

Harper, although not fully abandoning the belief in the need of a "Marxist philosophy" for the revolutionary struggle of the modern proletarian class, is aware of the fact that present-day Leninist "materialism" is absolutely unfit to serve this purpose. It is rather a suitable ideological base of that no longer essentially anti-capitalistic but only "anti-reactionary" and "anti-fascist" movement which has recently been inaugurated by the Communist parties all over the world under the new slogans of a "People's Front" or in some cases even of a "National Front." This present-day Leninist ideology of the Communist parties which in principle conforms to the traditional ideology of the old Social Democratic party does no longer express any particular aims of the proletarian class. According to Harper, it is rather a **natural expression**

of the aims of the 'new class' of the intelligentsia, i. e., an ideology which the various strata belonging to this so-called new class would be likely to adopt as soon as they were freed from the ideological influence of the decaying bourgeoisie. Translated into philosophical terms, this means that the "new materialism" of Lenin is the great instrument which is now used by the Communist parties in the attempt to separate an important section of the bourgeoisie from the traditional religion and idealistic philosophies upheld by the upper and hitherto ruling strata of the bourgeois class, and to win them over to that system of state capitalistic planning of industry which for the workers means just another form of slavery and exploitation. This, according to Harper, is the true political significance of Lenin's materialistic philosophy.

I. h.

## GENERAL REMARKS ON THE QUESTION OF ORGANIZATION

Organization is the chief principle in the working class fight for emancipation. Hence the forms of this organization constitute the most important problem in the practice of the working class movement. It is clear that these forms depend on the conditions of society and the aims of the fight. They cannot be invention of theory, but have to be built up, spontaneously, by the working class itself, guided by its immediate necessities.

With expanding capitalism the workers first built their trade unions. The isolated worker was powerless against the capitalist; so he had to unite with his fellows in bargaining and fighting over the price of his labor power and the hours of labor. Capitalists and workers have opposite interests in capitalistic production; their class struggle is over the partition of the total product between them. In normal capitalism the share of the workers is the value of their labor power, i. e., what is necessary to sustain and to restore continually their capacities to work. The remaining part of the product is the surplus value, the share of the capitalist class. The capitalists, in order to increase their profit, try to lower wages and increase the hours of labor. Where the workers were powerless wages were depressed below the existence minimum; the hours of labor were lengthened until the bodily and mental health of the working class deteriorated so as to endanger the future of society. The formation of unions and of laws regulating working conditions — features rising out of the bitter fight of workers for their very

life conditions — were necessary to restore normal conditions of work in capitalism. The capitalist class itself recognizes that trade unions are necessary to direct the revolt of the workers into regular channels to prevent them from breaking out in sudden explosions.

Similarly, political organizations have grown up, though not everywhere in exactly the same way, because the political conditions are different in different countries. In America, where a population of farmers, artisans and merchants free from feudal bonds could expand over a continent with endless possibilities, conquering the natural resources, the workers did not feel themselves a separate class. They were imbued, as were the whole of the people, with the middle-class spirit of individual and collective fight for personal welfare, and the conditions made it possible to succeed to a certain extent. Except at rare historic moments or among recent immigrant groups, no necessity was felt for a separate working class party. In the European countries, on the other hand, the workers were dragged into the political struggle by the fight of the rising bourgeoisie against feudalism. They soon had to form their working class parties and, together with part of the middle class had to fight for political rights, for the right to form unions, for free press and speech, for universal suffrage, for democratic institutions. A political party needs general principles for its propaganda; for its fight with other parties it wants a theory having definite views about the future of society. The working class of Europe, in which communistic ideas had already developed, found its theory in the scientific work of Marx and Engels, explaining the development of society through capitalism towards communism by means of the class struggle. This theory was accepted in the programs of the Social-Democratic parties of most European countries; in England, the Labour Party formed by the trade unions, professed analogous but more vague ideas about a kind of socialist commonwealth as the aim of the workers.

In their programs and propaganda the proletarian revolution was the final result of the class struggle; the victory of the working class over its oppressors was to be the beginning of a communistic or socialist system of production. But so long as capitalism lasted the practical fight had to center on immediate needs and the preservation of standards in capitalism. Under parliamentary government parliament is the battlefield where the interests of the different classes of society meet; big and small capitalists, land owners, farmers, artisans, merchants, industrialists, workers, all have their special interests which are defended by their spokesmen in parliament, all participate in the struggle for power and for their part in the total product. The workers have to take part in this struggle. Socialist or labor parties have the special task of fighting by political means for the immediate needs and interests of the workers within capitalism. In this way they get the votes of the workers and grow in political influence.

## II.

With the modern development of capitalism conditions have changed. The small workshops have been superseded by large factories and plants with thousands and tens of thousands of workers. With this growth of capitalism



and of the working class its organizations also had to expand. From local groups the trade unions grew to big national federations with hundreds of thousands of members. They had to collect large funds for support in big strikes, and still larger ones for social insurance. A large staff of managers, administrators, presidents, secretaries, editors of their papers, an entire bureaucracy of organization leaders developed. They had to haggle and bargain with the bosses; they became the specialists acquainted with methods and circumstances. Eventually they became the real leaders, the masters of the organizations, masters of the money as well as of the press, against the members, who lost much of their power. This development of the organizations of the workers into instruments of power over them has many examples in history; when organizations grow too large the masses lose control of them.

The same change takes place in the political organizations, when from small propaganda groups they grow into big political parties. The parliamentary representatives are the leading politicians of the party. They have to do the real fighting in the representative bodies, they are the specialists in that field, they make up the editorial, propaganda, and executive personnel; their influence determines the politics and tactical line of the party. The members may do the voting, assist in propaganda and pay their dues; they may send delegates to debate at party congresses, but their power is nominal and illusory. The character of the organization resembles that of the other political parties — of organizations of politicians who try to win votes for their slogans and power for themselves. Once a socialist party has a large number of delegates in parliament it makes alliances with others against reactionary parties to form a working majority. Soon socialists become ministers, state officials, mayors and aldermen. Of course, in this position they cannot act as delegates of the working class, governing for the workers against the capitalist class. The real political power and even the parliamentary majority remains in the hands of the capitalist class. Socialist ministers have to represent the interests of the present capitalist society, i. e., of the capitalist class. They can attempt to initiate measures for the immediate interests of the workers and try to induce the capitalist parties to acquiesce. They become middlemen — mediators — pleading with the capitalist class to consent to small reforms in the interests of the workers, and then try to convince the workers that these are important reforms which they should accept. And then the Socialist Party, as an instrument in the hands of these leaders, has to support them and also, instead of calling upon the workers to fight for their interests, to pacify them and deflect them from the class struggle.

Indeed, fighting conditions have grown worse for the workers. With their capital the power of the capitalist class has increased enormously. The concentration of capital in the hands of some few captains of finance and industry, the coalition of the bosses themselves, confronts the trade unions with a much stronger and often nearly unassailable power. The fierce competition of the capitalists of all countries over markets, raw materials and world

power, the necessity of using increasing parts of the surplus value for this competition, for armaments and warfare; the falling of the profit rate compel the capitalists to increase the rate of exploitation, i. e., to lower the working conditions for the workers. Thus the trade unions meet increasing resistance, the old methods of struggle grow useless. In their bargaining with the bosses the leaders of the organizations have less success; because they know the power of the capitalists, and because they themselves do not want to fight — since in such fights the funds and the whole existence of the organization might be lost — they must accept what the bosses offer. So their chief task is to assuage the discontent of the workers, and to defend the proposals of the bosses as important gains. Here also the leaders of the workers' organizations become mediators between the opposing classes. And when the workers do not accept the conditions and strike, the leaders either must oppose them or allow a sham fight, to be broken off as soon as possible.

The fight itself, however, cannot be stopped or minimized; the class antagonism and the depressing forces of capitalism are increasing, so that the class struggle must go on, the workers must fight. Time and again they break loose spontaneously without asking the unions and often against their decisions. Sometimes the union leaders succeed in regaining control of these actions. This means that the fight will be gradually smothered in some new arrangement between the capitalists and labor leaders. This does not mean that without this interference such wildcat strikes will be won. They are too restricted to the directly interested groups. Only indirectly the fear of such explosions tends to foster caution by the capitalists. But these strikes prove that the class fight between capital and labor cannot cease, and that when the old forms are not practicable any more, the workers spontaneously try out and develop new forms of action. In these actions revolt against capital is also revolt against the old organizational forms.

### III.

The aim and task of the working class is the abolition of capitalism. Capitalism in its highest development, with its ever deeper economic crises, its imperialism, its armaments, its world wars, threatens the workers with misery and destruction. The proletarian class fight, the resistance and revolt against these conditions, must go on till capitalist domination is overthrown and capitalism is destroyed.

Capitalism means that the productive apparatus is in the hands of the capitalists because they are the masters of the means of production, and hence of the products, they can seize the surplus value and exploit the working class. Only when the working class itself is master of the means of production does exploitation cease. Then the workers entirely control their conditions of life. The production of everything necessary for life is the common task of the community of workers, which is then the community of mankind. This production is a collective process. First each factory, each large plant is a collective of workers, combining their efforts in an organized way. Moreover, the totality of world production is a collective process; all the separate



factories have to be combined into a totality of production. Hence, when the working class takes possession of the means of production, it has at the same time to create an organization of production.

There are many who think of the proletarian revolution in terms of the former revolutions of the middle class, as a series of consecutive phases: first, conquest of government and installment of a new government, then expropriation of the capitalist class by law, and then a new organization of the process of production. But such events could lead only to some kind of state capitalism. As the proletariat rises to dominance it develops simultaneously its own organization and the forms of the new economic order. These two developments are inseparable and form the process of social revolution. Working class organization into a strong unity capable of united mass actions already means revolution, because capitalism can rule only unorganized individuals. When these organized masses stand up in mass fights and revolutionary actions, and the existing powers are paralyzed and disintegrated, then, simultaneously, the leading and regulating functions of former governments fall to the workers' organizations. And the immediate task is to carry on production, to continue the basic process of social life. Since the revolutionary class fight against the bourgeoisie and its organs is inseparable from the seizure of the productive apparatus by the workers and its application to production, the same organization that unites the class for its fight also acts as the organization of the new productive process.

It is clear that the organization forms of trade union and political party, inherited from the period of expanding capitalism, are useless here. They developed into instruments in the hands of leaders unable and unwilling to engage in revolutionary fight. Leaders cannot make revolutions: labor leaders abhor a proletarian revolution. For the revolutionary fight the workers need new forms of organization in which they keep the powers of action in their own hands. It is not necessary to try to construct or to imagine these new forms; they can originate only in the practical fight of the workers themselves. They have already originated there; we have only to look into practice to find its beginnings everywhere where the workers are rebelling against the old powers.

In a wildcat strike the workers decide all matters themselves through regular meetings. They choose strike committees as central bodies, but the members of these committees can be recalled and replaced at any moment. If the strike extends over a large number of shops, they achieve unity of action by larger committees consisting of delegates of all the separate shops. Such committees are not bodies to make decisions according to their own opinion, and over the workers; they are simply messengers, communicating the opinions and wishes of the groups they represent, and conversely, bringing to the shopmeetings, for discussion and decision, the opinion and arguments of the other groups. They cannot play the roles of leaders, because they can be momentarily replaced by others. The workers themselves must choose their way, decide their actions; they keep the entire action, with all its difficulties,

its risks, its responsibilities, in their own hands. And when the strike is over the committees disappear.

The only example of a modern industrial working class as the moving force of a political revolution were the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Here the workers of each factory chose delegates, and the delegates of all the factories together formed the "soviet", the council where the political situation and necessary actions were discussed. Here the opinions of the factories were collected, their desires harmonized, their decisions formulated. But the councils, though a strong directing influence for revolutionary education through action, were not commanding bodies. Sometimes a whole council was arrested and reorganized with new delegates; at times, when the authorities were paralyzed by a general strike, the soviets acted as a local government, and delegates of free professions joined them to represent their field of work. Here we have the organization of the workers in revolutionary action, though of course only imperfectly, groping and trying for new methods. This is possible only when all the workers with all their forces participate in the action, when their very existence is at stake, when they actually take part in the decisions and are entirely devoted to the revolutionary fight.

After the revolution this council organization disappeared. The proletarian centers of big industry were small islands in an ocean of primitive agricultural society where capitalistic development had not yet begun. The task of initiating capitalism fell to the Communist party. Simultaneously, political power centered in its hands and the soviets were reduced to subordinate organs with only nominal powers.

The old forms of organization, the trade union and political party and the new form of councils (soviets), belong to different phases in the development of society and have different functions. The first has to secure the position of the working class among the other classes within capitalism and belongs to the period of expanding capitalism. The latter has to conquer complete dominance for the workers, to destroy capitalism and its class divisions, and belongs to the period of declining capitalism. In a rising and prosperous capitalism council organization is impossible because the workers are entirely occupied in ameliorating their conditions of life, which is possible at that time through trade unions and political action. In a decaying crisis-ridden capitalism these are useless and faith in them can only hamper the increase of self action by the masses. In such times of heavy tension and growing revolt against misery, when strike movements spread over whole countries and strike at the roots of capitalist power, or when following wars or political catastrophes the government authority crumbles and the masses act, the old organizational forms fail against the new forms of self-activity of the masses.

#### IV.

Spokesmen of socialist or communist parties often admit that, in revolution, organs of self-action by the masses are useful in destroying the old domination; but then they say these have to yield to parliamentary democracy



in order to organize the new society. Let us compare the basic principles of both forms of political organization of society.

Original democracy in small towns and districts was exercised by the assembly of all the citizens. With the big population of modern towns and countries this is impossible. The people can express their will only by choosing delegates to some central body that represents them all. The delegates for parliamentary bodies are free to act, to decide, to vote, to govern after their own opinion; by "honor and conscience" as it is often called in solemn terms.

The council delegates, however, are bound by mandate; they are sent simply to express the opinions of the workers' groups who sent them. They may be called back and replaced at any moment. Thus the workers who gave them the mandate keep the power in their own hands.

On the other hand, members of parliament are chosen for a fixed number of years; only at the polls are the citizens masters — on this one day when they choose their delegates. Once this day has passed, their power has gone and the delegates are independent, free to act for a term of years according to their own "conscience", restricted only by the knowledge that after this period they have to face the voters anew; but then they count on catching their votes in a noisy election campaign, bombing the confused voters with slogans and demagogic phrases. Thus not the voters but the parliamentarians are the real masters who decide politics. And the voters do not even send persons of their own choice as delegates; they are presented to them by the political parties. And then, if we suppose that people could select and send persons of their own choice, these persons would not form the government; in parliamentary democracy the legislative and the executive powers are separated. The real government dominating the people is formed by a bureaucracy of officials so far removed from the people's vote as to be practically independent. That is how it is possible that capitalistic dominance is maintained through general suffrage and parliamentary democracy. This is why in capitalistic countries, where the majority of the people belongs to the working class, this democracy cannot lead to a conquest of political power. For the working class parliamentary democracy is a sham democracy, whereas council representation is real democracy: the direct rule of the workers over their own affairs.

Parliamentary democracy is the political form in which the different important interests in a capitalist society exert their influence upon government. The delegates represent certain classes: farmers, merchants, industrialists, workers; but they do not represent the common will of their voters. Indeed, the voters of a district have no common will; they are an assembly of individuals, capitalists, workers, shopkeepers, by chance living at the same place, having partly opposing interests.

Council delegates, on the other hand, are sent out by a homogeneous group to express its common will. Councils are not only made up of workers, having common class interests; they are a natural group, working together as the personnel of one factory or section of a large plant, and are in close

daily contact with each other, having the same adversary, having to decide their common actions as fellow workers in which they have to act in united fashion; not only on the questions of strike and fight, but also in the new organization of production. Council representation is not founded upon the meaningless grouping of adjacent villages or districts, but upon the natural grouping of workers in the process of production, the real basis of society.

However, councils must not be confused with the so-called corporative representation which is propagated in fascist countries. This is a representation of the different professions or trades (masters and workers combined), considered as fixed constituents of society. This form belongs to a medieval society with fixed classes and guilds, and in its tendency to petrify interest groups it is even worse than parliamentarism, where new groups and new interests, rising up in the development of capitalism soon find their expression in parliament and government.

Council representation is entirely different because it is the representation of a fighting revolutionary class. It represents working class interests only, and prevents capitalist delegates and capitalist interests from participation. It denies the right of existence to the capitalist class in society and tries to eliminate them as capitalists by taking the means of production away from them. When in the progress of revolution the workers must take up the functions of organizing society the same council organization is their instrument. This means that the workers' councils then are the organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This dictatorship of the proletariat is not a shrewdly devised voting system artificially excluding capitalists and middle class members from the polls. It is the exercise of power in society by the natural organs of the workers, building up the productive apparatus as the basis of society. In these organs of the workers, consisting of delegates of their various branches in the process of production, there is no place for robbers or exploiters standing outside productive work. Thus the dictatorship of the working class is at the same time the most perfect democracy, the real workers' democracy, excluding the vanishing class of exploiters.

## V.

The adherents of the old forms of organization exalt democracy as the only right and just political form, as against dictatorship, an unjust form. Marxism knows nothing of abstract right or justice; it explains the political forms in which mankind expresses its feelings of political right, as consequences of the economic structure of society. By the Marxian theory we can find also the basis of the difference between parliamentary democracy and council organization. As middle class democracy and proletarian democracy they reflect the different character of these two classes and their economic systems.

Middle class democracy is founded upon a society consisting of a large number of independent small producers. They want a government to take care of their common interests: public security and order, protection of commerce, uniform systems of weight and money, administering of law and



justice. All these things are necessary in order that everybody can do his business in his own way. Private business takes the whole attention, forms the life interests of everybody, and those political factors are, though necessary, only secondary and demand only a small part of their attention. The chief content of social life, the basis of existence of society, the production of all the goods necessary for life, is divided up into the private business of the separate citizens, hence it is natural that it takes nearly all their time, and that politics, their collective affair, providing only for auxiliary conditions, is a subordinate matter. Only in middle class revolutionary movements do people take to the streets. But in ordinary times politics are left to a small group of specialists, politicians, whose life-work consists just of taking care of these general, political conditions of middle class business.

The same holds true for the workers, as long as they think only of their direct interests. In capitalism they work long hours, all their energy is exhausted in the process of exploitation, and but little mental power and fresh thought is left them. Wage earning is the most immediate necessity of life; their political interests, their common interest in safeguarding their interests as wage earners may be important but are still an accessory. So they leave this part of their interests also to specialists, to their party politicians and their trade union leaders. By voting as citizens or members the workers may give some general directions, just as middle class voters may influence their politicians, but only partially, because their chief attention must remain concentrated upon their own work.

Proletarian democracy, under communism, depends upon just the opposite economic conditions. It is founded not on private but on collective production. Production of the life necessities is no longer a personal business, but a collective affair. The collective affairs, formerly called political affairs, are no longer secondary, but the chief object of thought and action for everybody. What was called politics in former society, a domain for specialists, has become the life interest of every worker. It is not the securing of some necessary conditions of production, it is the process and the regulation of production itself. The separation of private and collective affairs and interests has ceased. A separate group or class of specialists taking care of the collective affairs is no longer necessary. Through their council delegates which link them together the producers themselves are managing their own productive work.

The two forms of organization are not distinguished in that the one is founded upon a traditional and ideological basis, and the other on the material productive basis of society. Both are founded upon the material basis of the system of production; one on the declining system of the past, the other on the growing system of the future. Right now we are in the period of transition, the time of big capitalism and the beginnings of the proletarian revolution. In big capitalism the old system of production has already been destroyed in its foundations; the large class of independent producers has disappeared. The main part of production is collective work of large groups of workers; but the control and ownership have remained in a few private

hands. This contradictory state is maintained by the strong power factors of the capitalists, especially the state power exerted by the governments. The task of the proletarian revolution is to destroy this state power; its real content is the seizure of the means of production by the workers. The process of revolution is, in an alternation of actions and defeats, the building up of the organization of the proletarian dictatorship, which at the same time is the dissolution, step by step, of the capitalist state power. Hence it is the process of the replacement of the organization system of the past by the organization system of the future.

We are only in the beginnings of this revolution. The century of class fight behind us cannot be considered as such a beginning, only as a preamble. It developed invaluable theoretical knowledge, it found gallant revolutionary words in defiance of the capitalist claim of being a final social system; it awakened the workers from the hopelessness of misery. But its actual fight remained bound within the confines of capitalism, it was action through the medium of leaders and sought only to set easy masters in the place of hard ones. Only a sudden flickering of revolt, such as political or mass strikes breaking out against the will of the politicians, now and then announced the future of self-determined mass action. Every wildcat strike, not taking its leaders and catchwords from the offices of parties and unions, is an indication of this development, and at the same time a small step in its direction. All the existing powers in the proletarian movement, the socialist and communist parties, the trade unions, all the leaders whose activity is bound to the middle class democracy of the past, denounce these mass actions as anarchistic disturbances. Because their field of vision is limited to their old forms of organization, they cannot see that the spontaneous actions of the workers bear in them the germs of higher forms of organization. In fascist countries, where the old middle class democracy has been destroyed, such spontaneous mass actions will be the only form of future proletarian revolt. Their tendency will not be a restoration of the former middle class democracy but an advance in the direction of the proletarian democracy, i. e., the dictatorship of the working class.

J. Harper

## A "MARXIAN" APPROACH TO THE JEWISH QUESTION

The advocates of Zionism, or Jewish nationalism, like the advocates of all other nationalistic ideologies, approach the workers in many ways. Recently the Poale Zion of America republished some of the writings of Ber Borochov\*, who, some 30 years ago, tried to supply

the socialistic approach to Zionism.

Borochov sprang from the Jewish intelligentsia of Russia. At the time of his activities Jewish workers in Russia had built an organization, (Bund), which was a Social Democratic trade unionist organization and was anti-Zionistic. It consisted of industrial workers who formed their organization after the pattern of western European trade unionism. They had ceased to concern them-

\*) Nationalism and the Class Struggle. A Marxian Approach to the Jewish Problem. By Ber Borochov. Poale Zion-Zeire of America. New York, 205 pp., \$1.50.



selves very much with national problems, and were of the opinion, that the socialist revolution also would solve the Jewish question. Borochoy, however, thought that "one who has no national dignity can have no class dignity." He tried to prove that Zionism is not only the only solution for the Jewish people, but also the Marxist solution. He observed "the slow transition of the Jewish masses from unproductive to productive occupations," and was convinced that only in Palestine this tendency could come to its fullest realization. He was of the opinion that the Jews could neither wait for the "progress of humanity", nor depend on assimilation, but that their freedom from persecution and discrimination depended primarily upon the national self-help of the Jewish masses. "The national instinct of self-preservation latent in the Socialist working class," he wrote, "is a healthy nationalism." Though, at the outset he conceived that the class interests of the Jewish workers remained the same as those of other workers, and socialism was the ultimate goal, the immediate need was Zionism, and the class struggle was to realize both.

In the process of production various relations of production arise. But production itself, Borochoy argued, is dependent on certain conditions which are different in different places. These "conditions of production", which vary for geographical, anthropological, and historic reasons, form the basis for his idea that for the Jewish workers Zionism and Socialism are identical. The nationalism of oppressed nationalities, he said, is peculiar, and the system of production of oppressed nationalities is always subject to abnormal conditions. "The conditions of production are abnormal when a nation is deprived of its territory and its organs of national preservation. Such abnormal conditions tend to harmonize the interests of all members of a nation. This external pressure not only weakens and dissipates the influence of the conditions of production but also hinders the development of the relations of production and the class struggle, because the normal development of

the mode of production is hampered. In the course of the struggle for national emancipation, however, the class structure and class psychology manifest themselves." And so he maintained that a "genuine nationalism in no way obscures class consciousness," that the building up of Palestine would rather provide a real basis for the development of the class struggle of the Jews aimed at a socialist society.

In Palestine, which was not at all an empty country or an international hotel as Borochoy and his contemporaries tried to believe, the Jews found an Arab feudalistic agricultural society with merchant capital in the towns and ports. The immigrating Jews were artisans of the east European type, merchants of western Europe, and representatives of financiers of London, Wall Street, and South America. And in addition to these there were a newly formed proletariat of students, professionals, and intellectuals who, with great national enthusiasm set out to work under most primitive conditions for the Jewish state.

Into Palestine immigrated labor and capital, but on a small scale. However, the increasingly more "normal" conditions of production did not lead to a development in accordance with the dreams of the left-Zionists. Nationalism did not foster the class struggle, on the contrary, the latter was sacrificed to the needs of the nation. Class consciousness did not increase but tended to disappear, and the "common" interest against the Arabs created an almost ideal harmony. Zionism in practice was only able to tie the Jewish workers to the interests of their exploiters and, furthermore, to the imperialistic schemes of England, which fostered the Jewish aspirations for its own imperialist — strategic needs.

It is true that with the growth of Palestine capitalism the working class also increased. Scarcity of labor brought about in the building and similar trades relatively high wages for some workers.\*\* Other

\*\* The weekly wage rates of nine classes of urban workers in October, 1937, adjusted to the cost of living index, leads to the conclusion that the real wages of the Jewish workers in Tel-Aviv were 68

workers established co-operatives which functioned as building contractors and transportation companies. These conditions, however, did not foster the class struggle for socialism, but imbued large numbers of workers with capitalist ideology and led to the development of a labor bureaucracy participating in the exploitation of the workers. The Jewish workers not only found their old exploiters in the holy land, but they added some new ones in exchange for the empty promises of reformism.

Borochoy's "contribution to Marxism", i. e., the recognition of the importance of the "conditions of production" for the development of the class struggle, so far has served only capitalistic and imperialistic interests. By pointing to Palestine, the Zionists kept the Jewish workers from participating in the class struggle; in Palestine they now point across the border. The Zionist solution of the Jewish question lies only in combat with the Arabs. Under the conditions of Palestine, Zionism can emerge only in capitalistic garb. The Jews are obliged to be capitalistic in order to be nationalistic, and they have to be nationalistic in order to be Zionists. They are obliged to be not only capitalistic, but capitalistic in an extremely reactionary form. As a minority they cannot be democratic without damage to their own interests; and being land-hungry, they have to fight against agrarian reform, binding themselves with the Arab feudalists against the fellahs. They are not only reactionary themselves, but they lend force to the Arab reaction.

The last twenty years of Zionist practice have sufficiently shown that Jewish nationalism no less than any other nationalism has hampered the

per cent of the wages of workers in London, and that the wages of the Arabs were about 10 per cent less than the wages for Jewish workers. However, these nine classes of urban workers, responsible for the above wage index, belong all to the building trade and are not as is often assumed, representative of the wage rates of the working class as a whole. The index, so often proudly demonstrated, is also not true in so far as it excludes in the cost of living the factor of rent, which, owing to the serious housing shortage, is very high in Palestine.

development of the class struggle. To keep the Jewish workers' standard of living on a semi-civilized level was possible only at the expense of the Arabian workers. The discrimination against Arab labor practiced by the Jewish trade unions and the Jewish bosses did not create solidarity but nationalistic hatred among the workers. All the well-sounding phrases about solidarity with the Arab workers vanished when they were put to test in the strikes of 1936; instead, the Zionist labor bureaucracy successfully made the Jewish workers defend their bosses' property. The labor bureaucracy and the national peculiarities prevented the unemployed from fighting for relief, because otherwise the British might stop immigration. The scarcity of capital in Palestine agriculture, led to the creation of co-operatives of starving pioneers, the so called "communes" (Kvutsoy), it was the merit of Borochoyists to name these co-operatives the "socialist sector" of Palestine's economy, and to hail them as "outposts of socialism". But here also the Zionists only hide behind attractive slogans the capitalistic nature and the exploiting character of these institutions.

Zionism can serve only capitalism. Borochoy himself, at first only interested in the Zionist movement to foster the class struggle later forgot his original intentions and spoke in favor of class collaboration. No longer did he address the proletariat, but "the entire Jewish population," which should "not yield to the notion that the Jews disappear among nations and alien cultures." Notwithstanding that even an "internationalist" like Leon Trotsky states today "that the Jewish problem must be solved through territorial concentration", nationalism today can be only chauvinistic, can only lead to Jewish fascism which openly advocates struggle against the Arabs. And the nonfascists accept this struggle by maintaining silence or uttering hypocritical phrases. And only the recognition of their weak position hinders them from finding a place among the "aggressor nations," and forces them to play servant to English imperialism. Today there ex-



ists a report of a royal commission that recommends the partitioning of Palestine and the creation of an autonomous Jewish state. Whether this proposal will ever be realized, the fact remains that the Jews themselves cannot fulfill the Zionist desires, but are compelled to stay allies to English imperialism.

It is true that the furthering of capitalism in Palestine brought about by Zionism and the sharpening of capitalistic antagonisms are "revolutionizing", but only as the whole of capitalism is revolutionizing; it is of no concern to the working class. The sharpening of capitalist contradictions certainly serves the revolutionary interests of the working class, however, as the proletariat has to make an international revolution, it cannot support nationalistic issues, it can foster neither the Arabs nor

the Jews. It has to remain immune to all nationalistic infection and must concentrate on the conflict between capital and labor as determined by the relations of production. There is no national solution for the Jewish workers, as there is no possibility ever to find peace within the other countries. The Jewish question is unsolvable within capitalistic barbarism of today. There is no sense in closing our eyes to reality, difficult as it is, yes, impossible as it is in many instances to prevent the special atrocities against the Jewish population, Palestine is no solution. Capitalism means the prolongation of this barbaric situation. The task of the Jewish worker is the task of all workers, to end the international system of capitalistic exploitation.

## THE WORKERS' ALLIANCE

The recent convention of the Workers' Alliance (W. A.) held in Cleveland was another painful demonstration of the absence of an unemployed movement in America. Though it is true that the W. A. today is the only unemployed organization of any importance, it is also true that this organization has just as much relation to the jobless as the Salvation Army has to the hobos.

Different capitalistic groups struggle for governmental control. Anything goes in this fight. The anti-New Dealers label everybody a "Red" who supports or sympathizes with the present Administration, though they are quite aware of the nonsense of their charges. The Administration assures itself of the votes of large masses through its liberalistic attitudes and creates for itself willing instruments to carry through a capitalistic policy more in line with permanent depression conditions and new imperialistic expectations. The centralization of economic and political power proceeds by way of struggle. Many capitalist interests are hurt or eliminated in this development and try to check it to save themselves. They denounce the New Deal and all supporting groups including labor organizations as leading to Bolshevism. This in turn forces the New Dealers to continue to rely on the labor movement and to induce this labor movement to demonstrate continuously that it aspires toward a goal diametrically opposite to the true goal of labor. The labor movement becomes a 100% capitalistic American institution. The rift in the camp of the bourgeoisie gives energetic labor leaders new chances to prosper; the booms recently experienced in political and economic groups were reflected in the boom within the W. A.

With the history of the W. A. we have dealt before\*. Its fourth national convention only reestablished the fact that this organization is a small, but useful instrument in the hands of the Administration. However, one hand washes the other, or as Selden Rodman proudly described this harmonious situation in the *Nation* of Sept. 10, 1938:

"Give us decent wages and working conditions," says the Workers' Alliance to the W. P. A. (in effect), "and we'll do your lobbying for you; we'll see that Congress appropriates the money and that the states do their part." And from Harry Hopkin's headquarters comes the reply (in effect): "Go to it, boys!" You will find hardly a man in the huge government agency who hasn't a friendly feeling for the union; not one without respect for its competent leader."

At present the W. A. is scarcely concerned with unemployment and relief. The spending program and the W. P. A. determines her policies.

The convention dealt with the following issues:\*\*

- 1.) Continuation of the W. P. A.; 3,500,000 jobs during the next year;
- 2.) Improvements in the W. P. A. to perform more socially necessary work;
- 3.) Liberalization of the requirements for W. P. A. employment;
- 4.) Securing from Congress and Administration an increase in W. P. A. wages; 5.) Liberalization of the Social Security Act; 6.) Establishment of a just system of labor relation on the W. P. A.; 7.) The massing of the unemployed together with other progressive forces for the success of the progressive New Deal candidates in the 1938 election. This must be a major activity of our entire organization between this convention and November 7.; 8.) Increase of membership and press circulation. And last, the cementing of relationships with the organized labor movement.

As regards the jobless on direct relief, the Executive Board of the W.A. had no more to offer than the following phrase:

"While opposing absolutely the substitution of the dole for works programs, the W. A. did, nevertheless, push for a substantiation appropriation for direct relief in the 1938 Relief Act."

The history of the W. A. can be described as the shift from unemployed activity to parliamentary activity, notwithstanding a few samples of direct action in the East. Even these few examples of action were directed to state assemblies and court houses to impress upon the workers the importance of having the right people in the administrative offices. The authorities were grateful for this service, and as early as in 1936, writes Nel Anderson\*\*\* of the W. P. A. Administration, the W. A. delegates participating in a hunger-march.

"were no longer repulsed as were earlier job marchers on Washington. Instead, they were permitted to use the luxurious auditorium of the newly completed Department of Labor building. They made speeches, passed resolutions, sent committees to visit representatives of the Administration and Congress, and, having finished their business, went their way... Working from its headquarter in Washington, the Alliance concerns itself with putting pressure on Congress and on all administrative officials who have anything to do with work or relief."

\*See "Organizations of the Unemployed" in *Living Marxism* No. 4.

\*\*Work. Sept. 24, 1938.

\*\*\*The Right to Work. Modern Age Books. 1938; p. 115.



Then as now the "major activity of the entire organization" serves election needs, for, says the W. A. Manual of 1936:

"The victories won on the picket line, by everyday struggle of the unemployed, have too often been turned into defeat by crooked politicians and anti-labor legislators. We have learned through sad experience that we must take an active part in the election of public officials, and that we must hold them responsible for acting to our best interests."

For this reason, for example, the W. P. A. division of the W. A. of Greater New York enrolled as part of the American Labor Party, which supported and helped elect such "straight" politicians as Mayor La Guardia and District Attorney Dewey in November 1937. However, the election of "straight" politicians and the keeping of the New Dealers in office has not prevented the increasing misery of the unemployed, has not secured "the victories won on the picket line;" it has only destroyed all kinds of real activity on the part of the workers.

Pay slashes as great as 20 per cent for large numbers of W. P. A. workers throughout the country were reported in the middle of October, 1938. This was accomplished by so-called re-classification of positions. Some occupations were moved from one skill group to a lower one; the work done remained the same, but the wages were cut. Concerning the position of the unemployed on direct relief, the American Association of Social Workers declared in November, 1937, in an open letter to Chicago citizens, that

"human beings are forced to live in quarters unfit for cattle; that less is spent for the meal of many a person on relief than for the meal of a dog in a local animal shelter. Consumption of food in relief families is far below the safe level to maintain health and decency."

A year later, the situation had grown worse; and it was said\* that "relief is crumbling under the impact of the recession like a town rocked by a series of earthquakes."

Nevertheless, all that the W. A. has to offer in this situation is the proposal to put the right people into the right offices, although the people who are now cutting wages and reducing direct relief represent the New Deal and have been elected with the help of the W. A. to "secure the victories won on the picket line."

The reasons for the neglect of the unemployed on direct relief and for the hampering of all real unemployed activity through the W. A. are easy to understand. Like any other organization of any size the W. A. is first of all a business enterprise. There is more money in the W. P. A. than in the relief stations. Wages ranging from 40 to 100 dollar monthly are no doubt miserable; however, small animals too provide manure. A hundred thousand half a dollar pieces each month are nothing to be laughed at. Unemployment on direct relief have difficulty in paying dues regularly. It is relatively easy to make W. P. A. workers understand that their favorable positions depend to a large extent on their cash loyalty to the W. A. With the adherence to a few "union principles" the W. A. hopes today on many W. P. A. projects to have a voice in the hiring and firing of workers. They have

\*The Nation, August 29, 1938.

wormed themselves into administrative positions and use them to their own advantage. With the recognition that the W. P. A. is probably here to stay many labor organizers show a real interest in organizing the unemployed. The A. F. of L. as well as the C. I. O., not to speak of smaller political groupings, plan or attempt at present to launch W. P. A. project workers unions in competition with the W. A.\* If it is not more, at least it is good business.

People still respect the written word, the platform phrase, the swivel chair, impressive institutions, they still refuse to believe that before people can think of anything else they first have to eat, that the basis of all programs and philosophies is people with open mouths hoping to be fed. The W. A. is no exception in this respect. It functions exclusively for a group of people determined to make a living in other ways than the stupid uniformity provided for the workers and the corner grocers. This group has recognized that in order to make its way to the front it is not enough to have ambitions, but that there is needed an organization which backs it up in its efforts "to play a part." A college education is not enough to lead to the satisfaction of the needs of the body and the spleens of the brain, one has to be a Hitler in miniature to be respected and acknowledged by the rulers of society. The dues of the workers mean paid officials, organizers, an office staff, a regular press, enthusiastic stenographers, a fuller life for romantic natures and a better suit for engineers with a social, i. e. a bolshevik conscience. 100,000 fifty-cent pieces are a beginning, they create enough idealism for attempts to double this amount by intensive organization work to allow for a 10 per cent increase in the number of officials.

There can be no doubt that the W. A. is really interested in a larger governmental spending program, interested in higher wages for the W. P. A. workers and not disinterested in the betterment of the relief clients. There exists a real identity of interests of the leaders and members of the W. A. The welfare of the one depends on the income of the other. However, there are two ways to satisfy those interests: the way of force and the way of service. The first will only be used by people who have nothing to loose and all to gain. The second is preferred by people who want to make secure positions already gained. By traveling the first road workers cannot escape recognizing that the workers themselves are all important in the struggle, that all depends on their militancy, their solidarity, their initiative. The more they do for themselves the more they learn to disregard the paid mediator, the professional leaders, the enthusiastic stenographer. If they lose or win the fight, their respect for leaders will decrease proportionally to their own experience. However, the road of service is the road preferred by all labor leaders. Wage inceases were always accompanied by greater exploitation. Exceptionally high wages of some workers were always brought about by exceptionally low wages of other workers. The W. A. steps forward by way of destroying the unity of interests on the part of the unemployed, by controlling all activities of the pauperized by organizing part of them, and by

\*We will deal with these trends in a following issue of Living Marxism.



irritating the rest of the jobless. The W. A. found itself perfectly fitted to the New Deal scheme, it realized that the organization would gain more by collaboration with the Administration than by cumbersome struggles with local relief administrations. The organization became everything, the unemployed themselves were reduced to the role of a clique to increase the importance of sensitive engineers and genial organizers. The organization has something to sell, something which is still of use to the Administration, and as long as the market is good, business will continue. It sells the possible militancy and the desires of the unemployed to the government in order to help the latter to bring its capitalistic plans to realization.

Certainly the W. A. is not only interested in the welfare of its members, it is also interested in its own growth, provided that such a growth does not conflict with the policy of collaboration and with the bureaucratic rule established in the organization. However, a growth of the organization into a real mass force pressing for action will not only end the easy road of class collaboration, it will also endanger the present and future position of the bureaucracy. The latter will see to it that its own organization never takes on proportions which may endanger present policies and the rule over it by the present leadership. It will hold its organization in bonds to stop a real unemployment movement and there-in consists its best service to capitalist society. The owners of the W. A. will rather smash the whole organization than to watch it grow into a force able to put up a real fight for their own interests and so diminish the need for mediators and professional leaders. As long as organizations like the W. A. exist, there is little hope for the organizing of the unemployed masses. The function of this organization is the prevention of organized action on the part of the unemployed masses. That workers nevertheless belong to this organization is not to be wondered at, they also belong to churches and other institutions which stop them from acting in their own interest by offering them eventual salvation through the endeavors of others. Actions are transferred into hopes, peace is secured.

Workers have to begin to realize that the realism of the present labor organizations and the W. A., which recognized the present class forces and adopts its policies according to given possibilities, is only realistic in regard to the organizations themselves, and entirely illusionary in regard to the needs of the working class. If it is possible by taking advantage of rifts within the bourgeoisie to better the positions of a minority of the working class and provide jobs for labor leaders, it is impossible to satisfy in such manner the real needs of the workers and the unemployed. The W. A. will never be able to organize the unemployed or to wage a struggle along with the unemployed. It will always hamper any real attempt on the part of the workers to escape their present helpless situation, it will have to be destroyed in new attempts of the working and unemployed masses to free themselves in order to proceed toward independent working class actions.\*

\*In a following issue we will offer our own proposals and suggestions for an unemployed activity in the interest of the jobless.