

different and quantitatively determined masses of the total labor of society. That this necessity of distributing social labor in definite proportions cannot be done away with by the *particular form* of social production, but can only change the *form it assumes*, is self-evident. No natural laws can be done away with. What can change, in changing historical circumstances, is the *form* in which these laws operate."

In other words, the social division of labor entails some form of co-ordination of all individual operations to satisfy human needs. But private-property capitalism has no co-ordinating agency. That function is supposedly fulfilled by the exchange process. Human necessities must first be translated into value relations before they can be realized. The value relations appear as "economic laws" only by virtue of the fact that capitalists pursue individual ends in a society based on social labor. But the atomized activity of capitalist producers is only a historical fact, not an economic necessity. Capitalism emerged as a new class society out of another class society. It thus developed further the social labor process without being able to make it really social, that is, without being able to co-ordinate all partial functions in such a manner that the whole of society could participate in the progress connected with an increasing productivity.

Marx argued within the conceptional framework of classical economy in order to fight the bourgeois economists on their own ground, to show that their ideas failed to convince even in their peculiar fetishistic setting. But in doing so, he only translated into bourgeois-economic terms existing social relationships, that is, the actual fight between human beings and between classes to gain their separate ends without regard to any economic law or social necessity. He showed that no mysterious "invisible hand" was guiding society, but that it was "regulated" by the defeats and successes of groups and individuals in the relentless permanent social war. This war appears as the ordinary economic activity in which people engage; it is a war, nevertheless. The "economic laws" were exposed as relations between persons and classes in the productive process, and in social life generally.

The "economic laws" of capitalism, which have now supposedly culminated in the "directed economy," were of a fetishistic nature. Their end can only lay bare the real relationship they covered up. In other words, the end of these "economic laws" does not prove the existence of a new type of society, but only robs the capitalist society of its disguises. Behind all capitalistic categories there finally stands nothing but the exploitation of the many by the few. Because for historical reasons capitalist society started out as an aggregate of numerous large or small units, the accumulation of capital resulted from the quasi-independent activity of individual capitalists, profits and wages appeared to be regulated by market laws. For historical reasons, too, the state began as an executive organ for all capitalistic interests and was thus the property of none.

To the capitalist mind for which its own society was the final product of all social development and class relations were natural necessities — the capitalist relationships in production and exchange appeared as real

economic laws which determined and limited the behavior of men. To improve society it was only necessary to understand these laws better. However, all "scientific" economic theory remained mere ideology; though as an ideology it was forceful and well served the capitalist ends. As an ideology it entered even anti-capitalistic theories and mystified all social questions the simpler they became. The rise of the totalitarian state cannot be understood, nor its character grasped, by people unable to free themselves from this ideology which speaks of "economic laws" when it describes no more than the exploitation of men by men within a particular historical setting and at a certain developmental stage of social production and technique. However, fascism's "ending" of the assumed "economic laws" — which are now exposed as no more than a special *form* in which, within the atomized capitalist society, certain natural necessities assert themselves despite class and profits needs does not prove that there are no economic laws at all; it only shows that such laws can have nothing in common with those relationships the bourgeois economists describe as economic laws. The claim that fascism has brought to an end the "economic laws" which "regulated" capitalist society cannot be taken seriously, for one cannot end something that does not exist.

What the fascists are doing is to *react* differently to the inescapable need for distributing the social labor in such proportions that society can exist at all. That is, they have within given territories developed methods of doing consciously what hitherto was left to chance. The results of the struggle of all against all and of class against class, fought out in the sphere of exchange, disguised these real struggles as peaceful automatic exchange relations. What the fascists have done is to bring into daylight what had been hidden behind economic terms. They could not help unmasking the exchange relations as the relation between classes — one controlling, the other controlled — because they themselves rose to power by political struggles, not by grace of an economic law.

The law of value in the Marxian sense asserts itself by way of crisis and revolution. Under conditions of production and exchange in charge of a large number of relatively small enterprisers, and the existence of a variety of class interests and group interests within the classes, that is, in the so called laissez-faire period of capitalism, each class, each group, each capitalist had only a limited power to violate the interests of others. In bourgeois-economic terms this situation was seen, or could be expressed, as prices tending towards their value. The unequal development of the powers possessed by capitalists and classes, because of unequal beginnings and opportunities, and the inequality of social position meant that development took place as concentration of capital and centralization of political power. The strong could violate the weak in increasing measure. The distribution of social labor in definite proportions became ever more a distribution according to the needs of the determining capitalistic groups. If the contradictions between capital and social needs became too great, a crisis occurred. The crisis enforced re-organizations in the capital structure

so that the capitalists could continue to serve exclusively their own needs without inviting punishment. The day of reckoning was postponed, and has been postponed until now. In this very process, however, the face of capitalistic society has changed continuously.

All this can be expressed in economic terms, that is, can be described as the "law of accumulation", the "changing organic composition of capital", the "tendency of the rates of profit to decline", and in many other ways, as it is actually done in various crisis theories. But all these formulations only say in different words that on the basis of the existing divisions of labor, modern technique, and the prevailing class structure, more and more power is given to the successful groups to enforce their will upon society. This led to the conclusion that if one single group should usurp complete control over all capital, it would depend on the character of this group whether it would use its powers to distribute the social labor with a view of pleasing everybody, or use it to satisfy its own desires at whatever cost to society. It was not to be expected, however, that the cartellized monopolists would on their own part use their power to harmonize the social needs with the social division of labor. They either would have to be forced to do so, by more socially-inclined groups, or to be replaced by a socialistic regime. Thus not the working class, but separate organizations, parties as they had developed within the liberal structure, were thought of as the realizers of socialism.

Each political party, serving not the limited interests of one or another group within the accepted framework of capitalism, but aspiring to control society completely in order to realize one or another social theory, had thus to develop as a dictatorially-inclined party. Whatever parties claimed to favor democracy, that is, the democracy that existed, were destined to disappear, because the concentration process in society deprived them of their basis of existence. But the question which of a number of such organizations will finally gain power depends on a great complex of circumstances. There is no general formula for gaining power except that which says you have to take it. The composition of the group which becomes the single authority and its road to power may be quite different in every case. It is nonsense to address a particular group as one which, because of its special position or function in society, is scheduled to rule. No generalization can here approach realities. To explain the rise of Bolshevism in Russia a separate study is needed, to explain the rise of German fascism another is necessary. But to understand why the capitalist development tends to wind up in the dictatorship of one group over the whole of society it is only necessary to recognize the class character of society and to understand how this class nature determines the peculiar character of the developing economic and political structure of capitalism as one which concentrates, in the hands of a few, all that is created and belongs to the labor of all.

The successful party controls both the state and capital. But a state can under certain circumstances transform itself into a "party" and combine political and economic power in its dictatorship. Many roads lead to Rome.

The old idea that monopoly capital would control for its purposes the state apparatus has proved an illusion. This much only is clear. The old idea was the result of the generally accepted belief in capitalistic progress as determined by its "economic laws" of motion. There were no such economic laws; hence "progress" could take another course. But the stubborn insistence that old theories are truer than new facts, an insistence connected both with material group interests and the psychological difficulty of admitting defeat, still allows for wide-spread discussions as to what constitutes the difference between, say, Russia, Germany, and the United States. Those subjected to the fetishistic laws of capital have certainly lost a world with the establishment of the totalitarian states. Those adhering to the frozen ideology of bolshevism indeed see differences between fascism and bolshevism as great as between day and night. And every child can see that neither Russia nor Germany can be compared with the United States. Differences between these nations cannot be denied, but only a blind fanaticism could insist that Hitler serves a group of independent monopolists, that Stalin plans or fosters the resurrection of private property in the old laissez-faire sense, that Roosevelt's policies have as their basis the desires of the dominating groups of capitalists. It is also senseless to find a decisive difference between two systems in the fact that in Russia a party came to power illegally, and in Germany legally, or to distinguish between them, because in the one capital was expropriated at once and in the other only gradually. Neither is there any sense in distinguishing between a rising and an existing fascist regime, that is, between the latter and the "democracies", unless one has the power to turn events away from their present direction. To call one economic system capitalistic, another socialistic, and the third nothing for lack of terms, does not solve any question. Instead of arguing about names, one should describe in concrete terms the actual relations between men and men in the productive process, and their position in relation to the extra-economic sources of power. When one does that, all discernable differences become quite unimportant. In essentials all these systems are alike. In each a separate group controls all power sources and hence controls the rest of society.

The rule of a party as state, or of a state as party, and their control over the society, results from previous happenings. Advancing capitalization displaced individual capitalists with autonomous capitalist groups, individual workers with trade and political organizations. There arose — as it were — within the state a number of smaller "states" which interfered with the successful functioning of the state just as much as the monopolies interfered with the competitive rule of the market. Economic crisis conditions were accompanied by the crisis of democracy. To "solve" the first, the second had to be taken care of. But just as the bourgeoisie was unable to overcome the economic crisis, so it was unable to solve the political one. If a party could take state-power, or a state abolish all parties, it could "end" the political crisis. It could thus, unhampered, attempt to reorganize the economic structure. In fully developed capitalist nations a party may not need a real revolution to accomplish this task, nor does a state have to wait

for such a party. Only in backward nations are revolutions necessary for this purpose.

Although the growing influence of the state in capitalist society has been directly identified with its increasing monopolization, the apparent parallelism discernible here has to be understood not as a process in which one hand washes the other — that is, as if the monopolistic units themselves were fostering the power of the state, and the latter exercised this power in the exclusive interest of the monopolists,— but must be seen in connection with and within the setting of the general national and international competitive process. The state, essentially a monopolistic enterprise like any other, developed its own vested interests and had a better opportunity to defend them within the permanent international crisis conditions. It could with the help of social movements become the most important monopoly and within the framework of imperialistic rivalries combine all power in society in one hand, and thus begin to “plan” the nation.

From this point of view state rule over the economy and therewith totalitarianism is but another step in the concentration process which accompanied the whole development of capital. It is a new phase in the history of the capitalistic social and international division of labor based on the divorce of the producers from the means of production. Like any previous re-organization of the capitalist structure in the wake of a crisis, this new reorganization, expressed in a limited “planning”, succeeded at first in overcoming an existing stagnation. These initial successes, however, only obscure the real character of its “planning”, just as previously a new prosperity based on re-organization processes that took place during the crisis had given rise to hopes that now at last the philosopher’s stone had been found. In reality, as the spreading of the war shows only too clearly, the anarchy of the market has been replaced by the anarchy of “planning”. By gearing the whole economy to the needs of war all crisis symptoms disappear as they disappeared under war conditions in the liberalistic age. But the very existence of this war indicates that the separate interests of the diverse state-apparatuses — each of which comprises a group of privileged people — clash with the real needs of the social world just as violently, if not more so, as did the private-property interests of times past. All capitalistic categories today are reproduced not in their fetishistic form but in their actual character; they are reproduced on a still greater scale, violating more than ever the needs of mankind.

*Luenika.*

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## REVOLUTION FOR WHAT?

A critical comment on Jan Valtin’s “Out of the Night”

“Soiled with mire from top to toe, and oozing blood from every pore”, a seafaring man emerges on this side of the Atlantic to tell a weird story of intrigue and conspiracy, of spying and counter-spying, of treason, torture, and murder. It is a true story, a reliable record of tangible facts, albeit mostly of facts that remind one of the “stranger than fiction” columns. Yet there is the difference that they are not isolated facts which seem unbelievable only because they do not fit into the common assumptions derived from everyday experience. Valtin’s book reveals a whole world of well-connected facts that retain their intrinsic quality of unreality even after their non-fictitious character has been established. It is a veritable underworld that lies below the surface of present-day society; yet unlike the various disconnected underworlds of crime, it is a coherent world with its own type of human actions and sufferings, situations and personalities, allegiances and apostasies, upheavals and cataclysms.

It may well be that the claim of publishers and reviewers that “Out of the Night” is “unlike any other book”, and a “mile-stone in the history of literature” is justified, though in quite another sense than theirs. It has probably never happened before that a man of 36 years with “a face of exceptional boyishness” (publisher’s advertisement) has told such a gruesome story, dealing not with his individual adventures but with an important part of world history, not with events long past but with things that happen just the other day and that may still be going on in a very similar way right now.

The title of this book is utterly misleading. Who came out of the night? When and where and for whom did the new day begin? What right have the publishers to claim that this man Valtin is “a symbol of hope in this dark hour, a symbol of a generation which came back from a long trek in the wilderness, to build civilization all over again”? The only thing that his career as an OGPU spy and a Gestapo spy who finally commuted between both of them as a spy’s spy until even this became utterly impossible might symbolize is the final petering-out in a sort of ambiguous alliance of the competitive fight between German nazism and Russian bolshevism. How many of the readers, who today after fellow-traveling with bolshevism feel elated in the belief that, like Valtin, they have come back from a long trek in the wilderness to build civilization (“defend democracy”) all over again, are aware of the fact that with them, as with their hero, nothing has changed but the external situation? Like Valtin, they never

dreamed of the possibility that one day in August, 1939, the two mutually opposed world-powers of fascism and bolshevism would come to terms, after which neither party would need the particular services they had rendered in exchange for that certain amount of "security" or "protection" which in the world as it is, results from the connection with any organization of power — holy or unholy. (This applies to the particular services rendered by professors and other intellectuals just as much as it applies to the services of spies, forgers, killers, and to other menial services.)

On the part of Valtin himself there is not much of an attempt to conceal this woeful state of affairs. In this respect he still towers, despite all we have said and shall say about him, high above some of his fervent admirers within the recently established Defense-of-Democracy Front (formerly "Popular Front") of the repenting American intellectuals. Although he makes his bow to American democracy — the law of the land of his last refuge — he does not dissemble his essentially different faith. He reveals rather clearly the state of mind that he had reached when after some years of torture in the Nazi concentration camp he finally made a well-prepared gesture of repudiating communism and accepting the program of "Mein Kampf". He does not pretend that in explaining the reasons for this step to his torturers he was speaking entirely against his true internal conviction: "Many of the things I said were not lies; they were conclusions I had arrived at in the self-searching and digging which many thousand lonely hours had invited." (p. 657) Even now, as an American resident in 1939, he comments on the revolutionary internationalism of his youth in much the same vein as when he had still to prove his recent conversion to "healthy nationalism" to Inspector Kraus in the concentration camp. (pp. 3, 659). Signing the pledge for Nazism carried conviction because he explained to his torturers that he "joined the C. P. as a boy out of the same motives which brought other youths into the ranks of the Hitler movement." (657). His preference from the outset, if he had had a choice, might well have been in the direction of the more whole-heartedly violent of the two anti-democratic post-war movements. He faithfully reports the sensation he experienced when as a youth of barely 14 years he, for the first time, "saw a man lose his life". The man was an officer in field-gray who came out of a station surrounded by mutineers during the revolt of the sailors in Bremen on November 7, 1918:— "He was slow in giving up his arms and epaulettes. He made no more than a motion to draw his pistol when they were on top of him. Rifle butts flew through the air above him. *Fascinated I watched from a little way off.*\* Then the sailors turned away to saunter back to their trucks. I had seen dead people before. But death by violence and the fury that accompanied it were something new. The officer did not move. I marvelled how easily a man could be killed. — I rode away on my bicycle. I fevered with a strange sense of power." (p.10)

\*) *Emphasis by reviewer.*

Similar scenes were to occur again and again throughout the next fifteen years — and though no longer an innocent by-stander, he was still invariably watching the scene from a little way off, "fascinated" and fevered with a "strange sense of power." (There was one glorious exception that will be discussed below.) He was "fascinated" again when in 1931 he heard the first speech of Captain Goering:— "I tried to be cool, tried to take notes on what I intended to say after Captain Goering had finished, but soon gave it up. *The man fascinated me.*"\*\* (p. 243)

Thus there is not much of a "gospel for democracy" in this story of an unrepenting adherent of an anti-democratic faith. Valtin's escape to the country of "democracy" is a mere external occurrence. There was no room left for him between the fascist hammer and the communist anvil. He thus symbolizes not the sentimentalized but the real story of those people who, after the German-Russian treaty of 1939 and more particularly after the collapse of Holland, Belgium, France, found themselves in a trap and are still desperately looking for an escape. It is a hypocritical and self-defeating attempt to sell this gruesome but true story of Valtin to the American public as an uplifting report on the redemption of a sinner from the damnation of anti-democratic communism and nazism.

It is equally ridiculous to ask us, as does the January Book-of-the-Month-Club News, to believe that this book is "first of all an autobiography and it should be read as such." The reason that Valtin's book appeared in this country with the approval of the F.B.I., was the February choice of the Book-of-the-Month Club, has climbed to the top of the non-fiction best-seller list, was advertised on the radio, reprinted in excerpts through two issues of *Life* and condensed for the March issue of the *Reader's Digest*, is not its literary quality but its usefulness as war propaganda against both Nazi Germany and its virtual ally, Communist Russia. We, too, think that the book has merits from a literary point of view. There is a genuine epic quality in the story told in Chapters 18 and 19 ("Soviet Skipper") and in all parts of the book that deal with ships and harbors and seafaring folk. There is, furthermore, throughout the book an impressive show of that quality of the author's which impressed even his Nazi torturer when he said to him, "You have *Weltkenntnis*." There are other parts of the book, including the pathetic story of "Firelei", which might be said to betray too much of a lyrical effort; but here the reviewer would like to withhold judgment as it is often difficult to draw a line between genuine emotion and melodramatic display of sentiment. What concerns us, however, is the question of the book's political importance.

What does it contribute to our knowledge of that great revolutionary movement of the working classes of Europe that threw the whole traditional system of powers and privileges out of balance,— so much so that even in its ultimate defeat it engendered a new and apparently more formidable

\*\*\*) *Emphasis by reviewer.*

threat to the existing system — the unconquerable economic crisis, the fascist revolution, and a new world war? What does the book teach us about the mistakes that led to the failure and self-destruction of the revolutionary movements of the last two decades, and what can be learned from it for avoiding similar mistakes in the future?

Before attempting an answer we might consider how much of a contribution to far-reaching political problems we can expect from a book like this. It would be unreasonable to expect much political judgment from a man who was fourteen years old when he was drawn into the maelstrom of the German revolution and later spent the best part of his life in the strict seclusion of the professional conspirator and spy, not counting a three years' term in an American prison and four years' detention in a Nazi concentration camp. Apart from the contacts with real human beings that he gained on ships and in ports on his numerous travels over the seven seas, there was in his long life as a revolutionary just one short period — lasting from May to October, 1923 — during which he had a chance to put in some actual fighting with the rank and file. This period culminated in, and was concluded by, his active participation in the famous uprising of the military organization of the C.P. in Hamburg in October, 1923. Thereafter he left the scene for another period of traveling abroad, performing odd services for the Party, and did not return to Europe and Germany for any length of time until the beginning of 1930. Only then was he charged with more important work under the immediate control of the inner circles of the Comintern; only then did he get a chance to observe events and developments from a point of view broader than that of the secret agent committed to a specific, and for him often meaningless task. His misfortune was that the international communist movement had in the meantime lost all of its former independent significance. It had been transformed into a mere instrument of the Russian State. Even in this capacity it no longer fulfilled any political function, but was restricted to organizational and conspiratorial activities. The national units of the Comintern (the C.P.'s of the various countries) had been virtually transformed into detached sections of the Russian Intelligence Service. In name only were they directed by their political leaders; in actual fact they were controlled by the divers agents of the OGPU. Thus, during the first part of Valtin's career there was a political movement of which he got only the most casual glimpses; and during the latter part, all that was left of the former political character of the C.P.'s was a mere semblance and pretence of a genuine political movement.

This summary of Valtin's personal history explains both the usefulness and the shortcomings of his contribution to the political history of the revolution. He does not understand much, even today, of the very different character that the communist workers' movement in Germany and in other European countries showed in its earlier phases; he accepts its later conspiratorial character as the inevitable character of a revolutionary movement. Such a tragic misunderstanding results, in his case, from a peculiar conjunction of different causes. His extreme youth during the formative

phase of the Communist Party, 1919-1923, the particular conditions along the "water-front" and more especially in Hamburg, that in many ways anticipated a much later phase of the general development of the Party, his own impetuous, enthusiastic, reckless nature that from the outset designed him for the role of a "professional revolutionist" in the Leninist sense of the term, his particular usefulness as a "real sailor" (p. 107) in a field that was of outstanding importance both for international revolutionary politics and for the specific aims of Russian power politics:— all this contributed to deprive him of his full share in the "normal" experience of the class struggle long before the split between the masses of workers and a secret inner circle became a typical feature of the communist movement all over the world. When he joined the party in May, 1923, he was at once singled out for "special" duties as a member of one of the "activist" brigades in the harbor of Hamburg, as a military leader, and as a "courier" for the exchange of messages between the known leaders of the German party and their Russian military advisers. It was by sheer instinct and good luck that he did not get involved in the first amateurish activities of the terror groups that were then introduced into German revolutionary politics by the secret agents sent from Russia for this purpose.

It is easy to show how little Valtin really understood of the daring ambiguities of the Russian "communist" interferences in the revolutionary struggle of the German workers. To this day he believes in most of the romantic stories that were then whispered from mouth to mouth about the various important "generals" who had been secretly sent by the Soviet government to handle the military end of the planned insurrection. It is true that a number of Russian officers had been sent, that they had advised the German Party leaders, and that they were, in fact, responsible for such fantastic schemes as that of the assassination of General von Seeckt, head of the German Reichswehr, by the T.-groups of the ill-famed Felix Neumann, who later betrayed the whole crew of the T.-units and their secret leaders, the Russian officers, to the German police. But it is equally true that the Russian officers had come to Germany in a double capacity. While the Soviet government was assisting the German C.P. in preparing the insurrection, it was at the same time engaged in secret negotiations with the same General von Seeckt whom its Tchevist emissaries planned to assassinate. These negotiations with the militarist and reactionary clique — the forerunners of Nazism in the Weimar Republic — were conducted with a view to preparing a Russo-German alliance against France and England, who had at that time invaded the Rhine and Ruhr territories of Germany. The negotiations led to a number of military agreements and paved the way for the treaty that was actually concluded between Germany and Russia in the spring of 1926.

All the Russian officers who had been tried and sentenced to death penalties and long prison terms in the so-called Tcheka-trial at Leipzig in 1924, were shortly afterwards returned to Russia. The underlying diplomatic procedure was screened by the arrest and trial of a few otherwise

unknown German students by the GPU in Moscow on the charge of espionage. They were convicted and afterwards exchanged for "General" Skoblevsky (alias Helmut, alias Wolf) and the other Russian officers captured in Germany. In reporting his version of these events, Valtin still naively believes in the story which was then spread by the German and Russian governments and was at the time widely accepted by the workers. Felix Djerjinsky, the "supreme chief of the GPU", he tells us, had silently inaugurated the drive against the German students and thus compelled the German authorities to return the Russian officers who had plotted against the life of von Seeckt and had nearly succeeded in organizing a revolutionary overthrow of the German state.

We have discussed this particular question at length not for the purpose of exposing the naivety of Valtin's report, but for a more important end — namely, to show the distortion that the whole history of the class-struggle undergoes if it is regarded from the restricted viewpoint of the technical "expert", the professional conspirator and spy. This distortion is inherent in the whole of Valtin's report on those earlier phases when the communist movement was still to a greater or lesser extent a genuine political movement, a true expression of the underlying class-struggle.

Unfortunately, the same objection cannot be raised against Valtin's report on the later phases of the communist movement. By that time the distortion of a genuine political movement to a mere conspiratorial organization had become a *historical fact*: After 1923 and again after 1928, 1933, and ultimately after 1939, the so-called Communist Party became what Valtin assumed it had been at all times — a mere technical instrument in the hands of a secret leadership, paid and controlled exclusively by the Russian State, entirely independent of any control by its membership or by the working class at large.

Thus the greater part of Valtin's book presents a most valuable description of the real distortions that must befall a revolutionary movement that becomes estranged from its original purpose and from its roots in the class-struggle. There is no doubt that Valtin has given a realistic description of this historical process and of its ultimate outcome. He has presented the facts without reserve, with no perceptible sparing of other persons and very little sparing of himself. He has recorded the characteristic features of persons, events, and localities with a rare gift both of memory and of accurate detailed description. He has thus revealed the complete inside story of an immense plot, whose details — by a carefully devised and rigidly observed procedure — were known only to a minimum number of immediately involved persons, most of whom have died in the meantime without recording their memories. Thus in his factual report he traces to the bitter end the working of one of the processes that contributed to the utter defeat of the most revolutionary movement of our time and to the temporary eclipse of all independent workers' movements in a twilight of despair, loss of class-consciousness, and cynical acceptance of the counter-revolutionary substitute for a genuine workers' revolution.

Yet it cannot be said that Valtin has presented the story of the degeneration of the communist movement in a manner in which it would be most fruitful for the politically interested among his readers. We must supplement his tale with two additions. We must point out the subtle process by which the first germs of the later decay were introduced into the revolutionary movement; and we must try to understand the whole of the historical development that from those inconspicuous beginnings led to the present complete corruption of a once-revolutionary movement.

Little did the masses of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany know what they were in for when at their convention in Halle in the fall of 1920 they accepted, along with twenty other "Conditions of Admission to the Communist International", the necessity for a secret "illegal activity" in addition to the regular activities of a revolutionary party. They had had some experience in "illegal action" during 1914-18. They had built up a secret organization of Workers' Councils, and ultimately, of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils to end the war and to organize the socialist revolution. They had become used to periods when all legal activities of the revolutionary parties (outside of the still formally respected parliamentary sphere) were suppressed, their leaders persecuted, their institutions destroyed and thus, for a certain time, the whole party "forced into illegality". Thus they imagined that nothing was at issue in the 1920 discussion but this indispensable element of any genuine revolutionary action — an element that is present even under the most normal conditions of the class struggle (e. g., in the organization of an ordinary strike). They suspected the right-wingers who opposed all the twenty-one conditions of a malicious plot against this inevitable form of maintaining the revolutionary movement through the critical periods immediately preceding its decisive victory or following its temporary defeats. They were for this reason unable to listen to the warnings of the left-radical communists who, adhering to the tradition of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, emphasized the spontaneity of revolutionary mass action from the bottom up as against the supremacy of an uncontrolled leadership from the top down. They did not, and from their historical experience could not, anticipate the fact that from then on a steadily increasing part — and ultimately all of their organization and politics, tactics and strategies, their choice of foes and allies, their theoretical convictions, language and mores, in fact the whole of their behavior — would depend on secret orders received from the often suspicious agents of unknown superiors without the slightest possibility of influence or control on the part of the members. (This is what became known in communist circles by the beautiful name of "democratic centralism").

Already in the next year, the "March-putsch" of 1921 gave a first impression of the disease that from then on was to destroy the healthy growth of the revolutionary movement of the German workers. It was the first of a long series of events in which the elite of the most valiant and the most devoted workers was sacrificed for an insane enterprise that was not based on a spontaneous movement from below nor on a critical

condition of the existing economic and political system. It was planned, and led to defeat, entirely by a secret semi-military organization. The same game was repeated under similar conditions, and invariably with the most destructive consequences, through all subsequent phases until it actually fulfilled the ultimate purpose that had been inherent in the procedure from the outset. It was used not to arouse the workers, but to restrain them from the decisive fight against the advancing forces of Nazism because (as Manuïlsky said at the Eleventh Session of the Executive Committee of the Comintern in 1932): "It is not true that Fascism of the Hitler type represents the chief enemy". When this was said, however, the conspiratorial idea of the revolution had already nearly run its full course, although an aftermath was still to come. The period of the so-called Popular Front, inaugurated after 1933, brought many new phases until the Communist Party reached the utter debasement which is illustrated by the "communist" staff member of the City College of New York who was so conspiratorial that in helping to edit and put out the Communist campus paper he wore gloves in order to prevent his leaving fingerprints, because he had "an inordinate fear of detection."\*\*\*

A final objection that might be raised against Valtin's picture of the degeneration of the Communist Party is that he does not discuss the manner in which Lenin's concept of the conspiratorial revolution is closely related to other parts of Lenin's theory—namely, to his concept of the party and the state, to his assumption on the role of the various classes, and even of whole nations, in the "uneven development" of the proletarian revolution and, last not least, to his theory of the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Here again an apparent shortcoming of the book is due less to the restricted technical outlook of the author than to the fact that none of those wider political concepts of the Leninist theory exerted the slightest effect on the action and omissions recorded in his book. During those later phases of the Comintern to which his report is mainly devoted, all the high-sounding terms of the original theory had long since degenerated into empty phrases without any bearing on the practical behavior of the "revolutionary" conspirators. All that the people described by Valtin needed of those Leninist theories was the cheerful acceptance of an unrestricted use of all forms of violence both against the existing powers and against those proletarian critics of an assumedly infallible leadership who had been described by Lenin and were described up to the end in ever new and more poisonous terms as the "agents of the bourgeoisie within the ranks of the proletarian class", the "agents of the counter-revolution", of "Social-Fascism", of "Trotskyism", etc., etc.

There was no longer any connection between the various forms and degrees of violence applied and the different tasks to be solved at the different stages of the revolutionary development. In fact, Valtin's uncritical report could be used to demonstrate an *inverse relation* by which the use of violence became the more unrestricted the more the movement lost its

\*\*\* See the testimony of Mr. Canning in the *New York Times* of March 3rd, 1941.

original revolutionary character and became a mere intelligence service at the command and in the pay of the external and internal power politics of the Stalin government in Russia. For example, an indiscriminate use of sabotage had been repudiated by the early communists in accordance with all other Marxist parties. In the later phases, as is most impressively revealed by Valtin, all conceivable forms of sabotage were commonly used and had long ceased to involve any theoretical problems. Again the famous "purge" of non-conformist party members was applied originally in the form of disciplinary measures culminating in expulsion from the party; it was later developed into methodical character-assassination and, ultimately, into outright assassination of individuals and whole groups, party members and non-members, both inside and outside Russia. (The murder of Trotsky by the GPU in Mexico was only the most conspicuous example of an almost "normal" procedure that scarcely interested a wider public as long as it was restricted to the extinction of present or former revolutionists).

In conclusion, one word against those inspired people who want to minimize the significance of Valtin's book by pointing out that the author was never "an important communist". It is indeed remarkable that this most ferocious attack against the present-day usurpers of the name of revolutionary communism should have come, not from one of the people high up in the party, but from one of those ordinary workers who were forever misused and sacrificed for the higher purposes of the gods. Here is a fitting symbol of the form in which the last stroke against the counter-revolutionary power entrenched in Stalin's Russia is bound to come:— the rebellion of the masses.

L. H.

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## MAN AND SOCIETY IN AN AGE OF RECONSTRUCTION

Sociologists, who for professional reasons are more disturbed than other scientists by the unsocial behavior of men, find their greatest challenge in present-day reality. On the one hand there is an enormous advance in science and production, and on the other an almost complete inability to apply them to the advantage of society as a whole. This paradox leads sociologists once more to turn from their cherished pre-occupation with isolated sociological data to new attempts at formulating comprehensive theories designed to influence and direct social change.

It must be noted, however, that the vaunted empiricist formula was used so extensively not only for reasons of objectivity but also because it served as a sort of escape-device for scientists unwilling to make political decisions. Sociologists could not help noticing that all their findings led to conclusions which in one way or another were directed against the ruling interests in society. But though it was not difficult to maintain "neutrality" in the name of science, that was not enough. Whatever their attitude, the scientists are now dragged out into the open to "take their stand". Thus the recent tendencies in sociology are both a series of "confessions" and a militant defense of the scientists' position in society.

Although prosperity and depression, war and peace relieve one another, all that can really alternate in the course of social development is the *emphasis* upon one or the other side of this singular but double-faced process; for in the prevailing society productive forces are simultaneously destructive ones. This fact explains why, in an atmosphere suggesting war and reflecting general disorder, hopeful investigations are made and optimistic proposals offered to preserve peace and to re-establish order. Unless precluded by the requirements of warfare the search for sociality in the "unsocial" society is continued even in the midst of war. In this respect *Karl Mannheim's* new book *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*<sup>1</sup> must be regarded as an important contribution to contemporary social thought.

1) Kegan Paul, London. Harcourt, Brace & Company, New York. (469 pp., 16s.6d.—\$3.50) 1940.

The book, which carries the subtitle "Studies in Modern Social Structure," is divided into six parts dealing with rational and irrational elements in contemporary society, the social causes of the crisis in culture, the questions of crisis, dictatorship and war, with thought at the level of planning and with questions of planning and freedom. It contains, besides an introduction, a 72-page bibliography and indices of names and subject matter.

It should be clear that the reviewer will hardly be able to do justice to the whole

For Mannheim the present social crisis is not a temporary affair but a transition period to a new social order. The principle of *laissez faire* and its paralleling social structure resulted in chaos; a new principle, "planning for freedom", and a new social structure must evolve and lead to a higher social level which incorporates in itself former types of action, thought, and freedom compatible with the new society, and at the same time guards against exaggerated dogmatism in planning. Instead of despairing over the birthpangs of the emerging "mass-society", instead of longing for the irrevocable past, we should accept the *new* reality and help to realize a *new* freedom, *new* security, and *new* progress.

Since in Mannheim's opinion radical solutions of the existing social problems are out of the question, and since we have to be content with gradually altering small details within the framework of established relationships" (381)<sup>2</sup> we must, independent of our preferences, "use all our intellectual energy towards finding a combination of social controls which would determine how far individual liberties should be left unrestricted in order to preserve both the freedom of the individual and the efficiency of the community" (8). He, too, would prefer, he says, to live in a period "in which the social order and the technique of control did not allow one group of people to force its conception of the 'good life' upon another. But we have no power to choose the social order and its technique of control. They are already in existence, and the most we can do is to combine and mold them to the best advantage" (7). As there is no longer "a choice between planning and *laissez faire*, but only between good planning and bad" (6), and as the "planners can recruit themselves only from already existing groups, everything will depend on which of these groups with their existing outlooks will produce the energy, the decisiveness, and the capacity to master the vast social machinery of modern life" (75).

All this is quite in keeping with the spirit of the time, for it must be obvious by now that that kind of "planning" and social ordering initiated on a national scale by the Bolsheviks, adopted by the Fascists and Nazis in a somewhat modified form and with partly different means because of different conditions, is now under pressure of crisis and war being brought in a steadily increasing measure into the structure of those nations still paying lip-service to democracy and free-trade. In one respect, and with

content of this ambitious work, embodying as it does its author's reflections over a period of six years.. He will not deal with its social epistemology and its sociological analysis of ideas otherwise than indirectly. He feels justified in so doing because of the fact that the issues neglected were widely dealt with at the time of the appearance of Dr. Mannheim's previous book "Ideology and Utopia". Attaching more importance to the political than to the sociological aspects of the work, the reviewer concerns himself only with its main theses and its "message" as regards existing social problems.

2) All figures in parantheses refer to pages in Dr. Mannheim's book.

much more right than Harcourt who in 1901 said that "we are all socialists now", one could say that "we are all fascists today". A comparison between the various fascistic proposals and practices in regard to social problems and those brought forth by the reformists of the socialistic and liberalistic schools would suffice to justify such a remark. In view of this situation, Mannheim's book may also be appreciated for its attempt to reconcile social theory and practice, and for its recognition of the fact that whatever stand we may take in regard to fascism, our future activity has to be based on that social necessity which led to the rise of the totalitarian state.

## II.

Mannheim's *central* theme is formed by the problem "of how psychological, intellectual, and moral developments are related to the social process (15). He wants to show the connection between the changes in human beings and the great contemporary changes in the social system. The Marxian method of "contemplating our inner life in the light of economic processes does not exhaust all the possibilities of interpreting the mind in relation to contemporary society" (19). Relationships which are neither economic nor political, but social, "form the real center of the drama in which social changes are directly transformed into psychological changes" (21). Psychology, aesthetics, and jurisprudence are no more able than economics to deal sufficiently with the problems of mind and society. The isolated sciences have their usefulness, but they will have to translate their separate conclusions into sociological terms. Though until today we had no historical or sociological psychology, we now have to begin "to perceive the social aspect of every psychological phenomenon, and to interpret it in terms of a continual interaction between the individual and society" (17).

Mannheim points out that the number of sociological relationships and processes which affect the psychology of man is much greater than is usually supposed. To make this clear, he selects out of the variety of present-day social relationships "the conflicting principles of competition and regulation". He says "that not only in economics, but in every sphere of life the principle of regulation is replacing the principle of competition" (21). Because of the particular trend of thought which prevailed in those social sciences reflecting the rise of industry, it happened that the principle of competition was first discovered in the economic field. It had, nevertheless, universal validity. (There is competition in love, in art, in politics, etc.) Today, too, though the change from competition to regulation has economic causes, it also has a significance of its own; its influence is felt in every kind of social activity (22).

Mannheim's first attempt to forge a link between psychology and the social sciences serves to lay bare the "various sociological factors which could explain why civilization is collapsing before our eyes" (15). He points out that reason and order exist only under certain conditions. Belief in the progress of reason has lately been shattered; "groups which have hitherto ruled society and which, at least since the *Age of Reason*, have given our

culture its special tone" (40), have suddenly lost power. Thus it has become necessary to include in the "picture of historical development the recent experiences of the power of the irrational... It is the task of sociology to show at which points in a given society these irrationalities are expressed and which social functions and forms they assume" (63).

As points of departure Mannheim advances the theses that "the unfolding of reason, the ordering of impulses, and the form taken by morality are not accidental... but depend on the problems set by the existing social order. Societies of earlier epochs could afford a certain disproportion in the distribution of rationality and moral power. The contemporary society, however, must collapse if rational social control and the individual's mastery over his impulses do not keep step with technical development" (43). This latter disproportion proves — in the long run — to be incompatible with the industrial society because this society leads to a growing *social interdependence* and a *fundamental democratization*. Since there exists a "general disproportion in the development of human capacities", because "modern technical mastery over nature is miles ahead of the development of the knowledge and the moral powers of man", and also a "social disproportion" in the distribution of rational and moral capacities, because of the class and functional divisions in society, it happens that as soon as the masses "enter in one way or another into politics, their intellectual shortcomings and more especially their political shortcomings are of general concern and even threaten the elites" (45). To be sure there is today no more irrationality than in the past, but "hitherto it has found an outlet in narrower social circles and in private life" (45). As long as democracy was only a "pseudo-democracy", Mannheim goes on to explain, it allowed for the growth of rationality, but since "democracy became effective, i. e., since all classes played an active part in it, it has been increasingly transformed into a 'democracy of emotions'." (45).

At this point it is necessary to explain in what sense Mannheim employs the terms "rational" and "irrational". He speaks of *substantial* and *functional* rationality and irrationality. A substantial rational act of thought "reveals intelligent insight into the inter-relations of events in a given situation. Every thing else which either is false or not an act of thought at all (drives, impulses, wishes, feelings) is substantially irrational. Functional rationality or irrationality he uses in the way it is usually employed in regard to rationalization processes in an industry or administration, that is, where a "series of actions is organized in such a way that it leads to a previously defined goal" (53). "The more industrialized a society is", Mannheim explains, "and the more advanced its division of labor and organization, the greater will be the number of spheres of human activity which will be functionally rational and hence also calculable in advance" (55). This increased functional rationality does not, however, promote to the same extent substantial rationality. Rather, functional rationalization has a paralyzing effect on the capacity for rational judgment, as crises and revolutions so amply testify.