben W. Borough, former editor of Upton Sinclair's *Epic News* who writes regularly for the *American Socialist*, has joined our board of contributing editors.



MOSCOW PANORAMA in 1953 shows Moscow State University in the background, apartment-house construction for students and faculty in the foreground.

Forty Years of Russian Communism

The revolution in Russia seemed to defy history's "law of gravitation" by giving the job of pioneering socialism to the most destitute and backward country in Europe. The result has been a pattern far more complex than any had foreseen.

by Isaac Deutscher

THE Soviet Union has marked the 40th Anniversary of the October Revolution by sending the first artificial satellite to circle round Earth. The "Soviet man" has thus been the first to reach out into the interplanetary space; and now he is dreaming aloud of the time, which he be-

Isaac Deutscher's biographies of Stalin and Trotsky, and his writings for British and American periodicals on current developments in Russia and communism, have brought him world prominence as one of the foremost analysts of Soviet affairs. This article is reprinted from the London New Statesman with the author's permission.

lieves to be very near, when he himself may be able to ascend high enough to overcome the earth's gravitation, and soar in a cosmic vehicle towards the moon and the stars.

The Soviet people undoubtedly see a profound and real connection between the latest triumphs of their technology and the revolution which took place in Petrograd 40 years ago. Forty (and even 25) years ago Russia was industrially one of Europe's most backward nations. "Dubinushka," the famous folksong, which grimly contrasted the "clever Englishman who invented machine after machine" and

the Russian *muzhik* who, sighing and groaning, wielded only "the wooden club," was something like Russia's genuine national anthem. The October Revolution was, in one of its aspects, a protest against inherited poverty and an archaic way of life. Bolshevism instilled in the people the aspiration to "catch up with the advanced West and to surpass it." Now the Moscovites, as they watch the passage of the man-made satellites, read in it the message of fulfillment.

The October Revolution, it might be said, defied in its own way history's "law of gravitation." Its enemies at first saw it as a grotesque and ephemeral episode. But even Marxists thought it impossible that Russia, barely emerged from feudalism, destitute and illiterate, should shake off capitalism before any other country had done so and act as pioneer of socialism. Generations of socialists, western and Russian, had grown up in the belief that the industrialized and advanced nations of western Europe would be the first to accomplish this, and that Russia could only follow in their footsteps. Lenin himself had shared this belief until shortly before the revolution, and had regarded it as one of the laws and axioms of Marxism. When he finally abandoned it and took power, he still looked forward to revolution in western Europe to help to raise Russia from her poverty and backwardness. He used to say that "Socialism is already a material reality in our days, but its two halves are torn asunder: one half, the political conditions for it, has been created in Russia, while the other, the industrial and cultural prerequisites, exists in Germany."

TO the end of his days Lenin expected that the victory of Communism in Germany would bring the "two halves" together. When this hope was dashed, the Bolshevik Party set out, under Stalin, to create "the German half of socialism" within Russia's own boundaries and by Russia's own efforts. This again seemed a hopeless undertaking, in the light of statistical comparisons and economic axioms. There followed the somber, heroic, and cruel drive of industrialization, in the course of which the Soviet people, oppressed by Stalin's despotism, found themselves politically and morally as far from socialism as ever. Indeed, much of the "Russian half" of socialism, the rough plebeian democracy of the early Leninist years, had been destroyed or debased, even though social ownership of the means of production had been firmly consolidated. Around 1940, the Soviet Union was winning the race with Germany in heavy and armament industries. Then the Second World War inflicted the prodigious losses which threatened to throw it a long, long way back; and in the aftermath of the war came chaos and famine.

However, the Soviet Union resumed the industrial drive. The western power against which it now had to match its strength was no longer Germany but the United States. The "two halves" of socialism were still "torn asunder"—the industrial half was in America. To build up that "half" within the Soviet Union has ever since been the overriding purpose of Soviet policy.

These 40 years of Soviet history are made of the most dynamic interplay of backwardness and progress. In more than one field, extreme and desperate backwardness has

driven the USSR to adopt the most desperate and extreme forms of progress. Capitalism could not achieve stability in the old Russia because of the nation's obsolete and irrational social structure. The October Revolution smashed that structure and gave Russia a tremendous impulse which carried her beyond all the stages of bourgeois development that European society had to traverse towards publicly owned and planned economy.

HANDICAPPED industrially and militarily by the illiteracy of its masses, the Soviet Union was then driven to develop what is today the world's most extensive and modern educational system. Consequently, Soviet universities train at present more technicians and engineers than do all the universities of the West taken together, and the young Soviet factory worker or miner is, as a rule, a man with secondary education. It is arguable that the Russians are already the most educated of all nations. The paradox is that their educational system was built up together with the medieval Stalirist inquisition, with police rule and concentration camps. This paradox shows itself in the psychological formation of the Soviet people: In some ways they are the most inarticulate and the meekest of all peoples; yet in others they are the most ambitious, the most aspiring, and the most independent-minded. At times the modern Russia appears to be an unexampled combination of slave and Promethean hero.

The latest Soviet fears underline the pattern of contrasts even more sharply. The Russians are the first to revolt effectively against man's earthboundness and to spread out into outer space; yet in their mass they dwell in slums so overcrowded that the living-space of an individual is no more than seven or eight square yards. Constriction within the tiny cage of daily existence and the lure of infinite space and freedom seem to be the two equally real elements of Russian life. Further, the nation whose scientists and engineers have opened for mankind the way to the moon and are already thinking in terms of astronautics still suffers from the want of ordinary means of transport: Russian passenger trains are too few, too primitive, and too slow; motor traffic is negligible; and country roads, muddy or ice-bound, are impassable throughout a great part of the year.

HERE too, however, backwardness may provide the Soviet Union with the strongest motive and also with the widest opportunities for progress. The cities of the West are laboring under the conflict between their inherited architecture and their constantly expanding traffic, a conflict which seems insoluble and tends to reduce the traffic to an absurdity. The Russians may be able to avoid this predicament. They are driven by their very plight to adopt the most modern ideas of city planning and to develop ultra-modern forms of transport. They may yet replace the droshka by the helicopter rather than by the ordinary motor car, and the train by the transport plane.

The Russians are, of course, not the first nation that has managed in its striving for progress to turn backwardness into a decisive advantage. The Germans did the same in the second half of the last century, when from being one of Europe's economically underdeveloped nations they

rose to the rank of its leading industrial power. As a late-comer to the industrial world, Germany had no need to go through all the phases of development which the British and the French had passed gradually, slowly, over the lifetime of many generations. Assimilating the latest, ready-made, achievements of British technology and organization, making their start from this high level, and being free from the ballast of obsolescent equipment and methods of work, the Germans presently excelled the British in efficiency and modernity of organization. In Asia, Japan repeated the same experience even more rapidly but far less thoroughly and extensively. Finally, the United States found in its backwardness *vis-à-vis* Europe a blessing in disguise—its very backwardness enabled it to take over the best of the Old World, and to secure technological supremacy. It is striking that the remarkable progress of these nations from industrial backwardness to maturity was in every case preceded and prepared by political or social revolutions (the War of Independence and the Civil War in the U.S., Bismarck's "revolution from above" in Germany, and the Meiji revolution in Japan). None of these, however, had the depth, the force, the blood-soaked momentum, and the continuously widening scope of the Russian revolution.

The USSR is now just beginning to benefit from the advantages of the late-comer, advantages which may enable it to gain eventually the same sort of industrial ascendancy over the United States that the United States has had over Europe. To be sure, this latecomer has still a long and uphill road to climb. In most sectors of its economy the USSR is at present far behind the U.S. In some it is even behind western Europe. But in a few, strategically decisive, sectors it is already outstripping the United States. The discrepancy between the backward

and the advanced parts is still enormous. But it should not be imagined that it can be overcome only by slow degrees. With atomic energy being harnessed to production, with automation embracing ever wider areas of industry, with electronics opening up new vistas, and, last but not least, with the machinery of planning being overhauled so as to allow more scope for the producers' social initiative, further Soviet progress, if it is not impeded by war or grave disturbances in domestic politics, may be much quicker than Western, or even Soviet, opinion anticipates.

Technologically the USSR has hitherto served an apprenticeship with the U.S., imitating and assimilating American achievements. It will still go on imitating and assimilating; but the appearance of the Russian sputnik over our planet heralds the approaching end of the apprenticeship. Soviet progress is now likely to proceed by leaps and bounds, and this new level of technology and industrial wealth is bound to affect both the political climate of the Soviet Union itself and the prospects of international Communism—both of which have in these 40 years been decisively affected by Russian backwardness.

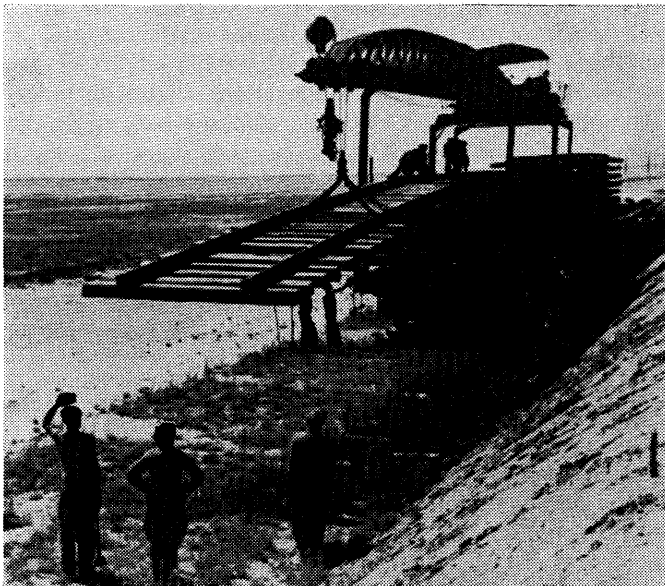
CLASSICAL Marxism had based its case for socialism on the argument that, *vis-à-vis* capitalism, socialism would represent superior economic efficiency and therefore a higher form of social organization. The Bolshevik leaders accepted this as an axiom. Yet, the regime they founded could not claim such merits. True enough, its economic efficiency was, in any case, superior to that of Czarist Russia, and this enabled Bolshevism to survive against all odds; but survival was only part of the test to which the regime which issued from the October Revolution was subjected. The other and the more difficult part lay in the relations between the Soviet Union and the industrial West. The decisive question has been: How does Soviet efficiency compare with that of the West?

This question has been of crucial importance for the whole evolution of Communism both within the Soviet Union and without. The October Revolution had survived, but its claims and title-deeds were in doubt, to say the least. The Bolshevik Party responded to this predicament differently in different periods. Its history in these 40 years falls into three chapters, each characterized by a different type of response: the Leninist period, with its active revolutionary internationalism; the early and middle parts of the Stalin era, with their ideological isolationism; and, lastly, the close of the Stalin era and the post-Stalin years, with the sporadic breakdown of that isolationism.

The Leninist attitude towards Russia's inferiority *vis-à-vis* the West was wholly dictated by the Marxist tradition. Lenin himself never wavered in the view that the congenial ground for socialism was in the "highly advanced and civilized" West; and in international revolution he saw Russia's escape from her own backwardness. True, Lenin and Trotsky had even before Stalin called upon Russia to "catch up with the West." But they did not expect an isolated Russia to be able to raise herself by her own efforts to the height of Western technology and industrial organization. They based their policies in the main on the anticipation of a "German October," a "French October," and even an "English October."



SUBWAY SCENE: The architecture is gaudy, the cleanliness notable.



RAILROAD-BUILDING ON THE STEPPES: "The nation whose scientists and engineers have opened for mankind the way to the moon and are already thinking in terms of astronautics still suffers from the want of ordinary means of transport."

They brought to life the Communist International to direct and co-ordinate the struggle in various countries; but they imagined the process of international revolution as a series of national revolutions, each developing of its own accord and by its own momentum, as the Russian revolution had developed. They were convinced that, with the spread of Communism, Russia's weight in the whole movement would be greatly reduced and that, even if China or India, of whose revolutionary potentialities they were fully aware, were to join Russia, the movement of all these nations toward socialism would still require the industrial and cultural leadership of a Communist West.

THIS scheme of things foundered on the failure of Communism in Europe which had become manifest in the early 1920's. "The Comintern will not carry out a single revolution even in 90 years" was the conclusion Stalin drew at a session of the Politburo. The Soviet Union was isolated and thrown back on its own resources. The new Stalinist response to the predicament consisted in the determination to overcome Soviet inferiority at any cost and by the Soviet Union's own efforts—with all that this implied in coercion and myth-making, in low standards of living and human misery. The Stalinist isolationism was, in fact, a desperate striving to avoid and postpone that decisive test of efficiency to which contact with the outside world would have subjected the Soviet Union—a test at which the Soviet Union would have inevitably failed. The Soviet inferiority, which the Iron Curtain succeeded in concealing from the Soviet masses—though not from the outside world—contributed to the further paralysis of Communism in the West. German and British, not to speak of American, workers, could not be attracted by a socialism which represented lower productivity, far lower standards of living, and far less political freedom, than they had attained under capitalism.

The Second World War drew the USSR out of its shell and brought it back to the arena of world politics as both a great power staking out national claims, and as the head of the international Communist interest. Stalin's armies carried revolution on the point of their bayonets into eastern and central Europe. Moreover, the international impetus of revolution, which had seemed extinct during a quarter of a century, came back into its own in Asia; the Chinese revolution was no mere by-product of the victory of Russian arms, but a gigantic social upheaval in its own right. Thus Russia's isolation was broken at a time when she was rapidly shortening her industrial lag behind the West.

CLEARLY, the political evolution within the Soviet Union, and the prospects of international Communism depend now on the pace at which the Soviet Union continues to shorten the lag. So far the USSR has achieved its industrial progress at the consumers' expense. Yet, superior efficiency necessarily translates itself, albeit with a delay, into higher standards of living. These should lead to the softening of social tensions, the weakening of antagonisms between bureaucracy and workers, and workers and peasants, to the further lessening of terror, and to the further growth of civil liberties. This trend may be complicated, blurred, or periodically halted by the inertia of Stalinism, by war panics, and, more basically, by the circumstance that the Soviet Union still remains in opposition of overall economic inferiority *vis-à-vis* its American antipode.

The impact of the new situation upon world Communism will make itself increasingly felt in coming years. Already it is obvious that a satellite over Earth is worth much more for the Soviet Union than many a satellite on Earth. The USSR's dramatic demonstration of its new technological power tends to re-establish its leadership in the Communist camp, just after the leadership had been morally shaken. The message of the satellite to all Communist Parties is that things may be very different for them in the second half of the century from what they were in the first; that the epoch during which their cause has been discredited or at least handicapped by the poverty, backwardness, and oppressiveness of the first workers' state is drawing to a close; and that they may look forward to a time when the appeal of Communism may be as much enhanced by Soviet wealth and technological progress as the attraction of bourgeois democracy has in our days been enhanced by the fact that it has had behind it the vast resources of the United States. More than ever is the world-wide "contest of the two systems" bound to center on the technological and industrial duel of the two giants, a duel for which the earth has become too small.

* * *

The historian of the future will perhaps say that, 40 years after the October revolution, man set out to conquer the moon and the planets before he had set his own planet in some sort of order; and so he projected his earthly follies into interplanetary space. But will the historian ponder this merely as one of the paradoxical curiosities of an age of transition, or will he see in it the tragedy of our time?

An observer of the CIO from its "fiery and realistically democratic beginnings" to "its solidification into a respectable and bureaucratic structure" tackles the puzzles of apathy and bureaucratism in the union movement.

Labor in Ebb Tide

by Kermit Eby

THE unions of America belong to their members. But saying so does not necessarily make it so. In fact, if we can judge by the utterances of union leaders, the unions belong to the bosses. The rank and file of workers are merely the social base on which the leaders' influence rests, not the generating source of decision and action. The union is to be played upon like a pipe organ, manipulated as a juggler plays with his ten-pins. In times of emergency—just before negotiations—the workers are expected to be radical, but never so powerful that they cannot be shifted in the twinkling of an eye from one line of support to another.

I had the opportunity to observe the development of the CIO from its fiery and realistically democratic beginnings through its solidification into a respectable and bureaucratic structure. For six years I was executive secretary of the Chicago Teachers' Union; and for six years director of education and research for the national CIO. The difference between my early days as organizer for the Auto Workers in 1935-46, or as organizer of the first Teachers' Union in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the position of the big unions today, is the difference between the era of the early Christians in their catacombs, and the era of the established church. There has been that much change over a period of a few years.

The modern trade union, like the modern corporation, is monolithic; one huge human shaft of power directed from the top. Its conventions are attended by professionals—"pork choppers"—whose present and future security depends upon the maintenance of the power hierarchy. Decisions which affect the rank-and-file worker are increasingly removed from his hands in both time and space. The decisions which must be made are technically so complicated that only the expert or the leaders advised

Professor Eby of the University of Chicago, held a series of positions in the teachers' and auto unions, and in the forties was national Director of Education and Research for the CIO.

by the expert are competent to make them. And finally, too much union education is limited to mechanics: the teaching of rules concerning the responsibilities of shop stewards, how and when to pay dues, voting technicalities, minor procedures of local collective bargaining, and the like. Overall policy, the important issues, are lost in the struggle of petty and detailed instructions. The present policy laid down for the average union educational program is that the most important thing is to teach efficiency; it is not considered necessary to develop in the rank and file the ability to criticize or question policy, let alone participate in the making of it.

SO that I am not misunderstood, it is my contention that the average union member wants his union. It is his insurance. He recalls what life was like before unions attained power. But except for emergencies, the average union member prefers to go his own way, drink his beer, work in his garden, bet on the horses, and gossip with his neighbors. In this attitude he is much like the average churchman who thinks churches are fine for the community, but should not interfere with his personal life. Both churches and unions are treated like insurance policies, protection for the here and hereafter.

Apathy, then, is the one attitude which is more prevalent than any other in unions; apathy which is directly related to the size of the union and the complexity of the major decisions it must make. Power which affects him is just too far removed for the union member to affect it. God is in his heaven and Walter Reuther is in Detroit. Somehow they are expected to know the right answers. When they do not know them it is their responsibility, their fault, and not at all that of the apathetic union member.

If these things are true, the question naturally arises: What can be done to reverse this trend? I confess that it is easier to pose the question than to answer it. But we must make a beginning. Obviously the average worker cannot become technically competent to understand all the intricate, fine points in contracts and Taft-Hartley acts. Nor does he need to do so. But he can understand the basic policy decisions on which ultimate decision must rest. The worker is no fool.

The preparation needed by workers for acting on policy grows out of their most immediate concerns. Myles Horton, formerly of the CIO United Packinghouse Workers of America, introduced something new into the field of worker education. His educational program assumed that men living with men in a union have common concerns. Discussion of these concerns, led by the workers themselves, moved from wages to contracts to stewardship, and thus to the relations between officials and local membership, between local and national and international offices. No outside experts were called in to impress the classes with their status. Skill and knowledge emerged as workers studied their own contracts, contract provisions, the local political structure, and so on.

Some of the political heads in the United Packinghouse Workers of America protested Horton's program because it meant that the pat answers which were being given the rank and file would no longer suffice. Horton emphasized what he calls the "percolator" rather than the "drip"

system of education—ideas perking from the rank and file up rather than dripping down from the top. Horton's program differed basically from other more conventional labor education methods because of its emphasis on development of leadership from the rank and file and because of its emphasis on promoting discussion topics chosen by the workers rather than topics written on the blackboards by staff members. These methods can be contrasted to those employed by the Steelworkers, whose educational program is geared to that of various universities, and where a policy of careful selectivity assures that instructors are not conversant with internal union problems.

IN August 1946 I was invited to teach in the Auto Workers summer school in Michigan. At that time the great tension between two factions of the UAW was reaching its height. Walter Reuther's rising star was challenging the Thomas-Addes incumbents. I had no sooner stepped into the camp when a man to my right asked, "Are you for Reuther?" He was interrupted by another on my left: "Are you for Addes?" I knew enough not to be caught right there in a factional fight.



I began by asking the workers to forget Reuther and Addes for the moment. We moved from personalities to ideas. We listed differences, real and imagined, between Communist and Socialist influences in a union and in a nation. We went back to the ideas and concepts of the great social philosophers, from Jesus of Nazareth through Machiavelli to Thomas Jefferson. When it was time for me to go, the class gave me an ovation. Why? Because their situation demanded clarification, and this type of

education was related to immediate realities. Every man present believed that he was going to be called upon to make important decisions back in the local. He, not Reuther or Addes, was someone—a participant.

Let us look at a contrasting situation. The 1952 labor delegation to the Democratic Convention was pathetically ineffective, not because of any lack of personal worth on the part of the individuals concerned, but simply because of the kind of operations they were expected to perform.

In the first place, their designation as labor delegates placed them in an ambiguous position. These labor delegates were selected from the ranks of unions on the basis of their active participation in politics on the grass roots level. They were pulled together in caucuses by virtue of their labor origin, in much the same manner that Walter Reuther, Franklin Roosevelt, Jr., and their group of Young Turks were pulled together at the same Democratic convention.

In actuality, these labor delegates had a larger constituency—a community one. Yet, their instructions were: There are three candidates—Stevenson, Kefauver, and Harriman; agitate for any of them; knife nobody; and if there are further orders, you will be notified. Rumor and drift prevailed. Attempts were made to act on what was imagined to be the Great White Father's mind way back in Washington. As always, when democratic discussion and decision is denied to men on the spot, frustration and foolishness developed.

By Thursday evening, when it was obvious that Adlai Stevenson was the man, a caucus was called and addressed as follows: The bosses have decided on Stevenson. He will be nominated on the third ballot. Represent your constituents on the first ballot. If the break comes on the second, climb on the bandwagon. It must appear that he is our candidate as well as the candidate of the bosses.

In the school I conducted, the men were acting as men; in the other situation, they were puppets, emasculated by a system dependent on one labor leader and his clearance with the President.

Ideas are not enough, of course. Men in unions must be permitted to give political form to their diverging views. We need more rank-and-file discussion of union policy. Jack London, in a University of Chicago doctoral thesis based on a study of factionalism in unions, found that the greatest democracy existed in those unions where there were organized differences on policy. The Typographical Union, for example, has for a long time had a two-party system. By the same token, the Packinghouse Workers continue to tolerate conflicting points of view within their ranks. There was more democracy among the Auto Workers during the time I taught their school, when two groups were struggling for power, than there is now, when there is one group in control.

THIS is, of course, where groups like the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and the Communists have done great harm. The Communists and ACTU do, indeed, constitute factions within unions, but these factions are not based on the union itself, but on externalized bases and from superimposed viewpoints.

Before any really democratic progress can be made in unions, the umbilical cord which connects American labor to Washington must be cut. This does not mean that political action should cease. Democracy operates through pressure groups and through pressure-group compromises. The unions have a vital role to play in furthering democratic growth in the affairs of the whole people of the United States. But it does mean that the unions must be independent of political favors, which means being responsible on their own account.

Labor has grown up with the New Deal and the Fair Deal. Labor chiefs found it easier to go to the White House than to the rank and file, so that only during strikes and elections were the rank-and-file members approached directly. And in such a relation lay the danger that the union one-party pattern would increasingly become the state pattern. There have been times when private interests, big business, big corporations, believed Washington to be an adjunct of Wall Street. Labor leaders, being equally power minded, are capable of believing that Washington is an adjunct of national labor headquarters.

With the election of Eisenhower, it became clear that there was no longer a Great White Father for labor in Washington. The unions today must be dependent upon their own strength, and on an active and alert rank and file. Following the first Eisenhower election, the labor press stated this fact editorially, emphasizing the idea that it is time to "dig in, brother, because we stand by ourselves now." The last four years have brought no change to this situation, as the recent election demonstrated.

Hence, labor unity doesn't excite me. It doesn't excite me mainly because of the very fact that it was possible, because there are no fundamental ideological differences to keep the AFL and CIO apart. It is likewise my contention that the unorganized worker, particularly, would be better served if this were not the case. So would the nation! There is no more significant political fact in American life today than the obvious one that we have struck dead center in our political alignments. There is no real debate on issues because there are no significant disagreements. This is one of the few times in our history when we have no gadflies to sting the complacent into action: no socialists, no Wobblies, no progressives, not even any good old-fashioned anarchists. And we are in such a state because our pride is in our conformity. Like the Germans, as Pastor Niemoller confessed, we think that we can secure our own liberties by keeping quiet when the liberties of so-called undesirables are violated.

THE American labor movement does not profess to challenge the economic powers which rule America, nor does it really challenge the war system on which our prosperity rests. Democrats and capitalists are united on the war and welfare state. The American labor movement is not anti-capitalist; in fact, it is confessedly pro-free enterprise. Its chief economic affirmation is "a larger share for us in the fruits of increased productivity." The annual wage, the arguments for which were so profoundly *moral*, was no challenge to the system. Instead, the equity of the elite of labor is to be protected at the probable expense of those not embraced by it, and certainly at the

expense of those employed by independent automobile manufacturers who cannot meet the increased labor costs because they are not powerful enough to pass them on to the public.



Here the trend in CIO which made for unity with AFL was obvious. The industrial unions, which were in a monopoly position vis-a-vis their bargaining counterparts joined with the AFL unions which have long been in such positions. In other words, it was a unity of the elites, in a sense, the unity of the *haves* of labor. No significant organization of new groups, in or out of industry, has gone on since '41.

How far the big unions have fallen lax in their willingness to educate their membership for a period of digging in, yet remains to be seen. However, that those same big unions have failed to educate their membership in the meaning of labor's political role, is undisputed. This failure was demonstrated in the second Eisenhower election, when the swing to Eisenhower and away from Stevenson, was obvious. Stevenson was labor's candidate, and no glossing over by stressing Democratic victories in Congress, can hide the fact that he lost. This was by no means an accident. It illustrates on the one hand the American worker's traditional enmity against the idea of being told whom to vote for—whether it is his union, his church or his lodge that does the telling. It also illustrates the average union member's profound apathy toward unionist political action. He has not been given to understand what the union will do in politics, why it should be in politics, and how his local is tied in with national affairs. Motivation for participating in political action has been subordinated to the act of giving a dollar to the political action committee for the sake of giving the dollar, or registering for the sake of registering. There is only one emphasis: register and vote.

Further, many union members—Republicans, socialists, and independents for example—resent the fact that the

CIO and AFL have unequivocally tied their fortunes to that of the Democratic Party. Some resent it because they are not Democrats, and dislike being torn between their union loyalty and their party loyalty; others resent it because they continue, like a large section of the non-unionized American public, to believe that politics is by nature corrupt and evil, and something not to be mixed with. Another common resentment voiced by the rank and file is the fear that the Democratic Party will too heavily influence labor, rather than vice versa. This last group feels that labor is being *used* as part of a political machine, and as a consequence they look with distrust upon their national leaders who are becoming the close cohorts of top politicians at the same time that these same national leaders draw further away from the rank and file. There is widespread distrust among the rank and file for the national leaders who are becoming the close cohorts of top "labor statesmanship" as used, for example, to illustrate the policies of Walter Reuther.

These facts and feelings make the average member of a local feel even more left out, even less of a participant. Some of this feeling of alienation from union affairs goes back to the decline of the union-hall meeting. The regular local union meeting, which served an important purpose during the turbulent years of the late thirties, before the "church" had been established, doesn't fill the same need now. This is because the period of organization in the mass production industries has been all but completed; the main organizational wave has ended and a period of retrenchment has begun. In the old days the union hall provided a common social meeting place for workers who lived where they worked and shared in common the deprivations of the depression and the open shop. This has been replaced by greater opportunity for social contact, greater development of the mass media of communication, a grievance committeeman who handles in-shop problems, and a membership which looks with pride at the accomplishments of the union and is pretty generally satisfied. However, most local unions have as yet failed to provide other and more effective means of keeping the ranks informed of the union's programs. Unfortunately, this is quite often exactly what happens. The result is that which we have described: apathy, indifference, and lack of understand-

ing on the part of the rank-and-filer—not only of labor's political role—but of basic union programs and activities.

ONE answer to this problem is, of course, to bring the union to the homes of the workers. This is a technique which began to be widely discussed among labor education leaders following the 1952 election. It was felt among them that the "revolt of the women"—the switch of workers' wives from the traditional Democratic to the Republican camp—demonstrated the failure of union education programs to reach union women at all. The expansion of a program designed especially for union wives—coffee hours in workers' homes, the development of women's auxiliaries, etc.—has become an important problem for union training programs.

Union leaders who recognize the problem at all are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that it is high time to make the rank and file again a real and concerned participant in the union, both a responsive and responsible agent. For instance, it is not enough that labor denounce the Taft-Hartley Act as a poor labor law; labor should also assume the responsibility for ordering labor's relations on some better plan. Unions are now powerful enough to accept mature obligations and to function as builders, not destroyers, and assume the role of making real contributions instead of merely criticizing "the system." If labor is to assume party responsibility by becoming a party, it has the obligation to work at local levels and must match its practices within the union to the democratic formulas of the American system. If labor does not do this, big unions will become in time but the replicas of big corporations, a cut and dried, dues-paying kind of big business.

This is why labor at the local level must educate its membership politically, and this education must mean more than the now existing forms of registering, paying a buck and getting out to vote. It means, if you please, getting beneath the war-and-welfare-state, single-party, conformist type of politics and reaffirming an indigenous radicalism which questions a prosperity built on war, two political parties which are alike, and our own conformity.

And only when those responsible for union education are willing to involve their members in the broader question of life, will this be possible.

Report on Harry Braverman's Speaking Trip

AROUND of meetings just completed by Harry Braverman in a number of cities proved quite successful. In Detroit, a debate with Professor Kenneth Boulding of the University of Michigan attracted an audience of ninety; in Chicago, a debate with right-winger J. Bracken Lee, Republican ex-governor of Utah, brought almost 600; a debate with Professor Abba Lerner of Johns Hopkins, chaired by the head of the Baltimore ACLU, brought out nearly fifty in that city. In addition to the above debates Braverman spoke to socialist forums in Milwaukee and Toronto, and to more than a dozen house gatherings, to a meeting on the University of Chicago campus and to a number of classes at Morgan State College in Baltimore. Newspaper interviews, one recorded radio program (which has not yet, to our knowledge, been used), and a chance to meet many new readers of the *American Socialist*

rounded out the trip.

The debate with Governor Lee was a lively, dramatic, and aggressive affair of a kind that has not been usual in this country since the thirties. The debates with professors Boulding and Lerner, both Keynesian economists, revolved mainly, as might be expected, around the issue of the role our present parties and government structure can be expected to play in the economy, and what kind of action they might take in a serious business recession. Readers will be interested to know that neither economist quarreled with the factual and analytical data presented by Braverman on the present imbalance in the economy, much of which has already appeared in this magazine.

Prominent reports of the three debates were carried in the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Chicago Daily News*, and the *Detroit News*.

Slowly but surely, a new intellectual pattern of socialism is emerging in a score of periodicals. Still currents of thought rather than movements, they may be the legitimate pioneer manifestations of a new, higher form of socialism.

New Horizons for European Socialism

by Bert Cochran

IN contrast to the post-World War I period when Bolshevism exploded on the international stage and forced back the traditional Social Democratic parties, the European Resistance of World War II gave birth to no new important parties, and after the war, Communism and Social Democracy continued to dominate left-wing politics as they had before. It has seemed to some of us in recent years that the logic of history called for the creation of new political movements, at least in Western Europe, as the traditional Social Democratic parties had lost their vigor and become ossified as bureaucratic vote-getting machines, and the Communist leaderships had subverted their parties into tools of Kremlin politics and reduced their so-called Marxism-Leninism to a repulsive philosophy and bankrupt strategy. We thought the logic of history demanded a regenerated socialist movement, but history seemed unaware of this logic and continued jogging along accustomed lanes. Belgians, Germans, Scandinavians, Frenchmen, went right on giving their allegiance to the two traditional organizations, even if at times *sans enthousiasme*.

This Left *immobilisme* was jarred by the Khrushchev Twentieth Congress revelations and further jolted with the almost simultaneous Hungarian and Suez affairs. Suddenly, a little window swung open in the stuffy quarters of Western socialism, bringing in fresh oxygen and carrying the hope that a Left resurgence may be in the making.

First on Britain. The British movement is dominated of course by the Labor Party which won its greatest parliamentary triumph scarcely more than a decade ago. It put through during its term of office important welfare-statist reforms like free medical service, public housing, improved social security, but its nationalizations of a number of industries bore little more resemblance to socialist measures than when Wall Street bankers dumped the New York subway transportation system upon the city government and managed to extort bargain rates for their watered stock and obsolescent equipment. The sad tale of British nationalization has been thoroughly documented by Rogow

and Shore in "The Labor Government and British Industry," and is nailed down for the recent years in the sensational pamphlet just issued by *Universities and Left Review* entitled "The Insiders."

THE Labor Party exhausted its limited mission after six years and got reduced to a huge, hulking structure without a program and without much aim—beyond the greed for office. Bevanism was the reaction to the decay. It was an attempt to inject the juices of life into the desiccated body. The very nebulousness of Bevanistic doctrine and the journalistic pragmatism of its leaders suited the mood and habits of most of the Labor Party and trade union activists and helped make it the impressive force that it became. The necessity of operating within a bureaucrat-ridden party put a further premium on trimming sails to conform to the demands of the establishment. But the very traits which helped forge this considerable but inchoate left wing have led to an internal crisis now that the Labor Party is again clearing decks to take over the government and change its role of critic for executor. Whether Bevanism as an organized movement can weather the crisis and reassert itself as a more integrated tendency, or whether Labor's next victory will mean the dissolution and disappearance of Bevanism from the scene, only time will tell. Whatever its future, it must be seen as the most important left-wing manifestation in European Social Democracy in the post-war period, doubly significant because it arose and fought during good times.

It is a demonstration of its monastic existence that this most exciting left-wing development in decades passed over the head of the British Communist Party. This party, while definitely on the political side lines, still counted for much more than its American counterpart. It had an important core of intellectuals, it had sustained influence in several important unions, it was far more generally accepted in the population as a genuine, even if mistaken, extreme Left. The hodge-podge nature of Bevanism only reinforced the stock prejudices of the Communist circles and strengthened their convictions that not much could



be expected from such heterogeneity, that there was no substitute for the hard-boiled good old Communist Left. It took the Khrushchev and Hungarian thunderbolts to cave in their own more or less self-enclosed world with the result that thousands of dazed ex-Communists began roaming around Britain looking for a new faith and home.

WHAT has come out of the year's churning? In terms of organization and social influence, very little. In terms of intellectual quickening, something of importance. As explained by our British correspondent in the October *American Socialist*, an immediate outgrowth of the mass exodus out of the Communist Party was the so-called forum movement, and the periodical, the *New Reasoner*, an offspring of the *Reasoner*, which was the opposition journal inside the CP.

The socialist forums held a two-day conference in April of this year at Sheffield attended largely by recent CP members to try to figure out what had brought on the catastrophe and how to go about reconstructing a philosophy for the movement. As was only natural after a sudden release from an intellectual prison-house, the gathering brought forth a remarkable babel of music in which every possible instrument of the orchestra was represented. Some thought Marxism remained unimpaired. Others believed Marxism had proved "a defective tool." One delegate wondered whether there weren't after all absolute humanitarian values. Another held out for proletarian values. Some wanted to go ahead and build a new Marxist party. Others thought the forums should not try to become a new center of political power but stimulate a new climate of socialist opinion.

Nothing could be more indispensable for the political hygiene of the ex-CP members, of course, than to purge themselves of accumulated poison. But as a catharsis, the forums had a necessarily limited function. The dilemma was well expressed if not resolved at the conference by Michael Segal, one of the editors of the journal, *Forum*, when he said "that there was danger of having nothing at all within a couple of months if they did not organize. On the other hand, if they adopted a program and formed a party there was a danger of becoming one more little sect."

The second conference of the forums which was just recently held in London saw a hectic debate between those who wanted to adopt a political platform and those who wanted to keep the forums as a wide-open discussion center, with the latter viewpoint winning out. But the impression is that the forums have already passed their peak and are now in a state of decline, and have become a bit of a hunting ground for some of the sects. The forums served a purpose at first when lots of bewildered CP'ers were looking for guidance. But many, possibly a majority, have already joined the Labor Party, and are caught up in new associations and routine.

ONE of the forum organizers proposed that the forums should become "a left-wing version of the Fabian society." This is a familiar thought. A while back we advocated a similar project in this country. But its realization is clearly beyond the forum's powers, as it proved beyond

the powers of the American Left at the time. It has to be kept in mind that the original Fabian society, for all its casualness, was not an intellectual free-for-all, but had a very definite political outlook and promulgated very specific ideas, concepts and projects. It also had a number of figures who were eminently capable, not merely of hollering for discussion, re-thinking, and new approaches, but brilliantly carrying through with a series of noteworthy pamphlets and books. The Forum movement is not equally well situated on either count. As for maintaining an organization merely to exchange opinions, people tire of that after a while, and besides in England other vehicles serve the purpose better.

The *New Reasoner* understood more clearly what it was about and what it conceived as its job. The editorial of the opening issue succinctly explained its approach:

Forty years of desperate emergencies, wars, and factional conflicts have reduced the creative body of ideas once known as Marxism to the state orthodoxy of "Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism" on the one hand, and to its stunted opposite, dogmatic Trotskyism on the other. But revulsion against these orthodoxies has strengthened the traditionally pragmatic and anti-theoretical bias of the British labor movement, and has narrowed its internationalist outlook and diminished its revolutionary perspectives.

The career politician, with his inevitable pre-occupation with maneuvers and expediences, dominates the political field. And the vigorous Left movement, expressed in the main around Tribune, has itself tended to fight shy of theoretical discussion or extended analysis, preferring to trust to the robust intuition of Mr. Bevan. In doing so it has failed to win the complete confidence of that great body of socialists who desire not only to act but also to understand the context and aim of their actions. The energies of the labor movement have been weakened by the snapping of links between socialist intellectuals and those who bear the brunt of the practical work of the movement.

The New Reasoner hopes to make some contribution towards re-establishing these links and regenerating these energies. In the political field, we take our stand with those workers and intellectuals in the Soviet Union and East Europe who are fighting for that return to Communist principle and that extension of liberties which has been dubbed "de-Stalinization"; in Britain with those socialists of the left wing of the Labor Party, or unattached to any party, who are fighting under very different conditions, for a similar re-birth of principle within the movement. We have no desire to break impetuously with the Marxist and Communist tradition in Britain. . . .

E. P. Thompson, one of the magazine's leading spirits, who is a university lecturer and biographer of William Morris, has made a notable contribution to the present British discussion in an article on "Socialism and the Intellectuals" that appeared in the first number of *Universities and Left Review* and which elicited in the following number a spirited discussion contributed by Mervyn

Jones of *Tribune* and several university lecturers.

Thompson argues that the circuit by which ideas are transformed into effective social energies has been broken by the withdrawal of the intellectuals on one side, and the bureaucratic structure of the labor movement on the other. He doesn't think the solution is for intellectuals to simply join the Labor Party. "I think that the greatest need of the moment is for a new, vital, and principled movement of socialist ideas, a new two-way flow of ideas and experience between the younger generation of technical, professional, and in particular industrial workers. After the spiritual impoverishment of the past decade, I think that the star of the imagination is likely once again to be in the ascendant. And, further, that for the time being at least it will be to the great advantage of any such movement if it takes place entirely independently of the organizational machinery of either Transport House or King Street. Specifically, I am thinking of books, pamphlets, and journals; discussion groups and forums; poems and novels; a re-awakened student movement; and cultural activities. . . ."

IT is naturally outside the purpose of this review to subject the various articles and positions to detailed critical analyses. I am trying rather to fit the different views and periodicals into a coherent or at least discernible pattern. Thompson is obviously trying to re-establish the figure of the Marxist intellectual as a personality of independent integrity and special skill who has a distinct contribution to make to the cause by practicing his trade, not by laying it aside in favor of so-called practical activities, or prostituting himself as a technician in the service of the machines. He is trying to open up the channels of intellectual exchange. His is a ringing "call to arms" to intellectuals, and may have an important influence especially on those with Communist background.

The weakness of the *New Reasoner* appears to be that most of its writers are still unduly pre-occupied with the world from which they have so recently broken, as evidenced in the subject matter which claims their attention, the problems that continue to dominate their thoughts, and the people to whom they are primarily addressing their writings. Moreover, trying to continue to rest on the Communist tradition by restoring it to its original pre-Stalinist pristine purity strikes me as a quixotic venture. Communism is bound by historical associations of a quarter of a century that neither god nor man can eradicate. To try to restore Communism to the meaning that it possessed in 1917 or 1848 is like trying to take Christianity away from the Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist churches of today and restore it to the simple virtues of the Biblical Apostles. It is a subject matter for literary exercises. It has no use as a workable tradition for the Left in Britain, much less, in the United States.

The periodical which seems to be most sensitive to the thought processes of the new generation and involved in making socialism a living, challenging movement again in a country like Britain is the *Universities and Left Review*. In part, it starts from similar premises as the *New Reasoner*. But its editors have had more success in freeing themselves from parochialism, their range of vision is

wider, and they have a better feel to whom their message should be addressed. Their introductory editorial shows that a group of people has finally come along who know what the problem is, at any rate. Here is part of their opening statement:

The post-war decade was one in which declining political orthodoxies held sway. Every political concept became a weapon in the cold war of ideas, every idea had its label, every person had his place in the political spectrum, every form of political action appeared—in someone's eyes—a polite treason. . . . Between the high citadel of Stalinist Russia, and the "welfare-state—no further" jungle of the mixed economy, there seemed to be nothing but an arid waste. In the tight compartmentalized worlds, buttressed by bans and proscriptions, suspicions and fears, supported by texts from Lenin and Stalin, mottoes from Burke and Bagehot, protected by massive armies with nuclear stockpiles and mutually exclusive military pacts, British socialism suffered moral and intellectual collapse. . . . It was inevitable that the post-war generation should identify socialism, at worst with the barbarities of Stalinist Russia, at best, with the low-pressure society of Welfare Britain. . . . The debate between those who clung to the slogans of the thirties and those who embraced the new orthodoxies of Welfare Britain, a debate which evaded the critical problems and the main frustrations of post-war society, appeared monstrously irrelevant to the post-war generation. . . .

What is needed, therefore, is the regeneration of the whole tradition of free, open, critical debate. The socialist tradition ought to be the most fruitful and the most stringent of the intellectual traditions. . . . Those who feel that the values of a capitalist society are bankrupt, that the social inequalities upon which the system batters are an affront to the potentialities of the individual, have before them a problem, more intricate and more difficult than any which has previously been posed. That is the problem of how to change contemporary society so as to make it more democratic and more egalitarian, and yet how to prevent it degenerating into totalitarianism. . . .

One can complain, of course, about all these declarations, that while they give the questions, they don't supply the answers. It seems to me that the political mistiness, in these cases, arises not necessarily from personal failings, but the intrinsic difficulty of the times: the realization that while the old socialism—both Stalinist and welfare-statist—has reached a blind alley, a new detailed program cannot simply be sucked out of a few editors' thumbs, but will have to come more organically through sustained efforts, exchanges, and experiences, and that a new dogmatism must be shunned. That does not mean that the *Universities and Left Review* is a vacuum. It would not have elicited the favorable response that it had if it did not represent something beyond the mere plea to have a discussion. By its statement of the problem, by its tone, by its very selection of writers and subject matter, it is carving out a political approach, which explains why it

has struck a responsive chord and been able to constitute itself a veritable *avant-garde* socialist institution.

LET us now cross the channel into France, the home in past days of Guesde and Jaurés, and now—of Thorez and Mollet. Both the Socialist and Communist parties here have reached an unheard-of degree of bureaucratization and degeneration, each feeding on the other's rottenness. The Socialist leaders yell, "Hungary," and the Communist leaders retort with "Suez" or "Algeria." It is a gruesome symbiotal relationship. In the past year, oppositions have again arisen in both organizations.

The machine in the Socialist Party has been ruthless in cutting down the dissidents. In 1947 the entire Socialist Youth Federation was summarily disbanded because of its opposition to the war in Indo-China. Recently, one of the Left leaders, Lucien Weitz, was expelled because of an article he wrote for the British *Tribune* criticizing Mollet's Algerian policy while oppositionists are denied space in the official party press. The officials are losing their moral standings. But no matter what the discreditment of the party hierarchs, the oppositionists are up against a stone wall as the party is heavily weighted with civil-service and white-collar people, many of whom are not disposed to get crosswise with government leaders who control jobs or have access to patronage. The officials have a bulldog grip on the party machine. Many members have reacted by dropping out, including recently the entire Ardenne federation.



The Communist leaders are even more ruthless against opposition, but the party has a far superior membership including tens of thousands of labor militants. The Hungarian news shook the organization and led to the break of a galaxy of renowned intellectuals and artists who for long years had been identified with the Communist cause. An anonymous opposition paper, *L'Etincelle*, is widely circulated in the ranks, and the leaders are so compromised and hard-pressed that thus far they have not dared to have recourse to expulsions. They are trying to ride out the storm. (*L'Etincelle* suspended publication following

the November meeting of Communist Parties in Moscow. There is a split in the opposition forces as to what course to follow, with a section of the opposition deciding to found a new journal to carry on the fight.)

Out of the ferment from the breakup of old ideologies and allegiances has arisen a new socialist formation called the "New Left," which designation covers three groups. First, "Nouvelle Gauche," most of whose members are former Communists and Socialists, of which Claude Bourdet, editor of the influential *France-Observateur*, is one of the leaders. Second, "Jeune République" of left-wing Christian Socialist origin. Third, the "Mouvement de Liberation du Peuple," a group that evolved from the Catholic Workers Youth. The three groups, which act together, and are holding big meetings throughout France, have a combined membership of about 10,000. They base their activities on a policy of anti-colonialism and anti-Stalinism, although they are not opposed to cooperating with the Stalinists on specific issues. Claude Bourdet has written that in his opinion the rehabilitation of the French Left depends on a convergence of the Socialist Party Left, the Communist Party opposition, the left-wing Mendès-France radicals, and the "New Left." Under this four-fold influence he looks forward to the construction "of a strong united workers party, mingling Christian and traditional liberal influences with a dominant Marxist one."

ON a less organizational plane, another group of left-wing intellectuals and unionists was brought together, as they explained, in a common struggle against the Algerian war, the British-French Egyptian expedition, and the Russian aggression in Hungary. They set up this past year a "Liason and Action Committee" and published the first number of a monthly paper, *La Commune*, in April 1957. Their program calls for independent workers' struggles, against all bureaucratic machines, the right of people to self-determination, the abolition of all colonial systems, including the French, as well as the right of the people in the Russian satellites and in the USSR to run their own affairs. The committee made clear that it was not thinking in terms of a new political party; its members retained their separate organizational and political commitments. The aim was to get cooperation going among all those in agreement with these principles. Furthermore, as its opening editorial explained, *La Commune* wanted:

To provide left-wing militants an opportunity for serious discussion outside of electoral considerations, outside of faction, class or organization; to provide the means for honest information on matters which are suppressed by the mass circulation press; to restore the habit of viewing militants of other organizations as comrades who differ with us on certain questions, not as enemies or traitors. We believe that the situation is sufficiently difficult and confused at the present time that no organization, no party, no person can pretend to offer a solution to the main problems that would be acceptable to all . . . the present task of the Left is to permit its different tendencies to meet. . . .

While *La Commune* cuts across many of the old line-

ups, and includes a number of prominent ex-Stalinist intellectuals as well as one of the figures of the "New Left," the group seems to have a big proportion of militants associated in the present or past with the Socialist Party, Trotskyists, Left Socialist formations within the unions, as well as leading figures of the present Left inside the Socialist Party. Hence, the heavy emphasis on anti-bureaucratism and workers democracy. Its paper has something of the flavor of the Left Socialist periodicals of the thirties.

Finally should be mentioned the quarterly journal, *Arguments*, issued by Colette Audry, who is also editor of *Nouvelle Gauche*, and several well-known intellectuals of the Marxist Left who used to be part of the Communist movement. The editors explain that the journal is "a bulletin of research, discussion and clarification, open to all who accept a scientific and socialist perspective. . . . The work of *Arguments* has special importance at a time when the decomposition of Stalinism compels every one to rethink old problems and to seek new perspectives." This is a noteworthy journal of scholarship which is trying critically to analyze and assimilate important new data that has been worked up over recent decades in various fields in order to furnish an intellectual groundwork for a new socialist movement.

IT is unnecessary to say very much about *La Gauche* in Belgium as we carried in our October issue a full account of this Left group inside the Belgian Socialist movement. As explained, this tendency grew out of specific Belgian experiences, although by no means unaffected by the general ferment brought on by momentous international events as felt in England and France. Though not nearly as influential as the related Bevanite tendency in England, *La Gauche* seems more Marxistic in its purposes and less erratic in its political estimations.

There are also new developments in West Germany, but a discussion of these will have to wait for another occasion as it is time to sum up.

First, it is important to keep in mind that none of these groups or publications, outside of Bevanism in England, constitute a social power. Indeed, the British and some of the French publications and grouplets are consciously delimited as educational enterprises without any organizational pretensions. Whether even the "New Left" in France, or *La Gauche* in Belgium, which are more comprehensive left wings, will become the starting points for a future regroupment, or whether the process of social change will assert itself through other instrumentalities, is still too early to say. The primary importance of all these manifestations, as I see it, is as ideological trends, as weathercocks showing which way the still uncertain winds may blow, as intellectual draftsmen attempting to sketch the shape and coloration of the coming design.

Another aspect that merits attention, and is of considerable interest especially for us in this country, is how they handle themselves in the East-West no man's land. The lowest common denominator of all of them, let us recall, is the conviction that a new socialism has to be fashioned transcending both traditional Social Democratic welfareism, and totalitarian Stalinism. But while, in their several

ways, they demonstratively reject Stalinism, virtually all of them—and this includes even the Bevanites—feel that countries like Russia, China, etc. represent the attempt of under-developed sections of the world to industrialize on some sort of socialist foundations. They don't go in for obdurate cold-war evaluations.

FINALLY, we have to estimate whether this Left breeze that has sent up ripples in the long-stagnant waters of European socialism is a premonitory sign of a future political storm, or at least, a good, steady trade-wind, or whether it is just an aimless stirring produced by frustrated intellectuals rushing to and fro. We are, after all, well acquainted with past re-evaluations of socialism in this country, from Lewis Corey to Bertram Wolfe, from Daniel Bell to James Burnham. In all these many cases, the probers started their re-evaluations in order to enrich socialism and make it more realistic, and ended by rejecting socialism. Aside from marginal contributions to scholarship, this intellectual commotion served mainly to enrich the editorial staffs of *Fortune*, the *New Yorker*, and sundry monied foundations. To all appearances, the new Left outcroppings in Europe represent an entirely different sort of re-thinking. The direction that their discussions have taken indicates that they are legitimate pioneer manifestations of a new higher form of socialism.

What they will represent in the scheme of things is another matter. The thirties, too, saw many left revolts inside and breakaways from the two established labor organizations, especially after the disaster in Germany when the Nazis took over. None of these formations were able to establish themselves as independent stable movements, or transform the existing ones. After a brief spell, they all petered out, surrendering the field again to the two old-line parties, even though they left behind an important heritage of political ideas which is influencing socialism today. At present, after a year of confusion, the Communists have discounted their losses and are in the process of re-consolidating their parties. The Social Democrats, for their part, were never threatened too seriously by Suez or Algeria. Once the tide recedes again, will these new outcroppings also be left high and dry? Or do these new currents presage massive social shifts to come in European socialism?

Many happenings indicate that the desire to reconstruct European socialism is not simply the cerebral emanation of a couple of hundred intellectuals, but reflects deeper-going social pressures—even if the intellectuals are considerably anticipating coming events. No one can foretell in what organizational garbs future social change will be clothed. But Western socialism will essentially be demonstrating in the next historical period whether it has the inner strength to reconstitute itself as a social force standing free of both Moscow Sovietism and Washington imperialism, and moving independently to transform the Western world along the lines of a new higher form of socialism; or whether the existing labor movements of the West have no other destiny but to drag behind the chariots of Khrushchev, Dulles, and their successors, and whether the inevitable stage of collectivism will have to be ushered in by other agencies.

Chronicle of the Beat Generation

by George Hitchcock

ON THE ROAD by Jack Kerouac.
Viking Press, New York, 1957, \$3.95.

HOWL AND OTHER POEMS by
Allen Ginsberg. City Lights Book-
shop, San Francisco, \$1.75.

AMERICANS have a peculiar affinity for marking their history off in decades. Each decade in turn gives rise to its particular and often exaggerated *Zeitgeist*, which literary and social historians promptly embody in a "generation." Thus we have had "the lost generation" of the twenties, "the socially conscious generation" of the thirties, "the war generation," and now in the fifties we have a rising aspirant for the title in the so-called "beat generation."

How much historical validity this categorizing actually has and how much it owes to our Madison Avenue habit of summing up every complex problem in a slogan, must remain for the time being open questions. But here in San Francisco, at least, we do have a very lively and vocal "beat generation" and the work of Ginsberg and Kerouac is the most illuminating guidebook to an understanding of it.

First, a little etymology. The word "beat" is, I take it, employed in three different senses, although even insiders don't appear to have reached agreement on the exact degree of its ambiguity. In addition to its obvious sense there is the jazz connotation and, finally, a sort of shorthand where it is assumed to stand for "beatific." The

meanings are interlocking and more or less—depending on your mood—interchangeable.

The historians and publicists of the "beat generation" have been the poets Kenneth Rexroth and Lawrence Lipton, although it is arguable how much direct influence they have had upon writers for the most part twenty years younger than they and concerned primarily with the attitudes of their own contemporaries. Rexroth is a distinguished poet and critic who for nearly thirty years has nurtured and kept alive on California soil a sort of transplanted Chicago anarchism. He is a caustic, opinionated man who sometimes appears as if he were sitting for a statue of "the last Wobbly," but he is also a scholar of genuine ability and one of the few authentic poets the Pacific Coast has yet produced. Lipton is a midwestern anarchist who now preaches "total disaffiliation" from American society and urges his fellow-poets in Southern California to adopt a voluntary "vow of poverty" as a practical method of escaping from the corruption of the dollar sign. Both are vigorous pacifists.

If Lipton and Rexroth can be called the elder prophets, Allen Ginsberg certainly has every claim to be known as the movement's Jeremiah. For as the Lord is reputed to have revealed to Jeremiah in the wilderness: "And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof, but when ye entered, ye defiled my land and made mine heritage an abomination," so Ginsberg in a neon wilderness cries out against the corruption of America, lamenting the destroyed lives and blighted ambitions of his generation, not omitting those "who were burned alive in their in-

nocent flannel suits on Madison Avenue amid blasts of leaden verse & the tanked-up clatter of the iron regiments of fashion & the nitroglycerine shrieks of the fairies of advertising & the mustard gas of sinister intelligent editors, or were run down by the drunken taxicabs of Absolute Reality."

THE publication here of his "Howl and Other Poems" created the closest thing to a literary sensation the West Coast has known in many years. The title poem is a protracted cry of rage, Biblical in form and surrealist in imagery, often turgid and at times hysterical, yet never lacking in explosive energy. It is the work of a literary dynamiter for whom anguish, marihuana and defiant homosexuality are all avenues of protest.

Orthodox society was quick to get the point. The Collector of Internal Revenue, a prominent Republican politician, ordered an entire edition of "Howl" seized in transit from its British printers to its publisher, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, a San Francisco poet and book-seller. Ginsberg's occasional use of un-bowdlerized Anglo-Saxon was given as the excuse, although Rexroth and others charged that the hand of the archdiocese was behind the seizures. Protests to Washington and the obvious lack of legal grounds resulted in the release of the edition.

The San Francisco police, perhaps with prompting from the same source, then got into the act. Officers of the Juvenile Bureau arrested Ferlinghetti and his clerk on very much the same charge that the officials of Athens brought against Socrates twenty-four hundred years ago—"corrupting the young"—in this case by offering "Howl" and a semi-anarchist literary magazine, *The Miscellaneous Man*, for sale.

The resulting trial attracted national attention and saw a nearly unanimous united front of the city's intellectuals in defense of Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti. A distinguished list of authors and critics took the stand in defense of "Howl's" literary qualities, while the District Attorney's office, largely staffed by Democrats, offered a somewhat shame-faced case for the prosecution. Judge Clayton Horn's ultimate decision for the defense surprised no one in

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particular, but his opinion was both literate and libertarian and should serve as a valuable precedent. In many ways it was an advance over the historic Woolsey decision (ending in 1933 the American ban on Joyce's "Ulysses") as it emphasized in particular the importance of protecting the rights of social criticism.

"Howl" is at present selling merrily through another edition, Ginsberg was last reported sunning himself in North Africa, and the censors are presumably licking their wounds in the confines of the Olympic or Bohemian Clubs.

The second salvo in the battle of the "beat generation" has now been fired via the respectable Viking Press. It is "On The Road," a novel by Jack Kerouac, a 35-year-old adopted San Franciscan who once played football at Columbia University. This last piece of information is not as meaningless as it sounds, for he approaches writing like a half-back on an endless touch-down run. He has already completed eleven full-length novels, of which "On The Road" is only the second to reach print, and if he can maintain his present pace is likely to set new mileage records for the medium.

He writes breathlessly in a pot-pourri of styles and with almost total recall of the materials of his own wandering life. "On The Road" is a sort of saga of a generation of rootless, restless *lumpen-proletarian* bohemians who endlessly traverse the face of America in search of her significance. They live in defiance of the norms of our prosperity, working at odd jobs when they have to, but preferring, when possible, the alternatives traditionally available to the hobo. From New York to New Orleans to Denver to San Francisco to Mexico City—this is the track of their ceaseless hegira. Everywhere they seek the ultimate in ecstatic experience, whether it be in driving a borrowed Cadillac a hundred miles an hour across Iowa, in all-night philosophic discussions, marihuana, jazz, or copulation.

KEROUAC'S hero, a "jail-kid" from Denver, Dean Moriarty, is a sort of intellectual Elvis Presley filled with a frantic hunger for life who leaves a trail of burned-out automobiles and women behind him from one end of America to the other. His character-

istic manner of speech can be conveyed only by an example:

"He watched over my shoulder as I wrote stories, yelling, 'Yes! That's right! Wow! Man!' and 'Phew!' and wiped his face with his handkerchief. 'Man, wow, there's so many things to do, so many things to write! How to even *begin* to get all down and without modified restraints and all hung-up on like literary inhibitions and grammatical fears. . . ."

Moriarty and his friends live in a souped-up world of continuous exhilaration as if the Second Coming is momentarily to be glimpsed around the corner. His psychological state could accurately be defined as approaching the manic. The philosophizing in which he and his friends are eternally indulging is all rubbish—and generally self-conscious rubbish. It is compounded of bits of Zen Buddhism, Saroyan, bop-talk, and Hemingway, with a generous admixture of the mystical primitivism of D. H. Lawrence's "The Plumed Serpent." Nor do any of his characters ever really do anything or communicate with each other—they assume, instead, attitudes of *angst* which Kerouac apparently feels are proof of their uniquely inspired visions. "See, we are really MAD," he seems to be telling us over and over again. "Cool, beat, and MAD." Since the characters are precisely as MAD at the beginning as they are at the end and nothing else changes very much, we may be excused if we have grown to feel a certain weariness toward them.

But beneath the cultish nonsense and literary borrowings there is another aspect to "On The Road," and it is this which gives the book its value. For in his naive outpouring Kerouac gives us at least one authentic picture—the picture of a submerged America, the America of an alienated, protesting generation which wanders from meaningless job to meaningless job in the depths of her psychic forests, a part of America expatriated in its own land. And this tragedy is not merely the personal one of Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise—it is the tragedy of our society, glittering on its suburban surfaces and anarchic and despairing in its true heart.

UNLIKE Ginsberg, Kerouac feels no Messianic outrage at this tragedy;

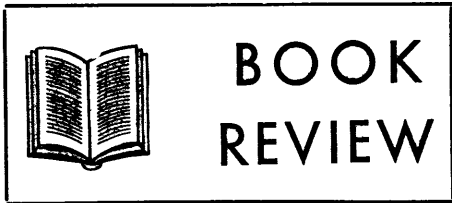
it might be argued, indeed, that he never gets the point of his own story, so enchanted is he by an "our gang is wonderful" feeling. But the point is there, and Kerouac's naive enthusiasm in the end proves an even more effective tool for laying it bare than Ginsberg's rhetoric.

Kerouac should be distinguished from his gallery of hipsters. As a writer he owes more to the romanticism of Thomas Wolfe than he does to the "cool cats" of his own generation. He has warmth and compassion, and does not suffer from the pessimism or explicit homosexuality which limit Ginsberg's approach. Sensing his own expatriation within America, he tends to identify himself with his fellow outcasts in our society, particularly among the Negro and Mexican peoples.

"At lilac evening," he writes, "I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27th and Welton in the Denver colored section, wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night. . . ."

Romanticized as this version of Negro life is, it helps to illustrate one of the great differences between this generation of "expatriates" and those other expatriates of the so-called "lost generation" of the 1920s. For what has changed is not the philosophizing—all the "frantic" talk can't disguise the same old content—but the social position of these bohemians. The expatriates of the twenties—and here I think of "Tender is the Night" and "The Sun Also Rises"—nearly all had money or at least pretended that they did, and they rejected American materialism in favor of the more urbane values of a decaying European upper-class civilization. But the expatriates of Kerouac's "beat generation" are aliens within their own country and in their frenzied quest for inner truth are being drawn toward the sources of new life and hope within that country.

I hope that I have indicated that Kerouac is a remarkable writer, although not for reasons of which he himself seems aware. But as a document of our times his "On The Road" rises far above the cult which helped give it birth and may, in time, be that movement's chief justification.



Fissures in the Prison Walls

*RUSSIA IN TRANSITION, AND OTHER
ESSAYS* by Isaac Deutscher. Coward-
McCann, New York, 1957, \$4.50.

OF the fourteen essays reprinted from various sources in this volume, eleven had previously been published in a British book called "Heretics and Renegades," brought out in 1955 and reviewed by Bert Cochran in the January 1956 *American Socialist*. Three impressive articles have been added: "The New Five-Year Plan, 1956-1960," "Khrushchev on Stalin," parts of which appeared in *The Reporter*, and "Russia in Transition," which was written for the first issue of the British radical quarterly *Universities and Left Review*. The present volume—a full collection of Deutscher's most important recent essays on Russia and communism—deserves a large American readership now that it is available in this country.

The most important essay by far is "Russia in Transition." Here Deutscher restates his basic thesis about the decline of Stalinism and its causes; he then deepens his thought on the subject by incorporating into his analysis of Russia in transition the immediate and potential role of the huge new working class as an independent actor in the drama. While, as he shows, the mass of urban labor which has been created by Russia's swift industrialization could not play the initiator's part, its place as a political force in the nation is bound to grow with the fissures in the old prison-house walls. Foremost in its new awakening has been and will be the demand for equality, one of the foundation stones of the original Bolshevik ideology long smothered and repressed by the bureaucracy:

Nor could the worker remain content merely with the relaxation of factory discipline. He began to use his freshly won freedom to protest against the pre-eminence of the managerial groups and the bureaucracy. By far the most important phenomenon of the post-Stalin era is the evident revival of the long-suppressed egalitarian aspirations of the working class.

From this point the workers' approach to de-Stalinization begins to diverge from that of the intelligentsia. The men of the intelligentsia have been intensely interested in the political "liberalization," but socially they are conservative. It is they who have benefited from the inequalities of the Stalin era. Apart from in-

dividuals and small groups, who may rise intellectually above their own privileged position and sectional viewpoint, they can hardly wish to put an end to those inequalities and to upset the existing relationship between various groups and classes of Soviet society. They are inclined to preserve the social status quo. For the mass of the workers, on the other hand, the break with Stalinism implies in the first instance a break with the inequalities fostered by Stalinism.

Deutscher tells the story, which appeared in the Soviet press, of a worker who accosted a member of the Supreme Soviet in Red Square and chided him for "wearing such fine clothes" as workers could not afford, etc., after which he disappeared in the crowd. He concludes the episode: "The day may not be far off when the anonymous man returns to the Red Square but not to accost a bigwig and vent resentment furiously. He will come back, head uplifted, and surrounded by multitudes, to utter anew the old and great cry for equality."

DEUTSCHER'S main line of analysis is essentially a transposition of part of Trotsky's earlier reasoning about the causes of Stalinist totalitarianism, taken in the reverse now to suit the new situation. The plague of multitudinous backwardnesses caused Stalinism; thirty years of industrialization and urbanization have modernized the country in many aspects, renewed its intellectual vigor, brought sharply to the fore the contradiction between the political regime and a burgeoning society. Cavil and quibbling from one or another point of the political compass have not succeeded in injuring this thesis, as the massive forces and startling developments of the post-Stalin era clearly show the direction of development of the Soviet bloc.

Granting the underlying trend, what kind of transition is in the making in Russia? Deutscher's earlier reply to this question appeared to be predominantly weighted in favor of a reform-from-the-top perspective. In "Russia in Transition," the tone is substantially altered. True, no decisive reply is made to the question, nor is one attempted. But by its whole content and approach, the scene is set in this essay for a somewhat different appreciation of the future than in past writings. The reluctance of the top echelons of Soviet society in their "reform" course is dealt with more sharply, the mass of the population "below" is given a larger place in the drama, and the divergences between the rulers and ruled in Russian society etched more clearly. After the revolts in the Eastern European countries, and the unmistakable popular stirrings in Russia itself, it seems quite natural for Deutscher to conclude his essay on this note:

Any political revival in the working class of the USSR is almost certain to lead to a revival of the Soviets which will once again become the testing ground of political programs, groups, and leaders, and the meeting place of spontaneous

movements and political consciousness.

Whatever the future holds in store, a whole epoch is coming to a close—the epoch in the course of which the stupendous industrial and educational advance of the USSR was accompanied by deep political lethargy and torpor in the masses. Stalinism did not and could not create that state of torpor; it spawned on it and sought to perpetuate it but was essentially its product. Basically, the apathy of the masses resulted from the extraordinary expenditure of all their energies in the great battles of the revolution. The aftermath of the French revolution was likewise one of a deadening lassitude in which the people "unlearned freedom," as Babeuf, who was so close to the masses, put it. Christian Rakovsky, recalling in his exile at Astrakhan in 1928, Babeuf's remark, added that it took the French forty years to relearn freedom. It has taken the Soviet people not less time—but there is no doubt that they are at last relearning freedom.

WHEN Deutscher turns briefly to the Hungarian revolt of 1956, the nub of his analysis is as follows: "What had begun as an internecine Communist conflict and looked at first only like a shift from one Communist faction to another, from Gero to Nagy, developed into a fully fledged struggle between communism and anti-communism. Hungary, in effect, rejected Russian bayonets together with the revolution which was originally brought to that country on those bayonets. This was not a counterrevolution carried out by a hated and isolated possessing class defending its dominant position against the masses. It was, on the contrary, the ardent work of a whole insurgent people. It may be said that in October-November, the people of Hungary in a heroic frenzy tried unwittingly to put the clock back, while Moscow sought once again to wind up with the bayonet, or rather with the tank, the broken clock of the Hungarian Communist revolution. It is difficult to say who it was who acted the more tragic, and the more futile or hopeless role."

This attitude seems to this reviewer mistaken for the following reasons:

The implications of the Hungarian revolution were by no means drawn out to the end, but aborted in mid-career. The final and stubborn worker-council stage of the revolt bore the greatest promise for the future of socialism in Eastern Europe, and does not fit readily into Deutscher's scheme of pro- and anti-communism. It hinted at the birth of new forms of socialism, in an even more inspiring way than developments in Poland and Yugoslavia have hinted at the same thing.

When once you have begun to visualize the transition of the Soviet bloc as involving independent mass activity, not just reform from the top, you must conceive of confusions, immaturities, gropings and developments of all kinds in the coming movements. In Eastern Europe, which as Deutscher points out is still far closer to its

capitalist-landlord-church past and where the foundations of a new order are far less consolidated, reactionary and Western influences will undoubtedly play a greater initial role. The process of transition to a new, higher, and more democratic form of socialism will necessarily involve bids by reactionary forces for power. Elements of what happened in Hungary will appear in every mass movement against Stalinism in Eastern Europe, and one cannot go on dismissing these movements in toto as so many blind alleys, as they are an integral part of the problem in that area.

It is our opinion that the Hungarian development should have been permitted to unroll to its full implications. The issue of who would control in the end was still undecided. The brutal suppression and the insane policy of Kadar-Khrushchev since is only preparing the ground for new explosions.

H. B.

If This be Treason

THE TRIAL OF MARSHAL NEY, by Harold Kurtz. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1957, \$5.

SINCE the French revolution of 1789 ushered in the complex paraphernalia of modern times like mass armies and military recruitment, Red terror and thermidorian terror, plebiscitary Bonapartism and the centralized bureaucratic state, it was not surprising that it also gave birth to political trials where the victor presumed to sit in judicial judgement on the vanquished. The theme around which Mr. Kurtz's book revolves is the treason trial of Marshal Ney by the post-Napoleonic Bourbon regime, a trial that at the time shook the whole country and set a fateful precedent in modern history. It was a political by-product of the turbulent revolutionary era where class power was shifting and where military victors sought not only territorial, financial or dynastic prizes, but tried to re-arrange the social structures of the countries they conquered.

The author moves toward the trial proper in leisurely fashion, supplying us with what are in effect running biographical accounts of Marshal Ney. It was a dazzling period of European history and the revolutionary metamorphoses of feudal France to Jacobinism, from the Directory on to the Napoleonic Empire, was mirrored in the rise of young Michel Ney, a cooper's son, who started as a humble soldier in the royal Bourbon army and rose in the armies of the revolution to a lieutenancy, then a division general, and finally to Marshal of France, Duke of Elchingen and Prince of Moskowa.

Ney was one of the leading figures forcing Napoleon's abdication after the Russian debacle and arranging for the restoration of the Bourbons, from whom he accepted a peerage. But the Bourbons, as the phrase has come down, learned nothing and forgot nothing. King Louis XVIII and

his entourage of embittered emigrés could not get it through their heads that the old France was gone irretrievably, that what the revolution had wrought could not be unwrought, that the monarchy could only maintain itself by accepting the new bourgeois regime. Their clumsy attempts to restore piecemeal the *ancien regime* first caused uneasiness and then brought the nation to a boil. When Napoleon landed in France ten months later, the army swiftly passed to his side. Ney, who was dispatched to stop Napoleon, was carried away by the mass mood, and re-enrolled under his old chief. This was the basis of the treason charge for which he was tried and condemned by the house of peers and shot.

AS Napoleon's other marshals, Ney had by 1815 lost some of the sheen of his famed military exploits because of his opportunistic adaptation to successive regimes in power. Besides, Ney upheld no principles or cause at his trial, but simply pleaded that he had lost his head in a moment of excitement. Nevertheless, the nation understood that the normal rules of military conduct had no meaning in this chaotic period when people's loyalties were deeply divided and when probably a majority of France shared Ney's "treason" openly or covertly. Besides, the glory of the *grande armée* lived on for years in French hearts, and the name of Ney—whom Napoleon had called "the bravest of the brave"—was inseparable from the golden legend.

"The fame of Marshal Ney could not be destroyed by his disgrace and the memory haunted the conscience of political France for nearly forty years." After the 1830 revolution, Ney's name was restored to the register of the Legion of Honor, his bust was placed in the Pantheon, and Madam Ney was given a pension. Within the first weeks of the 1848 revolution, the verdict against Ney was officially reversed. Five years later, a statue was erected at the place where he had fallen thirty-eight years earlier. The Marshal was rehabilitated. It is not as easy to re-write history as people in power sometimes imagine.

Mr. Kurtz's work is of the genre of political journalism and biographical chronicling rather than social history. He has however thoroughly steeped himself in the period, his command of the facts is impressive, his story crackles with excitement and carries the reader along on its swiftly moving current.

A. S.

Scholar's Evolution

THE DEMOCRATIC AND THE AUTHORITARIAN STATE by Franz Neumann. The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1957.

THESE studies in the history and structure of political thought exhibit the precise scholarship common to those who

gathered about Max Horkheimer and the Institute of Social Research. The enduring quality of their work is that, irrespective of the correctness or adequacy of a certain analysis, they applied themselves to the major problems of social evolution and individual motivation. It is in this tradition that Neumann was nourished.

The strongest side of Neumann's work is his studies in the sociology of law. The essay titled "The Change in the Function of Law in Modern Society" is a profound examination of the economic moorings of legal codes and viewpoints. In the nineteenth century, we are told, the impartiality of law, its functioning on the basis of general principles, reflected the nature of a free and competitive economy. In this condition, law in relation to the state power mediated the claims of political forces which were fairly well distributed between several classes rather than concentrated in the hands of a single, highly monopolized class. In twentieth-century conditions of capital concentration, the concept of a general and impartial legal structure is either ideological eyewash, or at best serves in the peripheral spheres of society. Neumann contends that in the main, general law has been replaced by direct rule of economically controlling interests. "The apparatus of the authoritarian state realizes the juridical demands of the monopolies." The body of the essay is taken up with a discussion of how ideological changes in legal theory have reflected this changed economic situation. And although Neumann is inclined to use German Nazism as his model, he leaves no doubt that this transformation occurs wherever monopoly replaces the free market.

No less interesting is Neumann's analysis of natural law in terms of historical needs and perspectives. He shares with others the opinion that natural law theory is self-contradictory, in that it is compelled to introduce into its conceptual framework non-normative elements such as power. But he goes beyond this criticism by recognizing that natural law concepts may function for many, even opposite, social ends. It is Neumann's judgment, which this reviewer shares, that the philosophy of law entails some type of natural law matrix. Pragmatic theories that assert the law is nothing but the way it functions in concrete circumstances, in fact deny that one can probe beneath the decision-making layer of law and seek a terminus in the socio-political fabric.

Toward the end of his life, Neumann asserted that political power unqualifiedly dominates economic forces. Since in an authoritarian state, power controls the means of terror, the manipulation of production and consumption, of propaganda and education, he could not envision continued belief in economic determinism. This contrasts with Neumann's earlier thinking, where law and politics were depicted as masking the economic foundation. Marcuse, in his preface to this book, asserts that the importance of economics receded in Neumann's later work. In fact, the relation be-

tween politics and economics seems to be inverted.

ANOTHER point of inversion is his opinion, formed in the twilight of his career, that the state, that leviathan which he had taken so much pain to reveal as a disguise for defending vested economic interests, could yet function as the representative of universal human interests. It is unfortunate that Neumann, who sought all his life to probe the moral injunctions of political philosophy, should in the end ask the state to assume its "proper task" of restoring a balance between "egoistic interests of private groups." This fundamental shift in theoretical mooring reflected his disillusionment with Left totalitarianism.

Neumann attempted to resolve the dichotomy of his work by searching out a new theoretical basis. Just as Marxism was his *leit-motif* during 1930-1945, Freudianism

assumed a like position in the post-war period. In his earlier phase, the irrationality of fascism could be overcome by the rationality of a planned yet democratic economy. But when it appeared to Neumann that the rational economy itself disguises a propensity towards irrational dictatorial rule, then problems of politics and psychology come to be considered as organically related.

In his last studies on the relation of personal anxiety to political alienation, Neumann goes in for a psycho-political synthesis. The successes of totalitarian systems are viewed as a mass response to the personal pressures created by industrialism. Identification with dictatorial father images, the alleviation of neurosis through ego-renunciation, the conflict between social requirements and individual happiness—these Freudian categories serve to underscore

Neumann's larger thesis that neurotic drives lead to an acceptance of totalitarianism, i.e., "the destruction of the line between state and society and the total politicization of society by the device of the monopolistic party." There is a strong tendency in Neumann's later work to transform psychic and biological factors into basic political laws.

However, even with the shift from Marxism to Freudianism (more specifically a shift from optimism to pessimism), this volume contains the work of a man deeply involved with the big issues of human existence. If it is true that the critical mind is better able than the doctrinaire to respond to the needs of a changing civilization, then this will serve as Neumann's justification and underline the importance of his intellectual legacy.

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ

LETTERS

(Continued from Page 2)

the twenties and right into the beginning of the economic crisis the CP could gain hardly any membership. While Union Square was packed from one end to the other with unemployed demonstrators on March 6, 1930, very few joined the party and practically none voted for the CP. The party did grow, but very little from 1932 to 1935. Its period of most rapid growth was from 1935 to 1939, when it grew in influence among workers in organizing drives and strike struggles.

To describe CP policy from 1935 to 1939 as having merely toned down its opposition to the New Deal is not quite accurate. And by New Deal I did not mean primarily its outstanding protagonist. I meant progressive welfare programs, unemployment insurance, legislation against strike-breaking, the Wagner Act, and similar policies. By the New Deal in foreign affairs I meant above all American-Soviet co-existence and collective security against aggression. Criticizing FDR for cuts in WPA or for breaking the Little Steel strike or for failing to support Loyalist Spain was not opposing the New Deal. On the contrary, it was the only way to fight for the New Deal. I quite agree that support for the no-strike pledge, and especially projecting it into the postwar period, could only weaken the party's influence among workers. But to support the right to strike is not being against the New Deal. One of the hallmarks of the New Deal was the right to strike.

It's hard to see how the CP could have grown if it didn't associate itself with the great social and labor upsurge roughly designated as the New Deal. The CP declined after its birth because it relied primarily on its association with the Russian revolution and opposed any struggle for a "New

Deal" in America. The CP continued in isolation all through the twenties and into the crisis when it failed to identify itself with the struggles of the American workers for New Deal democracy. How could the CP be a factor in labor struggles when it attacked Section 7A—the collective bargaining clause of the early New Deal—as "fascist"? When the CP flipped that silly attack on the New Deal and flopped into the arms of workers fighting to organize with the protection of Section 7A, it won members and influence among workers.

Is it logical to argue that the *New Leader* Socialists also supported Roosevelt but failed to grow as the CP did? There were other factors holding back the *New Leader* Socialists, just as there were other reasons for the CP advance. What's more, the *New Leader* opposed some of the more important FDR New Deal policies. Instead of American-Soviet collaboration they favored a crusade against Communists and the USSR.

Foreign experience tallies with this analysis which says that when Marxists champion democracy and peace they are more likely to succeed than when they hang on to the coat-tails of the Russian revolution. The French Communists declined and were completely isolated when they opposed collective security, the Popular Front, and the war against Hitler after August 23, 1939. They started on the way to becoming bigger than ever when they organized the resistance to Hitler in 1940 and soon espoused the Popular Front and collective security once again.

I agree with Mr. Herreshoff most heartily that a study of this history would be very valuable.

JOSEPH CLARK

Too Heady for Most

Your November issue has pleased me exceptionally because of the wide range of its articles, from the up-to-the-minute analysis of "The Space Age" to the theoretical

article on the—to me—unfamiliar Keir Hardie. As a member of the great fraternity of un-illusioned hucksters who spend a good part of their lives at the wheel of their cars, I was particularly delighted by the article "Our Fantastic Chariots" by Frank Bellamy. It is the sort of writing that Upton Sinclair or Sinclair Lewis might have penned, and many fellow salesmen might enjoy reading it and finding in it a reflection of their own frequently expressed views.

Such an article makes an excellent introduction to a discussion which could lead to a more profound analysis of our system of production, which makes these monstrosities not only possible but even inevitable. It is difficult to get to first base, however, when the article appears under the masthead of the *American Socialist*, which name, in these days of fading McCarthyism, is still too heady for most of my fellows. This is certainly not intended to suggest a change in your name, which suits *me* fine. I am only thinking that, in terms of entering wedges, it might be worth your while (and certainly mine) to reprint such an article in the form of a leaflet. It seems to me that hundreds of your readers, like myself, could use fifty or a hundred of these to initiate discussions that would be the forerunners of more political contacts with our fellow victims of "dynamic obsolescence."

A. B. Roxbury, Mass.

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