



**DEMOCRACY**

*and* **SOCIAL CHANGE**

**HARRY F. WARD**

# DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

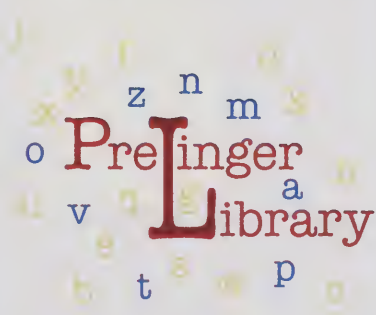
*by Harry F. Ward*

It is possible, says Dr. Ward, to pay lip-service to democracy and yet to stifle every attempt to give it continued life. For it is only by continuous adaptation of our social and economic life that we may make America fit for democracy, and in a world increasingly dominated by forces hostile to democracy only fundamental social change can save it. Dr. Ward's statement of the choice now facing American civilization is in his characteristically clear, forceful, and eloquent style. This is not merely a general discussion, but an extremely timely examination of the concrete situations that are causing our current political confusions, for Dr. Ward illuminates, among other subjects, the nature of the democratic state, the fascist threat, the red scare, the task of the intellectuals, the role of religion, and the shadow of war. Finally, the book is a ringing ethical appeal for democracy and a program for rescuing it from its foes, an inspiring presentation of a democratic philosophy as well as a touchstone by which we may know which things are necessary to democracy and which, though long associated with it, are in the present state of the world harmful excrescences upon it.

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# DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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# DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

BY

Harry F. Ward

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# DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL CHANGE



## CHAPTER I

# *The Question*

THE PEOPLE of the United States are facing a question that tests their ability to continue as a democracy. The course of world events now puts this question to all the nations that have organized their affairs around the belief that the democratic way of life offers the most promise to man. It is the question of the relation between democratic principles and the changes in social organization which are necessary if the capacities of mankind are to be further developed. This question has been discussed theoretically in the Western World for about a hundred years. It has now to be answered in action. What the World War of 1914-18 did to the existing order of things compels the answer.

That war shattered the world of security and progress in which most of the people of the United States thought they were living. It produced three events that marked the end of our era: the organization of the first socialist state, the breakdown of the profit-seeking economy, the rise of the fascist powers. There followed in due time the present conflict, more

general, more devastating, and pregnant with more far-reaching consequences.

In this rapidly changing world the American people, like those of the other democracies, do not yet know which way they are going. They are beginning dimly to realize that the period of stability for capitalist civilization is ended, that they are now caught in the swiftly moving currents produced by the breakup of an historic period. If they are to make headway it is high time for them to get their bearings and chart their course. Otherwise they will get the war they do not want and more of the unemployment they need not have; and these things, as the experience of Europe shows, will destroy the democracy they wish to preserve.

The two facts of unwanted war and unnecessary unemployment are proof positive that our present political and economic arrangements are unable to satisfy the needs of modern man or to keep him from disaster. They cry to heaven for reorganization of our affairs. Whether we now go from bad to worse, or find a way out of our troubles, depends upon whether the American people can work out a constructive answer to the question of the relation between the democracy they started with and the social change they now need. The first requirement for success in this undertaking is that the question be stated in the exact form in which the course of historic events is now putting it.

Usually the question is put in the form of a choice between the democratic process and the use of force and violence. The popular statement of it is that we want change by ballots not bullets. But this is not a true alternative, and it therefore leaves the issue confused. There remains the question of whether the

opponents of social change will let its advocates get it by the ballot. Our democracy has at times had to use force to defend its ballots. In some places the police still have to be called out on election day to protect citizens in the exercise of their right to vote in secret. In the course of the struggle for social change it may become necessary to use bullets to stop a minority from forcibly preventing a decision by ballot, or from overthrowing with arms the democratically expressed will of the majority. In that case the bullets would be a part of the democratic process. What has to be worked out in experience is the point up to which force can be democratically used and beyond which it becomes destructive of democracy. Clearly the question of the relationship of democracy to social change goes much beyond a simple contrast between the parliamentary process and the use of force and violence.

At the moment, the most popular statement of the question is in the form of a choice between democracy and either fascism or communism. Many intellectual liberals are as enthusiastic over this formula as the American Legion. It is one of those easy generalizations which escape the difficult and sometimes dangerous task of analyzing the actual situation, and which, at the same time, generate the comfortable glow that comes from a conventional expression of a moral position. Of course, all good Americans want democracy and are against dictatorship of any kind! But before this preference can mean anything concrete, our native tendencies toward fascism have to be uncovered and checked and the relationship between communism and democracy has to be traced exactly. To substitute for this duty the rousing of emotions against "foreign

isms" is to generate the repression that destroys democracy in the name of democracy.

The first part of the question which history is now putting to us is not whether we prefer democracy to fascism or communism but whether democracy and capitalism, which have been united throughout our history, can continue to live together. The relation between them is plainly quite different now, when the capitalist economy is contracting, than it was in the days of capitalist expansion. We have before us plenty of evidence that the increasing dependence of our profit-seeking economy upon state aid involves an undemocratic concentration of authority and is accompanied by an antidemocratic use of state power in the prosecution and persecution of radical minorities. Even liberals who use the democratic state to preserve the profit system acquire a vested interest in keeping others from changing it. As it becomes apparent that the increasing quarrels between capitalism and democracy cannot be settled, those who really want democracy are faced with something much more difficult than a verbal rejection of both fascism and communism. They are confronted with the practical necessity of rejecting and replacing capitalism.

It follows that the second part of the question which the course of events is now putting to the American people is: What is to be put in place of the capitalist economy whose demands are now threatening the life of our democracy. This issue too is evaded by those who pass resolutions against both fascism and communism, accompanied by heated declarations of affection for democracy, and then adjourn without even asking themselves what kind of democracy they want. To pre-

fer even our limited capitalistic democracy to Italian Fascism, German Nazism or Russian Communism does not begin to solve our problem of a failing economy and a diminishing respect for democratic rights. Democracy is not our present set of political institutions. These are but an imperfect and diminishing expression of it. Democracy is a body of dynamic principles. It is a living process which must continually change in order to grow. In obedience to this law of life we must now either transplant our democratic principles into new soil, where they can make a stronger growth, or watch them wither away and be cut down.

This fact is recognized by those who are now saying that we cannot preserve our political democracy unless we can work out economic democracy. This is the instinctive American response to the question of what is to replace the capitalist economy. It is saved from being another generality by an accompanying reaction which is also typically American. We ask ourselves what kind of an economic machine will work properly at the points where the one we now have has broken down. Thus we have two specifications for a new economic order which we can compare with the analyses made and the theories developed elsewhere. We demand both practical efficiency and the further expression of our democratic principles. These must coincide in the initial steps of a new economic development. Then we are on our way.

At once another issue emerges. Always in new developments in the life of man there is danger of losing for a time what was vital in the old order. Since we cannot now keep political democracy without establishing democratic principles and methods in our economic life, can we do this without

losing the political freedom guaranteed by our constitution? When democracy encompasses the common management of economic affairs as well as legislation concerning them, the problem of preserving freedom becomes vastly more complicated. The area of bureaucracy, already threateningly large in political administration, is greatly extended. And bureaucracy, as well as aristocracy and autocracy, is the mortal enemy of democracy. To work out democratic principles in a new economic order demands developments beyond those which have been required in the process of adjusting differences and settling conflicts within an established system. We have to find out what democracy will be and do under these new circumstances.

This is the question which the course of events has put before us. And we have to find the answer in terms of our own background and tradition. No pattern copied from other lands could ever work here. The Fascist and Nazi organizations which sprang up among our citizens of Italian and German origin never took root. It is our native fascist groups and forces that are dangerous. If the American people choose communism it will be an American type. We shall learn from other peoples in the future, as we have in the past. But we will make our own changes in the social order, in our own way.

The starting point for the American people on the difficult journey of social change, which all nations are being forced by events now to undertake, is the imperative to continue their democratic tradition and to realize their democratic hope. We will find our way by asking first what is now needed to fulfil our democracy, to make good the promises it held out to the

needy and oppressed of other lands, to make real its vision of a commonwealth of free people where all have equal opportunity to develop whatever is within them. If we find what our democratic principles and our economic necessity require to be done in the situation that now confronts us, and unite that with what it is possible now to accomplish, we shall have the democratic program of social change.

This is not the end of the democratic era but a turning point in its development. To hold that the difficulties of reconciling the necessity of an intricate social organization with the need for personal freedom are beyond our capacities is to strip all meaning from the long struggle of man toward freedom, fraternity and equality, and to leave him without faith, hope or charity, the victim of a hostile universe. That which democracy requires can be democratically done. Otherwise it is at war within its own nature and must destroy itself. If we answer the question of what needs now to be done under the compulsion of the democratic imperative, we have all the guarantee life offers that the further question of how to do it will also be democratically answered.

The question before us cannot be answered in mere discussion. It has to be worked out, it is being worked out, in the struggles and sufferings of the people. How much and how long they suffer depends upon how quickly they realize that the basic fact of the situation in which they find themselves is the breakdown of the economic machinery by which we all live.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Breakdown*

BEFORE the first world war, because of our favorable situation, we had risen to a higher position in the scale of capitalist well-being than any other nation. We were continually boasting that we were providing a higher standard of living for more people than the world had ever seen. When we were riding high on the crest of the stock market prosperity that followed the profits we took out of the war, our President officially gave thanks that we had avoided the economic depression in which the other capitalist nations were then plunged. He later announced that we had discovered the way to abolish poverty. Some of our leading economists, demonstrating their kinship with tribal medicine men, announced that we had found the way to end the business cycle. Immediately thereafter the country dropped into the deepest depression in its history, pulled the other nations further down, piled up an unemployment situation that outstripped theirs, and officially placed millions of its citizens upon a slow starvation diet. This is the record of the capitalist economy in the richest nation in the world.

The American people reacted to this situation with their characteristic vigor. Just as it was here that the capitalist economy reached the climax of its productive power so, when it collapsed, there appeared here the most vigorous and intelligent effort to restore it to health of which it was capable. For the first time it became respectable to discuss capitalism, to write about what was the matter with it and what should be done about it. The unbearable consequences of the anarchy of the present economic situation became a favorite theme with magazine and editorial writers. The factual and statistical analysis of the defects of the profit-seeking economy provided by the Technocrats made popular the contrast between a possible economy of abundance and the present economy of scarcity. The New Deal rallied all the progressives, and secured the temporary support of the radicals, for its immediate program. We seemed to be on the way to significant social change.

But now the climate has changed. Most of those who have a health-and-comfort standard of living and can see a way through high school or college for their children are in another mood. They are used to mass unemployment and are comforted when columnists cause it to disappear into the air by juggling the figures. There is war fear and the turning of attention to saving the nation from possible enemies without. The general attitude toward recovering the economic health upon which the future of society depends is like that of a man who, finding that the first pains of his troublesome appendix have subsided, postpones consideration of an operation until another attack.

Yet the basic facts of economic breakdown are still with us.

There is still mass unemployment, a socially dangerous standard of living, and no worthwhile jobs for millions of our people. Ten years after the breakdown where is the prospect for any real recovery? Because of the resources available here for its restoration, it is clear that if the capitalist economy cannot be restored here it cannot be restored anywhere. If it cannot supply the American people with sufficient health and education, if it cannot give them more abundant and purposeful living, it cannot do these things for any other nation. Here is its final testing ground. The role of the New Deal in history is to demonstrate whether capitalism can be made to work satisfactorily for a time by state aid after it has broken down as private enterprise. Hence, in any discussion of the relation of democracy to social change, what the New Deal attempted and what it has done must be understood.

From the beginning, Roosevelt made it clear that his attempt to recover economic well-being was to be conducted within the limits of the profit-seeking economy. Again and again he informed the nation that he did not propose to prevent "legitimate and reasonable profit," nor to stop the working of the "profit motive." He frankly said that he was trying "to prime the profit pump" with state funds in order to start the profit system working again. This signified his allegiance to the traditional belief that the welfare of the underlying sections of the population follows upon the prosperity of profit-taking business.

The liberal economists who were advising the administration knew that the crux of their problem was the restoration of the purchasing power of the great consuming public. In the first emotional flush of the new venture the President

sought to secure this result by exhortation, as his predecessor had done. He urged the industrialists not to raise prices but temporarily to forego profits, until the purchasing power to be created by the minimum wage provisions of the N.R.A. codes and the minimum farm income promised by the processing taxes had got to work in the market. He assured them they would get theirs later when the profit spiral started up again. The results were similar to those secured by his predecessor at the beginning of the breakdown when he pledged industrialists not to cut wages and the leaders of labor not to call strikes. The law of the capitalist economy that wages rise after prices and fall before them could no more be halted by Presidential appeal than the tides could be stopped from coming in by King Canute's royal order.

So the tune was changed. Price raising was permitted and even encouraged in industry, as it had been governmentally enforced in agriculture. The administration resorted to a series of measures calculated to help the people at the top under the timeworn hope that somehow the people at the bottom would derive benefits. Schemes to rehabilitate industry by state aid to one section of the population followed each other with such startling rapidity that the public, entranced by the new headlines, easily forgot the failure and abandonment of the last week's program. Finally, driven by a mounting demand from the ranks of labor, the pressure of the Senate progressives, and the necessity of getting the increasingly popular slogans "Share the Wealth" and "Social Justice" away from cruder defenders of the profit system before the election, the administration announced a social security program and a bill for the taxation of higher income levels. Neither of these

measures was adequate for what it professed to accomplish.

In turning to the device of attempted redistribution of wealth by taxation, the political representatives of American capitalism were unconsciously repeating quite a lot of history. From the days of the early Utopian socialists to the present time, the first reaction of idealist intellectuals to the need for economic change is to propose a redistribution of wealth. They leave untouched the method by which the wrong distribution was accomplished. Consequently, as the cruder capitalists bluntly tell them, if they could accomplish their aim they would then start again the cycle of prosperity and depression which has been the behavior pattern of profit-seeking economy throughout its life story.

The price raises made mandatory by the processing taxes in agriculture, and possible in industry by the codes, really amounted to an attempt to get people to buy more goods at higher prices with less income. This was because the higher cost of foodstuffs and other indispensable goods meant a drop in real wages, since this was never equalled by the slight increase in the wage fund. The absurdity of this process was equalled by a series of mystifying juggling tricks with the currency. Insofar as these had any political reason they were one of the maneuvers in a universal trade war. They allowed temporarily the selling of goods abroad at low prices. In reverse order, this kept up prices at home and so lowered real wages. But this destruction of the workers' purchasing power prevented the capitalists from continuing to operate on the same scale. Also while the devaluation of the gold dollar gave them a favorable balance of trade they needed the opposite if they were to collect their debts from other nations.

When the New Deal surrendered to the law of the profit-seeking market, and adopted a price-raising policy, it committed itself to enforcing a planned scarcity. It destroyed, or limited, cotton, cereals and livestock when the actual physical needs of the population called for their increase. This was a social crime but a capitalist necessity. This time it was accomplished not through control of the market exercised by "male-factors of great wealth" but by humanitarian liberals, who were trying to operate for the public welfare a system which forbade them to act in any other way. When the state tried to get the profit economy to work better, it necessarily had to follow the historic policy of private enterprise in making goods scarce. Thus it found itself in the position where the sabotage it had previously forbidden the workers, and the restraint of trade it had prohibited the capitalists, were now its official policy.

Meantime, again according to the law of profit-seeking economy, the more efficient, monopolistic section of big business was able to increase its profits out of scarcity. It secured the larger portion of the results of the priming of the profit pump. Some of the monopolistic corporations achieved a higher rate of profit under the New Deal than they reached in the golden days before the stock market collapsed in 1929. Salaries of executives, and their bonuses, went up while wages were coming down. An analysis of recent income tax returns shows that there was a rise in the number of persons receiving ten thousand dollars a year or more, and that this rise was most marked in the higher income brackets. At the same time there was a decline in the number of persons filing returns who received less than five thousand dollars a year. Thus the

New Deal in the long run, instead of decreasing the maldistribution of income which brought about the present breakdown of capitalist economy, has increased it. It started out by trying to give more income to those who need it and will use it in purchasing the goods whose production would put people to work. It ended up by giving more to those who do not need it and cannot use it, either for consumption or investment.

The price of all this was an addition to the debt structure of the nation at a rate and to an amount unknown in our history. In previous depressions the debt structure was lowered by bankruptcies and foreclosures. This decreased overhead and enabled production at lower cost and sales at lower prices. But this time the doctors we put in charge of the national economy decided that the patient could not stand the operation. They therefore pursued the opposite policy. Instead of lowering the debt structure they raised it. What this means is not understood when we merely talk about increasing the national debt, as though it were something the nation as a whole owes to someone else.

The debt structure which our economy has to carry is a series of claims to income from future production held by one section of the population. These have been created by private capitalists and by the state to finance its expenditures. Now our government has created additional claims for the purpose of restoring private enterprise. By those who own them these claims are considered wealth, because they are the right to draw income which can become capital to be invested and thus produce more income. To the productive plant they constitute a debt to be paid. They are a charge upon future production, a part of which must be used in

paying them. It is obvious that to increase the share of production which must go to satisfy the claims of the investor is to decrease the amount which is available for mass consumption without which mass production cannot continue, and the claims of the investor and his need for more investment opportunities cannot be met. At this point again the profit system the New Deal was trying to restore failed to increase purchasing power.

When the balance is struck we find an increase in the tendency of the profit economy to increase its debt structure faster than its productivity. It is clear that when the fixed charge on industry for debt service has to be carried by a smaller volume of production, there is less production available for wages and salaries, from which comes the greatest proportion of spending for consumption goods. The only chance to get the profit system running again with bearable efficiency was to increase the share of the product that goes to consumption and decrease the share that goes to investment. The amount of plant we have on hand permits this to be done. The opposite was done. The more the productive plant is turned into an agency for debt collection instead of a means to meet consumption needs, the more it becomes unable to operate. So by adding to our debt structure, our government, instead of restoring economic health, is increasing the disease that broke down the profit system.

Similarly, the result of setting the price level under the codes at the higher costs of the less efficient units and adopting regulations which led to the elimination of the less efficient manufacturers was the strengthening of monopoly interests. Giving government aid to the competitive profit

system does not change its law that the strong win. It is the smaller farmer, the weaker wage-earning groups, the people whose savings were in the smaller banks, who have suffered most and been relieved least. Contrary to its professed intention and desire, the New Deal has given big business more economic help than it has given to the forgotten man. In 1938 the President told Congress that "among us today a concentration of private power without equal in history is growing. . . ." He supported this statement with Bureau of Internal Revenue figures concerning corporation income and ownership. Out of the fund for benefit payments to farmers \$10,000,000 went last year to the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. After a long fight the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union with forty thousand members has just recovered \$100,000 from planters to whom county agents had turned over the benefit checks of tenants and share-croppers.

Business statistics, as well as those of the government, show a recovery in profits which outruns recovery in wages and production, and a recovery in production which outstrips recovery in employment. This continues in the latest records of the new war trade. Thus the trends toward disaster are not checked. They are on the increase. The basic capitalist contradiction between the productive capacity and the consuming ability of capitalist society is not lessened. On the contrary, it is sharpened by the enforced scarcity and the increased poverty caused by business resistance to the government expenditures that are the priming for the profit pump. The net result is that fixed capital and its overhead charges on the productive plant are increased and thereby the wage earners are further impoverished and total consumption reduced. At the

same time, in order to reduce costs, automatic and semi-automatic machinery is multiplied, so that the rate of employment and possible employment in proportion to the working population drops still further. Thus there remains open to the profit economy only the artificial stimulation of the war for which the New Deal is now preparing, and the inflation it has so far avoided.

Consequently, the graph of economic behaviour under the New Deal is a replica in miniature of that which records the previous operations of profit-seeking economy. It is a series of sharp ups and downs like the temperature chart of a fever patient. And these become more severe each time, showing that the crisis is drawing nearer. We have had a succession of New Deal boomlets, due to government spending. These were followed by recessions each time the administration, in response to the political pressure of that section of the population which owns the press and supplies the larger contributions to campaign funds, has cut expenditures and transferred responsibility for employment and investment back to private enterprise. The latest recession was due to increases in stocks of goods in anticipation of war orders and their effect on general trade. Now that the war orders have been sharply confined to a few essentials and have occasioned a withdrawal of orders for consumption goods, the forecasters are warning business that the inevitable recession will be the sharpest of the New Deal series. This will increase the tendency toward war and the further economic dislocation that must follow, that indeed has already begun in the building of aeroplane plants that will not be wanted except for war purposes.

Thus the failure of the American attempt to restore the profit system by state aid makes it clear beyond dispute that the disease which caused the breakdown of the capitalist economy is organic. The New Deal has demonstrated experimentally what was theoretically known before, that the profit economy becomes increasingly unstable as it grows older and can be continued only at the cost of a lower level of income and social well-being for the majority of the population. This is because, in the course of extracting the profit upon which it depends for its expansion, the profit-seeking economy progressively destroys the purchasing power upon which profit depends. In its nature the profit system is unable to distribute sufficient claims to goods and services to the bulk of the population to keep the productive plant operating to capacity. This situation is sometimes described in the phrase that says the capitalist system has solved the problem of production but not the problem of distribution. But if distribution is not solved, neither is production. They are inseparable parts of one process.

In demonstrating the incurable weakness of the profit-seeking economy, the New Deal is completing the record of American industrial development and its effect upon agriculture. The beginning of trouble for American industry was in the fact that the wage scale was never high enough to enable the wage earners to consume the things the industrialists were learning to make, and wanted to make, in order to acquire profit. Our standard of living may have been higher than that of Europe, but it has never been high enough to consume the products that needed to be consumed in order to keep our productive plant operating. The labor unions were never

strong enough to push wages to the necessary point. Big business was able to take back most of labor's gains through its manipulation of prices. The same process was operating in agriculture. With an average cash income of less than \$600, how much industrial product could the farmers buy? On the other hand, those who are now trying to raise farm prices run into the fact that the people with less than \$2,000 income, who do most of our buying, cannot buy the foodstuffs they ought to have. Thus the two deficits in purchasing power meet and increase each other. Thus the system was never able to supply sufficient purchasing power to feed itself.

In human relationships this means that one section of the population appropriates a part of the product which others have produced without giving any equivalent in exchange. Idealists call this economic injustice, socialists of all schools name it exploitation. Scientifically speaking, it is a technical defect in our economy which leads to breakdown. The beginning of this process was apparent some years ago, to those who had eyes to see, when it became clear that the productivity of the industrial workers was increasing faster than their share of the products. This discrepancy increased with technical improvements designed to reduce production costs. The same general fact holds for the farmer. His productivity has been steadily increased by the scientific improvement of agriculture; but meanwhile the middlemen, the speculators and the bankers have been getting more and the farmers less in the division of farm products. This technical defect decrees the decline of the capitalist economy. It creates the problem of mass unemployment, on the land as well as in the cities, and

it cannot solve it. An economic adviser to the Department of Agriculture has just reported to a Senate Committee that there is a continuing surplus of farm labor over a series of years with no prospect that it can be absorbed in either agriculture or industry. The chief administrator of the W.P.A. has just reported to another Senate Committee that there is no prospect that war and defense orders will reduce the roll of our unemployed to less than eight millions during the next year.

Business for profit would long before this have come to disaster if it had not been able to conceal its organic weakness, even from itself, by continued expansion in new markets. In the expanding needs of an expanding population, the profit economy had in the United States the greatest natural market in the world. Yet its nature prevented it from supplying these needs, upon which its future depended. So it followed the lead of the older capitalist nations, turned to foreign markets and began a career of economic imperialism. Naturally it joined them in repeating abroad the same story of the destruction of potential profit that is written all over its efforts to meet the needs of the home population. It sold the nations not yet industrialized the goods they needed, and then the machines with which to make their own goods. It taught them how to destroy their own home market by withholding from the majority of their people sufficient purchasing power to buy the new products. Hence they became competitors for what was left of the world market. They undersold the older nations by beating their own people down to lower living standards. This has been the role played by Germany and again by Japan. The consequence is lower living standards and

more unemployment in the older nations. Thus purchasing power, and along with it profits, falls off still more.

To meet the foreign competition they have created, the older industrial nations erect their tariff barriers and organize their cartels. But this prevents the payment of the loans made abroad to use the capital that was idle at home. With its industrial hand the profit system puts up barriers to the repayment of the money its financial hand has invested. It progressively destroys the world market it needs, both for goods and capital, just as it has been destroying its home market. Finally we got to the place, in our post-war financial relations with Germany, where we were lending money to pay the interest on our own capital because we would not accept the goods and services by which alone the debt could be reduced. Now we come to the point where nature itself calls a halt. The geographic limits to industrial expansion have almost been reached. The end of colonization and imperialist adventure is in sight. We are entering a closed world to which the speculative profit economy, blindly seeking new markets, is not adapted. This unchangeable fact brings the organic weakness of the profit system to its fulfilment and nullifies the efforts of those who would reform it.

In its later stages the profit economy has used the device of credit expansion to conceal its inability to supply sufficient purchasing power to enable the people to consume what it could produce, just as it used foreign trade in its earlier stages. Our wild orgy of stock market prosperity under the Hoover administration was in reality a joy-ride of credit expansion. We were dealing mostly in bookkeeping figures. Finally we came to the place where there was, roughly speak-

ing, five billions of assets in the banks and fifty billions in claims outstanding against them. Then the banks had to be closed to prevent the overwhelming disaster that would have followed the presentation of these claims for payment. This was the natural outcome of a system which continually supplies too large a portion of the national income to investment and too little to consumption. The only possible use for most of the profit that the smaller section of the population makes off the larger is investment in the search for more profit. When profit is not in sight, because most of the people have not money enough to buy the things out of which profit is made, we have idle capital, idle plant, idle workers, and disaster is upon us. Our economic system has broken down because it is a profit system, not, as many think, because it has been misused by bad men.

The great American attempt to bring about the recovery of the profit system has failed because it was attempting the impossible. Those who started it have stopped talking about their original purpose. They have proved that the attempt to redistribute the results of the profit method while leaving that method still operating gets nowhere. This is their contribution to history. They have shown that as long as the struggle for profit continues it will throw production and consumption out of balance. The results of this dislocation can no longer be patched up successfully because the end of capitalist expansion is in sight. Consequently, as the statistical evidence concerning production and employment shows, the capitalist economy has passed the peak of its efficiency. Our present economic situation is not merely another case of the partial paralysis to which the profit system has been subject

through its career. It is the beginning of the period of capitalist decline. This basic fact is a determining point in history. It tells the American people what they must now do if they would realize the kind of life which their democratic faith and hope promised them.

The millions who came here from Europe sought a land of freedom and plenty. They wanted opportunities for the development of their children which were denied them in the older world. Many secured them, but to an increasing number they are now closed. With our unequalled natural resources, our freedom from the inherited limitations of European society, the early American dream of a universally prosperous and educated people should have been realized. But the competitive, profit-seeking economy proved inadequate for this purpose. Here it gradually repeated the luxury and the poverty, the suburbs and the slums, the class limitations upon health and education, which millions came from Europe to escape. This situation is now intensified by a program of organized scarcity, relieved only by the disastrous stimulant of production for organized slaughter and destruction, which is all that capitalism has to offer. Thus the American vision of a society in which all men are free and equal to pursue life, liberty and happiness, the great American endeavor to realize this vision, comes to an ignoble end and is written down in history as another vain hope, unless the American people can now discover and accomplish the social changes that are necessary to turn the process of decline into one of further development.

## CHAPTER III

# *What Kind of Change?*

TWO OTHER sets of facts which accompany the breakdown of our economic machine further reveal the necessity for social change and point to the direction it must take. One is the social consequences of trying to run an economic system that is unable to meet the essential needs of the population. The other is the possibilities of a better way of life that are present in the American scene.

To get the full measure of our economic breakdown, what the profit-seeking economy is not doing must be set over against what it is now possible to do here. Because of the extent of its natural resources, because its population came from the most adventurous elements of Europe, the United States has developed a more powerful productive plant in relation to its population than the other capitalist nations have been able to do. Hence it is only here that the slogan "economy of abundance" has been raised in the first period of capitalist

crisis. It is here alone that it is possible to talk factually about such a thing as a present possibility. After the successive reports on our productive capacity by the Hoover Commission of engineers, the Brookings Institution and the Loeb-Frazier Committee, it is impossible to deny that a comfort-and-health standard of living is possible for the entire population if our economic activities and our productive capacities were organized to that end.

To say that we have poverty in the midst of plenty is a contradiction in terms as well as a misrepresentation of the facts. The truth is that the capitalist economy never gave us plenty. In the palmiest days of its prosperity it compelled about two-thirds of its population to live below a health-and-comfort standard of living as measured by our social workers. It is poverty in the midst of potential plenty that confronts us. We stand, where no other people ever stood, with plenty within our reach but we cannot grasp it. We have the plant to meet needs that are crying to be met, but we cannot use it. We have the capacities to build the plant that would sustain a higher level of living and culture, but we are prevented from exercising them.

The profit-seeking economy now offers the American people organized scarcity and mass unemployment. In the course of its career it has brought to them, and to the rest of the world, great gains. It has helped man to discover and control the energies of nature to a degree that would be miraculous to those of previous ages. But now it stands helpless to use for the further advance of mankind the powers it has called forth.

At every point in social well-being the American people are in possession of knowledge they cannot now apply, of skills

they cannot now use. We know much more about the best way to develop health and education than we are able to translate into physical vigor and intelligence. The proper care of expectant mothers, the necessary standards of child welfare, the forms of education and recreation that promote a sound body and sound mind, are known to us. We have within our reach the economic means to turn this knowledge to practical effect in more social well-being. But our failing economy forbids us to do it. It has trained workers it cannot employ, students it cannot use. To the educator, the scientist, the social worker, it says: "Thus far shalt thou go and no further." Unless the American people change this situation the day of their progress is ended.

This basic fact is not yet known to most of that large section of our population which still has its comforts. But the ten million unemployed, the one-sixth of the nation that is on relief in some form or other, the drifting agricultural workers who have been driven off the land, the tenant farmers, the newly organized workers in the mass production industries, the small storekeepers, the insecure professionals, and their children cut short in their education or unable to enter a career, are finding it out. To tell them that even now the capitalist economy provides modern man with more than his forbears secured under previous systems is irrelevant. The basis for judgment is the relation of present performance to present needs and present capacities. Like any other tool that man uses, a social institution that cannot fulfil its function cannot justify its continuance.

This becomes clear when the social consequences of our economic breakdown are examined. They are far reaching,

especially at the points of education and health, upon which the well-being and indeed the very existence of democracy depend. Without the increasing intelligence necessary for effective social control democratic society cannot continue. Without increasing health any society loses its vitality and becomes only a name to live in history.

Because of our favorable economic environment and our democratic ideal the amount and kind of educational facilities that were developed in this land established a record. This achievement expressed the democratic hope for a free, intelligent community and the democratic belief that all the people have a right to the development of all their capacities. As they went Westward the American people tried to make real their hope, and to live out their faith, by providing universal cultural opportunities.

But they were checked when our free land was occupied, our natural resources appropriated, and monopoly commerce, industry and banking organized. For some years now the children of a large section of our workers and farmers, save for exceptional cases, have found themselves unable to use our free high schools, colleges and universities. They have been unable to develop their economic, scientific, or artistic capacities. Their loss is also the impoverishment of American life. Any society which cannot increasingly develop and use its human resources has started down hill.

The breakdown of our economy gave us a further push in this direction. One of its first consequences was retrenchment in education. In face of the fact that there were several million more pupils needing to be taught, this nation spent four hundred and seventy millions less for its schools and supplied

eleven thousand fewer teachers in 1934-35 than it did in 1929-30. In that year more than five thousand schools operated with less than a six months' term. A recent survey estimates 3,500,000 children of school age without educational facilities. Another records the finding that nation-wide budget cuts have brought about "the shortened semester, consolidation of classes, lower salaries, narrower curricula, reduction in funds for equipment, and even the introduction of tuition fees." Since that report, the cuts in W.P.A. and P.W.A. have deprived schools of supplementary teachers and federal aid.

The restriction of educational opportunity is accompanied by a contraction of employment openings that require an education, and by increasing attacks by reactionaries upon its scope and value. The director of the American Youth Commission estimates from current figures that 70 per cent of our high school pupils are destined to become manual laborers. The Committee on Education of the New York State Chamber of Commerce recommends that the state endeavor to carry youngsters up to the point of mere literacy, but "beyond that point youngsters will do better if they have to put up a real fight to go on." One of our strong-arm industrialists rises to denounce the schools because "for a hundred and fifty years they have served to delude the masses into a belief in the equality of individuals and races."

These facts express an inexorable law of social development. An expanding culture requires an expanding economy to support it. The higher the development of education, the sciences, the arts, the greater must be the volume of production to provide their equipment and to make possible the leisure to use it. If this is to be the privilege of a leisure

class, production by slaves, serfs, or exploited workers, inadequate as it is, can provide and has provided, the means for significant cultural advance. But if education and culture are to be open to all, an expanding volume of production is required. It was the scale of productivity permitted by the natural resources of this country which enabled the American people to extend education facilities throughout the population of the more wealthy states to a degree that Europe could not attain. However, a section of its peasants and workers, through their own organizations, aided by some of the intellectuals, entered into an older and richer cultural inheritance than existed here. But no democratic desire to extend education and culture throughout the population can reach this result unless it is able to provide the necessary economic means. Conversely, a contracting economy compels a contracting educational system. A decline in the economic means of life is followed by a decline in culture.

The same thing is true concerning health. The vitality of a nation, like its cultural development, is dependent upon its economic capacity. In the days of their prosperity the health standards and the public health services of the American people were dangerously low. Now instead of advancing we must go back. What little public health service we have must be cut. In some of the most important industrial states, the necessity of budget cuts has stopped the enforcement of laws designed to protect the physical vitality of the community, as well as the worker, from the hazards of industrial accident and the consequences of occupational disease.

A still heavier attack upon the national health and vitality comes through the reduction of the standard of living for a

large section of the population. Our government has just completed a four-year survey of the income, spending and living standards of 300,000 families representing a population cross-section of 126,000,000. It showed that in 1935-36 two-thirds of all American families lived on an average of \$69 a month. There were 4,200,000 families, mostly on relief, who had an average income of only \$312 a year. This 14 per cent of all our families bought only 6 per cent of the food consumed in this country. They spent an average of \$1.00 per person per week for food, while those receiving \$1200 a year spent an average of \$2.18 per person per week. The next 27.5 per cent of the population bought 20 per cent of the food.

Medical authorities are warning us that about twenty million people in this country are now living on such low nutritive standards as to imperil the health of society. They tell us that, through their effect upon expectant and nursing mothers, the low-cost diets enforced by relief rates and work project wages lend inevitably to those diseases of childhood which produce physical degeneracy. The same result follows sweated industries wages, which already have returned in some communities. The only contribution of such weakened children to heredity is the enfeeblement of the life stream.

Thus in its decline the profit-seeking economy is declaring war upon life itself. From its beginnings human society has suffered from the depletion of its vital resources by poverty, ignorance and disease. The hope and promise of the machine age was to enable mankind to vanquish these ancient enemies. Even in the days of our rising standard of living that hope was never realized, that promise was not fulfilled. Despite our

army of highly trained social workers, poverty grew in our midst and the diseases we knew how to prevent remained with us. With all our free schools and colleges we were still 19 per cent illiterate. Now the social deficit which was accumulating during the period of capitalist expansion rapidly increases. The forces which have been trained to reduce it are being decimated by retrenchment policies. Those who are left are being compelled to enforce the socially destructive, scarcity standard of living which they once sought to abolish. They are in the same position as the agricultural economists who were trained to teach the farmers how to increase production and are now being employed to instruct them how to reduce it. To the failure of the profit-seeking economy to fulfil its own essential function there must be added its turning of constructive social services into destructive activities. This is a wider and more disastrous war than that for which it arms the nations and into which it drives them.

The climax of the social destructiveness of capitalist decline is what it does to youth. Its denial to so many of them of opportunity to follow the careers for which they have been trained, its refusal to develop the capacities of so many who desire to serve society in useful ways, is a more serious and tragic waste than the destruction of foodstuffs and live stock or the ploughing under of cotton. The life forces which are thrown into the human struggle through every new generation constitute the real fountain of youth from which society does from time to time renew itself. When it cuts itself off from that, any society dooms itself to death.

The measure of any social system is what it does or fails to

do with children, in producing them, nourishing them, developing them. Here is where it destroys or increases its creative capacities. There is an old saying that holds for civilization itself: "A little child shall lead them." How does it measure us in the day of a declining economy? At the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, in January, 1940, it was reported that nearly three-fourths of the families in the United States do not have enough income to give their children an adequate diet; that between six and eight million children were found in families dependent upon government aid for some form of relief; that one out of six city families live in houses either unfit for use or in need of major repairs; that a half million children under sixteen have cut short their education to go to work; that at least ten million school children have defective eyesight and one and a half million have defective hearing; that approximately a quarter million mothers have babies without any medical care at childbirth or immediately thereafter.

The effect of economic breakdown upon the life and future of the American people does not stop with their productive capacity, is not limited to their health and intellectual development. There are other elements just as necessary to the well-being of society as its physical and intellectual resources. It lives not by bread alone and not merely by intelligence. It does not hold together without justice and good-will, it does not advance without faith and hope. The moral emotions and their expression in socially beneficial standards of conduct, in ideals that continuously challenge all human resources, are indispensable in the record of man. The virtues, as they used to be called, the homely forms of the decencies of life that

are common to the human family, are an essential part of the equipment of man for his journey through life and history.

The consequences of capitalist decline upon this sphere of life are written large for all to see. Who can estimate the amount of social disintegration that must inevitably follow the blasted hopes and the broken homes of our unemployed? How much of the productive morale of the community, of the virtue of industriousness which it was capitalism's early pride to produce, has now been destroyed? What has happened to our boasted American initiative on which "private enterprise" claims an exclusive patent? How much is left to the man who works on the belt or a corporation-owned farm, in a chain store, bank, or newspaper? What has become of the moral qualities fostered by private property earned by the performance of socially useful labor, without infringement upon the needs or rights of others? Where are these to be found in those forms of corporate property which enable the taking of income from the common pool without any equivalent return, and even without any ownership of the instruments used for this purpose? In the moral realm, as in the physical, the capitalist economy in its decline destroys that which in its vigor it helped to create.

This is seen again in what is happening to the basic moral emotions of sympathy and indignation. As the records of the sufferings, injustices and wrongs put upon our breakfast tables by the morning paper mount up, the capacity of those of us who live in comfort to respond grows less. The unrecognized desire to hold on to our own position of comparative security tempers our reaction. The former millionaire gets a light sentence for his stealings, the labor leader or radical

agitator a heavy one for a technical infraction of the law. What of it? Many of our fellow citizens are slowly starving, a few actually dying from hunger. But we eat; and our taxes must be kept down. So since they won't work anyway let them go hungry! In common decency however, as one paper put it, we must see that no one starves on the streets for all to see. As for our ideals—schools for all the children and all the children in school, no hungry little ones in this rich land—they belong to the days of our national youth. As one gets older he grows wiser and quits reaching for the impossible. But it was just before the break in 1929 that our President was proclaiming that we were going to abolish poverty, and it was after that when we affirmed that here we would never have the dole.

Sympathy with deprivation and suffering, indignation against injustice and inequality are inherent in our American ideal. They are basic to our democracy and to the further advance of mankind. They are indispensable to the extension of the opportunity for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness throughout the population. They are the driving force in the achievement of equality and fraternity. Continued movement toward these goals is the essence of the democratic revolution, just as continued movement toward more culture is the essence of the technical revolution. There is an inner compulsion in the masses of mankind to carry on in both directions, to discover and use the resources of nature, and also to develop the capacities for human fellowship. The latter alone gives meaning to the former. These allied forces have been strengthened and extended during the democratic period. Along with mass production in the economic field

there has gone mass mobilization in the moral field. Now capitalist decline calls a halt at both points. Just as it dictates the reduction of goods and comforts so does it decree less freedom, justice and equality.

The attack of an inefficient economy upon society is upon its spirit as well as its body. Our economic breakdown threatens the creative forces upon which society depends for its future life as well as the productive forces upon which it depends for its present maintenance. Society needs both more goods and more culture. Science has made them both possible. But they cannot be had if a failing economy is permitted to continue its destructive work. Humanity needs more freedom, justice and brotherhood. The democratic period with its spread of common ideals has made this possible too.

To comprehend all that this situation requires, it must be understood that as long as life continues no separating line can be drawn between body and spirit, no division can be made between the material and the moral forces that contribute to the ongoing of human life. These aspects of life interpenetrate. To call the economic aspect of life material, and then to call its emotional-intellectual aspect spiritual, is to draw a false picture. Both capitalist and Marxist economists and philosophers, and religious writers before them, have contributed to the development of this false distinction until it has become fixed in the minds of most people. The capitalist writers did this in order to escape the ethical criticism of the human consequences of the profit-seeking economy. The Marxists did it because, as Engels said in the beginning, they were trying to rescue the people from a sloppy and futile idealism and could not stop to develop the connection between

these two aspects of life, the ethical and the economic, the material and the spiritual.

As a matter of fact we live by a combination of matter and spirit, the cooperation of persons with inanimate nature. The machine joins them in common effort. In the broadest sense, the productive forces that enable the development of society consist of man's relationship with nature, the conjunction of his energy and the energy of the universe. But his energy is applied in and through his relations with his fellows. Thus the moral standards, the social institutions and legal forms he creates and abides by, condition the operation of the productive forces and become a part of them.

For example it is now generally recognized that underneath previous changes in the form of human society and definite advances in culture, there were changes in man's relation to nature through different uses of it in getting his living. The change from hunting and fishing to the care of flocks and herds, from nomadic pastoral life to agriculture and craftsmanship, from self-sustaining communities to exchange between towns and overseas trade, from hand work to power production, have all been accompanied by changes in the arts, crafts and sciences, in the forms of political organization and the habits of social living. These occurred gradually. They became definite when the new form of getting a living was firmly established. This is clearly seen in the use of the term "industrial revolution" to designate all the changes in the organization and conduct of life instigated and made possible by the appearance of the power machine as the substitute for man power and horse power. A higher rate of the transformation of natural energy into goods and services for hu-

man use has enabled successive developments in human living.

In this combination and its results, it is the human factor that is decisive. The energy of the universe is waiting to be used. The degree of human knowledge determines when and how it can be used. The kind of human relationships determine the social benefits that result. These, in turn, through the distribution of knowledge and the consequent creation of skills, decide what further uses of nature and resultant advances in human living are possible. We have now reached a point where our relationships with each other in our economic and political organization prevent us not only from going any further but even from using what is now at our command. Nature is ready to cooperate but we are not. Man has thus become obstructive of nature. He is stopping nature from doing for him what it is willing to do if he will only relate himself to it properly. Beyond that, in his modern warfare, he is using nature for destruction as never before in his history. Thus he is separating himself from nature by which and through which he lives, and without which he cannot live. Unless, therefore, he can change the human relations which are doing this, he is heading for disaster after disaster.

But the life of mankind has never run into complete failure and never will. There are forces in it that cannot be defeated. Out of whatever darkness into which it may plunge because of its ignorance and folly, its cruelty and greed, it emerges time after time to climb again toward the light, no matter what the cost in toil and agony. Wars and revolutions no matter how bloody, dark ages no matter how long, do not put an end to the story of human effort. No matter how often, or how far, the line dips down, the general course of human life

is upward. The fact that there is no continuous path of progress, as those who first applied the concept of evolution to social history proclaimed, does not eliminate the general fact of advance. Today the elements and forces that are being threatened and attacked by the decline of capitalist society are working for a new order of living. The needs that are being denied, the possibilities that lie undeveloped, the capacities that remain unused, are urging men forward. Life may halt but it may not stand still. It may turn backwards for a time but that is not its permanent direction.

The fact that our capacity for producing goods and services is greater than our present economic system permits us to enjoy pushes toward a more efficient type of economic organization. The kindred fact that our knowledge and equipment permits more health and education than we are now getting creates an urge in the same direction. The further fact that the desire for freedom, justice and equality is stronger than the opportunity to realize it joins the force of the moral emotions and ideals with those of cultural capacity and economic necessity in the demand for a better way of life. These forces, expressed in the human beings they group under their respective banners, are now beginning to develop their organized strength. For the first time in history they are mobilizing the masses. Here we have the productive and creative forces in the broadest sense of that term, both human and cosmic. It is these forces, not the dreams of the prophets and philosophers nor the plans of the revolutionaries, which dictate the nature and extent of the changes now necessary in the organization of human life. But without the vision of those who saw by the eye of faith or the light of reason what we experience,

without the courage and determination of those who put their lives to the hazard in the fight against ancient wrongs, the changes we now need to undertake would not be possible.

How far-reaching are these changes? Is it a change in the structure, the control or the nature of social organization, or in all three that we need? The need for structural change is generally admitted. Viewed from the standpoint of our need for an efficiently functioning economy, there is wide agreement that order must be substituted for anarchy, particularly in international economic relations, and intelligent measurement for blind guesswork as to needs and the efforts to supply them. At once the question of a change in control emerges. International planning by imperialists and national planning by capitalists is one thing; the fully functioning economy of the industrial engineer is another; the fullest possible use of all available resources for the maximum possible development of all the people is yet another. Democracy, by its nature and history, just as much as socialist philosophy, requires that control by and for a class be replaced by all for all. So powerful has its challenge become that the fascist governments which have abolished democracy have to pose as the instruments which bring the good life to all their people.

But this goal requires a change in the nature as well as in the structure and control of society. It means that the dominant principle becomes sharing and helping, not getting and holding. It means that mutual aid replaces the struggle for power. It means that the class-divided society, which has been the general pattern for a long period of social history, gives way to the classless society. It means that the imperialist state is replaced by national sections of a world-wide community in

which the life of each helps advance the life of all and the life of all promotes the life of each. The impossibility of solving the problem of Europe while the present economic barriers created by separate power states continue, the impossibility of meeting the needs of the vaster populations of the world while competitive imperialist states struggle for dominance, show the direction in which our social organization has to move.

The general course of history has decreed the general direction of the next period of human living. We move from the individualism of the period of discovery of new continents and the settlement of new nations to the social controls necessary for an occupied planet whose inhabitants can live only by cooperative division of labor. We pass from the destructive antagonisms of the age of capitalist imperialism to the mutually helpful relationships of nations which regard themselves as members of the world community. We advance from the exploitation, the limited privilege, the repressions, of the class-divided society to the type of organization that permits all to develop themselves on equal terms and requires of all useful service to the community.

To see in full perspective the social change upon which the world is now entering, we must go further back in the human story than the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Then the new life forces released by the opening of world trade routes, the beginnings of scientific thinking and the demand for religious freedom, broke through the confining bands of mediaeval life. That was a change in the control of society but not in its structure and nature. The control of the capitalists was substituted for, or joined to, the control of the

landowners. The replacement of the rigid feudal class structure by the so-called free opportunity of capitalism merely re-formed the class lines. The fact of economic exploitation remained; the form was changed from the use of landownership to extract unpaid labor from the worker to the use of industrial and distributive plant ownership for the same purpose. Thus there remained still the basic conflict between the owning rulers and the exploited.

In its aspect of economic decline and the consequent social destruction, our period is nearer to that in which the Roman Empire was breaking up. But there are decisive differences. Underneath the intellectual and moral decay that accomplished the fall of Rome was the total loss of economic power. The great estates destroyed Rome, says one of its historians. This they did by their slave labor, their exhaustion of the fertility of the soil and their ignorance of the way to renew it by raising hay and pasturing cattle. Today we possess the knowledge and the power to secure greater economic results than we have yet accomplished. The dark ages followed the fall of Rome because there were present no vital, intellectual and moral forces. Today these are with us in abundance, seeking only the opportunity to carry life forward to higher achievements.

For a parallel to our present situation we shall have to go back to primitive times. Then there was a change in the nature and structure as well as in the control of human society. It occurred when the tribal community was broken up and the control of the fighting man, who was soon to become the king, was substituted for that of the patriarch, the council of elders or the prophet-judge. Then the nature of society

was changed and the struggle for power became the basic organizing principle instead of mutual assistance, by which mankind had previously lived in its small face-to-face groups. There followed class divisions and the class struggle within the forming nations, then the imperialist states and their wars. The history of man has run through the process of diffusion and expansion until the known world is occupied and divided. It has developed the machine technique and scientific knowledge which requires the cooperative living demanded by man's moral emotions and ethical ideals. It has reached the point where the principle of mutual aid must now be utilized universally or life itself is frustrated. In no other way can the discoveries of the modern age be utilized and justified, in no other way can life today be given meaning and worth.

In a famous passage Marx points out that when the conditions of production, instead of being aids to production, become fetters upon it then the period of social revolution has commenced. The conditions of production are the legal forms of property ownership and control which in the expanding period of capitalism determine the way production is carried on, and in the period of decline dictate how it is not to be carried on. Marx's conclusion is true, whatever the political form of this change. We have entered that period. All the life forces—economic, cultural, and what cynical old Bismarck called the imponderables—are now held in chains and are seeking to break them. How much of a revolutionary explosion, in the political sense, will follow depends upon how much the contraction of our economy and the attitudes of those who still profit by it, or believe in it, resist the expansion of life itself. For behind the struggle of those who

need the change is the struggle of life itself to advance. Viewed in the broadest sense it is mankind's coming of age, the attempt to achieve social consciousness and social control. Its immediate challenge to those who have inherited the American tradition is to find out what their democracy means and requires.

## CHAPTER IV

# *Democracy— What Kind?*

DEMOCRACY is one of those words which mean different things to different people. This is because it covers the scope of human living and therefore has several aspects. In its most common use it means a form of government, a way of conducting political affairs. For example President Roosevelt ended his message to the opening session of the present Congress by saying: "May the year 1940 be pointed to by our children as another period when democracy justified its existence as the best instrument of government yet devised by mankind." This is typical language of the machine age. It expresses the kind of thinking that naturally goes along with absorption in the instruments of production and distribution.

To many people, perhaps to most, democracy means not only a method of government but our present form of government, which then becomes sacred to them. Forgetting that all forms of life must change, that the old order must continu-

ously give way to the new, they regard our present political institutions as the final, perfect work of man in that field. Bills have been introduced into legislatures and Congress forbidding advocacy of change in our form of government, and the House of Representatives thus defined "Un-American Activities" in the resolution authorizing a committee to investigate them. But democracy, of course, is not only more than our present form of government, it is much more than any political institutions.

This is true even in its political expression. The principle of representative government, carried on by free choice, is much older than our present forms of it and will outlive them. It has repeatedly changed them in the course of our history and will continue so to do. Taking advantage of inventions which shorten time, reduce distance and increase communication, we have moved from indirect to direct representation in the Senate and in the primaries, to the use of the initiative, referendum and recall. Taking further advantage of the statistical methods that enable rapid polls, of the radio and television, we can proceed to more decentralization of our political controls, we can develop more actual self-government of the town-meeting type. It is the principle of self-government by free choice that is more important than the form or degree of representative government.

This principle, and the embryo form of our present democratic political assemblies, was well established among the tribes of Northwest Europe before imperialist Rome began her march of conquest across the then known world. Between the two principles of concentrated control by the few and self-government by the many, between the descendants of

imperialist Rome in thought and action and the heirs of the tribes whose members were free men governing themselves, there has been political warfare ever since. In the course of time there arose in Europe the Free Cities, winning their commercial freedom from feudal restraints on trade and, as its political counterpart, establishing a limited democracy of the rising commercial class. Then came the democratic revolution, developed in turn by England, the American colonies and France, smashing the controls and shattering the tradition of absolutism in government. Thus was developed and proclaimed to the world in its modern form the essential political principle of democracy, the principle that the people shall govern themselves in ways of their own choosing. This principle is the hope of the oppressed and repressed, the disinherited and unprivileged, the dispossessed and undeveloped. It tells them constantly that they need not, and must not, be governed by emperors, kings, priests, philosophers, dictators, lawyers, politicians, experts, wise men or fools; that they must take power and learn by experience how to govern themselves.

More than that, this principle of self-government tells the people that if they would continue to govern themselves they must continuously change and improve their democratic forms of government, not outlaw those who seek to make them more effective. Thus, if it is permitted, the democratic principle of self-government goes on, from strength to strength, from age to age, expressing itself in ever-improving forms of control that enable further developments of life. It is inevitable that man, who must die, should want to hold on to something that outlives him and to prevent it from being changed. But

he only deceives himself if he tries to hold on to forms of political organizations which, like him, must pass. It is the principles which man has discovered in the struggles and agonies of historic experience to have universal worth that, like the universal qualities of human nature, are deathless. It is these that must be held on to and used to produce the changes in political and social organization that are needed from time to time.

The principle of self-government is not fully expressed in the commonly used phrase, government by consent of the governed. That contains a hangover of imperialist and class control. In a full democracy none are governed. The people govern themselves. They are not governed by officeholders and bureaucrats. They govern themselves in ways of their own choosing, changing those ways from time to time as they need and desire. In their self-government they put the principle of consent above that of coercion. The rule of the majority, established by free choice, is accompanied by freedom of the minority to express itself and seek to change the decision of the majority by the appeal to reason and justice. This procedure involves the consent of both parties, and it works only as long as both sides abide by the rules of the game. This way of doing things is what is meant by the term the democratic process. It has a much wider meaning, however, than its use in politics. It holds for all kinds of organizations, for all social institutions, for economics, education and religion as well as politics. In a democratic society these too are to be administered by the appeal to reason and justice instead of by the use of coercion in hiring and firing, by full and free discussion

instead of the use of the closed meeting or the gavel to prevent or even secure needed change.

In our history the best expression of the principle of self-government is that immortal phrase of Lincoln: "Government of the people, by the people and for the people." In these few plain words is revealed the origin, the method and the object of democratic government. The emphasis is upon the right of the people to govern themselves in their own way. There is here a stronger quality than appears in the much quoted utterances of the other great exponent of American democracy, Thomas Jefferson. His emphasis is upon the principles of the Bill of Rights as rights of the whole people, and especially of unpopular minorities, even conservative ones. It is that of an aristocratic, landowning intellectual who is a democrat by intellectual and moral conviction. All credit, and perhaps more credit, to him, because of that. Lincoln, the rail splitter and homespun country lawyer, sharing the toils and pains of the plain people of the developing frontier, gives us the democracy of experience and vital faith. In a later utterance he sees its meaning in the coming struggle between labor and capital. He tells us that the prior right is with labor, because of its social necessity. He understands that the essence of democracy is the people's power, their power to govern themselves in ways and under terms of their own choosing, their power to control their own lives and destinies—their government, their livelihood, their culture.

The relation between democracy as the rights of individuals and minorities and democracy as the people's power to govern themselves can be seen in the references of Jefferson and Lincoln to the question of revolutionary changes in our gov-

ernment. Jefferson, the political philosopher, wrote in the Declaration of Independence: "Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends [the welfare of the people, their life, liberty and happiness] it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

Lincoln, caught in the struggle between slavery and free enterprise, seeing other conflicts of a similar nature ahead, transposed this statement into more specific terms in one of his speeches during the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates: "This country with its institutions belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right to amend it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it." Thus the democratic right mutually granted each other by all citizens in our constitution rests upon a power inherent in the nature of democracy. This is the power, through changes in government, to change the nature, as well as the structure and control, of society. The peoples' power to control together every aspect of their lives, which is the essence of democracy, is the power to change the ways in which they live together, according to their need and desire.

Any form of government is the organization of power. Democratic government is the organization of the power of the people. It replaces the power of their rulers, whoever they may be. In practice, this means the rule of the many instead of the few. It requires a sufficient majority to maintain a workable control. At points where the people's mind is not made

up, their will not clear, even to themselves, as now in the matter of the economic breakdown and what needs to be done about it, democracy has a hard time. In these situations it is easy enough to discredit it or reject it. But do the dictatorships have any easier time with the economic problem?

In practice democracy means also the development of all instead of the few. It ends aristocracy as it destroys autocracy. If it does not progressively accomplish this it ceases to be democracy. Only by increasing knowledge and intelligence throughout the population, only by spreading the spirit of service to others, which is the one justification that aristocracy at its best has to offer for itself, can the people hold power after they win it. Continuous movement toward social equality is the essential condition of the maintenance of the people's power. The transfer of power from the few to the many that was accomplished by the capitalist-democratic revolution can be permanent only under conditions that progressively distribute throughout the population all forms of power, that take away the power of capitalists as well as monarchs, intellectuals as well as capitalists, democratic bureaucrats as well as dictators. The growth of democracy is the continuous development of the people's power, maintained by their increasing capacity to control themselves, in every aspect of their common life.

Many who believe in democracy as method do not accept it as power, so in the end they cease to trust it as method. These folk—among them capitalists, politicians, intellectuals—call the people's power mob rule. They think that they and their children have a monopoly on ability and intelligence. These are the autocratic and aristocratic elements in our de-

mocracy. They and their predecessors have opposed, do now oppose, and will oppose, every extension of the democratic principle. They fought every extension of suffrage and education, every attempt of the workers to organize, just as now they resist the advance of the C.I.O., fight the National Labor Relations Board and seek to nullify the Wagner Act. They oppose the entrance of the democratic principle into the smallest part of our economic life. They wage war against the T.V.A. and small extensions of public ownership of public utilities, except where it takes unprofitable ventures off their hands. They attack the cooperatives. In these matters they act under the drive of instinctive self-interest. They sense that the extension of the democratic principle to our economic life will destroy their power and take away their privilege. Thus, in defending their own interests, they act more quickly than the advocates and defenders of democracy. They fulfil the old saying that the children of darkness are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

This fight against the establishment of the people's power in the economic field inevitably merges into an attack upon democracy as political method. Resistance to the democratic principle and method in industrial relations involves suspension or destruction of the Bill of Rights. Every sharp industrial conflict in our record has been accompanied by suspensions of free speech, free assembly and free press, and in many of them by the substitution of government by force and violence for government by consent. Thus the workers must defend democracy as method if they are to get it established as power—the only kind of power that can justify itself in principle or in results. Intellectuals prize the democratic

method because under it they are free to express themselves. Also it gives them the gratification of being able to help others. The workers, including those on the land and the working intellectuals, are beginning to prize it as the means to establish the people's power, just as the capitalists developed it to establish their power against the feudal landowners.

It is the combination of democracy as the people's power and democracy as the method of consent that makes the democratic process. Thereby democracy becomes not only an instrument for change, the appeal to reason and justice instead of the use of force and violence, but also a process of change. Autocratic and aristocratic power automatically become static because they develop vested interests to be protected. Democratic power is dynamic because it is to the interest of the people continuously to make whatever changes in organization are necessary to meet their needs. It is only when the people in a democratic community permit bureaucrats to take power that a democracy stands still or goes backward. A democratic society can go on living where others die, for it gives its members more than the right to secure reforms under the existing order, it gives them the right and the opportunity to change the order itself.

The mainspring of the drive to change in democratic society is the imperative for social equality. This requires a continuous effort to provide equal opportunities for the development of the capacities of all members of society. This urge toward social equality was the distinguishing characteristic of early American democracy recorded in the phrase in the Declaration of Independence about equal rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It was the degree of

equal opportunity afforded by the developing frontier which kept the tradition and the feeling of social equality vital longer in the West than in the East. There too it was later weakened, not only by the formation of economic classes, but also by the frontier development of individualism. This made democracy mean the right and opportunity of the individual to climb the ladder of success instead of the organized attempt to provide equality of opportunity for all. Thus the anarchic element in American society, its undue emphasis upon individual rights, triumphed over its belief in social equality. Nevertheless there still remain among us more freedom of social intercourse, more acceptance of persons without regard to their social status, than obtains in most other countries.

As long as democracy maintains the urge toward social equality it is developing the power for social change as well as providing the method to secure it. The continued effort to provide equal opportunity of development for all members of society makes more general the duty of the strong to serve instead of the right of the strong to rule. It develops the cooperative instead of the fighting way of life, more consent and less coercion, more sharing and less ruling. Thus the democratic way of life can accomplish change with minimum waste and loss.

The enemies of democracy see this more clearly than those of its friends who defend only its method. The reason that our own reactionaries increasingly attack democracy is that recent experiences have shown them that it leads to changes they do not want. In this recognition they are joined by those politicians who are beginning to see that their position is in peril if the people get more power. So they are found helping the

antidemocratic forces on the international field, and then limiting and destroying democracy in their own countries. Along with them go many of our intellectuals. They accept democracy as long as it gives them position and class power. When it gives the people power they cannot follow. What our intellectuals have to learn is that it is of no avail to accept democracy as method if it is not accepted as power. What those who need it as power must remember is that its power does not work unless it operates through its method.

The extension of democracy means more than reforms in the existing order of things, more than the mechanical expansion of an instrument of government. Again it must be said that it involves the breaking up and diffusion of all concentrated power—in politics, economics, education, arts, sciences and religion. The only way forward is along this road. The only possible advance for modern man, no matter how hard the struggle, is through more self-government, that is, by way of more power to the people. Along with this must go freedom to minorities, in order that from time to time they may show the way. In a deeper sense than its general use, the saying that the only cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy is a true guide.

We are engaged in much more than a struggle to defend and extend our democratic institutions. Our battle is to keep alive the democratic process itself, its power as well as its method, as the vital force by which alone human society is able to live and grow up to higher stages of development. What is at stake is not only the method but the possibility of social change. How many who believe, or think they believe, in democracy really understand that this is the issue? How

many of them are prepared to go through with it when they do understand? For this is the test of our faith in democracy. Are we willing to follow where it leads? Do we trust it that much? If we don't we lose it. We either commit our whole destiny to it or we give up the opportunity of any advance in human living for a considerable period to come.

It is self-evident that social progress depends upon the increase of the democratic way of life which extends more health and working intelligence throughout the population, as well as more goodwill and mutual aid. By extension of education in the broadest sense of the term, by increasing the ability to understand situations and act in the way they require, democracy increases the consciousness of social need. It multiplies this by its many channels of free communication—free speech, free assembly, free press. Then by continued extensions of the people's power in every area of living it provides for the changes necessary to meet this social need. Autocracy can accomplish social reforms, but they are benefits bestowed and accepted. They leave the people without the capacity to help themselves further. Democracy can achieve fundamental change by the method of social self-help, and can thereby increase the capacity for it.

The kind of social change now needed is forecast by the nature of our democracy. Its urge toward social equality demands the spread of a higher standard of living throughout the population. This requires national control of our economic plant and activities, directed to these ends. We must have an increase of production, not the decrease dictated by the struggle for profit. More efficient economic control in the machine age must in the nature of the case be more democratic control.

The intricate, coordinated mechanism of our economic arrangements requires for its effective operation government by consent, not by coercion. Otherwise it breaks down with tremendous loss for all concerned. Democratic economic control means that the many, not the few, own and plan the basic economic processes that are essential to the life of all. This also makes for more efficiency, on the principle that people work better when they know what they are doing, and why; and that the results will not be in any part appropriated by others whose interests are not theirs. Thus the social need and the urge of democracy dovetail.

The same thing is true about our culture. To be democratic it must be both enjoyed and controlled by the many. This in turn makes for the increase in its vitality that autocratic and aristocratic societies are unable to achieve after they reach the point of maturity. When the arts and sciences can be enjoyed by all, the capacities of all are available for their enrichment and development. They are fed from the inexhaustible springs of the common life instead of the diminishing reservoirs of the privileged few. At this point again the social need and the urge of democracy dovetail.

This means that the democracy of the pioneer stage, with its emphasis upon individual rights and freedom, needs now to develop into the democracy of the interdependent community, with its emphasis upon social control and purposeful, collective action, in order that the rights of all may be protected and the development of all secured. This kind of democracy will replace our class-divided society with one in which there are no class privileges or power. It will substitute the principle of mutual aid for that of the struggle for power as

the controlling organizing force. It will conserve that emphasis upon the rights of the individual which has been the main contribution to social progress of the period of capitalistic democracy.

Will our democracy be permitted thus to develop? Will the forces of power and privilege who stand to lose by such a development, and all the blind, ignorant forces they can control, permit it? Certainly not without a terrific struggle, in which the democratic forces may be again and again defeated as they have been in the past decade. The beginning of the victory is clear understanding of what has to be done, and of the forces that will move heaven and earth to prevent its being done.

## CHAPTER V

# *Capitalism and Democracy*

FROM THE BEGINNING there have been two elements in modern society, one democratic and the other capitalistic. The social change that brought the modern period into being is usually described as the democratic revolution. Sometimes it is called the capitalist revolution. Actually it was both. In its early days, before the economic and political power of the capitalists was consolidated, it was proper to name it the democratic-capitalist revolution. Now that the monopoly phase of capitalism has come to full flower and asserted itself as the dominant factor, exactness requires that the change be characterized as the capitalist-democratic revolution. Modern society is capitalistic. It is the capitalist economy which gives it its main characteristics.

These two elements in modern society derive from opposite principles and are therefore antagonistic in their nature. Capitalism is essentially autocratic in principle, being organ-

ized on the right of the strong to rule. Like all autocratic control, it inherited the military principle of authority and extols it in the name of efficiency. It rejects completely the social equality for which democracy strives. It insists, again in the name of efficiency, that inequality is necessary. Because its method of providing society with economic plant and cultural equipment is that of investment for gain, it asserts that this process must be put and kept in the hands of those who have proved themselves the fittest and ablest in the fierce struggle for profit and power. Under the capitalist economy the spoils belong to the victor, and the climax of the spoils is the power to own and administer the necessities of life.

Thus the capitalist way of providing society with its maintenance and the means of cultural development destroys the very possibility of social equality. It threw off the feudal restraints upon freedom of trade and liberty of persons, it rejected the feudal stratification of society, in order to establish the right to power of the rising traders and bankers and then the industrialists. But it retained the principle of exploitation. Thereby it was doomed to continue the class structure of earlier society in new form. While it was proclaiming that all men were equal in the ballot box, it was creating economic inequality. While it was affirming that all were entitled to equal opportunity to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, it was forming a new class structure that made it impossible for the many to exercise that right.

We shall not understand the situation in which we now find ourselves unless we recognize clearly the dual nature of our modern society. Our political life is supposed to be operated by democratic principles which require the diffusion of

power. Our economic autocracy is the concentration of power. So our house is divided against itself. We are once again in the situation that Lincoln described when he said "no nation can endure part slave and part free." Here is the essence of the political conflict between the democratic and the anti-democratic forces. One side fights to maintain its concentrated control of economic power. The other fights to democratize economic power, to diffuse it as democracy has sought to diffuse political power.

The struggle between the two elements in modern society began early in its history. In England, where the capitalist-democratic revolution began, and in France where it followed, the rising capitalist class, who had used the forces below them in the social scale to win their battle against the feudalists, began immediately to deny them their share in the fruits of victory. All measures looking toward equalizing the property system were dropped and talk about them soon began to be repressed. As the rising capitalists organized their power, they restricted the democratic opportunities of the class that needed next to rise. Capitalist democracy proved itself to be an instrument by which class power could again be consolidated. The capitalists soon saw that the democratic method which enabled them to take political power from the feudal landholders whose economic power they had already destroyed would in due course give power to the people to take economic power from the capitalists. This was why they fought against extensions of suffrage and educational opportunities. This was why they passed conspiracy laws in England, and organized violence here, to prevent labor organization.

The conflict between the two elements in capitalist-demo-

cratic society began early in our own history. It appeared in the Constitutional Convention in the fight over the Bill of Rights, as the studies of Beard and others have made plain. The constitutional provision of an elaborate system of checks and balances was designed to make it hard to change our form of government. There is no other democracy where it is so difficult for the people to secure change when they have made up their mind to it, no other where it takes so long to implement their will. This was done to protect the property rights of the rising merchants, bankers, shipowners and landowners. They were afraid of what those who had little or no property would do under unrestricted democratic rights. To them, as to their descendants today, democratic power equalled mob rule. Hence they made it as hard as they could for the people to do anything about concentrated property rights. It was as if they looked ahead and saw our present millions of unemployed in city and country and our millions more who tremble insecurely on the brink of poverty.

The conservatives in the Constitutional Convention did not want revolution. They rebelled against England in order to establish their own freedom to trade, make money, and establish social position for their families. That gained, they were quite willing to sell out the revolution behind the back of Washington and would have done it but for the backwoodsmen, and one banker, who stood by him through the winter of Valley Forge. Certainly the men who put the checks and balances in the Constitution and made it so hard to change them did not want the revolution in social relationships promised by the proclamation of social equality in the Declaration

of Independence. Between that and the original part of the Constitution there is a great gulf fixed.

So the battle was immediately joined between the defenders of property and the believers in the democratic rights of all men, led by Jefferson. The needs of the small farmers, small business men, and skilled craftsmen, of the "rag, tag and bob-tail" from the backwoods who finally won the revolution, were pitted against the interests of the property owners whose economic descendants were later to get a strangle hold on the major part of the natural resources and economic enterprise of the nation. It was a battle royal, in which the conservative forces asked for time out for a session of prayer. But the divine help which, in situations like that, is another name for bringing to bear upon the opposition the emotional influence of the most powerful traditional sanctions, was not forthcoming. In the end the men of property had to accept the Bill of Rights in order to get their checks and balances. They made it as hard as they could to change our political procedure and our property system, but they had to give the people the right to discuss and organize. Consequently the Bill of Rights has been a battleground ever since. With it concentrated property is in constant danger. Without it the Constitution will not work and democracy disappears. Our system is tolerable only when the approach to change is left open.

Because we have no inherited feudal structure or tradition, and because our unparalleled economic resources enabled so many people to change their social position, the democratic part of the capitalist-democratic revolution was carried further here than it was in the European nations in which it began. But so also was the capitalist part. Here monopoly developed

faster than there. And as it gathered strength, it naturally attacked the democratic rights of the people whenever its interest was threatened. Witness the documented record of its lobbying and its use of the police, the military, and the courts in strikes. At the same time a distrust of democracy was spread abroad in print and in certain university circles where self-made professors, paralleling the course of self-made business men, were talking like the intellectual aristocracy of the old world about the inefficiency and failure of democracy. This twofold attack upon basic American principles was concealed by lip service to the ideal of liberty. Liberty was degraded into freedom to make money.

Our Civil War marks the point when the capitalist forces in our society began to get the upper hand. Then our early individualistic capitalism began to be monopolistic. The fortunes made in the war, added to earlier accumulations, enabled large-scale exploitation of our natural resources and further concentration of economic power through control of prices and wages. This soon developed its political counterpart. Machine politics and boss control, as old as the first expressions of democracy, acquired new efficiency and size. A revealing test of what happened to our democracy is to compare the things talked about by our Presidents before and after the Civil War. Which one since then has said anything like the words of Jefferson and Lincoln about the right of the people to make revolutionary changes in their government? The disturbing principles of the Declaration of Independence were left to Fourth of July utterances, whose bombastic tones had no more political reality than those coming from the drum in the band. Populist speakers, voicing the revolt of the country-

side against the exactions of the city, thundered about the "will of the people," but no responsible officials of the republic, certainly no chief executive, was sounding this note as some of them did in earlier days. Later the first Roosevelt paid his respects to the "malefactors of great wealth," as his present namesake did to the "economic royalists," but neither of them made his words good by an assertion of the democratic guarantee of the people's right to power. So despite the brave words, the money-changers were not driven from the temple. Like Woodrow Wilson, these men came to feel the power of "the invisible government" and to name it before the people in varying phrases. But because they proposed only reforms in the system which created that sinister control, because they did not recognize the democratic right and the social necessity of the people to change that system, it remained in power.

Since the Civil War there has been a steady encroachment upon the basic principle of government of the people, by the people, for the people. The courts gradually arrogated to themselves the power to nullify the will of the people expressed through their legislative assemblies in matters of economic and social well-being. In our recent controversy over the question of additional justices to the Supreme Court, most of the discussion never came within sight of the real issue. Now, because the immediate issues at stake have been settled by the natural infusion of new blood, the people are quite unconcerned over the fact that three men, two men, one man, can tell them what they cannot do. Because the democratic power to decide their own social procedure was taken away from them earlier in our history and lodged in the courts,

where the Constitution did not place it, they have never felt the loss of what they have never enjoyed.

While this part of the destruction of democracy was going on, the executive power was extending itself over the legislative just as the judicial, under the leadership of John Marshall, had previously done. This was most evident in that function which is so vital to the continuity of democracy, the war-making power. As everybody knows, the Constitution intended to lodge this power in Congress, but gradually, under the pressures of capitalistic imperialism, the real power to make war has passed into the hands of the State Department and the White House. In the beginning of our history our armed forces were taken into what was then Florida without any consent of Congress. Later they were taken into Mexico and Nicaragua without any decision of the representatives of the people.

Our present Chief Executive is reported to have said to a press conference that he had the power to take this country into war if he chose to exercise it. In this, whether he was boasting a little or not, he was also speaking sober truth. His acts as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces can create situations in which Congress would virtually have no choice but to support them with a declaration of war. The same thing is true concerning the policies built up, and the economic situations sanctioned, by the State Department without any knowledge of Congress. What the founding fathers thought they were doing in guarding the nation from being taken into war by officeholders has been undone by the course of economic development, here and elsewhere. Our recent emotional discussion of a referendum before declaration of war,

in order that democracy may be preserved, did not touch the root of the matter. The peril to democracy is that the people do not have any control over, or indeed any knowledge of, the initial stages of the foreign policy that later determine whether or not a state of war shall come to exist.

The final impetus to the development of monopoly over free enterprise, and so to the assertion of control by the anti-democratic elements in our society, came from the passing of the frontier. One of the most significant attempts in our history to validate the promise of continuous movement toward social equality given in our Declaration of Independence was the Homestead Act, at the close of the Civil War, that opened government lands to settlement on the equalitarian basis of 160 acres to each person. A lesser attempt of the same sort is visible in the provisions of our earlier legislation concerning timber and mineral lands. Daniel Webster, strangely enough, in one of his sonorous orations argues that the equalitarian division of the land provided in this act is the basis of our political democracy, that the disappearance of the one will be followed by the dissolution of the other. That hard-headed and bitter-tongued Scotchman, Carlyle, once said to an American visitor, with typical scorn, "You may talk about your democracy, or any ither 'cracy, but just ye wait till your free land gies oot."

His words were prophetic. Along with the passing of the frontier came the closing of free economic opportunity. The end of free land for those who wanted to use it to provide the means of life, instead of to make money, was the beginning of the end of free enterprise. Already the equalitarian provisions of our land legislation were being subverted by

the bribery of the rising monopolists in some places and broken down by force and violence in others. The record of the grabbing and stealing of our land, timber, minerals and oil is now fully documented. It is a shameful story of criminality and the subversion of democracy. When the people of a democracy lose control of the natural resources upon which their lives depend they have lost the base of their political power. Then they are further bewildered by the increasing complexity of both economic and political procedure which leaves them individually helpless against the perfected machine politics which register the economic power of big business.

This helplessness is increased by the deception with which big business cloaks its assumption of power. As it destroys the reality of free competition, the words become slogans for office seekers and a legal phrase to validate monopoly practices. So the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution designed to protect the individual from losing his property or his rights without due process of law gets used by the courts to protect corporate enterprise in taking away the rights and property of the individual. Right of way for monopolistic practices is claimed in the name of "free enterprise." And the people are deceived by the illusion that they still can have freedom to become capitalists. This appeal to an established tradition to enable its opposite to come to power is of course no new thing in history. To see how far this use of it by big business has gone, how effectively the job has been done, there is in evidence the record of the recent conference of small business men called at Washington by the government for the purpose of finding out what their interests and demands were. Strangely enough, the record shows that most of these men,

who were supposed and expected to be the defenders of "laissez faire" talked only in terms of protecting the practices that threaten their very existence.

The passing of "laissez faire" has necessarily been accompanied by a weakening of civil liberties. As free enterprise grows less, so also does free speech, free press and free assembly. When the workers could find no more free land, they had no choice but to live and work in industrial communities which practically belonged to the owners of the factories or mines. There they found that political control was in the hands of those who owned the economic power which goes with possession of the means of maintenance for others. They found that this power increased as monopoly replaced free opportunity, and big corporations bought out or smashed the small factory owners. They discovered that those who controlled their economic existence also controlled their right to meet, to speak, to have and distribute their own printed matter. They learned, what the La Follette Committee—Senate Committee on Labor and Civil Liberties—has now documented for the whole nation, that in many cases the corporations were prepared to destroy the Bill of Rights with force and violence where they could not nullify it by intimidation, that in this attempt they were often able to use the local, and sometimes the state, law enforcement agencies. Thus the passing of free economic opportunity was followed by the loss of freedom in political action. The conclusion, by which it is necessary to shape our course of action, is that if this nation fails to achieve economic freedom we are doomed to lose our political freedom. Here again it appears that the conflict between the democratic and the anti-democratic forces is the struggle for

the control of economic power under the conditions of the machine age.

The battle rages also in the field of culture. There the same forces struggle for control for the same ends. Our tax-saving capitalists, and their political mouthpieces, are speaking more truth than they realize when they say they cannot afford the fads and frills of progressive education. Education that conceives its function to be the unfolding of all the capacities of childhood, youth and adults, and of all of them, is itself a democratic force, making for political economic and social change. And of course those who seek to preserve the present order of things cannot afford that kind of education. Hence they promote restriction and censorship of education in behalf of their own interests. From this it is only a step to the burning of books by the illiterate barbarians whom a capitalist society has produced and now uses to protect its narrow interests from the menace of a wider culture. Already one public library is reported to have ordered the destruction of *Grapes of Wrath*, and for some time in raids upon labor and radical headquarters, official and unofficial, the floor has been strewn with the torn fragments of hated pamphlets and books.

The long struggle between the capitalistic and the democratic elements in our society comes to its climax in the present period of capitalistic decline. The breakdown of our economic machine increases the concentration of power in the hands of the antidemocratic forces because it is the monopolistic form of business that survives longest. Because of the number of business failures, every depression in our economic history has lessened the number of owners of the national plant and increased the economic power of the stronger among them.

That tendency is accelerated now that depression has become crisis. The number of bankruptcies multiplies; the high cost of automatic machinery and of distribution on a nation-wide scale make it more and more difficult for the small man either to get started or to survive.

This increase of centralized control in our economic life is reflected in our political activities. While the La Follette Committee is finishing its job of exposing the strong-arm tactics of the roughneck industrialists and drafting legislation to stop their armed violence against striking employees, the House becomes the medium for a powerful assault upon the democratic rights of labor, radical and progressive organizations, and the unemployed through the Dies, Smith and Woodrum Committees charged with investigating respectively un-American activities, the administration of the National Labor Relations Act and the W.P.A. The metropolitan press, almost silent concerning the revelations of the La Follette Committee, gives plenty of front-page space to mere propaganda charges of the other committees.

These committees represent and embody the political elements in the South and Southwest who combine with their belated, traditional individualism the equally belated traditions and prejudices of a newborn industrialism. Along with their natural allies from other sections, they are as fit a tool for working the will and purpose of concentrated capitalism as were Hitler's followers in Germany. In the name of democracy they oppose the extension of democratic rights to those sections of the population whose opportunities have been most threatened by capitalist decline—labor, youth, the unemployed. They gave lip service to the New Deal as long as

it was politically profitable to do so. Now they are out to kill it. In their committee procedures, which have violated the democratic protections of court procedure and previous committee practice, they have in reality established a political inquisition. In so doing they have raised two questions which the American people had better answer before it is too late. Is Congress above the Bill of Rights? Is our democratic procedure to become the instrument through which capitalist autocracy can destroy political democracy?

The most sinister aspect of the recent assault upon democratic rights is the participation in it of a progressive administration. Recently the Department of Justice has begun several prosecutions, on technical grounds, for obviously political purposes. It has conducted spectacular raids upon those charged with a political offense as though they were dangerous criminals. It has behaved like the secret police of dictatorships, with no reprimand from the President. So at this point the New Deal becomes the Old Deal; it begins to talk and act just like its opponents. This happens because it has never recognized the conflict between the democratic and capitalist elements in our society. It never knew when it proclaimed the necessity of keeping the profit motive that it was retaining the dynamic which made for the concentrated economic power and the social inequality it was trying to remove. So now it finds itself at certain points aiding the reactionaries in the destruction of the basic democratic rights it has previously been extending. This is not a natural swing of the political pendulum, the inevitable turn in a cycle. That interpretation of history is an excuse for the failure to act at the decisive moment. In our

case the forces of progress have not yet recognized and challenged their real enemy.

The record of the New Deal and its swing to the right, its attack with one hand upon what it has been building with the other, shows us that the attempt to preserve both capitalism and democracy is like trying to ride two horses that are going in opposite directions. For our social development we want and need more democracy. For its development capitalism needs and wants less. It uses and increases the antidemocratic elements in human nature—greed, ignorance, fear of change and dislike of the struggle needed to secure it. It organizes campaigns to pass gag laws to prevent discussion that might lead to a democratic change of the economic order. Its more reactionary elements support professed fascist movements with their program of hate and repression and make speeches asserting that our government was never designed to be a democracy. To enforce its scarcity program, even liberal reformers are compelled at times to answer the militant protests of the unemployed with the clubs and tear gas of the police.

Democracy was the political instrument required by early individualistic capitalism, even though it contained the principle of social equality to which capitalism is by its nature opposed. Now the conflict between the capitalist and democratic elements in our society comes to a head. Free enterprise capitalism becomes monopoly capitalism because it is a struggle for power. Monopoly capitalism seeks to restrict democratic rights because otherwise democracy will destroy its power. When the people, enlightened by their needs, move democratically to take power for themselves, then, of necessity, the

capitalist forces move to stop them, even though that requires the destruction of the democratic method which they have found so useful in the past. The law of self-preservation is at work.

Hence democracy in its capitalistic form is not merely imperfect, it is self-destructive. Its political and economic interests are no longer united, they are at war with each other. The conclusive evidence is the fact that capitalist enterprise in the democracies has sold the fascist powers the materials to build up the war machines which are now threatening the life of their nations. We continue this practice even while we are arming to the teeth against the danger which could not exist without our help. To simple people, ignorant of the nature of the capitalist economy, it would seem that the first step in our national defense would be to see that no war supplies go from us to Germany, Italy or Japan. But no such legislation gets out of committee. The needs and demands of the profit system forbid. The significance of this situation is not changed by the eleventh-hour executive order establishing a discretionary licensing system for certain exports. The initial explanation that scrap iron was not then listed because our supply was more than adequate for our defense program reveals the inwardness of the matter.

All this happens regardless of the fact that many capitalists are not antidemocratic in principle. But the prevailing tendencies in our political procedures are the antidemocratic and antisocial elements in the nature of the capitalist economy and the class-divided society it supports. The struggle of those caught in the system who really believe in the democratic principle is like that—so frequently and vividly portrayed in

religious literature—of those who seek to live the life of the spirit but find themselves as long as they are in the flesh, bound to “the body of this death.”

The struggle between capitalism and democracy, between the antidemocratic elements that make for social loss and the democratic elements that make for social progress, is now a fight to a finish. The course of human events for the next period of history hangs in the balance. Either capitalism will destroy democracy for a period, or democracy will remove the capitalist economy and put an efficient economic order in its place, so that human capacities may be further developed. This is the basic issue in the democratic nations.

## CHAPTER VI

# *Economic Democracy*

HERE AND THERE in current writing on the theme of democracy there appears the judgment that the democratic process must either be extended to all our economic affairs or be lost. This conclusion rests upon the nature of economic power. Those who can decide the conditions under which people work and what they get for their labor have the power of life and death. Those who control the credit by which modern business is carried on have a veto over the activities by which we all live, and at times over the policies of the state. If this vast power can be exercised by a minority, the people cannot continue to govern themselves. Economic democracy is our next step forward; and it leads where political democracy has failed to carry us—into a socialized democracy.

Economic democracy must not be confused with industrial democracy which is limited to participation of workers with owners at different points, in varying degree, in the management of capitalist enterprise. Its chief current expression is in the exercise of collective bargaining over the conditions of

employment. This merely gives the workers the rights of organization and representation which employers have always been free to exercise. Further expressions of industrial democracy are to be found in forms of profit sharing and joint agreements to increase production and improve its quality. All such things are extensions of the democratic method to the field of industry, but they are not economic democracy. They do not reach to the point of ownership and planning, where economic power lies. They are not economic government of, by and for the people.

This takes us further than municipal, state or national ownership of public utilities. These measures may stop with being yardsticks to measure the extortions of private enterprise, like the T.V.A., or mere competitive checks to capitalist power; they may be only an opportunity for the capitalists to unload on the government unprofitable enterprises; or they may become, as they did in Germany, a state capitalism. This does not change the nature of exploitation through profit but makes the state, which turns out to be the bureaucrats of a totalitarian party, the receiver of the diminished returns. The power of the people is not put over economic enterprise. In order that it may not be, all democratic power is taken away from the people and put in the hands of the one political party.

So far the industrial democracy which the New Deal has advanced has not brought the people into the citadel of economic power. The opportunity to do that when the banks were on the verge of collapse in 1933 was lost. No reforms of the capitalist administration of economic power, no attempted controls of it by the political state—and we have had plenty of both in our history—have brought us further than

a sharing of economic power between politicians and capitalists, with a check by each upon the other. We have tried at points to extend democracy as method to the economic field, but democracy as power is still in the field of political action where it is being slowly strangled by hands that are strong with economic power.

When the New Deal specifically limited itself to the attempt to revive the profit economy and revitalize the profit motive, it thereby became an attempt to restore the past, not to bring in the future. When it failed to set for its goal the taking of economic power from the few and giving it to the many, it doomed itself to make alliance later with those who control the sources of power. How else can the capitalist state operate, whether it be democratic or totalitarian?

This is the course that leads to fascism, and it can be changed only by applying the democratic principle of the people governing themselves throughout the economic process. What this means in the broad is a commonplace in discussion of the nature of socialist society. Two historic phrases have expressed it: "The social ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution," and "The things that the people use in common shall by the people in common be owned and administered." These phrases recognize that other forms of democratic management than those of a political state are not only possible but necessary in our situation.

In earlier discussions of this matter the main emphasis was upon social ownership of the natural resources and the national plant. This was very largely a reaction against the injustice of private ownership of things upon which the lives of all depend. Then the social waste of private administration

of natural resources was exposed and expounded. So today there is both an ethical and a functional appeal in the slogan, "The tools to those who can use them"—that is, the economic machine to those who can operate it. The nation needs its economic capacities used as much as all workers need to exercise their skills.

But the economic machine is composed of collective tools that can be operated only collectively, either by monopolistic interests or democratic cooperation. Hence it is not a question of taking it away from some and giving it to others, but of finding the way mutually to administer it for the benefit of all. How much this is to be done through activities of the state, how much through cooperatives, how much for a time through small private business, all of them parts of a national plan, is a matter for experimental working out. The very term "big business" points to the places where the job has to start.

In later discussion of this subject emphasis has turned to the second part of the formula for economic democracy, namely, democratic management. The result of economic enterprise by the method of conflict through the struggle for power is plainly anarchic warfare. So our present emphasis is upon social and economic planning, often without recognition of the dependence of the former upon the latter. In some quarters this has provided a convenient escape from the difficult political problem of securing social ownership of the economic machine. But neither part of the formula will give us economic democracy without the other. Without ownership, no power to manage; without power to manage, no guarantee of social ends. What we are now learning through bitter experience is that democratic economic power must rest upon national own-

ership of the means of life for the people and be expressed through democratic social-economic planning, that is, economic planning for approved social ends. This is the way we have developed and administered our public education and recreation. This is the way we will democratically develop our economic life. There is no alternative. The attempt to stop monopoly by giving the democratic political state power to control economic enterprise leads only to the fascist state as Germany and Italy have demonstrated. A political-economic monopoly is substituted for an economic-political one. The struggle for profit leads to monopoly, imperialism, fascism. It takes us back to the world the capitalist-democratic revolution broke away from. The only other economic way of life open to us is the method of planning for social ends, made possible by the national ownership of the necessary resources and plant.

The essence of economic planning is that it substitutes measurement for guess and cooperation for conflict. The profit economy supplies us with our productive plant, our consumption goods and our culture, through a series of guesses as to where and how profit may be secured. Economic planning puts measurement of needs, and directed coordinated effort to meet them, in place of the blind guesses and anarchic conflicts of the profit seekers. Where they stumble forward ignorantly, it proceeds intelligently, charting its course by the exact information furnished by the slide rule of the engineer and the equation of the statistician.

These instruments are recent acquisitions. No earlier generation possessed them in the form required for social-economic planning. Before us, those who desired a better

world and a nobler race could only say what ought to be, or what, according to the laws of history, must be. They could not call into being their desires nor direct the course of history to the goal they sought. But the power withheld from those who pointed the way for us and passed on has come into our hands. In trying to operate high-power production without the recent scientific knowledge which makes a planned social economy possible, man fell an easy victim to his ignorance, his greed and his cruelty, despite his ideals. These primitive forces turn the tools of industrial civilization into the most powerful instruments of destruction man has ever possessed. But the advance of the physical sciences and a wider knowledge of history now provide a better fighting ground for the moral faculties and enable another destiny. They give man the power to release himself from the superstitions and traditional limitations born of his ignorance and to direct his affairs consciously to his chosen goal.

By coordinating our existing knowledge, it is now possible to measure nationally, for a given period of time, the productive and cultural plant needed to reach the point in consumption of goods and services and in cultural facilities that all available resources, natural and human, make obtainable. It is then possible to coordinate existing and potential productive and distributive forces to reach these defined objectives. This means the making of a national budget covering the whole economy, including cultural needs; administering it through a controlled currency and credit; distributing them both in the manner best calculated to achieve the desired ends. Such a plan would provide for all agreed upon consumption needs, including services as well as goods; repairs, replace-

ment and extension of productive, distributive and cultural plant to meet growing needs; security through social insurance of the entire population against all the emergencies of life—sickness, old age, dependence. Thus the new method of planning for economic and social needs accomplishes what is vainly sought in capitalist society by the investment structure as well as by the struggle for profit. It makes both as unnecessary as they are now inefficient and socially undesirable. Effort, and need, disjoined by the struggle for profit which was supposed to tie them together, are now consciously connected. Thus modern complex society is able to achieve the efficiency of those simple primitive groups who directly connect their needs and their efforts.

Hence an enormous gain over the results of the capitalist economy is possible. The struggle for profits continually destroys those human values which its sincere defenders genuinely desire to realize. Those who are seeking its recovery must stop to ask what will make money, and that inevitably means what will the dominant moneymakers permit. The President himself proclaims the necessity for "legitimate and reasonable profits." But this phrase has to reckon with all the claims of investment capital, so that those who accept it finally find themselves protecting investment structure more than the lives of the hungry and unemployed.

A notorious instance is the housing situation. The profit system has proved itself unable to provide and unwilling to permit proper housing for our slum dwellers. The housing reformers have finally thrown up their hands and admitted that under present conditions the task is impossible. Now it is conceded that the surest and quickest way to business revival

is through the building industries. Yet those who control them have prevented the government from starting the big scale building enterprises that are needed. A parallel process goes on with the small home owner. Ambitious plans were promoted to relieve him of the fear of foreclosure and eviction by prolonging the life of mortgages and giving government insurance to the investor. Frozen credits were thus relieved but there was then no place to invest them; the homes they might have built were not permitted. Now the government itself is foreclosing on many of the homes it built. Thus human hopes are being wrecked, human lives weakened, frustrated and embittered. If once we can free our capacities from the demands of the profit and investment system, life can be increased and developed instead of being diminished and destroyed. If we would scientifically harness the needs and capacities of the people of the United States, to what new heights of living could we then travel?

Such a planned economy is obviously different in nature as well as in extent from the economic planning now being attempted in this country by collaboration between the government and big business. Such planning may be able to reduce some of the over-production of those seeking blindly to supply a market they are unable to measure; but what is done in one section is promptly contradicted by what is attempted in another. This is clearly demonstrated by the way in which the price raises achieved separately in agriculture and industry have cancelled each other out. An older illustration is the way increased wages are promptly offset by increased prices.

To develop a social economy, that is, one that achieves desired social ends, economic planning must be able to set the

terms for the provision of productive and cultural plant and their use; it must decide amounts and kinds of consumption goods and who is to get them. But such controls are so contrary to the nature of the capitalist economy that they cannot be achieved by it, much as the capitalists desire them. The only possible planning under the profit system is monopoly planning for profits, which is both intolerable to the population and in the end impossible for the capitalists themselves. It breeds a destructive warfare between the great monopolist groups, international as well as national, so that in the end they destroy one another's profits just as they have previously been destroying the natural and human resources which produce them.

But the method of intelligent foresight, based on experimental knowledge and used cooperatively, has no such limitation to its life period. It is the instrument which, in its primitive form, brought man up out of animal life, and then out of savagery. All forms of social and economic organization began as attempts to meet needs, more or less clearly seen. In due time they became institutions embodying vested interests, defended not only by courts, police and armies, not merely by the rationalizing of philosophies and theologies, but by tremendous traditional prejudices and powerful blind passions. In their old age they all became deniers of human needs and destroyers of capacities to meet them.

This is the present stage of the capitalist system. It grew up as a rough and ready way of meeting the needs created by the opening of the trade routes and the later discovery of steam power. It enabled an enlargement of human living by a more potent use of the energies of nature. At that time no

other device for this accomplishment was historically possible. Now the environment has changed again. The higher rate of transformation of energy through electric power, with the resultant increased means of communication, enable us once again to move up to a higher plane of living. But this requires the joint management of life through a scientific system which measures needs and coordinates efforts, and which at the same time satisfies the ethical desires of human beings to be both persons and a community. If individuals and society are to go on developing, the collective life must become a consciously directed organism, with all its parts moving in response to centralized, democratic controls.

It is no longer possible to dismiss as idealistic theorizing the idea of a society coordinated around a planned economy. The first experimental steps to put it into history have already been taken. Over 170,000,000 people of the Soviet Union are now administering their life by the new method of social-economic planning, on a scale whose scope and complexity is bewildering at first to the observer from the older world. Just as the United States is demonstrating what cannot be done by state aid to make the profit-seeking economy work, so the Soviet Union is demonstrating what can be done with a planned social economy, supported by socialist state power.

This is being done under tremendous handicaps of inherited absolutism, ignorance and incapacity, with resources depleted by war, famine, revolution and counter-revolution, and against the hostility and plottings of the great capitalist-imperialist powers. Mistakes and mismanagement, and bad ones, there have been. Our own system is not without them. But the amount of productive plant created in twenty years, the degree

of cooperation secured, the advance achieved in the scale of living and the extension of culture constitute one of the significant achievements of history, no matter what political development may later do to it. While capitalist society has been going down, Soviet society has been going up. This judgment rests upon detailed personal observation \* and is confirmed by the later study of Sidney and Beatrice Webb. In the light of this record and of the recent authoritative reports concerning our productive capacities, our unused and undeveloped possibilities, there can be no question that if we would develop here, according to our background, the basic principles of a planned and planning social economy we could reach a general standard of living and culture unknown to history.

Because social-economic planning controls the factor of distribution it is able to achieve the necessary balance between production and consumption which the profit seeking economy has sought in vain. Because a planned and planning economy determines the amount, kind and location of productive plant by measurement of consumption need instead of the possibility of profit, it removes the insecurity that dogs the footsteps of those who now attempt to perform this necessary social function by guesswork. Continuous maximum production is assured; the business cycle, with its recurrent curves of prosperity and depression, disappears; unemployment is eliminated. It is estimated that to meet the crying needs of our population, measured by present standards of living, we should produce one and a half billion more bales of cotton, two billion more gallons of milk, construct two million more

\* Ward, Harry F., *In Place of Profit*, New York, Scribner's, 1933.

houses, with proportional increase in furniture, household and dress goods. Add to this the books, pictures, plays and opportunities for travel and recreation that could be used, and it is evident that an economy which relates effort directly to need could absorb all the technological improvements now in sight, provide useful occupations for all who are fit to work, and reduce the work day to the point which makes possible the maximum of health, recreation, cultural expression and development for everybody.

By social planning we could also provide social insurance for all the people against sickness, disability, old age and dependency. Capitalist insurance is able to cover only a section of the population. Even there it is increasingly unsafe because the hazards of the profit economy increase with its decline. The only way that insurance can be paid is out of the productive labor of the moment. In any economy it is a charge upon current production. In a planned economy this charge is carried consciously and directly. The entire community, as one big family, cares for its old, its sick, its young. This is a mutual arrangement and there is no stigma of charity upon the beneficiaries. The actuarial principle and method developed by capitalism is now put to its full social use. The planning society knows exactly how much has to be provided during any given period to carry those who will need social insurance payments. It therefore plans the additional amount of production that is necessary to care for the consumption needs of this section of the population. In no other field are the measurements so easy. Next in order for ease come housing, telephone and electric light service, milk, bread, medical and dental service.

Because a planned and planning economy uses all the resources of its population, and thereby continuously increases its productive capacity, it is able to move constantly toward its objective of cultural development for all. Instead of starving education, the arts and sciences, as a declining capitalism is compelled to do, it can give them more and more support. Its three broad objectives are: plenty for all, security for all, development for all. It cultivates the capacities of all its people without discrimination. Its cultural plan is an integral part of its economic planning. Hence the present gulf between the worker and the intellectual is bridged. The intellectual becomes a worker and the worker becomes an intellectual.

When this is accomplished, the cultural stage of society has been reached. Merely to achieve freedom from economic insecurity does not lift man above the animal class. To cultivate the arts and sciences apart from the grim necessities of physical existence is to doom them to unreality and decay. For the full satisfaction of both the bodily and the spiritual needs of man the development of culture must be directly connected with the provision of physical necessities. It is the lack of this interrelation in capitalist culture which has not only made the arts anemic, but has also made much of our so-called social science a waste motion, a mere academic indulgence.

When social-economic planning jointly seeks the satisfaction of physical, intellectual and aesthetic hungers, then culture acquires the broadest possible base and the most powerful impetus; the arts and sciences reach a dignity and power not obtainable when they exist under the patronage of princes, plutocrats or dictators. It is at this point, where it seeks the fullest possible development of all the people, that social-

economic planning becomes more than planning; it becomes the joint expression of the people's lives and of their power jointly to manage their common affairs and to develop themselves. It is something far bigger and more vital than the planned economy of our traditional economists and progressive politicians. Its basic and determining factor is its social goal. Once the meeting of social needs and the development of human possibilities is set as the end to be reached by economic activities, social-economic planning appears as the only method, because the path requires common building and common direction.

Social-economic planning is the democratic method for building a democratic society, because its goal is the continuous development of a social order in which all have their needs abundantly supplied, are free to develop all their capacities, with opportunity to exercise them creatively for the advancement of social well-being. As this is progressively accomplished, the class divisions, distinctions, and privileges of our present society are removed, and the base is laid for the removal of other divisions and privileges which may follow the removal of the economic base of class power. A planned and planning economy is the essential instrument for the achievement of a classless society, just as a profit economy is the essential instrument for the achievement of a class-divided, class-controlled society whose privileges can be enjoyed by only a part of the people, who alone are able to express themselves creatively.

The ideal of a society of free persons, having equal access to all its opportunities, sharing in all its controls, is an ancient vision of mankind. It has been sought through the ages by

many roads. Now both the desperate situation of mankind and the unrealized possibilities of the power age call for the progressive realization of this kind of a social order. The only society that can successfully use the power machine is one that recognizes the equality of human need and the equal right of all to develop. The only society that can continue to live is one that gives all its children equal opportunity to develop. The only society which can meet this requirement for continuing life is one which uses the method of social-economic planning.

The possibilities of social advance in the United States under this method do not exist merely upon paper or as pictures in the heads of writers. They have a factual base in scientific measurements. But between our present position and even the beginning of the realization of these possibilities there lies a terrific political and social struggle which will test the very foundations of our democracy. The stark prejudice of our traditional individualism against any form of collective action has to be broken down in the school of experience. The opposition of all the vested interests that profit by our present social anarchy has to be overcome. Part of the battle is around the very idea of social planning, the rest around the achievement of the degree of social ownership without which no social plan can operate. Here is where democracy as power has to assert itself, and here is where it will meet with the stiffest resistance.

Private ownership of the basic resources, the productive plant, and distributive machinery of our economic system is both the foundation and the goal of the profit system. It functions for the public need only insofar as profit is thereby

gained and property accumulated. This by-product of public service decreases with the age of the system, until, as we now see, the destruction of product in the interest of price and profit is begun. The same social necessity therefore which calls for a planned and planning social economy also calls for the cancellation of private ownership wherever it stands in the way of the social plan. This is the test of the kinds and amounts of property which must be socialized. This question, which was formerly approached by the test of justice or injustice, has now become an issue of economic and social efficiency.

The real essence of social ownership is often concealed by the loose use of the terms public or common ownership when only government ownership is meant. The one identical element in social and government ownership is that the title vests in the nation. But government ownership under the profit economy guarantees the capitalists an income they are no longer able to secure for themselves. Under social ownership with social planning, all the returns of the common enterprise go directly to social purposes decreed by the people themselves. No charges are collected by private capitalists for the use of their funds. The slight exception is where a country which has inaugurated social ownership and planning has to take loans for a time from capitalist nations.

Under government ownership within the profit economy the enterprise is usually operated by the political machine, which itself is an organized form of profit taking. This leaves the people with little or no share in the control. But social ownership of the national plant with social-economic planning puts the control as well as the full and direct use of the product

in the hands of the people. At this point social-economic planning is diametrically opposite in its method of operation to both the private ownership of expanding capitalist society and the government ownership of its declining period. In our great producing and distributing corporations the workers are increasingly without initiative, interest or share in the control. This is also largely true of government ownership within the capitalist economy. Its regimented civil service follows the lines of the military machine. It is because of this background that most of the capitalist criticism, or advocacy, of economic planning assumes its development or control by experts. It repeats the social fallacy of a benevolent dictatorship which can never develop anything but a servile community, even though its rulers may be efficient technicians and kindhearted social workers.

The first objection to a planned and planning social economy, made by the kind of economist who leaves university posts for more lucrative employment with banks and corporations, is that it is too complex a job for the human mind. This is nothing but the old cry, "It never has been done; it can't be done," which every generation of the human race has heard raised against every proposed improvement, technical or social. If our forefathers had been stopped by it, we would not have any of our present equipment for living. If we are stopped by it now, we are left with increasing scarcity and war, the destruction of all we have built. If we cannot control our economic affairs by reason and morals, our political affairs must increasingly be dominated by unreason and force. It is time to find out just what can be done in the field of social planning.

A more valid objection, raised by a younger group of writers, is that social-economic planning is too totalitarian; that it puts too much power again in too few hands, gives us a tyrannical bureaucracy for an autocratic plutocracy, stifles the initiative which is the very breath of progress. So they want either a return to our earlier agrarian type of free enterprise or a regulated economy in which there is large room for small business. But the economic clock cannot be turned backward, as the "trust busters" have found out. The machine age decrees collectivism. It requires concerted action in agriculture as well as in industry. The only question is what kind?

The record of the British Labor Party and of German Social Democracy makes it plain that any attempt to operate a small section of the national economy as community enterprise, with the rest private, is doomed to failure. To succeed it must be the other way round. In a planned and planning social-economy here there will, of necessity, be need for small personal business and handicrafts, but these must form a section of the plan, be assigned their quota of raw materials, goods, and market, and be under price and profit regulations. They cannot be left free to build up capitalist exploitation. They will be subject to the limiting controls of the social economy, just as public ownership and the cooperatives are now subject to the limiting controls of capitalist economy.

The basic question the critics of social planning are raising is an old one—the issue between security and freedom. There is no either-or choice. As some philosophers have observed, there must be an element of anarchy in any system to make it work. The rights of the individual must be guaranteed in any economic scheme as they have been in the Bill of Rights.

Security in the modern world can be had only by collective planning and control of economic affairs. Freedom for the individual can be had only by universal participation in the planning and control. This will do for the American today what free land and free business enterprise did for the Americans of 1776. It will do what Jefferson wanted when he proposed that ". . . there shall not be a man in the state who will not be a member of some one of its councils . . . and every citizen can act in person . . . in all things relating to him . . . and in the offices nearest and most interesting to him."

It is obvious that there is in social-economic planning a tendency toward bureaucracy. So there is in democracy. But this does not destroy the possibility of economic democracy. It merely calls for action. It is a challenge to a perpetual fight like that against weeds and plant diseases. The recognition of the danger is half the battle. The rest is in cultivating the will to serve and in continually calling office holders to an accounting of their stewardship. Those who defeat plutocratic autocracy should also be able to vanquish socialistic bureaucracy. The road to liberty runs forward, not backward. It runs through the greatest possible freedom to participate in social enterprise and its controls.

A planned and planning social-economy depends for its success as much upon increasing participation of all the people in the planning and the management as it does upon common ownership and common consent concerning the goal to be reached and the standards to be realized. Our political democracy breaks down where it cannot secure this participation; and the main reason why it cannot is the divorce of economic from

political affairs in the lives of most citizens and their unity in those of the ruling class. A democratic social economy becomes a national cooperative of producers and consumers of goods and services, jointly managing the common business. The condition of its successful operation is that all the people shall have the opportunity to acquire the capacity, and all shall accept the duty, to participate in all the controls. Without that an economy of abundance, resting upon social ownership, would indeed develop a stifling bureaucracy. It would create another privileged priesthood, exercising power by virtue of knowledge kept from the people. But when it draws into its operation the abilities of all, then it becomes not a mechanical scheme administered by experts but a functioning organism, the gradual development of an articulated, consciously controlled life.

Democratically conceived and inaugurated, planned and planning social economy calls forth more initiative than does the profit economy in its present stage. The profit system today has a large fear of initiative and inventiveness lest these interfere with the prospective profits of invested capital, and therefore restrains them where they look likely to do so. Capitalist society now leaves the major decisions of the kind and amount of productive plant, distributive machinery and cultural facilities it shall have to an increasingly smaller section of the population. A democratically planned social economy requires that the many shall participate in these choices. For success in its production it is necessary that they agree as to what their part shall be in providing it. Thus they, and not government officials, take the initiative in choosing the amount and speed of their work and the quality of their output.

Through sharing in making its choices and setting its standards, social planning develops widely the initiative and creative ability present in some degree in all human beings, just as pioneer living developed them in selected individuals.

Likewise the distribution of income under social-economic planning is determined democratically instead of being the outcome of the struggle for profit. Three considerations join in the decision of how the product of the common labor shall be divided; the desire to move toward an equalitarian society; the securing of social well-being by the development of the capacities of all the people; the procuring of the maximum motivation for individual effort. Thus there is drawn together the individual right to equal opportunity in the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness, the ideal of a society without privileged classes, and the practical necessity of securing the maximum contribution from all persons. Only through the closest possible approach to equality of income can a planned and planning society develop universally those capacities which it needs for general participation in the common enterprise. Therefore, it has a compulsion to fight tendencies toward inequality as socially dangerous, just as capitalist society is moved to combat trends toward equality. The more success a planning society has in its approach toward equality the more it can diminish its use of instruments of force—armies, courts, police and prisons—which capitalist society is compelled increasingly to use to uphold its inequality of income and life.

Capitalism needs inequality of income because it relies upon the stimulus of financial reward for its main motivation. A planned and planning social economy, on the other hand, requires and generates the motive of service. It requires so-

cially useful labor from all who are able to work and adjusts income to what is needed for the performance of the service. This involves a differential, which has to be kept as small as possible to prevent a new form of class privilege, class distinction, and class power from arising. The danger is diminished by the fact that all forms of work are regarded as honorable contributions to the community, not to be done for personal place or power. A planned and planning society is a creative society in which, for the first time in history, there is freedom for all to express themselves in socially useful work and to enjoy unhindered the fruits of their labor—to reap where they have sown, to inhabit where they have builded. Thus economic democracy, expressed through social-economic planning, leads to social democracy.

But across that road the enemies of social change are strongly entrenched. If we look at Europe we can see how forces long ago strongly organized for social democracy failed because they did not carry the democratic offensive into the economic realm soon enough. Just as our early democratic freedom was lost by the contraction of economic opportunity, so a socialized democracy can only grow out of the expansion of economic opportunity, out of the opening up of new economic frontiers to replace in multiplied forms the geographic frontier that was closed and wasted by the development of monopoly. It is only as we replace the blind struggle of monopolistic capital with intelligent planning for social ends and substitute the motivation of mutual service for that of profit seeking that we can open up the new economic frontiers which will sustain a wider democratic development. Put the people's power over our economic life in democratic form, for social

ends, and there are no limits to the new horizons that will open up before the march of the human spirit. The question now is whether the democratic state is to be controlled by those who seek this development or by those who desire to prevent it.

## CHAPTER VII

# *The Democratic State*

THOSE WHO seek to use the democratic state to establish a new social order on an economic foundation other than the capitalist economy have to reckon with those elements in its nature that are common to all states. It contains within itself the capacity for dictatorship because the core of state nature is the power to coerce. That power, even in the democratic state, is absolute and final over the individual. Democracy has not changed the nature of state power. That power reaches its climax in the control of the state over life and death, through its ability to make war, to imprison and to execute. Democracy took these powers away from the few and put them in the hands of the many. It then put limitations around their use, in order that the few—even the lone individual—might be protected from unjust and antisocial uses of state power. But the power to coerce remains.

Those who read history in terms of the struggles between

the classes write the state down as "the organ of class domination," "the executive committee of the ruling class," whether that class be capitalist or working. The function of the state that bulks largest in their eyes is its ability to stop those who seek to transfer its power from one class to the other. Those who examine social institutions from the functional viewpoint define the state as the agency that binds society together and enables it to stay together by expressing its will. Its ability to do this rests finally upon its power to coerce. Hence the state is a legally coercive instrument for maintaining a given order of society. Both its authority and its stability depend upon its ability to defend itself against enemies without and within. It exists only so long as it can perform this function adequately.

From the day of its beginning the state has been built upon military power. The men who laid its foundations were those who led the early communities successfully in war. The captains became the kings, and the kings became emperors. All through the history of the state, the expression of its power abroad has dovetailed with the form of its control at home. In the great capitalist states the development of democracy has always been limited by the effects of imperialist expansion. That the concentration of power within the state means more expression of its power against other states is now being written in letters of fire and blood for all the world to see. It has been a maxim of Machiavellian statecraft for centuries that adventure abroad provided diversion from trouble at home. We have added a variation to that theme. Until the outbreak of the present war, the committee records show that our increased armament budgets were put through as

much on the plea of possible domestic disturbance as on danger from foreign foes.

Thus the democratic state naturally falls back upon its power to coerce when its economic breakdown weakens its power to satisfy the needs of the people. The military grow in prestige and power. They are given executive posts in the new government agencies. Through the National Guard and the experimental contracts of the industrial mobilization plan, they tie business and military power together. Thus the democratic state which put the military under civil authority turns back toward the military control upon which the absolute state it replaced was founded. It approaches by its own path the pattern of the fascist state. In Europe the fascists came to power largely by identifying themselves with the needs of national defense. So here the antidemocratic forces use the same approach. In both cases the return to alliance upon force in foreign affairs is accompanied by repression of democratic rights at home.

What is often forgotten in the discussion of democracy is that while in principle it substitutes government by consent for government by coercion, nevertheless it must operate at present through the state which is based upon the power to coerce, and in the last analysis depends upon that power. What the idealists who are opposed to repression within and war without often forget is that the democratic state at times depends upon its power to coerce for its very life. Democracy has not removed the element of coercion from the state; it has subordinated it to the element of consent. That element was not entirely missing from the absolute states. They had to satisfy their subjects enough to avoid revolt. To this end the

modern dictatorships use their control of propaganda. Coercion is the major element in their power, consent the minor. The democracies reverse the relationship. Also the consent is different. In the dictatorships it is secured after the event, by official propaganda. In the democracies it is secured before the event, by democratic discussions, in which propaganda plays its part. By deciding things for the people the dictators prevent them from acquiring the capacity to think and to judge, to make choices and decisions. This is the capacity that democracy develops and upon which it depends.

Democracy retains, however, the power to coerce those who refuse to abide by the rules of the democratic game, who instead of seeking to change the democratic decision by democratic means, seek to overthrow the democratic state and destroy the base of democratic power. This power of repression rests finally in the state's control of its armed forces. It may be used to protect the life of the democratic process, it may be used to destroy it. The state in any form is always a potential instrument of repression—either to uphold change or to prevent it.

It is this fact which leads the anarchist and syndicalist philosophies to reject the state and to seek its abolition. It also leads communist philosophy to seek to so administer the state in the transition between capitalist and socialist society that it shall gradually wither away. This outcome demonstrably depends upon the same course being pursued by all the great states. As long as the socialist state is compelled to arm itself and use organized violence abroad, it runs the risk of developing the same course for repression at home.

Democracy cannot change the nature of the state until it

succeeds in developing a world in which power states do not exist. At present its course runs in another direction. The League of Nations failed because the democratic principle cannot govern the relations of states which are imperialist in nature and are becoming undemocratic in procedure. International democracy can be established only as the nations become more democratic at home. They know full well that international democratic control over economic resources and trade is the only road to peace. But how can this be done by nations whose internal economic life is dominated by the antidemocratic, monopolistic-capitalist forces? These forces naturally seek a similar type of international control. This fact makes all talk of a democratic federation of Europe under present conditions another illusion.

The fact that the state is able to prevent social change from being effected, or to prevent it being destroyed after it is won, makes the struggle for social change the struggle for possession of state power. That struggle is now going on in the United States between those who need and want change and those who need and want to prevent it. This fact explains much of our history since 1929. That is why our Federal Bureau of Investigation behaves in certain instances just like the secret police of the dictators. That is why the Dies Committee, and the Department of Justice through Grand Jury procedure, conduct an undemocratic inquisition into opinions and beliefs. That is why the President declares that W.P.A. workers have no right to strike against the government. The struggle has been carried on mainly with the instruments of propaganda. Now it begins to use the instruments of repression and revolt against them, as in the case of W.P.A. sit-down

strikes and the hunger strike of the wives of those arrested in the Detroit raid of the F.B.I. Whether it will proceed to the use of armed force, as it did in President Hoover's brutal action against the Veterans' Bonus marchers in Washington, depends upon whether enough people awake to what is going on in time to insist upon the use of democratic procedure.

Those who think they can bring in a socialist order of society by merely winning elections need to examine the nature of the democratic state, and the recent record of its use here by those who intend to prevent a socialist society from coming into being. That will not be done without securing a democratic mandate from the people. But the reactionary forces and their political henchmen have known for a long time how to prevent elections from being won. To the traditional method of buying votes, strong-arm tactics at the polling places, and the stuffing of ballot boxes, they have added the new technique of propaganda, for which we may thank the advertising men and the psychologists who taught them. The lies and forgeries spread about Upton Sinclair in the Epic campaign in California in 1932 indicate what may be expected. Where lies fail, more force will be used. Already, in some cities, Democratic and Republican election officials join in throwing out all Socialist and Communist ballots. But even when a sufficient vote to put democratic control over the sources of economic power, and thus change the economic base of society, is registered, the struggle for the power of the state will only have begun.

The possessing classes will naturally try to use the power of the state to prevent their power from being democratically taken away from them. Its courts and armed forces have been

brought into action sufficiently when local industrial power has been threatened to show what will be attempted. The attacks upon Governor Murphy for his refusal to start bloodshed by ordering the state troops to oust the sit-down automobile strikers, when even the heads of the corporation involved did not want that done, show how large a dependence upon force instead of reason and justice there is among us. Another indication is the increased recognition by the high military command of the problem of "domestic disturbance." A military manual on this question was recently withdrawn from circulation when its terms provoked critical discussion.

The real battle has not yet been joined. So far the temple of Mammon has not been cleaned out. Only its doorstep has been brushed, and that not thoroughly. If we look back at the determination to execute Sacco and Vanzetti no matter how inconclusive the evidence, at the power that kept Mooney in jail for years after the evidence against him had been proven false, if we measure the propaganda and legislative campaigns against social change in this country since the World War, we will understand what may be expected when the people really accomplish a vital part of the change that is needed.

Our political system was not designed to change itself into a more effective form. Our people have been taught to regard it as perpetual. It was created to protect a free, small-scale capitalism, and it continually seeks in vain through its old-fashioned adherents to return to that condition of affairs. This is like trying to cut a wheat crop on a large farm with a sickle. Since our political system has been under the influence of monopoly capitalism, its own vested interests have built up

barriers against self-transformation. Are our office-seeking, job-distributing machines gracefully going to commit hari-kari? Ask Mayor Hague and those in higher places who accept his aid! By what process can they be transformed into effective instruments of social administration? What are they doing now to the social services that the people need more than ever before?

Our political system was designed to make and keep a fairly comfortable, middle-class population. It has given our middle income section enough of a stake in the capitalist economy to put most of them against changing it, even though it is destroying their security. To transform political democracy into social democracy means changing our legal provisions regarding property rights. From that, despite the fact that these rights have already been changed to their hurt by economic conditions, this middle section of our society draws back for fear it is going to suffer. Thus the political program it mostly favors moves toward state capitalism, with its need to use to the full the coercive power of the state against further change.

The democratic state, like any other, operates to prolong the existing form of society through the idea that its law and order are sacred. This puts the weight of the state, without the actual use of its coercive power, against social change. It is the job of the capitalist press and other propagandist forces to get the people to consent that law and order are more important than freedom. The core of this question of course is whether law and order, in any given situation, represent the permanent community interest or the temporary interests of a class. It is necessary to remember that the state, with its legal arrangements and its coercive powers, is after all only

a tool made by man for certain purposes. Both religion and philosophy have at times done themselves much discredit, and humanity much disservice, by teaching that the state was ordained by God and embodied eternal values. This gives a sanction to mere legality which it has no right to possess.

While it embodies certain abiding principles the law is a temporary adjustment of interests that change from time to time according to social need. Today the state gives property rights and it is illegal to touch them. Tomorrow it takes them away and it is illegal to resist their loss. To make mere legality an absolute imperative is to subordinate inalienable human rights to temporary arrangements. The next step is to make the state a God, another idol made with hands. This leads to subservience to officeholders, and then dictators. The American people need to remember that the state and its constitution are human instruments, designed to meet human needs at a given time, and therefore to be changed when they no longer serve their purpose. They need to understand that all the recent emphasis upon the Constitution, loyalty oaths, and flag worship is an instinctive defense reaction to the approach of a change in property relations.

The real nature of power in the democratic state is concealed by the illusion that the state represents the common interests of the people. By virtue of this it demands loyalty and commands obedience. This idea has been borrowed for effective propaganda use by the totalitarian dictators. The state must be all because it represents all. The Fuehrer embodies its power because he is the guardian of all. The history of our agrarian struggle, our labor wars, and our radical movements explodes this illusion. It shows a bitter conflict of

interests, with the state, most of the time, acting in behalf of one side. Where are the common interests in a society whose economic order creates classes whose basic interests are antagonistic? How much common interest is there today between the farmers and the bankers, between the wage earners in corporation industries and the stockholders? Its margin grows smaller all the time, as the self-interest of one group ceases to provide employment and a living for the other. In a class-divided society the broad common interest, after the securing of a livelihood, is the search for health and education. Even this is less and less a common pursuit, as capitalist decline lessens the activities of the state in these essential services. In this situation, the idea of the state as the instrument of the common interest is a fiction to keep us using a tool which no longer does the thing it claims to do.

A similar purpose is served by the idea that the state is an impartial power to arbitrate and adjust the conflict of interests within the community. This again is the claim of the totalitarian dictators, to which the papal state adds the attribute of divinity. The claim of above-the-battle impartiality for the state is symbolized in the blindfolded figure of justice holding the scales even. Our long record of the difference in the sentences given malefactors of great wealth, labor organizers, and radical leaders, sufficiently explodes the illusion that justice is blind. What section of society do our judges and controlling legislators represent? True enough, in the matter of the right of labor to bargain collectively our democratic state has recently ceased to be partial, but note the power of the present attack upon the National Labor Relations Act and its administration. True enough, the Supreme Court has recently acted

impartially in free speech cases. Even Mayor Hague must now let radicals speak. But if they go into the Black Belt and try to organize the Negroes, they soon discover how impartial state power really is. The La Follette Committee has recently made public the record of how brutally state power was used in California to prevent the migratory farm workers from organizing.

As a matter of fact the power of the state, through its courts, legislators and officeholders, nationally and locally, represents one side or the other of the underlying economic conflict, according to the dominance of forces. Most of the time the state power is exerted on the side of property and business interests. A well-dressed man gets a different reception in a police station from a tramp, indeed is less likely to get there for the same offense. How many legislators give the same reception to a request from a wage earner or a small farmer that they give to one from the prominent business man? There are a few cases in our record where the police and the armed forces have been used to protect the lives of the workers. These were the acts either of labor administrations or of those elected, or expecting to be elected, by the labor vote. Hence, including the exceptions where democratic principles prevailed, they too prove the rule that in a society divided by class conflict the state is not impartial. This fact has a vital bearing upon the part the democratic state will play in social change. Hitler came to power partly because of the connivance and aid the state gave him in his attacks upon the meetings of his opponents. Several hundred New York policemen were recently shown to have joined, and signed applications to join, the Christian Front. This organization was engaged, among

other things, in breaking up meetings the police were duty-bound to protect.

Our record makes many additions to the historic evidence which supports the thesis that the state is the instrument through which the ruling class expresses its power. Our experience also provides support for the opposing thesis that the democratic state is the expression of the common will, expressed through the majority with the consent of the minority. At present the American state is partly one thing and partly the other. Under the pressure of necessity we proceeded from the view and the practice that the best government is that which governs least to the increasing use of governmental powers to protect business at home and abroad. Then it became necessary for the government to protect the people—their natural resources, their education, health, recreation. In these activities all of the people, through their government, seek to repair the damage done to the community life by part of the people. These forms of community enterprise introduce into government the humane and scientific spirit, the opposite of the profit spirit embodied in our office-seeking political machines. In these activities there is felt the impact of the underlying economic conflict. One section of the population opposes them, the other struggles to advance them. One shares more in their administration than the other. The organized workers had the initiative in producing our public school system. How much do they share in its administration now, in determining to what ends it is run?

Traditionally our political struggle has been over the centralization of governmental powers, between the followers of Jefferson and Hamilton. The advocates of a strong state rep-

resented the man who had his hands on economic power and wanted the protection and help of the state. The advocates of a weak state, keeping its hands off business, represented those who desired to get their hands on economic power and wanted opportunity left open. As big business developed, it wanted the protection of the state at certain points and to be let alone at others. Today its reactionary section wants a representative republic, not a direct democracy, because the former is more easily controlled; it proclaims the need of a dictator, Mussolini type preferred. Because individualistic democracy expressed politically the economic opportunity of this rich land in its early days, the struggle against the class use of the state by growing monopoly interests took the form of opposition to a strong government and demanded return to earlier freedom. Now two things have happened: The big business interests have seized the slogans of free enterprise, have so appropriated for their own use the economic side of the Jeffersonian tradition, that there is no difference at all between the Democratic Bourbons from the South who control the present Congress and the most reactionary Republicans, traditional worshippers of Hamilton. At the same time, the real Jeffersonian democrats, genuine believers in human rights, are compelled to extend the powers of government over new areas of life for the protection of the people and to develop a centralized state with its inherent menace to democracy. Thus the struggle between the class interests involved is the struggle for control of what must be, both by economic and social necessity, a stronger form of the state.

What we have is a dual system. Up to a certain point the needs of the many prevail. This happens because the impera-

tive of social well-being is recognized, also because of the need of votes and the danger of pushing the people too far down. There are some things that cannot yet be done, perhaps not ever. But at vital spots, as for instance the recent cuts in funds for the unemployed, the farmers and youth, the will of the few prevails. Then social and political need forces some restoration. But the suffering and the social loss remain. So we have an area of democratic power and an area of autocratic control. This represents a clash of economic interests.

Our political tradition says that economic power and state power are two things and should be kept apart. Actually, under the impact of the machine and its demand for collective control, they tend to become one and indivisible. In the course of this development we have a conflict between economic and state power—the invisible and the visible government—at certain points; for instance, the N.L.R.B. At other points we have collaboration; for example, recent budget policy. Until economic and state power are openly unified by complete democratic control of both, the invisible government of economic power will continue to encroach upon the democratic state. In our later history, our armed forces—the final expression of the power of the state—have been used, at home and abroad, more to protect the interests of property than the life of the community. Our entry into the World War in 1917 is the crowning case in point.

State power was military power to begin with; the successful fighting men were the first rulers of the forming nations. Then military power became economic power. It enabled the control of the land for revenue and the maintenance

of armies. This was the first economic revolution—changing the function of land from the means of subsistence to the means of power. The capitalist-democratic revolution changed the order again. Economic power became the means to control military power; it captured and used the state for its ends. These were later said to include peace. War was supposed to be on the way out. But it is back again, because the nature of state power has not changed. As long as the economic aspect of life is organized as struggle for power, as long as it requires the coercion of the state to maintain itself, abroad or at home, democracy is defeated in its basic purpose to substitute the process of reason and justice for that of coercion. Not until democracy has captured the economic citadel can we alter the basic nature of the state.

To treat our situation as one in which the state is only the executive committee of the ruling class is to miss the opportunities for further weakening its power and so make the accomplishment of needed social change more difficult. To ignore the existence and power of a ruling class, to view American government as only the expression of the will of the people, is to pave the way for the totalitarian state by making it easy to destroy democracy in the name of democracy. The essence of political realism is to understand that the state cannot represent the community as long as there are economic classes struggling for power. The most that can happen is that class power can be democratically established and made the power of the state. The "community," which in theory the democratic state is supposed to represent, can exist only in the classless society. In the class-divided society, it is a myth which is finally used to support the claims of the

totalitarian state to supersede democracy. It is only when economic classes disappear that the common interest can appear and take control. Then it has the opportunity to express itself in cooperative administration of government instead of state power.

At present the democratic state expresses popular control no more than it does social well-being. It is now actually enforcing economic scarcity, repressing civil liberties, and getting ready to make war, contrary to the interests of most of its citizens. Thus it becomes increasingly the instrument of a class which uses its control of the agencies of public opinion and the powers of the state to collect its profit and interest, to deceive the people and suppress its opponents. The Vice-President of the Southern California Chamber of Commerce indiscreetly revealed the situation when he sent out a letter to its members asking for a fund to combat "subversive activities against business." Not a few recent court decisions, a lot of the questions asked by the Dies Committee and the investigators of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, reveal the same identification of the democratic state and the capitalist economic order. This procedure gives us less, not more, democracy and leads easily toward the fascist state.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Fascist Threat*

THE FASCIST STATE registers the victory of the capitalist-imperialist elements over the democratic elements in modern society. It shows itself in several forms. Hitler perfected the organizational pattern of Mussolini and put behind it a racial cult that has the fervor of religion. The corporative fascism of Portugal is different from both, in that it puts the church back of the state and thus embodies for the modern world the old papal ambition for temporal power. The military fascism of Japan is a more direct survival of the feudal system than the others. But though the pattern varies a little, the warp and woof are the same in every case. The fascist state restores government by force, it regiments life on the military pattern of obedience, it prevents the social change that both the needs of modern society and the inner drive of democracy require. In words its leaders pour contempt upon democracy, in action they crush it with the iron heels and the blackjacks of their storm troopers. By their restrictions in culture they try to make its restoration impossible. Their

purpose is to prevent the transition from capitalist to socialist society.

To speak of the fascist state as revolutionary is a misuse of the term. Its limited social welfare activities, its surface efficiencies, may be new for the countries it dominates. Its regulation and limitation of capitalist activities may look new to American individualists. But the fascist state does not change class divisions or class power; it strengthens them by bringing back the feudal doctrine of social ranks. It does not remove the basic fact of economic exploitation from which class divisions arise and on which class power is based. It merely replaces private capitalism with state capitalism. This makes the state the chief exploiter, and the results are shared between the party bureaucracy and the key capitalists in the war production industries. So far from being the social revolution, or a part of it, the fascist state is an attempt to prevent it. It is the counter-revolution anticipating, instead of following, the basic change in the structure, control and nature of society that is called for by present need and democratic ideals. It is the attack upon the forces forming to make that change, before they have become strong enough to take power.

Instead of bringing forth new things the fascist state restores old things. It brings back the absolute authority of the feudal system and attempts to restore the feudal pattern of society. It appeared where the principle of authority had deep, historic roots that had never been dug up by the democratic part of the capitalist-democratic revolution. It restored the worship of nationalism where internationalism was needed. It then revived the pre-capitalist type of imperialism, the world conquest dreams of the Caesars, the Alexanders, the Napoleons.

Naturally, therefore, it turned the hands of the clock of culture backward, banished scholars, burned books and ordered women back into the home, to occupy themselves solely with cooking and children. To complete the picture, it seeks in Germany and Japan to revive the religion of primitive society. Thus it gathers behind its banners all the forces of reaction. It likes to call itself dynamic, but its power, which cannot be denied, runs life backward on its tracks.

The fascist leaders have brought the world no creative ideas, only a re-hash of old ones which the world has been trying to outgrow. They are the temporary receivers of a bankrupt order, milking it dry, and destroying its remaining ideals by ruthless force and propaganda without scruple. The fascist forces are composed of all who are unable to go forward in a day when the world must move in one direction or another, joined with those who must either stop democratic advance or lose their privilege and power. That is why the governments of England and France, and the United States, have helped build up the fascist states even to their own peril. As state policy it does not make sense, as class strategy it falls into a readable pattern.

The capitalist nations have reached the point where either democratic power must be extended to their economic life so that the people may have the well-being and culture that the machine age makes possible, or democracy must be abandoned and the people regimented at a lower level of living. The price paid by the capitalists for the latter course is the loss of their freedom to invest and to direct their workers, except where they can bribe, or become, party officials. They also run the risk of losing the rest of their power to the legionaries

they have hired to defend them, as did the emperors in the declining days of Rome. But most of them prefer this risk to the certainty that capitalism, which produced the economic crisis and cannot solve it, must surrender its power to the people if the fascists do not destroy democracy.

The feudal remnants in modern society naturally join the capitalists in this course. They are already tied together through intermarriage and the merging of the old investment funds made out of land with the new money acquired through commerce, industry and banking. These combined class interests are joined by the small business men who ignorantly and vainly think that the promises of the fascist leaders to emancipate them from the competition and repression of the monopolists will be redeemed. Into the line-up come many wage earners and a lot of professionals, deceived by their bitter needs in the economic crisis, to fight ignorantly against their own interests. Later they find themselves purged, cowed by espionage and persecution, rendered helpless by a propaganda machine more conscienceless than the yellow journalism of the capitalist reaction or the war propaganda of the great democratic nations, and more scientifically efficient. In this matter, as in some others, the Nazis have improved upon their teachers.

So the fascist state is not merely the result of a middle-class revolt; nor is fascism solely the handiwork of finance capitalists. It is both and more than both. The fascist forces are a coalition of class elements—capitalist, feudal, small business and professional, wage earners and farmers. The fascist state embodies all the dark forces of modern life; it is

a combination of greed, ignorance, cruelty and fear come to power.

In Europe the fascist state arose out of two needs—repressed nationalism and the economic crisis. In both Germany and Italy the national ego was thwarted and the economic crisis struck early and hard. Japan was in the same situation. For the economic crisis the democratic governments had no solution; they could not even reduce unemployment. For the repressed nationalism the parties of the left, with their messianic internationalism born out of due time, had no solace. Their philosophy and their strategy had not allowed sufficiently for the strength of nationalist emotions. So the fascist platforms, promising freedom and glory for the nation, along with employment and a good living for the distressed, easily deceived the people. They did not see that the political essence of fascism is the destruction of their right to govern themselves, and its economic essence the maintenance of the capitalist system of exploitation by the use of state power. Just as easily fascism concealed for a time the fact that its solution of the economic crisis was a fake, that the removal of unemployment by a war-preparations economy was the road to the war it professed not to want in fact, while it glorified it in principle.

The fascist state, thus created and composed, is now a threat to the peace and security of the democratic nations. Beyond that, it menaces the democratic way of life everywhere and the possibilities of social change that democracy opens up. The immediate threat helps to conceal the nature and origin of this danger. Startled by the might of the Nazi war machine, the American people are looking without for

the danger that begins within, whose growth they have failed to perceive. The fascist states are now a threat to the democratic nations only because those nations built up the fascist war power by loans, credits and the sale of war supplies. This they did under the necessity of the capitalist economy to find markets, make profits and provide jobs.

Without this aid the fascist states would be unable to fight effectively. The democratic nations had the overwhelming superiority in economic power. They have been handing it over to the fascist states. In the year before the Nazi invasion of Poland the three nations that led all others, by a big gap, in selling the means of war to the Nazis were Great Britain (with her colonies), the Netherlands, the United States. Under the terms of the contracts between Germany and the British and French owners of Rumanian oil wells, a part of their output still has to go to Germany. Our sales to Italy, the Nazis' ally and one of our best customers, were only stopped by Italy's action as part of her preparations to enter the war, whose winning by the fascists would endanger our national future. We are still supplying Japan with the essential materials of war, even while our President is warning her that any act against the Dutch East Indies which her war party is demanding would be against our interests. It would be, because we are buying there three metals essential to our defense program.

This disastrous course of building up the power of the fascist war machine was entered upon by the democratic nations under the requirements of the profit-seeking economy. Just as the competitive struggles of the great powers for markets, raw materials and fields of investment during the period

of capitalist expansion led to the World War, so the need for trade in the period of capitalist decline has led to the present conflict, with all its menace to democracy. The political policies of the business men who led the British government, held France in financial leading strings, and had large influence here, were the expression of their international financial interests. Their diplomacy gave the fascist states what their economic aid had made them strong enough to try to take—Manchuria, Ethiopia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Spain, Poland, a large part of China. In China and in Spain they helped the fascist states to attack a forming democracy, and we assisted.

This policy, expressing the interests of capitalism against the interests of the people of the democratic nations, has turned the balance of power in Europe over to the fascist states and may yet accomplish the same result in Asia, Africa and South America. It then demands and gets the suspension of democratic procedure within the democratic nations, the road by which Germany traveled to the fascist state. This, it tells us, is the only way to defend ourselves from the fascist threat. So, to protect ourselves from it without we are to surrender to it within. In that event, the war, on top of the economic crisis developed by capitalist decline, will do for us what the Versailles Treaty, on top of capitalist expansion, did for Germany. This will be the result, unless the American people see in time that the roots of the fascist state are in the antidemocratic elements in our capitalistic democracy, and proceed to get them out.

What reality there is to the fascist threat in the United States does not come from the plottings of any foreign government. Our organizations that show the characteristics of

the original fascist formations in Italy and Germany—suppression of opposition by strong-arm method; incitement of hatred against Reds, Jews, Negroes and immigrants; hostility to labor unions and farm organizations controlled by workers and farmers in their own interests; promises of economic reforms and benefits that cannot possibly be secured under the profit system—have borrowed some propaganda material from Goebbels. But their basic pattern is American; it derives from the Ku Klux Klan and other organizations of native sons. These organizations express ignorance, fear, and unmet needs in the American scene. They are used by the special interests that fear the outcome of democracy. An exception must be noted in the case of the Christian Front, the product of the propaganda of Father Coughlin, until it appears what action the Roman Catholic Church, an international organization whose supreme power is outside the United States, takes in regard to it.

The fascist threat in the United States lies deeper than any existing organizations of the fascist type, or any talk about the need for a dictator. A retired general or two, and a few rich men, may talk and even plan, as they did a while back, a seizure of power. But the people of this nation are not likely to let any man on a white horse get as far as Washington. The threat to our democracy is from inherent tendencies in the capitalist side of our dual society. Our inability to solve the economic crisis has strengthened these antidemocratic elements. Some of them display the characteristics of the fascist state and the organizations that created it. Consequently they should be called pre-fascist tendencies. They will either be

controlled and eliminated or will ripen into the fascist state in due time.

The reliance upon force and violence instead of upon the democratic process of discussion and consent is just as marked a characteristic of the anti-union corporation control of company towns as it is of Black Shirts, Storm Troopers and the fascist state. The habit and even the technique of repression is identical in both cases. It has been laid bare in detail in the records of the La Follette Committee. For many years we have had mining, mill, coal and steel towns where the Bill of Rights has not been recognized, where even the right to a free and secret vote has not obtained, where every attempt to organize a labor union has been met with physical force applied with the utmost brutality.

The only difference between the beatings suffered by union leaders and members in these towns and those endured in the Brown Houses of Nazi Germany and the party headquarters of Fascist Italy has been the color of the uniforms of those who were doing the beating. The record shows that in many of these towns the government of the United States has actually been overthrown by force and violence, its functions usurped by company hired men exercising authority over the comings and goings, the lives and liberties, of American citizens. Recently the La Follette Committee has verified the newspaper account of the same procedure on the Pacific Coast by the Associated Farmers. What kind of farmers they are is shown by the fact that while 8700 farmers in California got \$3,356,351 in farm benefits, 204 Associated Farmers got \$1,107,544. Among the contributors to their funds, used in organizing a reign of terror against migratory workers and

farmers who dealt with their union, were, banks, railroads, public utility corporations, oil companies, cotton-seed oil and ginning companies, box and lumber companies, sugar refineries, canneries and other processors of farm products.

It is a mistake to assume that the fascist state will follow precisely the same pattern wherever it comes to power. Like the democratic state, it will show variations. But there will appear in fascist organization, as in the organization of democracy, certain typical characteristics. Two points were essential in the Fascist seizure of power in Italy and the Nazi rise to power in Germany. One was the failure of the existing state to enforce its law and order against the fascist organizations; the other was the collaboration of the law-enforcing agencies with their violence, which increased as police and officials became members of them. These attitudes and acts are also present here. The use of the police and the sheriffs by local industrialists to break strikes and stop workers from organizing is typical of certain American communities. It has now extended to our rural life. For instance, the headquarters of the Associated Farmers in Imperial Valley was located, until recently, in the county courthouse, and the Board of Supervisors donated \$50 a month toward the expense of maintaining a stenographer in the office. When the farmers organized an association to keep the truck drivers who transported their vegetables from organizing, everybody on the staff was a deputy sheriff.

We have a long record of illegal raids upon the headquarters of labor unions and radical groups, planned by employers' and patriotic organizations, carried out with brutal violence against persons and destruction of property. The police did

not interfere, or else participated. In many of our cities policemen belong to the Ku Klux Klan which from its beginning has expressed the fascist temper and methods. Now they are joining organizations with a fascist program, like the Black Legion in Michigan and the Christian Front in New York. This carries further the danger to democracy implicit in the fact that the natural sympathies of many officers of our National Guard and army are with capitalist interests and against democratic rights. Our press has given a small amount of space to the exposure of the repression of civil liberties in industry by the La Follette Committee and a large amount to the attempts of the Dies and Smith Committees to limit democratic rights. This indicates how much business cares about democracy when its class interests are involved. It shows also the points at which the antidemocratic economic forces meet and join hands with the antidemocratic political forces. Unless this alliance can be defeated now, it will develop the American type of the fascist state.

For that, our machine politics have prepared the way. Their local dictators, like "I am the Law" Hague, are nationally powerful, even in reform administrations, through their control of convention delegates. The amount of political power in the hands of the average citizen in most cities is like the amount of economic power in the hands of the small business man, the small farmer, the small investor. He suffers distinctly from an inferiority complex in politics because he feels his helplessness before what has become a highly organized business. He is entirely without Walt Whitman's healthy disrespect for "elected persons." When he criticizes his representatives who show less intelligence and honesty than himself,

they demand respect for the office and he subsidizes. He permits elected attorneys and judges, who often have bought their offices by contributions to the party funds, to bully him in the court room like hanging Judge Jeffreys come to life again. Then he wants a strong man to clean up the mess. This is the mood that makes easy the coming of the fascist state.

The antidemocratic tendencies in our political and economic life unite naturally in the days of capitalist decline. Unable to solve the economic problem, afraid of the war that this inability has created, our politicians turn to repression; their latent fascist tendencies spring into action. The leaders in Congress who are stabbing the New Deal to death and putting through repressive legislation come from Southern states where getting the nomination in the primary is equivalent to election, because the state is governed by one party—the totalitarian system. The key men in the congressional forces of reaction and repression come from the eight poll-tax states of the South and Southwest. In those states the propertyless, poverty-stricken section of the population—Negroes, poor whites, Mexicans—is disfranchised by a law which provides that no person may vote who has not paid his poll tax. This makes the buying of votes easy and gives the political machine long life. It also destroys democracy and sets up in its place a dictatorship of the minority. This control has now been transported to Washington.

No representative in Congress from the poll-tax states represents a majority in his district. The figures have recently been analyzed by Allan L. Fletcher. They show that in the 1936 election the percentage of voters who actually voted in the poll-tax states ran from 33.5 per cent in the highest down

to 14 per cent in the lowest. This last was in South Carolina, whereas in North Carolina, where there is no poll tax, the vote was 50 per cent. In Virginia, a poll-tax state, the vote was 26 per cent of the voting population. Across the line in West Virginia where there is no poll tax, it was 92 per cent. The average for the nation was 64 per cent. "Cotton Ed" Smith, a typical diehard, was sent back to the Senate from South Carolina, by exactly 5.5 per cent of the potential ballots. Cox of Georgia, violent opponent of the Wages and Hours Act, came back to the House by the will of 3.8 per cent of the voters of his district in Georgia. Smith of Virginia, leader of the attack on the N.L.R.B., has 10 per cent of the voters of his district in Virginia behind him. Woodrum, from the same state, chief axe man against the W.P.A., represents a fraction less than 10 per cent of his constituency. Dies of Texas, "defender of democracy" and advocate of repressive legislation, owes his office to just about 8 per cent of the voters back home.

While our liberals have been denouncing all dictatorships abroad, a very effective one has been operating here. The poll-tax state machines, with only a small minority to control, are able to keep their men in power longer than other states. Out of their 78 representatives, 30 have held their seats for more than ten years. Under the rule of seniority, this gives them an undue portion of committee control. Through chairmanships and the balance of power, they dominate seventeen major House Committees. They also have the chairmanship of five minor committees, the speakership, and the post of majority leader. To this they add the Vice-Presidency, with its chairmanship of the Senate. These positions,

plus the glad collusion of representatives of capitalist reaction from other states, have given them dictatorial control of legislation at vital points. The will of the great majority of the American people is defeated in the committee rooms, cloakrooms and halls of Congress, because of the key positions held by representatives of minority interests in a group of eight states, whose total vote in the 1936 election was less than that of the Democratic Party in the state of Pennsylvania. Such men are natural leaders of the American fascist state. They have grown up, and acted all their lives, according to its pattern. By their whole political inheritance and careers they are conditioned to cooperate in its further development. They can mouth the phrases of democracy as emotionally as Hitler, in his early days, could mouth the phrases of socialism. They are equally ready, in conjunction with the financial, industrial and landowning interests who have tolerated no opposition in the communities they control, to do to those who oppose them what they have long done to the Negroes, the poor whites and the Mexicans of their own states.

Meanwhile, a progressive administration helps prepare the way for fascist repression. It begins to use the machinery of justice for political purposes. With an election approaching, and wartime emotions rising, it suddenly begins prosecutions of radical leaders based on material that has been lying for years in the files, because not considered important enough, or valid enough, to be acted upon. The Democratic Administration tries the secretary of the Communist Party, the leading Republican candidate for the Presidency tries the editor of its paper. The administration invokes the antitrust laws against labor unions for the first time, and the first union prosecuted

is one with a Left leadership which came to power by clearing out the racketeers at risk to life and limb, a job the government should have done long before. The law officer of the government contends in court that a strike is in itself a restraint of trade and commerce forbidden by law. Then the President holds out an olive branch to his political opponents who advocate repressive legislation and directs the hysteria over fifth column activities toward those who oppose his war policy. In these various ways the Bill of Rights is undermined and it is made easier for the fascist state to come into being.

The inability of the progressives to solve the economic crisis is the basic fact that puts them in the position of preparing the way for fascists to come to power. Analyses of the form of economic government installed in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany have shown that the New Deal Codes followed the same general pattern. This is natural. When the state starts to preserve the profit system, its economic administration must follow the capitalist pattern. That pattern is autocratic not democratic, and it moves always toward the totalitarian form. Thus in the N.R.A. Codes and in the first forms of the A.A.A. the power to control prices, and thus indirectly to control wages, was put into a few hands.

The longer we try to meet our economic needs by the profit system, the clearer does the disastrous result to our democratic institutions appear. The New Jersey legislature recently received a committee report recommending that those who have been on relief for three years be barred from voting and formally designated as paupers. California is being propagandized and organized for a One-Two plan which would

give one vote in state elections for ordinary citizens and two to those who can produce a receipt for either income or real estate tax payments. Thus we start back to the days when the franchise was limited by property qualifications.

The psychological trends which the fascist state uses for its emotional drive have long been with us. Like our other pre-fascist trends, they increase with capitalist decline. Our "Americanism," nurtured by the American Legion and various patriotic societies with powerful financial backing, is doing the same job that the extravagant nationalism of early Fascist and Nazi orators did in Germany. Our loyalty oath and flag salute laws, our Constitution Days with the Bill of Rights played down, join in preparing the fascist temper of repression. The democratic tradition is being used against itself, because it lacks economic understanding and a sense of class interests. This weakness increases the strength of capitalist reaction. Beset by economic scarcity and misled by war-time emotions, many believers in democracy fall easy victims to the propaganda that plays upon their honest fears. They do not see that democracy is being destroyed in the name of democracy.

The racial hate which the Nazis have used so powerfully, with their bastard science and their calculated cruelty, points its finger, when indicted, at our race discrimination against the Negro and our lynching record. This stain in our history, this corruption in our blood, is deepened and extended by the economic crisis. Increased antagonism toward Negroes is manifest in those sections where their economic competition has been intensified by unemployment and the drop in farm income, and where their attempts to organize bring them into

conflict with the constituted authority which embodies race prejudice. It appears also where anti-Semitic propaganda, as in Detroit, has been powerful. One race hate feeds upon another.

The growth of anti-Semitic propaganda since the economic decline set in has become a new national problem. Before we had only a slight anti-Semitic feeling locally, due to economic competition and the exaggeration of certain Jewish characteristics. This is more than a borrowed fascist symptom, grafted upon our record of discrimination against the Negro. It is more even than the finding of a scapegoat for our inability to solve the economic problem. The caricature which portrays the Jew now as the destructive communist, and now as the devouring capitalist, could in time destroy itself by its own contradictions. The real threat of our growing anti-Semitism is that it destroys the roots of the tolerance without which our melting pot democracy cannot live and grow, upon which it depends for its nourishment.

The ignorance, and the appeal to ignorance, of this anti-Semitic propaganda is the ripening of an earlier strain from which the fascist war upon culture can easily be developed. Our early Puritanical fear of the aesthetic aspect of culture carried over into the evangelical sects, our practical scorn of intellectual activities developed from the frontier contempt for mere "book larnin'," our anti-evolution laws, the widespread opposition to the discussion of sex hygiene and birth control, our current investigations of schools, colleges and universities, are all fuel for fascist book burnings, fascist dismissal of professors, fascist restrictions upon science, literature and art. The capitalist control of culture, probably carried

further here than in any other democratic nation, is perfect preparation for a similar state control. The party bureaucrats will have only to follow the capitalist methods. They can do no more than has already been done in some instances.

A recent study of the "muckraking" period in American magazines—the period of investigation and exposure of political corruption, its financial sources and beneficiaries—records that these magazines were either forced into receivership by bankers calling their demand notes, were ruined by advertising boycotts, or had their credit undermined by rumors and their shareholders intimidated and bought out. Then their editorial policies were changed. The educational world was more easily handled. There big business did not have to club or buy its way in. It was invited upon the governing boards and given honorary degrees in return for, or in anticipation of, gifts. Sometimes these did not materialize; so the control then came without the price. Thus what the students learned about democracy and ethics in the classroom was often undone by what they saw and heard upon commencement day. The educators who have participated in turning the control of education over to capitalists will make no resistance to the fascist completion of the process of castration.

In Europe fascism began in the needs, fears and illusions of the lower middle classes and a section of the workers, under leaders thrown up by them. It was aided to power by the finance capitalists. With that lesson before them, our reactionary capitalists will play a more purposeful part in attempting to create the fascist state. Some of them now say in private that the capitalist system has entered its final stage, that they propose to maintain it by fascist means as long as they can

and let their children face the results. This they will attempt through the machinery of the democratic state. As long as they can use the police, the sheriff, the National Guard and enough judges, as long as they have sufficient influence over our political machines, our fascist-minded capitalists who think a dictator is needed do not have to spend big money on storm trooper organizations. Using the democratic state to destroy itself in the name of preserving law and order, abrogating the Bill of Rights for the Reds in order to preserve democracy, is the most effective way to put the fascist state over people who have a deep regard for democratic principles. The outcome depends upon whether the American people can be deceived by war fears and the Red scare into letting the fascist tendencies in our society develop unnoticed and unchecked.

## CHAPTER IX

### *The Red Scare*

THE RED SCARE, under whose terrorizing influence the fascist state came into being in Italy and Germany, is now an important factor in American political life. In some sections the animus against the communists and all to whom the Red label can be attached has reached hysterical proportions comparable to the emotional debauch that characterized the witch hunt in early New England. Now as then, this is partly the result of sincere ignorance and partly the work of those who hope to hold or gain power by it. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis finds that the Red scare is being promoted by over eight hundred organizations and eighty weekly publications of the fascist type. To these must be added a considerable section of the press and pulpit; sectarian Left groups opposed to the Communist Party and jealous of its growth; the Dies Committee; the international propaganda machinery of the Roman Catholic Church.

There is no factual basis for any Red scare in this country. Even the anticommunist popular magazine, *Liberty*, laughs at

the idea. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis reports much more fascist than communist propaganda now appealing to the American public. The Dies Committee reports only an insignificant fraction of the population being subjected to what it calls "subversive activities." Therefore this unreasonable animus against communists, this unjustifiable use of the Red label, must reflect powerful forces operating beneath the surface of our society. Undoubtedly these are the general insecurity and the common fear of change which develop in a period of decline.

Here, as in Europe, these powerful emotions are increased by the Red scare, then turned against any democratic change in the existing order and then against the democratic process itself. A case in point is the American Legion. Under the slogan "against all foreign isms," later made concrete in the form "Against Nazism, Fascism and Communism," the rank and file were fed with lurid propaganda about communist influence in labor unions, churches and other organizations. The term *communist* was applied to all who stood for change in the economic order in behalf of the common people. In a number of communities the result was a Legion demand for suppression of meetings and speakers over whom the Red paint had been smeared. The demand was sometimes followed by violent attacks in the typical fascist manner.

A similar result appears from the work of the Dies Committee. Dies secured his original appropriation by promising to investigate "Nazism, Fascism and Communism." In the report of the first year's work about three-fourths of the space is given to Communism, including alleged "Communist Front" organizations, and about one-fourth to Nazi activities,

with scarcely anything on native fascist organizations. After another year's work, the latter have not had their major activities, their foreign connections and their financial sources exposed. Instead, the hearings and the publicity of the Committee have been so handled as to bring into disrepute organizations and individuals opposing fascist development by charging them with being controlled by the Communists, and thus to further incite local undemocratic repression against them.

The same thing is done to liberal legislation and its advocates. "The difference between ultra-liberalism and communism is one of degree," cried a defender of the Dies Committee on the floor of the House. Dies himself equated the New Deal and communism in a public address. So has Father Coughlin, on the air and in his magazine *Social Justice*. This is an old tactic in the conflict over social change. Marx mentions that it had become a habit of the opponents of liberal measures in Europe, almost a hundred years ago, soon after communism appeared on the political scene.

The further objective of those who raise the Red scare is the outlawry of the Communist Party. The Nazis used the Reichstag fire to remove all antifascist parties from the ballot in Germany in the decisive elections of 1933. Here the work of the Dies Committee culminates in legislative proposals designed to destroy the Communist Party politically and make impossible any successor to it. To do this of course is to cut the heart out of our democracy by preventing the people from choosing their own political organizations, and so stopping them from governing themselves in ways of their own choosing.

Preparatory for this dire result is the move by liberals, aided by rival parties of the Left, to expel communists from various organizations, thus excluding them from the working of the democratic process. This attempt received its immediate impetus from the emotional reaction to the Nazi-Soviet pacts and the invasion of Finland. Sometimes it goes so far as to include all those who will not agree to condemn the Soviet Union in the same indiscriminating language used by those who introduce a resolution against it. It is a typical exhibit of what war does to human reason. The ground was prepared for it by the spreading of the idea that fascism and communism are equal dangers to democracy. The same people who are now trying to purge communists and "fellow travelers" were previously introducing resolutions against both fascism and communism. This was partly an attempted insurance against being smeared with Red paint, and partly an honest belief that they were equal dangers, acquired without any analysis of the differences between them. The consequence is that these people now act as though communism were more dangerous than fascism. While the fascist threat increases, they do nothing against it. On the contrary, they help it to move forward by diverting the attention of the people to the red herring they are dragging across its trail.

There is no more factual ground for the view that fascism and communism are equal dangers to democracy than there is for the strategy of directing an attack against communists and leaving our American fascists unscathed. It is a matter of common knowledge that the fascists propose to destroy democracy root and branch, while the communists propose to develop it in a new direction. Whether this direction is right or wrong

is subject to democratic discussion. The fascists rule that out from the beginning. Being against democracy in principle they destroy it in practice, commencing with the prevention of discussion by force and violence.

Even a casual examination of the social goal sought by the communists reveals its likeness to the American democratic ideal. Both seek a society without class divisions, privileges and power, one from which race and sex discriminations have been removed. Both would develop the capacities of all children, would extend the arts and sciences to their maximum by making it possible for all the people to participate in their development. The position of the fascists in these matters is exactly the opposite. In each of them they would go back to the pre-democratic period.

There is no question about the attitude of the communists toward democracy as the expression of the people's power, the organization of their right and ability to govern themselves. Their criticism of capitalist democracy is that it denies itself because it does not permit the people to govern themselves but enables a minority to control them. True this has been misinterpreted by some communist propagandists as a rejection of democracy itself, and thereby a strong weapon has been given to their adversaries. But the intelligent reactionaries know better. Their objection to communism is that it gives the people too much power; as they put it, "the mob rules." This is also their objection to the development of direct democracy, it explains their change from the slogan, "We don't want a Soviet here" to "Our government is a republic, not a democracy."

From the beginning the communist proposal has been that

the majority, not the minority, shall rule. The minority may lead the majority, but not rule it. This distinction is extremely difficult to realize, but is essential to progress. The *Communist Manifesto* begins by talking about "workers' democracy" in contrast to capitalist democracy. It ends by calling upon the workers of the world to unite. If this is interpreted not in the narrow sense of the industrial wage earners, but in the broad meaning of all socially useful workers, what is it but the democratic principle of the majority of the people taking the power that belongs to them by their functional capacity and their social need? This interpretation of workers' democracy obtains in the Soviet Union.

The history of the Russian Revolution makes it clear that Lenin refused to move to establish a government until he was sure from the decisions of the Soviets that the Bolshevik program had the support of the overwhelming majority of the people. In the meaning of the word, and in practice, the Soviet is the equivalent in the Russian scene of the town meeting of old New England. The Bolsheviks had been teaching the people "You must get ready to take power," and when the opportunity came, under their leadership, the people took it. It was their democratic right. This can be objected to on other grounds. Like one of our university presidents who recently said, "We don't want a democracy. We must get back to the republic and let the best people rule," one can prefer aristocracy or autocracy. But the essence of democracy is the power as well as the right of the people to govern themselves. Its faith is that it is better for the people to learn from their own incapacity than to be governed by the few who may be wiser than the many. This is what the fascists deny. So they

take away from the people not only the little self-government they have but all chance to get more.

Democratic power can be undemocratically used. Then democracy, whether it be capitalist or socialist, destroys itself. This is what is now beginning to happen in the capitalist-democratic nations, including our own, as the leaders chosen by the people get dictatorial powers and prepare the way for the fascist state. The critics of Marxo-Leninist communism contend that this is what its theory of the transitional socialist state leads to. Here is where fascism and communism are alike, they say. Since the Soviet-Nazi pacts, many writers on democracy are putting the Soviet Union, Germany and Italy together as totalitarian states. They forget that temporary diplomatic and even military arrangements between states founded on different basic ideas are a commonplace of history. Their logic, or rather lack of logic due to war-time emotions, would make dictatorships of Great Britain and the United States because of their trade and diplomatic relations with dictator states.

Other writers have previously classified the Soviet Union with the other totalitarian states because of internal happenings. This is a misuse of language due to an incomplete analysis of the situation. In the nazi-fascist theory the state is totalitarian in that it controls the whole life of all the people. It is the over all, the be all and the end all. It is omnipotent and omniscient and supposed to be eternal. In communist theory, the state is repressive and therefore evil in its nature; it is to be checked continuously by other forms of people's control and finally to "wither away," as other cooperative forms of control make it unnecessary and as the disappearance of hostile capitalist states makes this possible. Fascism seeks to

perpetuate the authoritarian state with all its repression upon human freedom and development. Communism seeks to get rid of the state completely. Again the theories are opposite.

However, those who put fascism and communism down as equal enemies of democracy insist that, different as they are in principle, nevertheless they operate by the same method, and therefore democracy is lost if either comes to power. This position cannot be maintained by citing instances of undemocratic behavior by the Soviet Union. On this basis one can contend, as some communists do, that there is no essential difference insofar as the future of democracy is concerned, between the democratic powers and Nazi Germany. The weaknesses in human nature, the inconsistencies in human behavior, are so hard to overcome that history is full of instances of identical conduct by schools of thought which are opposite in principle. But history does not show that therefore they come out at the same place. That depends upon whether one of them adopts the basic method of the other and so destroys its own principle. The same result will follow the repeated use in specific situations of a method contrary to basic principle until it becomes a habit.

The contention that the communist method of social change is as dangerous to democratic development as the fascist state rests mainly upon the claim that it relies upon force and violence instead of consent. When the government has tried to prove this in court, either against those charged with advocating the overthrow of our government by force and violence, or with holding this belief when they sought entrance to this country, it has had to rely upon citations from earlier communist writings. It has never been able to prove any acts or

personal advocacy. For either of these things the American Communist Party insists a member would be expelled. Its present constitution declares that it will seek to realize its program by the democratic process.

Communist writings and speeches do not make a cult of violence as those of the fascists do. They have never adopted as a principle the strategy of forcibly preventing and breaking up the meetings of their sectarian opponents as the fascists have done. There was a period in this country when physical clashes between left-wing sectarians at meetings were a common practice, and for this the communists were as much responsible as any others, the proportion of blame varying on different occasions. But since a code to prevent these incidents was worked out by the mediation of persons concerned over the future of civil liberties, the communists cannot be accused of disregarding it.

The communist position regarding the place of force in social change is not that it is a substitute for democratic decision but an inevitable necessity in maintaining it. They forecast the attempt of an irreconcilable minority to overthrow the decision of the majority by force and violence. Instead of advocating an armed attempt of a minority to set up a dictatorship, they have consistently opposed that course throughout their history. They hold realistically that the people will only be able to hold the power they democratically take if they have a sufficient majority to overcome a rebellious minority. Here again, in the field of method, is a basic difference between them and the fascists. The fascists use force to overthrow and prevent democratic decision. The communists will use it when necessary to enforce a democratic decision. It is

possible to object to this on the basis of pacifism but not on the basis of democracy.

It is obvious that no form of democracy—capitalist, socialist or communist—can continue unless it can enforce the decisions of a majority against those who deny the appeal to reason, refuse the appeal to justice and resort to armed force. The communists insist that their statements on this point are prophecy not advocacy, and point to a free speech case decision by the late Chief Justice Holmes to support them. The base of this forecast is the record of the resort of reaction to force and violence to prevent democratic advance. The record of the capitalist-democratic revolution in almost all countries shows a pattern like that of the law of action and reaction in physics. In his *Natural History of Revolution*, Lyford P. Edwards concludes that the amount and kind of violence used by the people in securing needed social change corresponds to the amount and kind used by reaction in trying to prevent it. This is borne out by the record of our industrial conflict and the utterances and attitudes of our reactionaries. The Civil Liberties Union has published a collection of these, and there is no equivalent to be found in the utterances of the Left.

Granted that in earlier communist propaganda there was an emphasis on answering force with force rather than on trying to prevent its development, nevertheless the communist forecast concerning the place of violence in social change is a warning and a challenge to democracy rather than an attack upon it. It puts upon the believers in democracy who seek its non-violent advance the burden of preventing in time the reactionary resort to violence which has in previous social transitions produced its counterpart and threatens to do the

same now. Unpreparedness to meet this menace may prove fatal, certainly the cost will be high. The record of the past shows that trust in the peacefulness of reaction leads to disaster. When the Soviet power was established, the Czarist generals at the front secured their release from arrest by signing a promise never to take up arms against the new government. Later each of the foreign-supported, counter-revolutionary armies attacking the Soviet government had one of these generals at its head.

The strongest point to support the contention that fascists and communists are an equal menace to democracy is the fact that by their own proclamations each proposes to set up a dictatorship. An important difference, however, is that the fascist dictatorship, true to the time-honored meaning of the word, is personal; while Marx, using the word in a collective sense, set forth the necessity of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" during the transition from a capitalist to a classless society. His contention is that in the latter days of the capitalist state the capitalist few rule the non-capitalist many. In the socialist state this is to be reversed, and the socialist many are to rule the capitalist few until all capitalist elements have disappeared. Then the non-capitalist dictatorship, which has been gradually diminishing as the opposition of capitalist remnants dies down, gives way to full democracy. Until that time this mass dictatorship is to operate on the principle of collective discussion, collective decision and collective action, which is the opposite of the leadership principle of the fascists, with its personal decisions. My own recorded observations in the Soviet Union, supported by the findings of Beatrice and Sidney

Webb, show that no questions of policy, local or national, in any institution, are ever decided by one man.

It was because of its suspension of civil liberties, and the extent of its reliance upon force as the final arbiter of the conflict between the new social forces and the old, that Marx described this transitional form of government as a dictatorship. Lenin's description of it in operation against the White terror, after the attempt upon his life, was exactly like Wilson's phrase when he entered the war, "Force without stint or limit." The difference between the fascist and communist position on democratic rights is twofold. The fascists abolish them for everybody, the communists for counter-revolutionists. The fascists abolish them permanently, the communists propose to suspend them when necessary. The fascist position is completely antidemocratic, the communist becomes so if it is subverted by the habit of holding power, fails to live up to its principles and carry out its purpose. The fascists close the door to any democratic attack on concentrated, misused power, the communists leave it open. Thus communism is subject to modification by the democratic process, while fascism is not.

This difference is not removed by any similarity that can be found between certain events in Russia, Italy and Germany, any more than the difference between Germany and Italy on the one hand and France, Great Britain and the United States on the other hand is removed by certain similarities in their treatment of weaker nations. The point is that those who profess democracy have a chance progressively to overcome the antisocial tendencies in human nature, where those who deny it have none. A suspension of democratic rights that leaves all power in the hands of the administration is an imminent peril

to democracy. Whether or not it leads to its destruction depends first upon whether it expresses the necessary defense of the majority against an antisocial minority or whether it represents the aggression of a minority upon the rights of the majority, and next upon whether it is carried further or longer than the actual danger requires. This it is the business of the defenders of democracy to prevent by mass pressure, by mass action if necessary.

We run this risk when martial law is declared for the protection of the community life against riot or in the case of lynching. Every democracy must so act at times. Those who refuse to abide by democratic procedure and resort to force and violence must be prevented from accomplishing their purpose. In the extraordinary circumstances of transition from one form of society to another this democratic duty and the democratic risk involved become greater.

If, for a moment, we can forget Russia, whose background is so different from ours, and translate the confusing phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" into terms of our own background, its challenge to democracy will be clearer. Suppose the American people, by the democratic decision of a workable majority of all who perform the tasks necessary to the development of our society, take the first decisive steps toward the establishment of a socialist republic. Then a minority by force seeks to prevent that decision from being carried out. Whereupon the majority takes the necessary steps to put down that rebellion and to stop its plots, including the proclamation of martial law and the limitation or suspension of civil liberties. That would be the American equivalent of what Marx called

the "dictatorship of the proletariat." But we would call it the democratic exercise of the police power of the community.

From our experience in the Civil War, and in local situations since, it appears that there is no necessity that democracy in thus trying to preserve its life should destroy it. There is certainly danger of this happening, but it is the duty of those who know the danger to see that it is averted. To hold that democratic power must always abolish democratic rights in the struggle to establish itself, and come out at the same place as fascist power, is to leave us with no hope of social progress, the helpless victims of the antisocial tendencies in human nature.

Another point supporting the contention that however different in theory communism and fascism may be, nevertheless in practice they come out at the same place, is that they both provide for only one political party which permits no rivals. This party, being in itself totalitarian, becomes the totalitarian state. Granting the totalitarian nature of the Bolshevik Party, nevertheless there are differences important for the future of democracy between its behavior and that of the Nazi and the Fascist Parties. The only party in Germany and Italy is in each case a law unto itself and permits no criticism of any sort, from any source, to go unpunished. The one party in the Soviet Union encourages in the press and in all sorts of meetings widespread criticism of all officials and, at stated times, of party policies and actions. In the periodic cleansings of its ranks, all its members must answer questions in open meetings concerning their record and their fitness to continue in membership. The result is determined very largely by criticisms

from non-party members. The same is true concerning admission of new members.

This procedure, along with numerous others, records the feeling after new kinds of control by the people. Democratic forms in a socialist society necessarily will differ at many points from those in a capitalist society. When the managing of the social economy is the business of the whole people, the forming of the inevitable opposition comes over questions of administrative policy and action. Opposition to the basic economy appears and is handled in about the same way as when an old order is struggling for its life. Full discussion of basic change appears only in the stable periods of an historic order.

It is significant that Nazi writings admit no development beyond the totalitarian state and the party that controls it. In the writings of Marx and Lenin, the dictatorship of the proletariat is to lead to a universal democracy. Then the party which, with the aid of the militant section of non-party workers, peasants and intellectuals, has administered the dictatorship becomes unnecessary. Thus it appears again that the communists and the fascists are going in opposite directions. This basic difference cannot be cancelled out by any errors in communist practice. These do not make those who seek democracy, in any form, identical with those who reject and seek to destroy it.

It appears therefore that those among us who have been proclaiming communism and fascism to be equal threats to democracy have fallen into a fallacy. This fallacy will prove fatal to our democracy if it blinds enough people to the fascist trends in the American scene which express the capitalist necessity to prevent the advance of democracy and to get rid of it. Those well-meaning liberals who are increasing the Red

scare and purging communists are helping democracy to destroy itself. They are dividing the potential democratic forces while the antidemocratic forces are forming one camp. By concealing the fact that communist strategy is subject to modification by the democratic process while that of the fascists is not, they are enabling the enemies of democracy to stealthily enter its citadel.

The fallacy that communism and fascism are alike in their relation to democracy is usually accompanied by its twin—the idea that there is some middle ground between monopoly capitalism and socialist society called democracy where we can now stop. But society is always dynamic not static, and never more so than when it comes to the point where an existing order ceases to function acceptably, where the old garment will no longer hold the patches it needs. The basic challenge of communism to our progressives goes far beyond the method of achieving the transition to the new order. It asks them to decide what kind of democracy they want. Do they want capitalist democracy to continue? If so, then it is capitalism they want more than democracy, for the evidence is clear that capitalism is now divorcing the democracy that has been so useful to it in the past. Because of the natural tendency of capitalism to develop the fascist state, and the natural tendency of democracy to fulfil itself in some form of socialist society, the question is what kind of democracy do we really want?

The answer to that question in the American way is now being confused and endangered by events in Russia and the skillful propagandist use of them by the enemies of democracy. It is a complete loss of historic perspective to judge Russia on the basis of the standards of the United States with its

hundred and fifty years of democratic history. It is an utter confusion of values to reject the principles of a socialist society because of anything that Russia may or may not do. England's bloody record in Ireland and in India does not destroy the value of the basic principle of freedom for the citizen which her democratic revolution long ago asserted. Our treatment of Sacco and Vanzetti and Mooney, the crimson pages of our industrial history, do not destroy the value of the equalitarian democracy asserted in our Declaration of Independence.

There are some important things that we can learn from Russia, both in regard to what to do and what to avoid. But our job of developing democracy as the people's power and government by common consent has to be done differently from theirs, because it starts from a different base. With no background of democratic history, they made a constitution providing for economic and social democracy, ruling out capitalism. Having laid the foundation for socialist society through the first two Five Year Plans, they now proceed under their new constitution to develop political democracy within the framework of a socialist economy. We proceed in the other order of development. Having a hundred and fifty years of political democracy behind us, and being in danger of losing that inheritance through the effort of a declining monopoly capitalism to save itself, we now face the necessity of developing the economic and social democracy promised by our first principles.

In doing this, as in all of life's adventures, we cannot save our democratic life unless we are willing to take some risk of losing it. That is the way life is. Democracy can be lost in socialist society as well as in capitalist society. But it has a

better chance to live and grow because the economic setup is for it and not against it, and because the class interests that are hostile to it are eliminated. The challenge to us of the communist thesis regarding social change, and the communist experience in Russia, is to so organize the class forces which need a new order that the opposition has no chance to start the civil war, and so to imperil all democratic rights.

## CHAPTER X

### *The Class Line-Up*

ANY DISCUSSION of social change today must recognize the validity of the Marxist analysis of history in general terms of a struggle between antagonistic class forces. What remains to be worked out in each national scene is the composition, the present and prospective alignment, of these forces.

One of the favorite American myths is that we have no classes here. It has been badly shattered by the facts of the monopoly period of capitalism but it dies hard. It is true that we have no such fixed class boundaries, no such sharp class consciousness, as exist in England. That is because we have behind us no feudal period of history to shape our community life. It is also true, as our descriptive sociologists like to tell us, that most Americans do not think of themselves as belonging to a class, but as citizens and members of various organizations. To them society is composed of individuals, not classes. Our democracy is still individualistic, not collective; political, not economic. Nevertheless we have always had our class divisions; our history records plenty of action springing from class interests, and we have a growing class consciousness.

There were two classes in the *Mayflower* and in the first ships that went to Virginia, those that had a right to the land and those who came to work for them. The chance for free land gradually made many of the descendants of the bound workers the social equals of the offspring of the Puritans and the gentlemen. But meantime the theocracy of New England and the aristo-democracy of Virginia were developing into a plutocracy, by way of the intermediate rule of the best people, ministers in the one case and statesmen in the other. The rising capitalism formed its own class lines, different in form but alike in social nature and consequences, to those of feudalism. The experiences of the frontier, where all men worked and opportunities for education were general, concealed this fact for awhile and gave some reality to the contention that one man was as good as another. In due time the appropriation of the land, timber and minerals, and the organization of industrial corporations, produced a class of wage earners whose class position was fixed. The monopolistic practices and powers of finance capital gave a similar status to most salaried and professional workers. Then the same thing happened to several million small farmers, tenants and sharecroppers, along with more than a million agricultural laborers, none of whom had either the social equality or the economic opportunity of the former hired man on the farm.

Thus a class-divided society was slowly forming here, though the process was delayed and modified by a democracy of social intercourse that the capitalist nations who have gone through feudalism do not know. The inevitable development was further held back by the cheapness and standardization of mass production, especially in clothing, thus prolonging the

fiction of equality through similarity in style if not in quality. The same effect is produced by the fact that so many wage-earner families have some members who have entered the professions or business and made good. So the phrase "working class" still sounds foreign to most American ears. Such working-class consciousness as we have was developed out of local labor struggles, and did not get beyond them, except for the limited reinforcement of this experience by socialist teaching. Because of the American gospel of work—the joint product of our Puritanic strain and the necessities of the frontier—embodied in the Benjamin Franklin philosophy, our capitalists cannot easily become aristocratic, spendthrift idlers. They must justify themselves to themselves by the claim of performing work of some use. Hence, as technical advance creates more need and opportunity for useful labor, we arrive naturally at a wider base for a working class than that passed down from the previous stage of society.

Meantime class consciousness increases faster at the top of American society than at the bottom or in the middle. More people look down on others than look up to others. The experiences of capitalist decline to date have produced more consciousness of a class interest in preventing social change than of a class need to secure it. Before recent developments calmed the air, the worst expletives hurled at Roosevelt in the clubs and social gatherings of the rich accompanied the charge that he had betrayed his class. To show that the vanishing frontier also has begun to think in class terms, a Texas oil man and publisher recently informed his fellow citizens that "Jack Garner is a Democrat who has no desire to substitute the autocracy of the masses for those of the classes." It is

clear enough that the facts of class formation are producing the pattern of class consciousness. What else but class interests accounts for the different attitudes in this country toward the invasion of Spain and the invasion of Finland, even allowing for the religious factor in the former case and in the latter the perennial sympathy for the underdog in a fight? Why did the people who called Roosevelt a war-monger for asking us to quarantine the aggressor when the fascists were invading other countries, turn round and push him toward war when the Soviet Union was the invader?

Behind our growing class consciousness, a further guarantee of future developments, is our record of sharp class conflict in the industrial field. This runs from the days of the Molly Maguires in Pennsylvania, through pitched battles in mining towns in the Rockies, to the recent engagements around the industrial plants in the Middle West. Just as American capitalism formed its class lines uninfluenced by feudalism, so it made its own class war unmodified by the older community restraints that capitalist England inherited.

There is also plenty of class conflict in our agricultural record, from the days of Populism to the farmers' stopping of evictions under foreclosures between 1929 and 1932, and the fighting in recent milk strikes. The class struggle of the farmers expressed itself more clearly in politics than did that of labor, which was kept out of independent political action for years by the masterful policies, and then the tradition, of Samuel Gompers. In the earlier days the agricultural class conflict was a debtor-creditor not a tenant-landlord fight. Hence it was separated from the class struggle of the industrial wage earners against the owner-employers. They were

further kept apart by the capitalist nature of small farming and by clever capitalist propaganda about the conflict of interest between organized labor and the farmers, especially over reduction of hours of work. A general attitude was expressed by an old farmer on the platform committee of the Bull Moose convention in 1912, in the discussion over the plank calling for an eight-hour day: "Eight hours? Let 'em work from sun-up till dark. That's the way I got mine." But the fact that the farmers' struggle was first with the creditor class, and then with the processing middlemen, led some of them to understand the nature and power of finance capital before many of the workers were conscious of what they were facing. Consequently, now that so many of the farmers, like the workers, are in conflict with owner-employers, the class struggle in agriculture and in industry moves toward one line-up.

Under the pressure of capitalist decline the old division between "haves and have-nots" takes sharper form in American society. The difference between the political attitudes of those who still have, and those who are fast losing, opportunities for health, comfort and cultural development becomes clearer with every shift in the economic and international scene. In Europe the solidarity of the workers had behind it the long struggle of the peasants against the nobility over the land, the primary means of life. Here our free land for a long time prevented the development of a propertyless class interest. Then this was held back by the extent to which American capitalism gave the wage earners a share in the property system and maintained the illusion of it through installment buying even after the system broke down. This illusion has however been badly shattered since 1929 and will be smashed

to pieces when the banks and insurance companies have to repeat in sharper form the story of 1932. This experience will draw further together the wage earners of all sorts, the farmers, the salaried technicians and the professionals. At present most of them, with the gambler's optimism that the profit system breeds, are still hoping against the facts for better days to come. When that hope is gone we shall find that the economic breakdown has created a much wider class base for social change than the capitalist economy created at the beginning.

If we look at the transition from capitalist to socialist society, in the American way, as a job that needs to be done, and then ask the typically American question, "Who is to do it," without regard to existing definitions or theories of class action, what will the answer look like? In general terms it would be that the people who can make the base for the new society are those who have the labor power, the skills and the knowledge to produce and distribute the goods and services without which society cannot live or grow. Any section of them can delay, perhaps fatally, the necessary change if they do not sufficiently participate in it.

Before they can express their creative capacity, however, these socially useful workers must have sufficient united political power to win control of the state. Here is where the difference between our situation and that of those who made the capitalist era becomes clear. They won the state because they had economic power. The makers of the new order today have only potential economic power. It does not become actual until they gain sufficient political power to make that possible. How then do these people who have this functional capacity line

up today, and how will they line up tomorrow in terms of classes?

The answer to this question is often confused by slipping back and forth between the two meanings of the term *class*. One, following the division into three which the mind has used so long because so many things have two ends and a middle, describes society in terms of the upper, middle and lower classes. In Europe this goes according to inherited, or acquired, social rank. Here it goes according to income—the upper, the middle and lower brackets. In its other meaning, the term *class* is a section of the population which is united in common political action and social attitudes by its uniform economic interest. In its simplest form this gives us a sharp twofold division—the capitalist class and the working class, the owners and the workers, the leisure class and the working class.

The in-between group, composed of various elements, dependent on both capitalists and workers for their maintenance and divided in their allegiance in the struggle between them, is the bone of contention between class theorists, both as to its composition and its function. It is here that the issue is often confused by slipping back into the older use of the term *middle class*. This happens because this section has no such sharp economic composition as the other two and changes more. It must also be remembered that the main economic classes have various sub-classes which complicate the line-up, because their interests also clash under capitalism. Witness for example the relations between each other, and with big business, of the craft and industrial unions, the small farmers and the dispossessed farmers who are now migratory workers.

The simplest classification for those who have the functional capacity, but not yet the political power, to build a socialist society is found in the American income standard. If we take the social workers' division into luxury, health and comfort, and deficiency incomes, most of the indispensable workers are still found in the middle division. But this section is fast dropping to the level of the third ranking. In other words, the middle is being wiped out. This is where and how the dynamic force for social change develops according to the historic law that revolutionary social change is accomplished not by the misery group but by those threatened with loss of their security and opportunities for development.

In this middle income-standard section of our population are the typical Americans in what they want of life and how they expect to get it. A recent test poll of *Fortune* magazine reports that 79 per cent of the American people believe they belong to the middle class. Even with their present political disunity they are able at times to exercise a veto over big business and its political representatives. The reason they cannot do this more effectively is because most of them still have the capitalist mind at the vital point of property relations. In psychology and ethics they are typical small capitalists. The wise man of an older day spoke for them when he said: "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me."

This middle-class America has to find out that not only its ideal of the democratic community, but the way of life to which it has been accustomed, is impossible under our profit-seeking economy before it will act for social change. To learn what cannot be done is a step toward finding out what can and must be done. This is being learned fast. Hoover's promise

of the abolition of poverty is today a faint and mournful echo from the dead past. The failure of those who succeeded Hoover to remove unemployment or meet the needs of youth and the aged, the unemployed and the farmers, is slowly teaching the American people that there is no way out for them under the profit system. As more of the middle income-standard section lose their jobs, their property and their insurance, the small owners who have been a force to hold change back will become a force to push it forward, provided the strategists of social advance can give them the right direction. Those who are moved only by the loss of the comforts they have worked so hard to get need to be enlightened and led by those who think more of the freedom their fathers and forefathers left Europe to get, who know that life is more than cars and radios, silk stockings, fur coats, and cosmetics, overstuffed furniture and overstuffed stomachs, who are moved to action by the injustices, the cruelties, the stupidities, the unrealized possibilities, of our present mode of living.

The problem of strategy for the forces of social change is to split the center so as to get more of it to the Left than goes Right. If this splitting of the middle is done only by the natural pressure of the declining economy, the story of Europe shows that the fascists, appearing as the fake Left, will take most of it over to the Right. To prevent this the interpretation of capitalist breakdown by those who see the need of socialistic society has to proceed correctly enough, and fast enough, to line up the maximum forces for change at the decisive moment. The way the income sections of our population and its occupational organizations are now dividing shows that there has to be a fusion of class forces to defeat the coalition of

reaction that is already operating successfully on several fronts. This fusion, which of course will have its core and its fighting front in those organized industrial workers who have long fought the battle with capitalist injustice and oppression, is being made possible by the extent to which other socially useful workers are being driven by the economic crisis to organize in protection of their economic interests and their social future.

For the first time in our history the white-collar workers and the professionals—even artists and writers—are organizing for the protection and advancement of their cultural and economic interests, and are coming together with the main force of workers on common ground. This fusion is being furthered by many united activities on the Democratic Front and in resistance to war. Out of all these experiences there is being forged the consciousness of an objective, the realization of a common enemy, which is essential to winning the struggle for social change.

Perhaps the most significant fact in this development is the part the farmer is playing in it, because he has been usually left out of the strategy of social change. Due to the part the industrial revolution played in the formation of capitalist society, the class struggle has been analyzed mainly in terms of the relations between workers and owner-employers. This was also because England, where the capitalist system grew up, lived by foreign trade and imperialist expansion. But the Russians, who put the sickle with the hammer on their flag, learned to their cost that organizing a socialist society involves a joint relationship between peasants, industrial workers and professionals. They also learned that one of the toughest prob-

lems socialist economy has to solve, one which capitalist economy has failed to solve, is the relation between agriculture and industry.

The American farmer is not peasant-minded like the farmer of Europe. Through his ownership of the land, through his opportunities to make money out of it by rental and speculative sale, he has long been capitalist-minded. Now he is becoming city-minded. The telephone, good roads, the car, the radio, are bringing farmers together as the factory brought industrial workers together in the beginning of capitalism. The state university is teaching the farmer new methods. He is organizing his cooperatives and, after the Farm Holiday movement, his union, to express his revolt against the bankers, insurance companies, the commission men and processors who collect the claims of big business against him. Because credit was his problem, cheap money has been his battle cry, and he has followed demagogues, like Coughlin, who will take him into the fascist state if he does not wake up in time.

In all this struggle he has been closer to revolt against the profit system than most of the industrial workers have been. Certain of the farm states have taken more of an anticapitalist stand in their legislation than any of the industrial states where the wage earners have sometimes held the balance of power. It was in Minnesota that we got the first effective expression of a Farmer-Labor Party. The hindrance to this development is the capitalist view of landownership which regards it as a means to make money instead of a function to maintain life. The role of the farmer in our social change depends upon the degree of his emancipation from this point of view. Those who wish to make money will join the forces of reaction.

Those who desire to use the land to feed society as well as their families will unite with those of like mind in other vocations.

The emergence of the class struggle among organized farmers, white-collar and professional workers brings before us the difficult problem of transforming the class struggle within the capitalist system into the struggle to replace it. For all its sharpness, the class struggle of organized labor and of the organized farmers is a struggle for a better position within the capitalist system. It is against the wrongdoings of the employer and the banker, not against the economy which they represent and administer. It was because it was not related to the need for social change that it did not develop a wider class consciousness or a long-range social purpose. The American Federation of Labor has a strong statement of the class struggle in its preamble, but it has very little class consciousness, and at the top no sense of the need for social change. It is capitalist-minded and, as many reporters have told us, the gatherings of its officials look, talk and act like gatherings of business men. Recently in their efforts to defeat the C.I.O., they have made common cause with the employers in their attack upon the Wagner Act, and have even helped them run their company unions. This is the natural result of the theory of partnership with the employer. In the days of capitalist decline this becomes treason to the workers. It betrays even the narrow purpose of craft unionism to raise living standards, because it helps the employer to enforce a falling standard of living.

The class struggle of wage earners and farmers for position within the capitalist order becomes the struggle for social

change only when the pressure of events makes the present order unbearable, and those who suffer find leaders whose correct analysis shows them the source of their ills. How fast this happens depends upon how much those in charge of the existing order permit the producing workers to satisfy their immediate needs, and along with that, how much the economy they are trying to administer permits them to make concessions. This technical factor may determine the issue.

As long as the existing order yields a sufficient amount of satisfaction to those who need a basic change to keep them unwilling to take its risk, the class struggle results only in reforms. As long as it is kept within those limits it develops mass movements, as it did in Germany, which are fascist in nature. The question is whether the United States can avoid going through this stage. This depends upon whether all sections of the population whose economic interest and social need require the extension of democracy to the whole of the common life understand in time what has to be done. Unless that happens, instead of class struggle for advantage within the existing order becoming preparatory to basic social change, it becomes a hindrance to it. That occurs when the classes that need the change are too easily satisfied with slight improvements. That was why the steel trust offered to raise wages 10 per cent in order to defeat the C.I.O. drive for organization. That was why our industrialists have time and again bought off potential labor leaders by offering them highly paid jobs.

The increasing inability of the capitalist economy to meet the needs of the people is shortening the reform stage of our class struggle. It is developing in various sections of the popu-

lation the awareness of a common enemy which leads to decisive action. No revolutionary change in society is carried through by blind historic necessity. It takes the partisan spirit that stubbornly carries a cause to victory when it seems hopeless. It is a battle for and against—for the common people and against the king and the nobility; for the masses and against the classes; for the people and against big business. But, necessary as it is for most people to personify the struggle, this does not set the issue in terms of the job to be done. If it stops there, we are back with the first Roosevelt's "malefactors of great wealth," or we are no further ahead than the present Roosevelt's "a plague on both your houses." It is only as those who are without adequate social opportunity see that they cannot be free from those who control the economic machines unless they change the machine itself that the forces for and against that change will be mobilized. Those who understand the system and those who feel the enemy must march together.

This is difficult to accomplish here because we individualistic Americans think in terms of personalities more than systems. We have yet to learn that there is a common line which runs through all our sectional economic struggles—debtors and creditors, tenants and landlords, workers and employers, small business and big business. There is a common enemy behind the creditors, the employers, the landlords, the monopolists; it is the economic method they administer and the ownership it creates. The separate struggles against these personal forces should lead to a general action against the system itself. The practical situation is shaping the forces that way. In the days of finance capitalism the nature of profit-

seeking economy is clearer than in its early productive form. Today it takes its toll from all who travel the broad highway of the common life—all the way from the workers of all sorts at the bottom to the rank and file of investors at the top of our financial structure. Thus it stands revealed as the exploiter of all, leaving security for none, not even for those who think they control it and yet cannot avoid the crashes in the stock market which shake their power.

This situation would determine the line-up of class forces if those in need of a new order could see clearly their common interest, or if people acted only from economic interests. It would then be mass against class, those who have lost and are losing social opportunity against those who still have it, producers against investors, debtors against creditors. But neither economic interest nor social need is as clear cut as that. The system makes some people both debtors and creditors, both producers and investors. It divides the wage earners as well as unites them. By its differential scale of payments it creates social gradations, classes within classes. It fosters the vested interests of craft unions to check the development of industrial unionism in the mass-production industries. To many it still gives a property stake in the system that sets a gulf between them and the homeless. Its propaganda works overtime to persuade the basic productive workers that they have a common interest with monopolistic owners.

By all these means the profit system contrives to separate those who should unite against an economic order that is preventing them from realizing their capacities. It is helped by the fact that so many people are more strongly influenced by tradition than by facts, even the facts of experience. So they

still cite the past contributions of the capitalist economy to our development and are blind to its present repressive and destructive actions. Consequently when the day of decision comes to this nation, and the historic die is cast for or against a change in the control and nature of our social organization, the dividing line will run through every section of the population, through all economic classes.

The rising capitalist class which led the democratic, and then the industrial, revolution, did not come to power without the aid of other classes. As Engels observed, all revolutions are fought by and between a coalition of classes. In its decline the capitalist economy is creating the coalition that has the capacity to carry further both the democratic and technical revolutions which the capitalists are now blocking. Through the pressure of insecurity and unemployment, it is giving large sections of the farmers and the professional workers the experience and training in organization that the industrial workers have received in their long conflict with the employers. The American equivalent, in the days of capitalist decline, of the working class made by rising capitalism out of the factory workers, is the combination of socially useful workers who are beginning to see that their need and their capacity can be realized only as they make a change in the structure, the control and the nature of society. This formation is not a new class created by a change in the instruments of production, but it is a class force for social change produced by the inability of the present instruments of production to operate to capacity.

This combination has the right of succession to social control because it can direct machine production for the develop-

ment of democracy as those now in control are unable to do. It is thus the operating force for society in this period of history. It succeeds to the role in social change played earlier by the fighters who became landowners, and later by the rising capitalists who became the owners of our natural resources and industrial plant. It succeeds also to the Messianic mission of the working class to produce a society without classes. Of this its joining of all creative workers to act for the common good is both promise and forerunner.

The class forces that achieved the democratic-capitalist revolution were moved by, and used, the great ideas and ideals of liberty and democratic equality. To these the class forces that will carry through the next great social change in the story of man are adding the idea and ideal of functional efficiency. This is the scientific form of the ethical idea of service, and it is a natural development in the American scene because of our strong belief in the value of socially useful work. It is the sense of frustration because they cannot serve society as they have been trained to do, the realization of our social inefficiency because of unused capacities, which is moving so many Americans to a position of intellectual and moral revolt against the existing scheme of things and will in due time lead them to the necessary action. This is the creative urge in its most powerful form and it will not be denied fulfillment in a higher form of living.

This situation gives a new aspect to the struggle for power. Society has always been based on labor but ruled by force. When it is controlled by all who perform socially useful labor, the need for the use of force is diminished. With the productive workers instead of the exploiters in control, the necessity

for coercion grows smaller. Those who see only the vengeful aspects of popular uprisings, forget the calculated cruelties of the oppressors, forget also the part they played in keeping the masses ignorant, in making them cruel.

It is now the turn of the workers in history. The fighters made the feudal world. The traders and bankers organized capitalist society. The creative workers can make the classless society. They can do it because they can operate the technical system the capitalists leave partly idle, develop the democratic system the politicians are now destroying, and advance the knowledge upon which life depends. They can change the nature of society as other classes did not when they came to power, because they depend upon a scientific economy which requires functional cooperation from all and can be used to give health, education and vocational opportunity to all.

## CHAPTER XI

# *A Comment on History*

AT THIS POINT the relation of the present class line-up to the Marxist theory of the class struggle demands a brief comment. This is required because of the intellectual prestige and political power that Marxism has acquired in the period of capitalist decline, and also because of the recent development of Marxist criticism in American thought. Some of this is an honest attempt to develop the principles of Marxism in the American scene. Some of it is the typical evasion of the actual social struggle by intellectuals who imagine that scholarship consists in finding some "i" undotted, some "t" uncrossed, by men whose shoes they could never fill. Some of it is purely destructive, proceeding on the vain hope that if only some errors can be proved against Marx then there can be no socialist society.

The two contributions of Marxist thought to the effective meeting of the situation in which we now find ourselves are its demonstration of the inevitable decline of capitalist society,

and its analysis of class forces in relation to social change. The chief criticism leveled at the Marxist thesis of the class struggle is that its forecast was incorrect at two points. First the middle class has not disappeared on the schedule set for it. On the contrary, nourished by our exceptional resources it has become stronger. Next the industrial wage earners and their organizations have not played the Messianic role allotted to them. On the contrary, both in Germany and England, when they became the government, they helped reaction back to power instead of bringing in the new order.

In these matters the record is not yet complete. Marx was portraying moving social forces, and often talking about them at the climax of capitalist decline, which has not yet been reached. Supposing it is definitely established that at these, and some other points, the forecast was in error, what of it? Does that invalidate the general historic law of the nature and operation of class forces that Marx discovered? Only in the minds of those who are opposed to needed social change, not for those who want to know how to get it. For them, as in the case of those who are using the laws of natural science for social purposes, the discovery of errors leads to their correction and more effective use.

Marx never claimed infallibility or omniscience. "Thank God, I am no Marxist," he is reported to have said in his later years. His followers can commit no greater error than to claim another Bible without mistakes, and establish another infallible papacy to interpret it. Scientific prophecy can never be as flawless as revelation claims to be; so both those who make and those who use it, had better scrupulously avoid any claims of infallibility. Our weather forecasts are never one hundred

per cent exact, but they are saving a lot of lives and much property that would be lost were we still operating by the old traditions and hunches. Our forecasters know the laws that determine general changes in the weather and are usually accurate for periods and regional areas. But the effect of topography upon atmospheric conditions frequently make them locally inaccurate. This does not diminish their general social value. It challenges to more knowledge and better results. The variations in human affairs are more difficult to handle. But here too the fact of error at particular points is a challenge to further effort, not a disproof of laws that are found to be generally correct.

The thesis of social classes, their nature and their relation to revolutionary change in society, was first set forth in the *Communist Manifesto*, written in 1847 by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels collaborating with him. In 1888, after Marx was dead, Engels wrote an introduction to a revised edition. Giving Marx the credit for its "fundamental proposition," he says some important things about its accuracy.

"However much the state of things may have altered during the last 25 years, the general principles laid down in this *Manifesto*, are, on the whole, as correct today as ever. Here and there some detail might be improved. The practical application of the principles will depend, as the *Manifesto* itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing, and for that reason no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II. That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worded today. In view of the gigantic strides of modern industry since 1848, and of other events this program has in some details become antiquated."

The first sentence of the *Manifesto* lays down a typical German generalization: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." To this Engels adds a note in his 1888 edition, saying "That is, all written history," and pointing out that since 1847 research has been done into the social organization, existing previous to recorded history, which was then all but unknown. More such work, with very fruitful results, has been done since Engels wrote that note. And it enables us to see clearly how classes were formed in the change from tribal to feudal society, and how the struggle between them began. The factors in this development existed in tribal society in embryo form but they could not bring social classes into being until changes in the ownership and use of land made this possible. Lawrence, leader of the Arab revolt against the Turks in the World War, has recorded how those nomads, who have differences of rank and wealth, were horrified when they came into contact with the British army and first saw personal inequalities.

It should be remembered that in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels were not so much writing history as using it. Marx was seeking to change life, not merely to record its behavior. The object of the *Manifesto*, clearly stated, is to accomplish the emancipation of the working class. It seeks to create a movement that can accomplish this end. It uses an interpretation of history for this purpose—an interpretation which depicts one of its major aspects, previously neglected by the historians and social philosophers.

This interpretation is used to put behind the struggle of the working class one of the oldest and most powerful forms of the moral dynamic. The *Manifesto* sums up its brief descrip-

tion of class struggles throughout the history of society as being the opposition and at times the open fight between "oppressor and oppressed." It asserts that modern, capitalist society has "established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones." It ends with the famous appeal: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries unite." Here once more is the old battle cry of freedom, the final answer to tyranny. It has moved men of every race to action against things as they are in every land. When it sounds in the ears of those oppressed in body and in spirit by the tyranny of monopoly capitalism in its declining period, the question it raises goes far beyond that of academic accuracy in details of exposition. The vital issue is whether this class interpretation of history gives us an effective strategy for changing our intolerable world. In other words, the question is whether it is functionally accurate.

In his introduction to the 1888 edition of the *Manifesto*, Engels states that its fundamental proposition is:

"That in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis from which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolution in which, now-a-days, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class—the proletariat—cannot attain

its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class—the bourgeoisie—without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class-distinctions and class struggles.”

Here the purpose of the class-struggle interpretation of history takes a wider sweep. It becomes the emancipation of society from class struggles through the emancipation of the working class. It is saved from the Utopian perfectionism of many of its preachers, from the error of a finished system, only by remembering that getting rid of social classes rooted in property relations does not get rid of social cleavages arising from difference in ability and function and the social advantage that these give. What it does however is to provide ground from which to more effectively attack these. When the main base of the enemy is destroyed, the others are easier taken.

It should be noted that Engels' statement does not give the working class the role of chosen deliverer for mankind, proclaimed in the simple gospel of Marxist fundamentalists. It merely says they cannot achieve their own emancipation without emancipating society from class struggles and their consequences. That is, the two objectives are interdependent and must be joined together consciously. When this is done, the danger of class pride and class power is guarded against. For no pride leads more quickly to unholy power than the pride of a righteous mission.

The Marxist fundamentalists have, however, been encouraged in their simple preaching of the Messianic mission of the working class by a sentence in the *Manifesto* which concludes that the fall of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the

proletariat are equally inevitable. The former prediction rests on economic and social analysis of the unfitness and functional inability of the capitalists to maintain their rule over modern society. That evidence multiplies in this day of decline. It is recorded regularly by analysts who do not accept the Marxist thesis of the class struggle or its outcome. But none of them has summed up the consequences better than the phrase in the *Manifesto* which says: ". . . a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and exchange is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells."

The prediction of the inevitable victory of the working class, however, rests more on faith than on evidence. At this point the argument is not complete, as it is in the case of the capitalists. By inference the victory of the working class derives from the increasing pauperism of the wage earners, but actually this point is one in the specifications that show the unfitness of the capitalists to administer society. Also it gives support to the thesis of social revolution from the rebellion of the misery group which is not supported by the history of revolutions nor by the main argument of the *Manifesto*.

That document depicts the inability of the capitalists to rule society in two ways, and rests its prediction of the fall of capitalism on two grounds: one is its production of increasingly dangerous economic crises and its inability to prevent them; the other is its creation of the working class and of successive stages of its struggle with the capitalists. The connection between the crisis of capitalism and the class struggle is not made specific, because that stage of development had not

been reached. That is where we now stand, and that is our job, if victory is to go to the forces of progress instead of to the forces of reaction.

The Marxist thesis of the economic causation behind the class struggle for and against social change is stated in one sentence in the *Manifesto*: "For many a decade past the history of commerce and industry is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and its rule." We face that situation at its climactic point. If we take the broad class division—oppressors and oppressed, exploiters and exploited—and forget the names *Bourgeoisie* and *Proletariat*, is it not true today that "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other?" Is not this exactly what capitalist decline, and the war it has produced, is now doing in American society? In Europe, the *Manifesto* points out, the rise of the capitalist class, "pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages." Here there were none to be pushed out, only new lines to form. Since our minor class divisions are neither so old nor so clearly drawn as in Europe, the formation of two "great hostile camps" will proceed here in direct response to what the decline is doing to people and what the prospect of change promises to do. The division is beginning to run through all classes, through all labor, religious, cultural and reform organizations.

How many will gather in the camp of advance depends upon how clearly its leaders see that the class base provided for social change by capitalist decline is broader than that

created by capitalist expansion. On this point the *Manifesto* points out that "entire sections of the ruling classes are so threatened in their conditions of existence" that they "supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress." That is, economically and psychologically they become one with the wage-earning workers. This is plainly what is happening here with increased velocity, since the breakdown in 1929. Then there is "The 'dangerous class,' the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society," which while it may be swept into the movement for change is, however, by its condition of life "prepared far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue." These are our stool pigeons, our renegade Leftist "informers," our fascist organizations' rank and file. The description also fits the part now being played by some of our high-paid columnists and radio commentators.

Thus the disappearance of minor classes by division between the contending forces increases rapidly before our eyes, under the impact of capitalist decline and the nearness of either fascist or socialist society. The lower middle class, that is the middle-income section of our population, is described in the *Manifesto* as "conservative, even reactionary—trying to roll back the wheel of history." This is because its members are trying to save their existence as small capitalists, something that cannot be done in the days of monopoly capitalism. But some of them "place themselves at the service of the proletariat" because they are able to see the impending transfer to the wage earner group. This point can be stated today more positively. The middle-income group is potentially either fascist or socialist. Which way its members line up depends

largely upon the strategy of the leaders of the forces of change.

The two points that need to be remembered in making this strategy are, first, that the old craft unions, so relied upon by the early Marxists, are almost entirely in the position ascribed correctly to other lower middle-class elements, absolutely so in their top leadership. They are fighting for "their existence as fractions of the middle class," not to improve the status of the workers as a class, not to improve human society. The other point is that the middle class—measured either by income or by psychology—has so extended itself through the expansion of the distributive and social services, the increase of technicians of all sorts, and of salaried office workers, that it is capable of acting for a time in behalf of its own interest. This capacity has been increased by the dependence of absentee ownership upon salaried executives and technical experts. The general Marxist thesis has been that because this group has no economic roots of its own, because its means of livelihood derives from the working capacity of those below and the directive capacity of those above, they move to one side or the other of the social conflict and do not act on behalf of any interest of their own. But in Germany the middle class developed enough consciousness to supply the initiators and the backbone of the Nazi movement. A similar development can only be avoided here by a strategy which takes the vocational interest and social claims of this group into account.

The recent course of capitalist history sufficiently confirms the main points in Marx's analysis of class forces and their relation to social change. Those who agree with him that the desperate need of humanity is to find emancipation for the workers, and for society at large, from class oppression, should

also agree that this is no time to be arguing about the finer points of theory. With the future of democracy hanging in the balance, our concern must be with the correct use of the general method of historic analysis that Marx placed at our disposal to prevent the antidemocratic forces from winning. What needs to be done with Marx's theory is what he said he did with philosophy, that is, use it to change life as well as explain it.

The Marxist analysis shows us clearly that social change is accomplished by the pressure of economic need, reinforced by universal ideals, and expressed in political power; that early capitalism made a new division of classes, and declining capitalism unites various sections of those classes in two opposing camps. It follows that the line-up for needed social change must unite all whose labor is necessary to operate the method of social-economic planning, which is the only substitute for profit-seeking economy; also that these forces must unite around that body of workers who have been longest in the struggle against capitalist oppression. The general advance depends upon how soon this body of workers can go beyond their position of winning benefits and reforms within the framework of the capitalist economy. For any intellectuals to delay this advance by promoting controversy over the accuracy of details in earlier Marxist forecasts is treason to the social need.

## CHAPTER XII

### *The Task of the Intellectuals*

THOSE WRITERS who have analyzed the developments of the capitalist-democratic revolution have pointed out that the intellectuals were attacking and undermining the ideas and moral claims of the feudal order before the political struggle for change began. They conclude that such activity is one of the signs of the beginning of a period of social revolution, and they note its presence in capitalist society before the period of economic decline set in. As the day of political democracy drew near in England, in France and in the United States a varied group of statesmen, philosophers, religious enthusiasts and freethinkers formulated the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity which were the inspiration and the battle cries of the forces of change and still fling out their dynamic demand to be realized in other changes in the organization of society.

It is a greater task that now confronts the intellectuals. To use democratic political power to secure economic and social

democracy requires more preparedness than the rising capitalists needed to overthrow feudal political power. A big job of social education has to be done before existing experience can produce the social consciousness required to change the economic order. It is more difficult to organize the principle of cooperative living in this country, conditioned by its frontier experience, than it was to establish the principle of freedom for the individual after the restraints and oppressions of feudal society. To do this without losing the essential and indispensable values in personal freedom is more difficult still. The moral values that are in solidarity have now to be united with those that are in liberty; order has to be joined to freedom in an effective working combination. The oppressed have to do more than get rid of their chains. They have to organize brotherhood so that it will work. Today equality and fraternity have to take precedence over liberty without losing liberty. The individual and the class have to learn to use their capacities to end power, their own as well as that of others. In this assignment which history has set before us a heavy responsibility falls upon the intellectuals, since they have read history and should be able to show which way the road into the future must run.

The term *intellectuals* has a somewhat different meaning in American society than in the European scene. There its meaning is more heavily charged with the content put into it in the aristocratic, leisure-class days of feudal power and in the pre-scientific period of intellectual development. There it still means mostly a section of the population which is not only separated from business and the workers, but holds itself aloof from the concrete tasks of human existence. The writer,

the artist, the philosopher, generally speaking, exhibits no concern with the sources of his food, clothing, shelter, and comforts. He is living in another world. Those who supply him with these things are to him a lower order, whether they are business men or wage earners. Therefore he tends to become parasitic in spirit as well as in economic fact, to recognize no obligation to those who supply him with the means of life, to talk about pure art, pure science, pure reason—things that never did and never can exist—to seek an ivory tower to live in—an impossible habitation. The climax of this parasitism is reached in making a vocation of criticism, which in a society run for and by profit can contribute nothing to creative thinking, is merely intellectual calisthenics performed for pay, and degenerates into gossip and spite.

Here the term *intellectuals* acquires a wider meaning. At first we had the "learned professions"—preaching, teaching, medicine and the law, and the term implied a superior class, entitled to "leadership in the community." Our colleges used to graduate their classes under this slogan and for this purpose. Later our policy of free education for all—from kindergarten to university—and our emphasis upon the practical sciences, including business management, changed the tone of our intellectual atmosphere. By the old school in education, and by the intellectuals, we were dubbed materialistic and shallow, as of course we were. But nevertheless this development laid the ground work for the true connection between theory and practice, between thinking for social ends and doing. This can be developed only when we install social-economic planning.

Then we can move toward a society where all are both

owners and socially useful workers, where all whose service to society is mainly intellectual and artistic carry a constant responsibility for the improvement of the economic activities by which all live, where all whose vocational service is not mainly intellectual yet have intellectual and artistic interests. This is the outcome of the American view of the intellectual life when it becomes emancipated from the profit-seeking economy. It requires the democratizing of all capacities and all opportunities, and their uniting in a common effort for the development of the community life. This process can be aided by the mechanizing of labor. Automatic and semi-automatic machinery, instead of creating unemployment and misery, can be used to increase the intellectual and purposeful life of the worker as well as to provide more leisure for cultural pursuits. The man with the machine may not think any better than the man with the hoe. But he can and he should.

In the days when the Chautauqua lecture circuit was bringing a glimpse of the cultural life to the small towns and the countryside, our popular platform orators used to grow eloquent over the printing press as a great democratic force. It had opened the gates of the temple of knowledge to all, it had extended to the common people one of the privileges of the leisure class. There is a kernel of truth in this rhetoric despite the use of the art of printing for profit—to deceive the people by propaganda in behalf of the profit-seeking economy and the interests of those who by it have climbed to power. The same observation holds good for the radio in relation to the further democratizing of our cultural life.

Our present democracy has given our intellectuals access to the knowledge needed to carry it forward into the future.

They are therefore under obligation to pay the debt they owe for the cultural heritage the past has bequeathed them. Upon those who know falls the duty to do, particularly that which cannot be done without the knowledge they possess. Who then are the intellectuals in our society? They make up a long and varied list. It extends far beyond the learned professions, which in the persons of many of their present members are far from being learned. The artists and the scientists now belong. The technicians who possess knowledge of the applied sciences that are indispensable to social well-being have entered the company. Many in the ranks of labor, most of whose education has been acquired outside the schools, possess knowledge indispensable to the working of society.

All these people constitute the technical staff for accomplishing social change. The term *professionals* describes them better than the old word *intellectuals*. They are able to help the practical workers in making the changes which they and the community now need, just as the workers of an earlier day helped the rising capitalists to remove the restraints of the feudal society from all of life. The meeting of their own needs, and their children's, depends upon the realization of a common interest and a common enemy. The need of the dispossessed and disinherited intellectuals, who are now performing tasks much narrower than those they were trained for, or are on relief, who can see no certainty, and little possibility, of the good life for their children, is the same need as that of the workers in the mill, mining and steel towns, in the offices and stores, on the railroads, subways, ships, farms. The need is common, the failing economy that prevents it being met

is the common enemy, the effort to replace it must also be a common effort.

The carrying through of the social change that our common life now needs requires two general capacities sufficiently distributed throughout the population. One is the will to make the necessary effort, no matter what it costs. The other is the knowledge of what has to be done. The will to change is developed by the pressure of events joined to the call of the ideal. The knowledge of how to change comes by seeing the results of events, past and present, and understanding their meaning. Without this knowledge, no matter how strong their will, how high their courage, the people perish in the effort to accomplish change. They have to know where they want to go, why they need to go in that direction, and how to get there.

Because the capitalist-democratic revolution was only a change in the ruling class, substituting merchants, industrialists and bankers for landlords, it could proceed from point to point without those who made it seeing where the road was leading. All they saw to begin with in England and in France was that they had to curb the taxing power of the king and the nobility. Gradually they found they had to get rid of the power of the king and the control of the landed interests he represented. Our break with England came as the result of successive steps to curb her control over the business of the colonies and the land of the continent. Like the workers, farmers and professionals today, the rising business class was conscious only of immediate needs, not of its power and the broader social interests involved. What were then the left-wing intellectuals—democratic liberals they would be today

—gave the economic forces a broader vision and a higher goal. That task they hand on to their successors.

The change before us is one born of conscious need and dependent upon organized effort that sees its goal. The present economic order cannot be replaced by a class feeling its way to power and gradually discovering to what lengths it must go. Those who do this job have to use the instruments developed by the present ruling class, which they are now unable efficiently to manipulate. It is the awareness of the unused forces in present society calling for release, and the understanding of what represses them, which alone can enable their emancipation and successful direction. This consciousness was not present in the previous change. It has to be developed now. And it has to be developed democratically, that is, of the people and by the people as well as for the people.

The transition from capitalist to socialist society can never be made by dependence upon leaders. That is a common weakness of mankind. The fascists have built their tyranny upon it—and it is a particular failing of the American people. Unless they recover from it, they will trust too long those who are trying to patch up the old order. In the only land in which a break has been made from capitalist society, and the foundations of a planned and planning social economy and a classless society laid, there was a group who had analyzed the situation historically and knew what had to be done. As the situation developed they made clear to the masses, point by point, what they themselves saw. Then the people were able to take action that related the meeting of immediate needs to the later removal of their causes. This is the application of the scientific method to social change. Its successful use depends upon a

correct understanding of the causes of social breakdown and a sufficiently powerful installation of preventive measures.

This understanding, and the action it should lead to, cannot be produced and distributed among the people by education or propaganda alone. To so think is the blunder of the intellectuals, with their dependence upon words, powerful as these are. Education and propaganda become effective for social advance only as they interpret situations and are applied in action. Thus they enable the people to educate themselves and share in the thinking process that was started by the intellectuals. It is because the breakdown of capitalist economy and the disintegration of capitalist society is now providing the unthinking crowd with the necessary experience, that the consciousness of needed change and the will to effect it can be developed.

What has to be more generally acquired is the capacity to act in anticipation of events. This distinguishes man from the animals, and the higher order of animal life from the lower. This is the power to plan and create the future by correctly interpreting the past and the present. This is scientific thinking as distinguished from purely philosophic thinking, which follows a chain of ideas, or seeks only to interpret life with no desire to change it. When the two processes are connected we get scientific social philosophy, and scientific prophecy which forecasts the course of events and so guides action. Thus disaster can be forestalled and suffering can be prevented. This is exactly what is happening in preventive medicine and public health, until the inexorable demands of a failing profit system cut down the necessary budget. This is exactly what is not happening in the prevention of war, despite the knowl-

edge of its approach and of what is required to stop it, because this type of thinking and action is not yet operative in our basic economic organization.

To put it in practice in that field is plainly the job of those who know history and can understand events. Otherwise all our knowledge as well as our faith is vain; and our educational system is vain along with our preaching. In our political and economic affairs unreason rules and has to be dethroned. Can anybody make sense of a system that, for the sake of trade, builds up the armaments of the dictatorships and then risks the life of all the democracies in the effort to destroy them; which demands budget economy at the cost of the lives of the unemployed and the future of youth; which pays out vast sums for farm relief, thereby increasing taxes which, by the financial manipulations and political power of the vested interests, are then largely transferred to the shoulders of the great consuming section of the population, thereby cutting down their capacity to purchase foodstuffs and increasing the distress of the farmer so that more farm relief is called for?

If the professional knowledge and skill of the socially useful intellectuals are employed to maintain the present unreason in the economic affairs upon which our existence depends, it becomes an instrument to make catastrophe certain instead of to avoid it. On the other hand the opportunity of our intellectuals to use their capacities for real social advance is more promising than that of their predecessors at the beginning of the present era. Then the philosophers, educators, economists and statesmen made themselves and the public believe what rapidly turned out to be an illusion—that out of the blind competitive struggle for profit social harmony and the good

of all were being achieved. If they were religious, they described this as the guidance of the unseen hand of an all-wise and altogether beneficent Providence. Now our task is to develop a conscious social purpose out of the chaos and conflicts, the hates and fears, that have resulted from putting the competition and mechanistic efficiency of the capitalist era behind the inherited class domination, imperialism and blood lusts of the earlier age. Difficult as the job is, it can be done if we can tie together science and goodwill, if we correctly unite the method of scientific thinking in political, economic and social affairs with the dynamic of the social ideal that has been handed on to us out of the sufferings and visions of the past.

The economic conditions necessary for successful social change are present in the verified potential abundance of this land. The psychological backwardness, the lack of understanding of the situation that prevents action which will anticipate and thus control future events, is being cut down by the increasing economic breakdown. It will be more rapidly diminished if the intellectuals will now do their duty and both explain the situation and point out the necessary direction of change. Despite the difficulty of winning state and economic power from those who now hold them, it should, nevertheless, be easier to go from our highly organized democratic society to a socialized democracy than it is from the feudalistic capitalism of Europe. What Russia did in jumping over the stage of democratic capitalism shows that it is possible here to jump over the period of class struggle reformism which Europe with its feudal background had to go through. If we will use our heritage for that purpose, we can avoid both fascist capitalism and repressive state socialism and begin, in the

only country whose resources permit it now to be done, a socialized economy and a democratized society.

In this endeavor, the particular task of the intellectuals is the shortening of what the sociologists call the cultural lag. This is the time it takes the thinking of the people to catch up with changes in their practical ways of living. A current recognition of this is the description of the thinking of some business and political leaders as belonging to the horse and buggy age. Another example is the time it took us to get rid of the lame duck session of Congress that gave political power for a time to those who had been repudiated at the polls. This was necessary because it took so long to get newly elected representatives to Washington in the days of horse travel. It has been entirely unnecessary since the railroads have been running. Likewise we still talk about free enterprise when we are really speaking about monopolistic big business; sing about God as King when we no longer believe in kings, and call Jesus Lord when he told his disciples not to.

This clinging to ideas that are no longer workable enables the reactionaries to carry on antisocial practices under the cloak of words that misrepresent what they are doing. If those who mold public opinion do not shorten the distance between what is actually going on and what is said and believed, then the pressure of events will lead the people to revolt against valid ideas and ideals. It will then take a long time to recover values that are necessary to social advance. When economic reconstruction started in Russia after the revolution, Lenin found that he had to educate the people in the essentials of the business morality which Communist propaganda had rejected on account of its misdirection under profit-seeking

economy. It is as necessary to develop ancient good in new form as it is to shatter false social myths. When ideas and ideals are brought up to date, then the power of universal truths is put behind the pressure of events in pushing life forward. Today the world is fast becoming united in practical connections. This fact requires that it be made one in its organized living. It will be done either under a world-wide imperialism or through the growing solidarity of the peoples in democratically organizing their life together to meet their common needs and develop their common capacities.

What is the immediate prospect of our intellectuals meeting the responsibility that history and our unique environment have placed upon them? Take first those whose business it is to deal in ideas and words—the scholars, writers and lecturers. They influence the public directly through their writing, teaching and speaking. These are the people who could lead this nation away from war and the destruction of its democratic rights. They could awaken it to the possibilities of an economy of abundance and the social development its realization would make possible. They could help it decide that its economic power is not to be used to prolong a destructive world imperialism, but to develop a democratic world community. How many of them are doing any of these things? Too many are running true to the form set by the intellectuals of an aristocratic and autocratic society. They are following, consciously or unconsciously, their class interests or the path of least resistance. They are teaching what will bring academic promotion or a highly paid position in the business world. They are preaching what the congregation likes to hear instead of what it needs to hear. On the platform, and on the

air, they are talking down, intellectually and morally, to what the advertiser says is the I. Q. level of the audience he expects to sell to. They are writing what pays. The roll call of editors and columnists who once fought for the people, and who are now the most effective propagandists the monopolistic interests possess, is a sad one.

All this is a recurring page in history. Browning summarized it in his lines about the leader who "Left us for the sake of a ribbon to put in his coat"—the reward for treason to the people. We cannot win the race between enlightenment and catastrophe unless there is a sufficient body of intellectuals who will follow the truth at any cost, who cannot be deceived by any sophistry nor bought at any price, who will go on fighting for the right as they see it even when there is no hope to win.

The broader question is the final part in the drama of social change in the United States to be played by that large company of intellectual liberals, scattered through all the professions and vocations, who sincerely desire social advance. Our liberal weeklies speak for them and to them, and their present attitude is not one that promises a vital role in the crisis. Like the college campuses, they are less interested in crusading than they were in the first flush of the Progressive movement in politics. They are rendering an invaluable service in collecting and summarizing the facts in crucial situations. But this more often indicates a mood of intellectual satisfaction with that limited achievement than the use of a tool for achieving necessary social change. The sense of crisis, the awareness of the basic economic weakness, is nearly always blunted by absorption in some minor point. A trenchant fac-

tual description of some current injustice often has its punch pulled by concluding with a pious hope that the administration will understand and things will come out all right.

There is a striking difference between the attitude of liberal intellectuals and that of the wage earners toward the present war and our relation to it. The usual audience of intellectuals, because of the common cultural heritage with England, can see only the moral values on the Allied side, whereas the workers can see the overshadowing fact of British-French imperialism. Because of the Finnish situation, despite their awareness of its exaggeration by war propaganda, most liberal intellectuals can now see no possible good coming into history from the Soviet Union. Yet they would not think of writing off all that Cromwell did for British liberties and the freedom of man, because of what he did in Ireland, a much worse situation than that of Finland. Why this difference in judgment? Is it because of class interest? Or because of the failure to analyze the economic situation? Is it the inevitable result of assuming that capitalistic democracy is sufficient for the needs of man—the atrophy of mind that follows the willingness to rest content with any stage of human achievement?

At the moment some of our intellectuals are accusing themselves and their fellows of having failed in their duty to society in its present crisis. Facing the consequences of a possible German victory, they have changed their position on war. Their penitent accusation is that the intellectuals have weakened our democracy by antiwar writing, by not preparing it to fight the antidemocratic forces of Europe. Their penance is to use their talents to get us into the war that will put our own antidemocratic forces in the citadels of power. In their

confession they do not say that if they had exposed, and helped the people to defeat, the economic and political policies that built up the fascist war might, this deadly dilemma of democracy would have been avoided. Thereby they reveal the inner weakness of the intellectual.

Our intellectual world is still more concerned with ideas than with facts, or the relation of ideas to facts. The basic fact of all—the economic system by which we live and sustain our culture—is almost completely ignored. As long as our intellectuals are separated from the struggle of the people to live, as long as they are more concerned with the operations of the mind than the relation of these to bread-and-butter activities, they cannot give this stricken world much help. If they do not become auxiliaries of reaction, they become advocates of measures that seek to bring back the conditions of an earlier, simpler period of our history. Like the handicraft workers who thought they could save themselves by smashing the machines, they try to restore a pattern of living that cannot meet the needs of life today.

The inadequacy of the intellectual liberals in a day of change is revealed by the fact that they are responsible for the fallacy that fascism and communism are alike in their consequences to democracy. A Gallup poll of the professions would unquestionably show a heavy majority who take intellectual pride in being against both fascism and communism. This becomes a justification for doing nothing to check the growing fascist symptoms in this country, nothing to expose the Red scare under whose smoke screen fascism has elsewhere advanced to power. The consequence is that the fascist forces gather strength faster than the natural impetus behind them

warrants, because they have the opposition of only a small part of the intellectuals who should be the outposts of an advancing democracy. Consequently most of the people are left without sufficient understanding of the nature of fascism until that comes by bitter experience. Then it will be too late; the fascists will have taken power. And the impartial intellectuals will discover they have not been wise enough to save their own skins. Too late they will learn that the social forces which bring forth fascism, like the natural forces which produce floods, are too powerful to be stopped unless they are checked in the first stages of their development.

The will for the extension of democratic power and the democratic process into a socialized economic order and culture is not yet present among us. Unless it comes in time, through a conscious understanding of what is happening and what has to be done, the fascists must win for a period. If the present capitalistic controls over the behavior and aims of human society are not removed, they will express themselves in some form of the fascist state, with power divided between the financial hierarchy and the political gangsters. The democratic forces can only prevent this by extending their power to the economic and cultural areas they do not now control. All who are kept out of the struggle to do this by the fallacy that fascism and communism are equal, are helping to defeat democracy. If government of the people now perishes from this part of the earth for a time it will be for lack of knowledge. And the intellectuals whose duty it is to supply the knowledge will stand responsible for the outcome. Later, as it was after the Russian Revolution for a similar reason, there

will be a reaction against certain aspects of the intellectual life which will entail severe social loss.

The intellectuals can prevent this catastrophe if they will forsake the safety-first habits of the academic world and abandon its unreal scientific detachment, its make-believe impartiality. If they will get into the actual struggle for the improvement of life at the points where the facts become known to them, they will develop the will to change and help the people to do what needs to be done. The will to act is being developed in the non-intellectual sections of the population by the pressure of the declining economy upon their lives. But action without sufficient awareness of the nature of the situation that is oppressing them will make the people, as it has in the fascist nations, the victims of those who will bind them with still stronger chains than those they tried to throw off.

The effective will to social change is forged in the fire of bitter experience and tempered in the defeats that must be endured before the existing order can be replaced. It is brought into shape on the anvil of suffering by the hammer of reaction. The loss of businesses, farms, homes, jobs and educational opportunities; the clubs, tear gas and bullets that break up picket lines; the injunctions and unequal sentences of the courts, will only teach the people who suffer from them what has to be done, provided there are those at hand capable of interpreting the situation and pointing the way out. Those who have been equipped intellectually to do this can do it only as they take part in the actual struggle of the people, only as they act as well as think. The time has come for intellectuals to choose between the needs of the people and the

interests of the plutocrats and their allies. The future of the intellectual life lies within the creative workers of all kinds. It is not in the hands of the capitalists and their dependents. Because its liberal elements will be either transformed or repressed by war and reaction, all that allegiance to capitalism can do for the intellectual from now on is to goose-step his mind.

## CHAPTER XIII

# *The Role of Religion*

IT IS EVIDENT that religion will play a significant part in the struggle that brings in the next stage of human society. It did in the transition from the feudal to the capitalist period. In Germany, Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation, encouraged the peasants to demand justice. When they revolted, he urged the nobility to shoot them down "like mad dogs." In England, where the capitalist-democratic revolution began, the Reformation, according to the younger school of historians, was more political and economic than religious. However that may be, it was certainly used by the king to break the political and economic power of the papacy over England. Today, in the United States, as the inability of a declining capitalist economy to solve the economic crisis plunges the world into another war, we see an emergence of the religious appeal in the political field. Its use recalls the time when the antidemocratic forces that passed the infamous

Alien and Sedition Acts invoked the deity in their behalf and attacked Jefferson, the exponent of democracy, as an atheist.

Not since then has there been such an attempt to use the sanction of God for political purposes and to cover political objectives with religious phrases that have a powerful emotional appeal as there is now. Most of the antidemocratic organizations and publications use the word *Christian* somewhere in their title. It is the Christian Front that has been promoting violent anti-Semitism, outraging all human decencies as well as the basic precepts of the Christian religion. Its battle cry is "Christ the King" which, in the lands where it has previously been raised, has covered deeds of armed violence against democratically constituted governments. In the report to the House of Representatives of the first year's activities of the Committee on Un-American Activities, the chairman attempted to define Un-Americanism. He made the first requirement of Americanism the belief that the liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights were derived from God and from no other source. And there was no protest against this ignorant attempt to violate the religious freedom guaranteed by the Bill of Rights by labelling atheists, free thinkers, modernist Protestants and Catholics—anybody who does not agree with a politician's narrow religious views—as Un-American.

In more pious days, it was the custom in some sections to open political gatherings—even caucuses—with prayer. As a matter of form the custom still prevails in legislative assemblies, and in Thanksgiving proclamations. But in these last days most important political utterances invoke the name of the Deity. The Pope is joined by the President and by European statesmen, including even Hitler, whom one did not

previously suspect of an acquaintance with God, in asking His blessing upon their undertakings, or in being confident that they are expressing His will. This does not mean that they have suddenly become more religious, but simply that the situation is becoming more desperate. It also indicates that their enterprises cannot be fully explained to the people, so they are cloaked with the last and highest sanction known to man.

The two most publicized, demagogic, anti-Red propagandists—Father Coughlin and Martin Dies—whose political propaganda against the democratic gains recently secured by the people is identical, use the technique, even on the radio, of closing a speech with a prayerful appeal for the blessing of the Deity. Thus support is gained for their antidemocratic program by a subtle appeal to the religious emotions of their hearers. Protestant and Catholic, they join in calling for a holy war on communism, a new crusade to save Christ from the anti-Christ of materialist Marxism.

Behind this use of religious language and the emotions it arouses for political and economic purposes is the influence in the struggle for social change of organized religion as a social force. In our situation that means the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Like the rest of our social institutions, they do not show the same vigor or growth that they recorded in the time of capitalist expansion. Nevertheless, most of the people of the United States are still influenced in their attitudes, behavior and moral judgments, by the teachings and beliefs of these religious organizations. The Jews, whose influence on social questions is much greater than their numbers, will in general follow the same pattern of social behavior as

the Christians. This is because they are an integral part of the economic setup, and also because the basic principles of the Christian teaching on social questions derive from Jewish history. The religious ideals of the Western World in relation to human conduct are described by scholars as the Hebrew-Christian tradition. Because their religion is more a faith and a moral code than a church, the Jewish attitude and influence on the social struggle has been and will be more akin to that of the Protestant denominations than that of the Roman Catholics. Also, because of their temperament, they will divide more sharply into radicals and conservatives.

The Catholic and Protestant churches approach the issue of social change, and the relation of democracy to it, from a different point of view. The basic organizing principle of Roman Catholicism is authority, that of Protestantism is freedom. True an institution as large and varied as the Roman Catholic Church finds itself compelled to grant more freedom within itself than its framework indicates, and the Protestants had no sooner got rid of the authority of the Pope than they substituted the authority of an infallible, verbally inspired Bible. But that could not long survive the influence of the basic principles of the right of the individual conscience and the free access of the individual believer to God, without the intervention of priest, bishop or Pope.

Another basic difference is that the Roman Church is still in principle a temporal as well as a spiritual power. Since Mussolini gave back to the Pope a place to hold a little imperial court, and especially since our President sent to the Vatican a personal representative who was promptly given diplomatic rank, the temporal power of the papacy has out-

ward and visible expression in the modern world. The Catholic ideal and hope for human organization is still another and greater Holy Roman Empire. Ever since the day that the Roman Emperor became the head of the church, and the church took over the organizing principle of the empire, it has been a religious imperialism. Its aim is power as well as doing good. It would say that it must have power in order that the highest good may be achieved and the greatest good done.

The Protestant principle of the freedom of the individual conscience however, when fully carried out, makes religion a private matter and requires the separation of church and state. It is individualism in religion. Its freedom of religious conscience and interpretation is the counterpart of free enterprise and free speech, and played its part in the historic development from feudal restrictions to modern freedom. To Catholic thinking this is heresy and anarchy, in politics and economics as much as in religion. Catholicism claims to stand for the principle and fact of community, the organization of the common life in and under the one true church. When Protestantism, through the principle of individual freedom, rediscovered Jesus it developed its individualism into a sense of community. But it is the growing community of free individuals with common standards and ideals, and the church as the servant of the community not its overlord. In Protestantism the common voice on social questions is found, if it can be found at all, by democratic discussion. But the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, which speaks on certain subjects for most of the Protestant denominations of the United States, does not and cannot bind its constituent bodies as the utterances of the Pope do the Catholics. The

Protestant declarations can be disavowed and the dissenters still remain in good fellowship, if they wish to do so.

With this different approach to the present world crisis in which all nations are torn apart by the passing of the capitalist period of history and the coming of another stage in human development, the general heading of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism is in different directions. Both of them resisted the rise of capitalism, condemning its practices of competition, profit and interest as unchristian, but both of them were defeated by what were then irresistible economic forces. Protestantism made its peace with them and prospered organizationally, if not spiritually. Catholicism soon followed the same course. That story has been fully documented by Max Weber in Germany and Tawney in England. Now that the results of monopoly capitalism are rapidly becoming as socially intolerable as they have for some time been morally unbearable, the reaction of Catholicism and Protestantism is the same at certain points, but basically different on the general question of social organization. The utterances of the Pope, and of Catholic groups, agree on certain immediate measures of reform with those of Protestant bodies. On what is to be done with the body politic they disagree fundamentally, because one wants a church-controlled society and the other does not. The Protestants generally are willing to trust the democratic principle and method as the way of change. The Catholics naturally put their faith in the authoritarian principle, with the church as the final authority.

The criterion here is the utterances of various sections of both faiths, official and unofficial. Once, in a mixed gathering of religious workers, I made the point laid down by the

late Chief Justice Holmes in one of his free speech decisions, that those who believed in democracy would have to accept a democratic decision of the people of the United States in favor of communism or any other form of social organization, the remedy of those who did not like it being to seek democratically to change it. The national leader of the most radical Catholic group happened to be present and felt in conscience bound to make it plain that it could not accept this position, because the people "like children need sometimes to be directed and controlled."

Because of the Catholic community ideal, because also of its basic imperialism and its homesickness for the day of its glory in the feudal age, the Catholic view of the future organization of society looks backward for its pattern. It is feudal, imperialist, even fascist. The Christian Socialism of its European radicals was used by its ecclesiastical diplomats to get church control of the workers, their unions and their cooperatives, and to block a democratic socialism of the people's power. Its hope for the state in democratic countries is what it calls religious corporatism, a fascist setup with the church the final authority, as developed in Portugal and advocated in Quebec. The writings and speeches of the most widely heard and read Catholic in the United States plainly tend in this direction; and this must be one of the reasons why the Church permits his utterances at points violating principles laid down by the Church and constituting a threat to its future.

When it comes to practical politics and economics, however, this basic difference of attitude toward democracy between the Catholic and Protestant churches is diminished, and

it grows less as the need for social change increases. Both have large investments at stake and will oppose measures that imperil them. This resistance will be weaker and less militant in Protestant ecclesiastical circles because of the amount of democratic social conscience there to be found, and while its social radicals can be freely denounced and the road of preferment made difficult, or closed, for them, they cannot be controlled as they are in the Roman Church.

In both sections of American Christianity the lines of division in the struggle for social change are becoming clearer. In each case there is a reactionary, a reformist, and a radical division. While it follows in general the class lines of the population and reflects its economic interests and struggles, yet it is also crossed and mixed by the types of religious emphasis—theological or liturgical—and the temperaments of priests and preachers. Also there is a curious reversal of the relation between clergy and laity over the social question because of the fact that the priest is the church with all its authority, while the preacher is a voice, a moral influence, and the representative of a denomination. Consequently, in the Protestant section of our Christianity we find the demand for social change coming almost entirely from a section of the ministry and generally criticized and obstructed by the laity. In the Catholic world it is the other way round. Aside from a few priests, the Catholic social radicals are lay people; it is from the laymen that open criticism of reactionary stands by the hierarchy is being heard. So that if religion is to be a force for needed social change, the Protestant preacher and the Catholic layman must each win his fight for independence.

This means that the Reformation must be fought over again

on a wider field, and more consciously. Those preachers, priests and laymen who have come to the conclusion that the principles of the profit economy, as well as some of its practices, are unchristian and undemocratic, who are taking the side of the people who suffer from its injustices and inefficiency and thereby the side of the welfare of human society as a whole, are in the position of the pre-Reformation priests and lay preachers who took the side of the oppressed and hungry workers on the land under the feudal system. They need now to realize that the change in the structure, control and nature of society necessary to correct this situation brings with it a corresponding change in the organization of religion. A part of the struggle between conflicting elements in society is the conflict between conflicting elements in religion.

A part of the cultural development within tribal and feudal society, representing steps in the knowledge and use of nature by man, was a change in the ideas and ideals of the gods and God, in forms of worship, and in the moral codes set up by religion. These also accompanied the change from tribal to feudal society. In the change from feudal-agricultural to commercial-industrial society the change in religion was not so great, because no such change in the nature of society occurred as happened when the tribes became nations and went from democratic to centralized control, resting on military force. The class pattern thus set up in feudal society was continued in capitalist society alongside the adoption of the democratic principle and method. Now, if democracy is to continue, class control and imperialism—its political expression—have to go.

This means that both the poverty and ignorance of the masses has to be ended. To accomplish this requires more

than the democratic control of political and economic power. It demands the democratic development of culture, including religion, so that with the aid of all the new knowledge of the universe and human nature that science has brought us, and will bring us, the people together may work out their salvation. This, in turn, means that all the authoritarian elements in the Christian religion which came in when Christianity adopted the principle of the Roman Empire will have to go. They will take with them all the beliefs and ceremonies based on superstitions which arose from ignorance of the ways of nature, and the method of philosophical speculations detached from the working world, which Christian thinking borrowed from the Greek aristocratic philosophers.

This, briefly described, is the struggle for social change within the domain of religion. It is the modern phase of the historic struggle between what is known as prophetic and institutional religion. Institutional religion represents the vested interests of an organization in property, income, social prestige, political power, modes of thought. Prophetic religion represents the attempt to change human life in the direction of certain ideals worked out in the social struggle by joining the needs of the people with the insight and vision of the prophet. This effort has appeared at times in every world religion. They have all produced their social prophets and reformers, raising their protest against injustice and oppression, crying their challenge to a new order. Time and again the churches, as Jesus said, have killed the prophets and then paid honor to their memory.

The clearest and strongest expression of the demands of an ethical religion upon both persons and society is that appear-

ing in the Hebrew religion, and then in Jesus, who came, as he said, to fulfil the law and the prophets. The strength of this religious message was due to the unique experience of the Hebrew people in their release from slavery in Egypt, which gave them an ethical God, quite different from the gods of other Semitic tribes—a God who was the helper of the poor and oppressed because his nature was justice and righteousness. The character of their God consciousness played a vital part in the social struggle of the Hebrews. When they became a nation and developed a commercial society, with its exploitation, its class divisions, its political repressions, the tribal spirit of democratic equality survived among them; whereas it disappeared from surrounding nations. Out of the struggle to maintain it came the Hebrew prophets, with a denunciation of injustice and oppression, an exaltation of righteousness, justice and compassion, a proclamation of a social ideal of peace and freedom, equality and solidarity, which in clarity and power is not equalled anywhere in the record of man. This was the base of the social codes known as "the law." These codes invoke a twofold imperative—the need of man, the will of God. The law and the prophets, fulfilled by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and other sayings, proclaim a social ideal which has been, and will be, a continuous challenge to the conscience, the faith and the will of man, as long as his course runs upon this planet. Its influence is to be found alike in Jefferson, the democrat, and in Marx, the scientific socialist. As it was in the day of Jesus, so now its effect in the changing of human life is to be found more outside the ranks of organized religion than within.

No matter how much it is obscured in the ceremonies

and mental speculations of the churches, this common heritage of Jew, Catholic, and Protestant, of every oppressed and exploited class, race and nation, is still a dynamic force in the affairs of man. This kind of religion is not an opiate for the people like the gorgeous church pageantry, or the Negro spirituals, with which the emotions of the slaves, serfs, peons, share croppers, the underpaid and the unemployed, are channelled away from rebellion against the conditions of their life and work. The religion that expresses itself in the song ascribed to Mary the mother of Jesus, in the words, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat and exalted them of low degree . . . The poor he hath helped with his right hand and the rich he has sent empty away," is not like the ecclesiastical system which reads these words in Latin, a belated survival of the past. A religion that expresses itself in the great sayings of Jesus about the leaders being those who serve the most, about the first being last and the last first, about the deceitfulness and moral destructiveness of riches, about the poor having a right to the Kingdom of Heaven while the rich find it almost impossible to enter, is a continuous force for social change.

In the days of the peasant struggle in England that preceded and led to the Reformation there were Poor Preachers going up and down the land, proclaiming the truths of the gospel that the Church had hidden, and sharing the sufferings of the people. There are spiritual descendants of these men with us today and, as in the past, their work will outlive and overcome all that the reactionary and exploiting religious forces are doing to stabilize the present by bringing back the past. The social message in the Hebrew-Christian tradition,

when it is united with current need in the actual social struggle, is the promise of victory in the social order of the forces of life over the forces of death.

The test of the organized churches, whose duty it is to proclaim this message of the prophets and Jesus, and to help their people realize its meaning in the American scene, is their attitude toward the development of democracy in the present crisis. In principle the Protestant churches are for democracy. Their forbears helped to bring it into being. The first Bill of Rights was written by the Left groups in Cromwell's army. It began with a declaration of religious freedom, then proceeded to political freedom and an attempt at economic freedom. Like all human institutions, Protestantism at times has violated the principle it professed. As dissenters developed, the sons of those who had claimed and won religious freedom denied it to others—Roger Williams was expelled from Massachusetts for claiming freedom of conscience. History shows that the sects, which began as rebels in religion, politics and economics, became conservative in each field as they became churches with large vested interests. As these are endangered by the world crisis, most of the preachers and church members will turn, not against the broken-down system whose principles are contrary to those they preach, but against those who are trying to replace it with one that is more ethical and efficient. They will blame their troubles on the doctor instead of the disease. In the liberal sections of the Protestant world, there will be no support for the Holy War for which the ruling section of Catholicism is beating the tom-tom. But for the most part they are, and will be, content to be against both fascism and communism

instead of being for the changes that would make effectual the democracy they profess to believe in.

There is however the saving remnant. Through the educational system of their denominations they have planted the seeds of the social religion of the prophets and Jesus, with due recognition of their relation to a kindred strain in other faiths, in the minds and consciences of some millions of the younger generation who no longer find official religion able to express their needs. They have raised questions about the nature of our economic order, our political controls, our educational system, which will be so emphasized by the experience of the period of capitalist decline that they will bear fruit in action. Some of them in nine denominations have organized themselves in voluntary associations which, not receiving official funds, cannot be officially controlled and can say things which official bodies will never utter. They are united in a Christian Council for Democracy which rejects the organizing principle of the profit economy and commits itself to follow the democratic principle along the road of the social change which the present and future needs of the people require. This growing fellowship represents much more than its actual numbers, and it has a part to play in the future of this nation, even though it may be split by the war issue.

The situation in the Roman Church is different, because it does not accept the democratic principle. Its most liberal writers in the United States, stalwart champions of many needed social reforms, have made that perfectly clear. They say that the church recognizes the value of the democratic state and the gains it can make under it. Therefore it will cooperate

with it, but cannot accept our constitutional principle of religious freedom. In *The State and the Church* written and edited for the Department of Social Action of the National Catholic Welfare Council, Father John A. Ryan and his collaborator tell us:

. . . Non-Catholic sects may decline to such a point that the political proscription of them may become feasible and expedient. What protection would they have then against a Catholic State? The latter could logically tolerate only such religious activities as were confined to the members of the dissenting group. It could not permit them to carry on general propaganda nor accord their organization certain privileges that had formerly been extended to all religious corporations, for example, exemption from taxation.

This statement makes it clear enough that a totalitarian religion requires a totalitarian state to enforce it. The two absolute authorities join for one end. The hope of bringing this about explains why the Vatican is not as militant against fascism as it is against communism, even on the religious question. It explains also why the Vatican prefers fascism to democracy, even to the extent of blessing Franco, who shot many of the liberal Basque clergy because they supported the democratic government of Spain. The Vatican prefers to take its chance with a rival authority which will stamp out democracy, waiting in confidence for the day when its diplomacy will make it supreme. Those liberals who are so bravely against all totalitarian states are strangely silent about the Vatican—the home of the principle of absolute authority on which they are all founded, and by which they justify themselves.

The Roman Catholic Church cannot accept the principle

of the separation of church and state which is essential to the perpetuation of our democracy. A limited democracy may use the church as an organ of the state, an instrument of its class control, as in England; but a full democracy must hold the church to be the servant of the community, neither an arm of the state, nor the power over the state. That is why Roosevelt's sending a personal representative to the Vatican, instantly given the status of an ambassador, is treason to democracy. It should have been immediately opposed by all the Protestant churches and cancelled by Congress.

In the United States it becomes constantly clearer that the Catholic hierarchy is on the side of the antidemocratic forces. The weekly magazine, *Social Justice*, which is anti-Semitic and antidemocratic, vicious and violent in its language, even to the extent of threatening to take arms, is the organ of a Catholic priest, Father Coughlin. Until Jan. 9, 1939, it carried his name "By permission of his superior." Recently, speaking to 1200 officers and men of the 165th Infantry, Monsignor Sheen of the Catholic University at Washington said: "Outside the Catholic state the only other institution that goes in for authority and discipline is the Army and Navy." He advocated that unemployed youth be compelled to join the army. New Jersey is now trying to bring this about by ordering that relief be withheld from all of military age.

It is in the record that the influence of the Catholic hierarchy defeated the Child Labor Amendment in the Massachusetts legislature, and in that of New York, where 83 per cent of the voters wanted it. Likewise it prevented the lifting of the embargo on Spain when over 75 per cent of the voters, including 38 per cent of the Catholics, wanted that done. It sup-

ported Mayor Hague in all his antidemocratic repression in Jersey City. The evidence recently made public indicates that it has sanctioned the organization of a boycott to control the sale of books that it thinks immoral or whose social views it objects to. It is also proven to have interfered with the purchase of books for public libraries on the same grounds. It is admitted by the movie industry that Catholic pressure was put on movie houses until the industry accepted the Production Code written by a Jesuit priest and administered mainly by the representative of the Catholic Legion of Decency. A similar organized movement brings pressure on the press concerning news that affects the Catholic Church.

Here, as in the movies, the pressure is also being exerted over issues of public policy. This was particularly the case in regard to Spain, where the course of events which are now putting democracy in peril throughout the world was decided. The extent to which practically the whole press was subject to Catholic pressure on this issue is documented in a recent book by George Seldes. Recently one of the widest known correspondents of the *New York Times* had to complain vigorously to the owner and managing editor because material on Quebec Catholicism had been cut from his special articles on the situation in Canada. Just before that, the same paper, whose masthead slogan is "All the news that is fit to print," refused an advertisement of the *Protestant Digest* for a special issue dealing with the attitude of the Catholic hierarchy toward Franco, and including an article entitled "The Franco Way in America." The reason given was that the linking of some Catholic names with the title might be libellous, and the titles of some other articles might be disturbing to Catho-

lic readers. Other New York papers accepted the advertisement.

Recently the Pope declared himself on the issue of education in relation to the Church in the United States in a manner which, from the head of any other state, would have been at once objected to as an interference with our domestic affairs. The fact that the Church is international and is also a state, raises the question of foreign control in our politics. Any honest attempt to prevent foreign direction of our political organizations will certainly have to include the Roman Church. In many of our big cities, the machine politicians of both parties are accustomed to speak of the residence of the Roman Catholic dignitary as the "power house." The record shows, with a few outstanding exceptions, that this power is used to check the advance of democracy.

The menace of this situation is increased by the extent to which the fundamentalist section of Protestantism joins with the reactionary section of Catholicism. Fathers Coughlin and Curran—Catholic priests; Gerald Winrod and Frank Norris—Protestant evangelists, and a host of lesser men of both persuasions, are talking the same language. Catholic sheets of the yellow journalism type, like *Social Justice* and the *Brooklyn Tablet*, are duplicated in source materials and phrases by a number of Protestant weeklies read constantly by the poor and uneducated. All these voices incite the same hates and repressions against the Reds, against liberals and most of them against the Jews. An ignorant, religious fanaticism is on the way to becoming the dynamic for the American type of fascism.

Economic interests and ignorance of economic forces in

the more intelligent sections of both the Catholic and Protestant churches is increasing this danger. The Methodist Church, having recently united its Northern and Southern sections, is now the largest single body of American Protestants. At its recent General Conference its Entertainment Commission invited Martin Dies to speak at a public meeting. It was on the evening of the day given to Methodist youth. The youth came to their meeting prepared to give out a mimeographed statement objecting to what Dies stands for and to the fact that the official invitation seemed to endorse his record. They found a lot of police in the auditorium who promptly took their statements away from them. This was done under an ordinance against the distribution of unofficial material, which had been ignored during the earlier part of the conference. The responsibility for this action lies at the door of the local Methodist Committee in charge of the city-owned auditorium. This is the first time that police have been used by Methodists to prevent Methodists from exercising what the Supreme Court has declared to be a constitutional right.

Thus Methodist youth saw what Catholic youth saw when the Hague Machine in Jersey City put John R. Longo in jail for exposing and resisting its corruption and repression—that the struggle to preserve and extend democratic rights divides the churches, as it does all other organizations. In the crisis before us, institutional religion will serve as chaplain to the forces of reaction, blessing its program, justifying its repressions. It always has; it always will, because its course in practical affairs is determined by its economic dependence upon, and its desire for, the favor of the powers that be. Liberal religion will pass resolutions against both fascism and com-

munism, affirm moral generalities and defend free speech. Prophetic religion, in all our faiths, will recognize itself as one of the forces for social change. It will bring them hope and courage, sharing the dangers and persecutions that are the lot of those who break new paths in the social order. In that experience it will find new life for itself.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Civil Liberties*

TO MANY PEOPLE the democratic process means the maintenance of civil liberties, that and nothing more. This represents the right to free expression of opinion upon which the parliamentary system rests. As long as this right is available to all without discrimination, government rests more upon consent than force, and the road of progress is kept open, because the majority is continually subject to the changing influence of minorities. Through the maintenance of civil liberties the democratic process is the formation and expression of the people's power. They govern themselves through the free expression of the opinions of all, no matter how objectionable these opinions may be to some. But the democratic process is not complete unless it is the people governing themselves in every aspect of their lives. It is because of the relation of civil liberties to democratic power that the special interests are continually trying to limit or repress them. When the people surrender them, as they generally do in war time under the plea that the national interest eliminates party lines, then

they surrender their destinies to the hands of the ruling clique.

With us the civil liberties, common to all democracies, are specifically set forth in the Bill of Rights—the charter of our democratic freedom. They are the well-known rights to freedom of speech, press and assembly. Subsidiary, and of great importance because they express the right to equality under the law—the principle which the Roman codes handed on to the future to temper the Roman bequest of imperialism—are the rights to a fair trial and to immunity from unreasonable punishment. Later was added protection from search and seizure without warrant of the court, specifying exactly what was sought.

In this day of social change if these rights are to operate effectively for the extension of democracy, not sterilized in a vain effort to preserve the existing forms of democratic government, there must be made general a clear conception of their nature and function. The Gallup poll which showed that a fraction over 40 per cent of the population were not sure whether free speech should be enjoyed by those preaching doctrines that would change our present system of government is a danger signal of bad weather ahead.

At present there are differing philosophies of civil liberties among their most ardent defenders. For twenty years I have sat at a table where actions in defense of the Bill of Rights were planned and undertaken weekly by persons who did not agree among themselves as to the nature of the base from which their actions proceeded. Our tradition of freedom maintains the rights of the individual and of minorities. It is the heritage of the frontier, joined with that of repressed minorities from Europe drawn here by the light that did for a time

enlighten the world. Hence to some of the staunchest defenders of civil liberties the rights of individuals and minorities to meet, to utter, print and distribute their opinions are regarded as absolute, an end in themselves.

This point of view overlooks the fact that all human ends are means to other ends, that ends and means are inseparable. Also it disregards the relation of civil liberties to the public safety and to social change. Practically, those with this point of view have to recognize necessary qualifications of the rights of individuals and minorities. As the familiar illustration goes, no one has the right to yell "fire" in a crowded theatre. Libel and slander have to be made punishable; also certain forms of obscenity, remembering that punishment for a breach of democratically determined public health and morals is not censorship. The community must defend itself against some actions of the individual as much as the individual must be defended against encroachments of the community. Meetings must be subject to considerations of public safety and traffic necessities, and continual vigilance is necessary to see that such regulations are not administered repressively or with discrimination against unpopular minorities. It is in the struggle to live that democracy becomes strong enough to grow.

Individual rights are absolute only in the sense that there can be no exceptions. It is easy for those who make them an absolute to play into the hands of class interests by failing to recognize that individuals are not equal in their rights when one possesses economic power and the other does not—for example, Henry Ford and one of the men working on the belt. There was no such situation when the Bill of Rights was written. Today we have to deal with more than a clash of

individual opinions. We are caught in the conflict between economic interests and social needs.

The limit of the right of our citizens to express their political opinions was drawn by the Supreme Court, during the World War, in what is known as the "clear and present danger rule." This was laid down in the case of Debs, and others, convicted for violating the provisions of the Espionage Act regarding interference with conscription. The rule says that words are punishable when there is a clear and present danger that they will result in acts which have been forbidden by law. This rule was formulated by the noblest Roman of them all, Oliver Wendell Holmes. Yet today how many constitutional lawyers would contest the judgment recently expressed by a prominent financier that Debs was imprisoned not because his speeches were hindering conscription but because, for general political reasons, it was desirable to get him out of the way for the time being. It was Warren Harding, not Woodrow Wilson, who pardoned him after the war.

In the absolutist emphasis upon the rights of individuals and minorities there is a tendency to forget that in the democratic process the majority also has rights. These increase as the majority becomes large enough to represent, for the time being, practically the whole community. There are three rights involved in free speech. The right of the individual to express himself, the right of others to listen or refuse to listen, the right of the community to regulate both of these in the interests of public safety. To find the exact point of danger is the difficult decision. An error there imperils the life of democracy. In time of social change the course of democracy runs between anarchy and tyranny, and the channel is both

narrow and dangerous. If certain kinds of utterance are permitted, the community life may be torn apart by violence. If others, closely akin to those that produce this effect, are not permitted, the community closes the road of progress. By any interference with free speech, assembly and press, beyond the point where words mean action, the community is injuring itself even more than those it represses. Recently the habit is growing in many of our communities of denying the use of school buildings for public meetings of political minorities. In so doing these communities deny themselves the right to social progress through education by minorities.

Over against the absolutist view of civil liberties is the instrumentalist view, which regards them as a means to social change. Freedom of discussion is seen as the only alternative to force in reaching a decision between conflicting views and antagonistic interests. This view recognizes that we are faced not merely with a clash of individual opinions but with a conflict between irreconcilable economic and social interests, working behind and through these individual opinions. It sees the maintenance of civil liberties as a possible substitute for force and violence, certainly as a means of reducing that dangerous outcome to the minimum. Was it on that basis that Jefferson did not fear the expression of opposition to the new republic, or was it because the strength of its youth, and the expansion before it, made it seem impregnable? Or was it because he had vision enough to see that change is forever necessary, whereas those of lesser stature want always to stay in the present?

In its illegitimate form, the instrumental view of civil liberties would use them as a means to power for class interests,

and then discard or suppress them. In its true form, this view sees them as a permanent factor in human progress and strives to secure the interpenetration of the rights of the community and the individual, the majority and the minority, in the proportion that will continuously secure needed change. This is a difficult equation to work out, and still more difficult to administer, in the flux of contending social forces. But this is the job that has to be done, and so far there is in history nothing to cause us to doubt man's ability to do what has to be done, despite the continuous imperfections that mark the approach to a goal which no generation may reach. A guiding principle is that the social necessity—determined by the standards which experience over many ages and in many lands has built up—must supersede the anarchic desires of the individual. His freedom to attack and seek to change accepted standards must, for the sake of the community, be kept open up to the point where the health and safety of the community is endangered. This point has to be measured by concrete, factual standards. For example, in a smallpox epidemic in a backward community, refusal to submit to vaccination has to involve a penalty. Propaganda against it, however, should be answered with better propaganda for it, which may remove the refusal. But incitement to, and organization of, an attack to destroy the vaccination headquarters would have to be met by sterner measures.

Another view of the nature and function of civil liberties, coming in between the absolutist and instrumentalist views, makes freedom of opinion the primary value and objective on the ground that if the people are free to think they will in due time work out their economic difficulties. Those inter-

ested in philosophy will at once recognize that this is a return to the position that ideas determine everything, including economic changes. The weakness in this position is that it fails to recognize and deal with the interrelationship between ideas and objective economic situations. So practically it runs up a blind alley. How are people to get freedom in ideas that will enable them to change economic conditions as long as economic conditions prevent them from having freedom to think? This position is really an intellectual throw back to free competition in ideas that is as unreal as the free enterprise and free speech talk of the monopolistic controllers of industry, trade and finance. Competition in distributing ideas between Henry Ford and the wage earners in the Ford plants is like putting a college heavyweight boxer with one hand tied behind him in the ring with Joe Louis.

The infant labor unions and the radicals are free to hire a hall and spread their views if they can get the money to pay for it, and if their opponents, through threats of the police and licensing agencies have not scared every hall owner in town so that he dare not rent them a hall. Did Hague and his kind stop the Reds from meeting outdoors just because they are political bosses, or because they represent the controlling economic interests of their community who want the spreading of ideas about economic change stopped? Those who want change can print leaflets, and the Supreme Court says they can distribute them, but how much money does it take to start a paper like the *New York Times* with its freedom to decide what news is not fit to print, with its power to leave out and to color at will? In some correspondence over refusal to print a certain piece of news that other papers

printed, the managing editor of that paper naturally enough said that he hoped he would never live to see the day when the man who owned a newspaper was not free to print what he chose. That was well enough in the days of the small and possibly independent newspaper. But a newspaper that runs presses which cost a small fortune is no longer independent in the social struggle, as the record of *The Times* on Russia, Spain and the Catholic Church clearly shows. And who is able to compete against this kind of handling of the news?

Wherever society has reached the point where man has learned to formulate his thinking, it is true that all freedoms stem from freedom of the mind. It also is true that freedom of the mind was won out of innumerable battles against economic and political tyranny and was made further possible by changes in economic conditions. It is incorrect to make either freedom to think and communicate ideas or economic freedom primary and put the other in the position of flowing automatically from it. They are interdependent and have to be won together, step by step. At the present moment, one of the most powerful repressions of freedom to think does not come from any direct assaults upon freedom of the mind. It is the result of the terrorism exercised by such propaganda as that organized by and around the Dies Committee and its local imitators. This expresses powerful economic interests. That economic power has to be broken if freedom of the mind is to be restored and maintained.

It is the failure to adjust the base of civil liberties to changing economic and social conditions that is largely responsible for present divisions in the ranks of the defenders of freedom. Until recently the issues have been clear and it has been pos-

sible for those of different philosophies to unite in action concerning them. Of necessity most of the cases in the twenty-year records of the American Civil Liberties Union have come out of the industrial conflict. They express the opposition of employers to the attempts of the wage earners to organize, hold meetings and distribute their printed matter. The next largest group of cases involve the same rights for unpopular radical minorities, including religious sects like Jehovah's Witnesses whose children refuse to obey laws requiring the salute of the flag in public schools. Political tyranny, like religious tyranny, cuts across the class lines between which the battle over labor organization and radical propaganda wages. In most of these cases the issues of unlawful search and seizure and fair trials are involved.

Then there is the issue of censorship, both public and private, its obstruction of social education by what it keeps the people from reading, seeing, or hearing over the air. Here the rights and powers of ownership are involved, so the economic question again emerges. It is also involved in the issue of academic and religious freedom. In this field also the right of the employer to get what he pays for and to hire and fire on that basis is claimed. The rights of preachers and teachers as citizens have yet to be defined and established. Here is where education of the supporting constituency of schools, colleges and churches is the decisive factor. Before freedom of speech, and freedom of the mind that alone makes speech socially valuable, is secured in our educational institutions, both public and private, and in our pulpits, the people must resolve to put truth above doctrine, must continually be willing to change doctrine to make it accord with verifiable truth.

These are the main points around which the battle for civil liberties has been, and will be, fought. The campaign now has to be adapted to the change in capitalist society from expansion to contraction, from development to decline. Free speech and free enterprise grew up together. One demanded and defended the other. One was the economic, the other the political, weapon against the restrictions and repressions of the feudal state. Our political and social institutions are supposed to express and secure "free competition." But that no longer exists. The closing of the individualistic period of capitalist expansion faces defenders of the Bill of Rights with the new conditions created by the collectivist nature of the machine age.

The first big break in the individualistic approach to civil liberties came in the recognition of the right of labor to democratically organize and the attempt to guarantee that right, under democratic conditions, through the National Labor Relations Act (the Wagner Act), and the administrative rulings of the Board charged with carrying out its provisions. This legislation was a recognition of the organized power of capital and the necessity, in the interests of both justice and social peace, of securing a similar right to labor. The administration of this law faced the defenders of civil liberties with some new decisions.

From the beginning of its career the American Civil Liberties Union regarded the right of labor to organize, strike and peacefully picket as a civil liberty to be defended, because these were obvious expressions of the guarantees of the Bill of Rights, and the attempt to stop them meant the denial to the wage earners of the right to free speech, assembly and

press. The operation of the Wagner Act has produced a large reduction of civil liberties cases in the industrial field, because it has reduced the number of strikes by removing their main cause. The propaganda that contends the contrary is misleading because it depends upon the record of the year when the reactionary employers, acting on the erroneous advice of a group of corporation lawyers that the Wagner Act was unconstitutional, were refusing to obey its provisions. This is part of the campaign to emasculate the law, which will increase as the further decline of the profit economy makes it more difficult to carry the costs of socially necessary labor conditions. If it succeeds, industrial conflicts will naturally increase in number and in severity.

Another right is involved in the recognition of labor's right to organize, strike and picket peacefully as a civil liberty. It is the right of the community to industrial peace by substituting the method of discussion and consent for the method of force in settling industrial disputes. In the administration of the law, another right emerged—the right of the employer to free speech on the question of labor organization. It came sharply to a head in the Ford case when the N.L.R.B. issued a cease and desist order requiring Ford to stop uttering, printing or circulating among his employees statements about labor organization. The ground for the order is that the words of the employer on this subject are a part of a course of conduct in violation of the law. There is no question as to the facts. The employer was proved to have carried on organized coercion and to have committed a series of acts of violence against the workers in the effort to prevent them organizing under the guarantees of the law. The record of violence from one

plant was so bad that after it had been for some time fighting and obstructing the law in the courts, the company sought to get this case settled outside, in order that the facts might not become public. Consequently the words, written or spoken, that the employer addressed to his employees on the subject of organization were designed as a part of the opposition to the law and were in effect threats and coercion. Such implied threats and coercion the American Civil Liberties Union had opposed in the case of political campaign material inserted in pay envelopes.

In this new issue there is plainly a conflict between the right of the worker to organize and the right of the employer to talk. Both cannot be maintained. Faced with this choice, some defenders of civil liberties take refuge in what is after all an abstraction, the right of the employer to utter his opinions but not threats or coercion. This disregards the economic power of the employer and the indirect way in which he can use it. It opens the way to the nullification of the law. It forgets the old proverb that a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse.

The absolutists in civil liberties take the ground that the employer should always be free to express himself on labor organization, that the test of coercion is deceptive. They evade the difficulty of making the necessary discriminations, and accuse those who disagree with them of being partisans of labor. In reality the shoe is on the other foot. Judged by their fruits, these simon-pure defenders of civil liberties come out on the side of reaction. They help it to power, and then it will destroy all democratic rights.

The other position, which for the time being turned out to be the majority, held that the right of the worker to organize

takes priority over the right of the employer to talk to his employees against labor organization, because the community has found that democratic labor organization is necessary to its peace and safety and has so decreed. Hence the employer is not free to nullify the law by his words any more than by his acts, or any more than he is free to violate the law against libel and slander. There is danger that this restriction may be carried too far for the good of the community. But the same danger exists in restricting time and place of public assemblies in the public interest. The more governmental functions increase under the inevitable collectivism imposed upon us by modern conditions of living, the greater is this danger. More than ever before, the development of democracy today is the practicing of the constant vigilance which is the eternal price of liberty. To defend the right of the individual, whether employer or labor leader, to persist in a course of antisocial conduct democratically forbidden, because of an abstract conception of his rights, is to enable reaction to turn the clock back once more. Ford as a citizen is free to speak and write publicly to his fellow citizens trying to get them to change the labor law. Ford the employer is not free to use his economic power through words to prevent his workers from organizing. Defenders of civil liberties, from now on, have to work out the difference between the expression of opinions and the exercise of economic power.

Just now the more acute issue of civil liberties, increasing as the economic crisis matures, is the rights of political minorities who advocate a new economic order. This situation is made more acute by the coming of war and the war temper. The machinery of democratic repression is now being given a work-

out in preparation for possible war use, and a possible domestic emergency. The crop of lies, fear and hate, sown by "patriotic" propaganda of the "Red Network" type is now beginning to be harvested. There is a strange contrast between liberalism in thought and liberalism in action. From the former we get Supreme Court decisions that order Hague and his clan to stop denying the use of streets and parks for public assembly, and stop mayors from preventing the distribution of leaflets they do not like. But from liberals engaged in politics we get attempted purges of the Left from all kinds of organizations, including the Civil Liberties Union. We also get a series of political trials, on technical grounds, which would have shocked intelligent conservatives in less dangerous times, and shock some of them now. The leading Republican candidate for the Presidency has called attention to the fact that we have no worse record of unequal punishment than the current scene has given us. Fritz Kuhn, leader of the unpopular German-American Bund, got 2½ to 5 years in Sing Sing for using personally \$500 of its money, when the organization had given him unrestricted use of its funds. Richard Whitney got 5 to 10 years in the same penitentiary for stealing several millions. Earl Browder, leader of the unpopular Communist Party, got 4 years imprisonment and a fine of \$2,000, not as commonly believed for traveling on a false passport, but for answering "No" to the question on the application blank as to whether he had previously had a passport. The government had known this for four years and had not considered it of sufficient importance to warrant action. Judge Manton got 2 years in prison and a fine of \$16,000 for selling justice in return for bribes.

The battle for civil liberties has been broadened by the economic breakdown, because it has matured the political struggle over needed social change. What is involved is more than the civil liberties of individuals and minorities; it is the basic democratic right of the people to govern themselves in ways of their own choosing. This is now threatened in the attempt to restrict their political choices by proposals to rule the Communist Party off the ballot. It is also endangered by the inquisition of the Dies Committee into political opinions and beliefs which nullifies the secrecy of the ballot, and attempts to put Congress above the Bill of Rights. As political proposals for change move closer to action, opposition to their expression is bound to increase. Democracy is indeed on trial. Its final test is not its ability to withstand attack from without but its capacity to maintain and extend its own principles within. Will it continue to permit not only expression of opinion, but also direct advocacy of change?

The recent record of those who have long been leading the defense for civil liberties is not encouraging. Some of them, misled by the fallacy that fascism and communism are equal dangers to democracy, tried to get the American Civil Liberties Union to go on record as opposed to them both, whereas its function is to defend the constitutional rights of both of them as need arises, not to pass political judgment upon them. Consequently this attempt failed. But later, under the pressure of war-time emotions, a resolution was put through disqualifying for membership in the governing bodies of the Union anyone "who is a member of any political organization which supports totalitarian dictatorship in any country, or who by his public declarations indicates his support of such a prin-

ciple." Thus the Union abandoned its policy of making the only test for service on its governing bodies the attitude of persons toward, and their record in defense of, the Bill of Rights. It abandoned also its policy of refusing to concern itself with civil liberties issues outside this country and obligated itself to pass judgment on such matters as the suspension of democratic rights at the present time by England, France and Canada. In this action the Union also violated several of the principles for which it had always fought. In constituting itself a judge of what constitutes a totalitarian dictatorship and how a person's public declarations indicate "his support of such a principle," the majority are censoring and penalizing opinion, something the Union has always opposed when done by the government or by educational institutions. In debarring from its governing bodies any person "who is a member of any political organization which supports totalitarian dictatorship in any country" it is using the principle of guilt by association, which it has always opposed when the government sought to enforce it.

Plainly this is no way to meet the peril to democracy that lies in the nature of the social change upon which human society has now entered. As long as the acute issues of civil liberties arose out of the conflict between capital and labor within the existing economy, and out of the advocacy of opinions which were not immediately to be translated into action, there was sufficient neutral ground on which its advocates could operate without more discomfort than being accused of sharing the doctrines of those whose right to utterance they defended. But this neutrality is rapidly disappearing. Those who were against both fascism and communism a little while

ago are now so militantly anticommunist that they have not enough time or emotion left to do anything effective against the rapid development of fascist tendencies. By encouraging the Red scare and dividing the forces willing to defend the Bill of Rights in the day of its greatest peril, they are actually contributing to the destruction of the democracy they have been unable to preserve.

As long as the struggle for civil liberties was carried on within the framework of the expanding capitalist economy, it could enlist a strong middle-class group which, because of its pressure capacity, could often hold the balance of power in critical situations. In the main it helped and strengthened labor, because it was the rights of labor that were most often infringed upon. It helped employers occasionally, when their civil rights were restricted by government action. Just because it was impartial in defending civil liberties and did not follow its own class interest, it was in fact middle-class aid to labor in its class struggle for justice and a better position within the capitalist order. This was not seen by many who were giving the aid, by virtue of the fact that they were impartial and met the need shown by the facts. Now that the class struggle takes the wider form of the struggle for and against a new economic order, confusion and division appear among civil liberties defenders. Class interests come into play as before they did not. Objective impartiality in defending civil liberties is more difficult to maintain. To take positions which will in fact give aid to the forces of change, and to bear the attacks which follow, is more difficult still.

It is self-evident that democracy cannot survive without taking the risk of losing its life. If it denies free speech, it

ceases to be. If it gives free speech to its enemies they may persuade the people to put them in power. Then they will destroy completely the right, and opportunity, of the people to govern themselves. This is the dilemma in which civil liberties is put by the present crisis. It arises out of the nature of democracy. The people's power to govern themselves is also their power to destroy self-government. Like fire, or dynamite, it can be used for opposite purposes. But history guarantees that such a disastrous misuse of democracy as putting a dictator in power will not be completely suicidal. In due time it will be corrected by the exercise of the natural right of revolution. But that is a high price to pay for an error which can be avoided.

The practical issue now before us is usually put this way: "Why should those who want to destroy civil liberties be allowed civil liberty to do it?" Most liberals shape this question against both fascists and communists. Communists shape it against fascists, asking why democracy is so foolish as to encompass its own destruction by permitting them to organize. To complicate the issue, the American Nazis now proclaim that they are submitting their program to democratic decision.

In this situation how are the people to distinguish the road forward from the road backward? There is a practical test for all who advocate social change. Are they willing to submit their ideas and program to the test of democratic discussion and democratic decision? Will they allow their opponents full freedom of expression? Will they refrain from incitement to acts of violence, from plans and preparations for violence, such as military uniforms, drilling, gathering and carrying arms? By their fruits ye shall know them, and the first crop

can be seen now, in the preparatory period for social change. It is significant that the American Communists can today pass these tests better than our fascist groups. Yet it is their democratic rights that are more attacked. This indicates that after all it is not fear of their violence, but fear of their program concerning property relations, which arouses hostility against them. This means that it is not the communists, but their opponents, who are unwilling to submit the question of economic control to democratic decision.

The point where civil liberties end is the point of action, or incitement to specific action. Democracy can afford the advocacy of dictatorship but not the actions that set it up. Here is the real threat that must be stopped as soon as it appears. The unwillingness to take the necessary steps is a sure sign of surrender to under-surface fascist pressures. This is the mark of those who are spending their energy in anticommunist resolutions and purges and doing nothing to stop fascist action. They find it technically too difficult to prevent fascist groups from wearing uniforms or to stop anti-Semitic incitement, but it is not too difficult to work up emotions against communism and to express them in words.

This fact, and the general situation, indicates that from now on the struggle for civil liberties will not depend upon a body of middle-class defenders, but also, and perhaps much more, upon the principles and attitudes of the actual contestants in the struggle for social change. The continued decline of our economy is going to draw all sections of the population into the struggle for or against it, and the question is whether enough of them will see that their own interest, and the future interest of society, depends upon keeping the guarantees of

the Bill of Rights operating as long as possible. There will inevitably come a point in the transition from one social order to another, as there is in war time, when they will be restricted or suspended. How much and for how long, according to the testimony of history, depends upon how well they can be kept open during the approach to the point of change. This is the first time the democratic process has been thus tested. It is its crisis, as well as the crisis of the economy whose rise was accompanied by the rise of civil liberties.

Anti-Semitic propaganda provides a real test of civil liberties. It is a tissue of lies, the slandering and libelling of a race. Its outcome is the disruption of a democracy that depends upon tolerance between its various racial groups. Already it has produced violence. How shall it be met? To extend the law of libel and slander to cover it involves serious danger of its misuse against radical groups. But unless that risk is reduced to the minimum and then taken, the consequences are likely to be fatal. A way must be found to penalize falsehood that damages the character of a race as we have done when it damages the character of an individual. It is time for fools to rush in where lawyers fear to tread. For direct incitement to violence by anti-Semitic propaganda there is sufficient law and it must be immediately enforced, as it has been in New York City, especially when the police became sufferers from the resultant action.

Under the impact of a declining economy and the war-time temper of repression, the struggle for civil liberties now merges into the whole struggle for democratic rights. Just as it became a part of the struggle of labor to organize, so now it becomes an essential part of the struggle of all groups who

are denied their democratic rights—farmers and professionals seeking to organize and get the good life, Negroes and Jews wanting to be free from discrimination, youth needing education and jobs. The basic democratic right of all is the right to work at a worthwhile job. Unless it can guarantee this, the democratic community cannot survive. Its unemployed, as they did in Italy and Germany, will follow leaders who put them first into "Shirts" and then into uniforms, who give them the job of destroying democracy and marching to war.

The legal defense of constitutional rights, important as it is, is now the smaller part of the fight for civil liberties. The need for democratic social change and the organized opposition to it call for a mass movement to defend all democratic rights for all, to extend all of them to all. Faith in the Bill of Rights is faith that the people can govern themselves. They can only learn to do this as each comes to the defense of all, and all to the defense of each, in the present struggle for the social change they need.

## CHAPTER XV

# *The Democratic Front*

THE NECESSITY of preserving and extending democratic rights if needed social change is to be accomplished confronts us with the question of the future of the Democratic Front. The period between the first and second World Wars saw not only the rise of the first socialist state, and then of the fascist powers, but also the development of the Democratic Front in a number of nations. This was a union of liberal and radical forces, a combination of the political Left and Center with non-political groups, to extend democracy and to stop the fascist forces from taking power. The term covers both United Front movements for particular purposes and also their wider expression in People's Front governments, as in France, Spain, Chile, Cuba, Mexico and China where the Japanese invasion furnished the welding force and so created a different prospect for national development.

Internationally the parallel to these national developments

was the collaboration of the Soviet Union—a socialist republic under Communist leadership—with the capitalist democracies, in the League of Nations. This collaboration was never permitted to become an effective Democratic Front because of the rejection of the Soviet proposals for disarmament and the failure to take effective action against the invasions of Manchuria and Ethiopia, the first aggressions of what was later the Fascist axis.

The most promising European example of a Democratic Front was in Spain. For here the anarchist element in Spanish thought and life, while it proved a hazard in the conduct of the war, would, if allowed to function under normal development in the transition from capitalist to socialist society, have provided a check to the tendency to bureaucratic regimentation inherent in collectivism. That development, of infinitely more value to history than the fascist regimes of Italy and Germany, was smashed by them under the pretense of preventing the spread of Bolshevism. What they really feared was the rise of democracy to economic power. In their illegal and conscienceless action they had the cooperation of British imperialism, which forced French collaboration by financial pressure. We followed along, led by a combination of pro-British pseudo-aristocrats in the State Department, an innate distrust of governments in which the workers participate, and the political pressure of the Catholic hierarchy. The smashing of the democratically constituted government of Spain revealed the nature of capitalist democracy. It showed what Munich fully uncovered, that it has become internationally, as well as nationally, the cloak under which financial imperialism assassinates democracy. If Hitler and Mussolini

had not been allowed to use Spain as the testing ground for the present war, democracy would not now stand in such peril.

Mortally wounded by the results of the intervention in Spain, the Democratic Front in Europe was ended by the Nazi-Soviet pact, which split its participants asunder immediately. In China, and here, the possibilities of social gain by that formation are not exhausted. That they should be developed is of the utmost importance, for several reasons. A Democratic Front provides the only democratic approach to the change from capitalist to socialist society. The degree of democracy achieved in the approach to this change determines the degree that can be maintained immediately after. The coalition of class interests and political forces which naturally forms to oppose this change calls for the formation of a similar grouping to make it possible. This approach bristles with difficulties, as the experience of France and Spain show. It is made still more difficult here by the propaganda about Communist control of Democratic Front activities by those who sense, both nationally and internationally, its possible achievements.

Since the ending of the Democratic Front period in Europe, it is the habit of many liberal writers to ascribe its origin to the plans of Moscow. This lays the ground for the charge that having beguiled the democratic forces to become its allies, Moscow then betrayed them. The question of who betrayed whom, or whether anybody was betrayed or just outplayed in the usual diplomatic game, of whether it was the chosen policies of Moscow or those of British financial imperialism that ended collaboration between the Soviet Union and capitalist democracies and broke up the national Democratic Front

movements, is beyond our present concern and can be left to the evidence of the diplomatic records.

United Front activities between Socialists and Communists began in France and the United States at a time when the Socialist and Communist Internationals were against this policy. As they grew in strength and drew in liberal support, the leaders of the Soviet Union and of the Comintern naturally sought to use them for the protection of the socialist state against its enemies. So the policy of collaboration with capitalist-democratic governments in the effort to preserve peace began. The Democratic Front in this broad sense appeared in answer to the threat of fascism, just as fascism was the effort of reaction to prevent a socialist society.

The beginning of a Democratic Front here was in various combinations of the Left and Liberals on issues like the Sacco and Vanzetti case, and that of the Scottsboro boys. Then came wider and stronger formations in the struggles against war and fascism and for the rights of youth, Negroes and aliens; also tentative farmer-labor political alignments. These formations were not planned and directed from Moscow nor by the Communist Party. They were the coming together of various forces at particular points under the pressure of social need and common ideals of society. In these combinations the Communists were naturally a dynamic force. The discussion of the Democratic Front as though it were all a product of Moscow planning for ulterior purposes recalls the argument for complete design in the universe that used to be so popular with theologians of an earlier generation. It is the product of a kind of thinking which produces pictures in the heads of the people who engage in it that are unrelated to the actual course

of events and are sometimes completely misleading. The picture of Democratic Front activities in the United States thus fastened in the public mind is quite different from the one seen on the inside by those participating in them.

To hinder and break up the formation of a Democratic Front the reactionaries, and their allies on the Left, circulate the charge of Communist control. The facts about it, in such organizations as the Youth Congress and the American League for Peace and Democracy, are that nationally the Communists have neither sought nor secured control, either in policy making or in executive positions. They knew that the activity could not continue if they did. They have acquiesced willingly in holding a small minority on policy-making bodies, and have welcomed, and indeed proposed, non-Communist executives.

The argument that a small, able and persistent minority can always lead is stretching the inevitable fact of the leadership of the most able in any committee too far. In the cases in question, the representatives of all groups are too able to be dominated by a fractional minority. What has happened is that the Communists, like the rest, submit their views to democratic decision. In that process some modification of the views of all the groups involved necessarily occurs. The arrangement works as long as people trust each other. And they can and do trust each other, even when they differ sharply, as long as they are honest in their loyalty to the cause for which they have chosen to work together. A lot of misrepresentation of Democratic Front activities has been spread abroad by witnesses before the Dies Committee who have left both the Democratic Front and the organizations that put them there,

and who by their own testimony and record were not honest. Such people cannot even trust themselves.

In some local situations there has been Communist control of Democratic Front activities. Usually it was not because the Communists wanted it that way, but because other elements were not willing to accept responsibility and do the work. When the liberals who talk about too many Communists in any United Front activity are as willing as the Communists to do the hard and dirty work, to take the knocks and to go on without pay when the money does not come in, then their criticism will have more pertinence.

The assumption that the Communists are always trying to get and control the personnel in united activities is contrary to my experience in the American League for Peace and Democracy. In some cases striving for Communist control came because local officials were not in sympathy with national policy, or from new members whose zeal outran knowledge. In matters of policy, uncritical fellow-travelers are usually much more difficult than Party members, because they are without discipline and often feel that they must show themselves redder than the rose. Complaints about obstructionist tactics usually fail to observe that some people of a certain temperament will behave the same way no matter what party or faith they belong to, and regardless of its efforts to discipline them. In six years we had only four cases of improper actions by local officers who were Communists, and in each case the Party authorities were prompt and thorough in their cooperation in administering the necessary discipline.

The American people are often described by foreigners as

being politically adolescent. Insofar as my experience in the Democratic Front goes, the cry of Communist control is a bogey to scare political children away from places where they ought to go together. Whatever substance it has can be dispelled by democratic action, because the Communists are a small minority. Yet it has created such a fear in many people that facts do not remove it. This is more than a fear of the Communist Party. It is the fear that democracy extended to the economic sphere will endanger their social position. The fear is most acute in those who have special privilege. It is democracy itself that the reactionaries are really afraid of. It is what the Democratic Front can do, not who controls it, that creates the opposition which makes the propaganda that generates the fear of it.

Here we have the core of the issue. The test of any policy or program is not who makes it but what will it do, where does it come out? Not origins but consequences is the decisive question. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. By their fruits ye shall know them. Long ago, when the rulers and exploiters of the Jewish people saw the menace to their future in the words of Jesus, their propaganda slogan against him was, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Nazareth was a tough town. It was unorthodox. It was rebel. The use of its name was sufficient to keep most of the respectable people, and many of the deluded and fearful poor, from accepting the program of Jesus. The similar question in relation to the Democratic Front is, "Can any good thing come out of Moscow?"

Are war and fascism any more desirable for this country because the Communists helped make a program to try and

stop them? Are peace and democracy any less needed because the Communists participate in a program to get them? The answer from certain quarters is: "But the Communists only do this in order to put over their program of violent revolution." This says that the people who want violence are spending much energy, and making real sacrifices, to protect and develop the democracy that would make violent change unnecessary. That sounds like Alice in Wonderland. This picture of Communists wanting one thing and working for another rests upon a belief for which a certain section of early Communist propaganda and some Communist actions must bear a part of the responsibility. It is the belief that Communism and democracy are incompatible. On this basis the presence of even one Communist in a Democratic Front organization is objectionable, and the presence of a few produces the assumption of Communist control, along with a refusal to examine or accept the facts. If you belong to a Democratic Front organization which has even a fractional minority of Communists in it, you have delivered yourself into the hand of the evil one. Then you are treated by a lot of respectable people just as the churchgoers of an earlier generation treated those who engaged in amusements that they proclaimed to be "of the devil."

The belief that communism and democracy are incompatible ignores both the relation of communism to democracy as the people's power and the fact that its theory concerning democracy as method allows for its modification by varying factual situations. In the few years during which Democratic Front organizations have been developing in this country, as they have taken on the form of collaboration between the middle

class and labor and cooperation between Communists and non-Communists instead of the earlier narrower form of a United Front between Left political groups, much has been learned in the kind of behavior necessary for their success. This newer experience is unknown to those who participated only in the earlier competitive and often vitriolic period whose experiences form the basic material of current propaganda against the Democratic Front, most of which completely misrepresents the present situation. For example, early in the development of the American League against War and Fascism the question of Party fractions in our offices and units was raised for discussion. This is vital to the question of political control and political recruiting. The Communist authorities decided that fractions did not belong in the United Front movement as they tended to create distrust and disharmony. That decision made a real change of atmosphere. When the organization became the American League for Peace and Democracy, and political parties were no longer eligible for membership, our Communist members acted as individuals in our National Congress and did not caucus.

The only way to find out how much democracy is furthered or hindered by any Left theory or tactics of social change is by experimentation in the Democratic Front. The irony, as well as the danger, of our present situation is that so many of those who really desire the extension of democracy are so scared by the bogey of Communist control, so disturbed by the fear that the Communists will suspend civil liberties, that they combine with the reactionaries to prevent the democratic process from working. This can mean only that basically they do not trust it. That has always been an historic weakness

of intellectuals. They will not trust the people to take care of themselves. Personally, I have seen enough of the effects of the democratic process in softening the rigidities of sectarian doctrine, in making sectarian attitudes more flexible and co-operative, to know that it can be trusted completely.

But the combined forces of capitalist self-interest, reactionary religion and imperialist power, have set out to make it impossible for the Communists, or any others who seek a socialist society, to use the democratic process. They are determined not to give them the chance. They destroyed the democratic People's Government of Spain, which the Communists supported with their small minority. They have outlawed the Communist Party in France, and in Canada. They have taken away its freedom of speech and press in England, and the leader of the British trade unions proclaims that there will soon be no Communists seen in the House of Commons. Our own reactionaries, aided and abetted by some professed liberals, are seeking to break up and outlaw the Communist Party of the United States, and also to destroy all Democratic Front organizations on the plea that Communists control them.

If they succeed they will make certain what they most profess to fear. They will leave the people with no democratic way of getting rid of the inefficient profit economy and making the transition from a capitalist to a socialist society. In that event we will never know whether the Communist road, or any other way, to the next period of social progress can be traveled without destroying or suspending the democratic process. This is the most serious consequence of taking democratic rights away from the Communists or any other radical minority. It is not simply that thereby the rest of us in time

are bound to lose our rights; it is that thereby the democratic road to the next period of history is closed and revolutionary violence is made inevitable.

This is why no matter what happens in Europe the period of the Democratic Front should not now be permitted to end in this country. The combination of black reaction and faint-hearted, self-interest liberalism which now threatens our basic liberties and our future must not be permitted to succeed in depriving the people of the means of effective resistance against enforced poverty and war. The forces of reaction and repression are increasingly united in a strong coalition of sections of both old parties. The progressive forces must unite or be destroyed.

The difficulties involved in getting united political action between groups of differing and equally strong convictions concerning the strategy of social change are many and serious. The experience of Spain and France show that if they are not assessed and prepared against before the time of danger forces together those who have before refused to cooperate, they prove in the hour of crisis a fatal weakness. But if they have been faced in previous efforts, and the leadership of the combining forces has made, and continues to make, a real effort to overcome them, they are not insuperable. The experience of our recent Democratic Front efforts here demonstrates this.

The most difficult question in united political endeavor is to secure a genuinely democratic control of policy. This becomes more difficult for Left parties as the hour of change draws near. The condition of success in solving it is the recognition that the united program cannot go as far on certain

points as the programs of the Left. At the same time the Left must be free outside the united effort to propagandize for its own stand. In certain situations the Left may and will feel that its own and the common interest will best be served by temporarily waiving its right to promote its own objectives, as in China just now. Most critics of the Democratic Front do not understand this point or know the record of the Left in keeping faith.

There is a vital distinction between attempting to impose on the united effort the program of a party which is far beyond other cooperating groups, and attempting democratically to get the adoption of the party's view of what the united effort should be. Naturally all political groups which enter a coalition to achieve a certain object desire to see their principles carried out by the united activity in the field in question. It is proper for them to strive for this as long as they do it democratically and abide by the result. I have not found Socialists, or opposition Communists, or New Dealers, any less concerned than the Communists over the carrying out of their principles in the united activity. This is a natural and a legitimate concern. The value of it for the common good is that, in the give and take of democratic discussion, the maximum contribution of each group to the working out of the common objective is secured. It is, of course, the endeavor to propagandize for sectarian party purposes within a Democratic Front which is illegitimate and cannot be permitted. In united activities this tendency is the original sin of all political organizations which has to be overcome. There is no less of it in the groups which most strenuously attack the Communists.

A kindred difficult question for the Democratic Front is its

use as a recruiting ground by the participating political organizations. At the 1934 Congress of the American League against War and Fascism at Chicago I said something on this matter which I now see no reason to change. It was: . . . "there is a legitimate as well as an illegitimate use of this organization by political groups. It is quite illegitimate for any political group to seek to dominate this organization for partisan purposes. . . . Legitimately the group which can offer to this movement the most valuable suggestions concerning program and tactics, which can offer the most dynamic, active force for carrying it out, will gain political prestige out of their activity in this League, and they are entitled to do so. I want to point out that there is a sense in which this League becomes the competitive testing ground of all political groups who profess to offer their own leadership in the struggle against war and fascism. Let them all come in. Let them throw all their forces into the work of the League, and as they demonstrate their capacity for leadership they are entitled to reap any political power later which they can. As they sow so shall they reap."

This is exactly what must happen as it becomes plain to the American people that neither of the old political machines can meet their present needs. The incompatible elements that now compose them will split apart. On the one side the solid army of reaction will form; on the other the composite forces of social change. If the forces of progress survive the attack upon them and tackle the question of democratizing economic power, then leadership must pass to those most able to express and unite the common need. It is evident from the history of England, Germany and France that delay in attacking the

centers of economic power will prove fatal and enable the reaction to continue itself. The Democratic Front cannot prevent fascism by merely struggling to keep open democratic rights in order to meet present needs. There must be preparation for the time when those needs can no longer be met without changing to another economy as the social base. Democracy cannot win against fascism by a defensive battle. It must make its offensive in the economic field and extend itself to the whole area of social living.

This necessity presents the Democratic Front with a two-fold test. Can it develop a leadership able to select the right moment and the right point of attack for the democratic taking of economic power? Will enough of the Center go with the Left to make the bid for power successful? The experience of France and Spain shows that in the critical hour most of the Center is likely to join the reaction in throwing out the Left. These liberal forces are then immediately destroyed by the reaction. Here the splitting is beginning before the zero hour comes. If it can be stopped before serious losses occur, if sufficient education concerning the economic causes of present needs and the failure of present remedies can be carried on in the Democratic Front, then the forces it is training to act together will not disintegrate, but will consolidate for effective social change when the possible moment arrives.

## CHAPTER XVI

# *The Shadow of War*

WHAT will be done about social change by the people of these United States is made unclear and uncertain by the fact that the road ahead is covered by the shadow of approaching war. Whatever shape this swiftly changing world may take before these words are in print, it will be a world that is organized and organizing for war as never before in its history. It will be a world which will provide us with more occasions for war and more incitements to war.

If England is still fighting Hitler and Mussolini, we will either be fighting with her or will be, much more than we have been under our Neutrality Act, the manufacturing end of her war, her main source of supplies. In that case we will be liable to attacks that would bring us in; also the pressure of our moral emotions and our self-interest will move constantly in that direction. If, as before, our economic weight proves decisive, there is nothing in sight on either side of

the Atlantic that could prevent a repetition of the sequence of events that followed the last peace. Nationalism and capitalist imperialism are still dominant. Moreover they are now under the terrific impulsion of economic breakdown. All they can produce is more and worse Blackshirts and Nazis, more fascist nations.

If the state of things that the modern world strangely calls peace has come about, it will be even more than in the past a state of preparation for war, a state of production for war which is production of war. Unable to solve the problem of unemployment and a falling standard of living, the democratic nations will move more and more on to the base of a war economy. Unable to produce for more life they will, as we are now planning, produce for more death. Driven by the need for trade in the world market upon which any economy today must to some extent depend, they will continue to supply their prospective enemies with materials to build up the machine for the total war that requires everything and destroys everything. Until they are able to cooperate in developing each other, the nations will continue to cooperate in destroying each other.

At the same time the antagonisms between them will deepen. As the possibilities for capitalist expansion decrease and there is less to go round among the winners and losers in the competitive struggle of capitalist imperialisms, the struggle for raw materials becomes more ruthless and the pressure on living standards heavier. So the imperialist powers turn more and more from robbing the backward peoples to robbing each other. If we help England to win, we will still have to reckon with her industrial leaders who, a few weeks before Munich,

made an agreement at Düsseldorf with the corresponding German group. One of its objectives was to divide the South American market between them, crowding us out. If England loses, we are the heir apparent to her economic imperialism and all that it involves in relations with other nations.

Whether the present war is shortly ended or whether it is continued, there remain in the world two irreconcilable antagonisms. One is between democratic capitalist society and fascist capitalist society, the other is between capitalist society and socialist society. The first of these is embodied in the present war, the second in the Chamberlain policy of trying to turn Hitler against the Soviet Union, whose results are also recorded in the present war. The antagonism between democratic capitalism and fascist capitalism leads to either appeasement or war. Both lead to the loss of democracy. If that becomes complete in the capitalist nations then a united fascist imperialism will attempt to crush the Soviet Union.

Meantime these two antagonisms provide a continuous moral appeal for war. In the Christian, capitalist nations the people will not support war unless it is dressed up as a moral enterprise. Then its economic causes and political objectives are concealed. Then the moral emotions can be subverted to the support of the opposite to what the people want, as they were in 1917, when the people were led into a war which weakened the democracy they thought they were saving, and sowed the seeds for more war when they thought they were ending it.

It is true that all the liberties and all the decencies of life are in danger as long as fascism lives. It is also true that it cannot be destroyed by war any more than it can be bribed into

decency by appeasement. What the people who are called to die in a war between capitalist democracy and fascism do not see is that the fascist destruction of democracy, brutal or kid glove, is the result of capitalist policies. They do not see that the fascist destruction of moral standards—its blitzkrieg, its organized deceptions and treacheries—is the climax of what monopoly capitalism has been doing to the decencies and humanities which organized mankind has been ages in building up, against the handicap of his brute heritage and under the repressions of nationalism and imperialism. The international gangsters are the projection to a larger scene of those which capitalist society has produced in all its cities.

The antagonism between capitalist and socialist society which expresses itself against the Soviet Union adds religious appeal to its moral incitement of the war spirit. There is no battle cry so effective in arousing fanatical response as the call to a holy war. Already it has been raised against the Communists abroad and the Reds at home by some of our demagogues, both Protestant and Catholic. Millions have been prepared to answer it by the campaign of the Vatican against atheistic Communism, destroyer of religion and God. This appeal conceals the property interests that are involved for both church and capitalists, and the response to it is increased by the general fear of change and the disillusionment of idealists who expected the Soviet Union to act independently of the laws of state nature and a world controlled by power politics.

This combination powerfully increases emotional preparedness for war. Most of our columnists, radio commentators, and magazine writers seldom miss a chance, and manufacture

many, to incite the people against the Soviet Union. Note the way the Fifth Column hysteria is being turned against Communists, ignoring the real Hitler sympathizers and our native fascist forces. Recall the difference in the emotional reactions to the fates of Czechoslovakia, Albania and Finland. Compare the different treatment in our press of the bombings in Finland and in France. Those in France have been reported factually, those in Finland were sensationally exaggerated, as the responsible correspondents concerned have since stated. To quote one of them: "The Red army never tried to exterminate the civilian population . . . Despite the number of bombs dropped, few homes were wrecked and comparatively few civilians killed." Dorothy Thompson, widely read columnist, was impelled to say penitently: "Most journalists, including this columnist, have been ill informed." But why were seasoned journalists, who know what war censorship and war propaganda are, so easily misled?

Just as the promotion of the Red scare at home has produced mob action against the Communists in a number of places, so the continuous incitement of the moral and religious emotions against the Soviet Union will have a similar result in the international scene when the occasion arises. The fact that the world cannot long continue part socialist and part capitalist would not be an additional cause of war if the democratic forces were in control of the capitalist nations and moving for the extension of democracy to the economic sphere. Then collaboration with the Soviet Union for peace, and the gradual transition to socialist society, could be worked out according to the tradition and institutions of each nation. But as long as monopoly capitalism is in control of the democratic na-

tions the presence of a socialist state is an occasion for war.

We are being presented with more immediate occasions in the Far East and in Latin America. In both of these places it will be harder for us to keep out of war than in Europe. The extension of Japanese dominance now in sight, with more likely to come, is a threat to our trade and to what diplomacy calls our national interests, a situation which capitalism can meet only by war or the appeasement that leads to war. Capitalist imperialism cannot provide for the legitimate needs of the Japanese people which, as with the other Axis powers, are then used to support and justify the actions of the new imperialists. Our program to prevent Nazi economic and Fifth Column penetration in Latin America plays right into the hands of those financial interests and their political tools who are plotting another intervention in Mexico to put down the disorder they are fomenting and subsidizing. More than that it is providing opportunities for that section of our capitalists who are saying that what capitalism needs is another expanding frontier, and that the direction to move is southward. The need to stop Hitler from doing on this continent what he has done in Western Europe is a fine new cloak, of the most attractive color, for our Yankee imperialism.

The present proposal to keep the surplus of this continent away from Hitler by creating an All-American export monopoly, underwritten by us, means, if it can ever be carried out, the financial strengthening of certain dictatorial governments in Latin America. We would then be moved to put down uprisings of the people against them. Our vested interest would push toward the sort of intervention that defeated the Spanish democracy. We would appear, as usual, in the

garments of righteousness—we would be preserving order against the destructive Reds. This would be the more effectively done because our new necessity for hemisphere defense requires that we should have naval and air bases in some of those countries, as its outspoken advocates frankly say, whether they like it or not. But this of course is on quite a different moral plane from the Soviet Union's need to protect itself from possible attack by Hitler, because we are a democracy.

Underneath these new occasions for war, and these increased incitements to war, is the basic fact of the inability of the capitalist economy to meet the needs of our people and thereby find the market for lack of which it now declines. It was because we needed a market that we sold Hitler and Mussolini the planes, engines and instruments from which they built up their air power and oil to run it. It was because we needed a market that we sold, and still sell, oil, steel, scrap iron and cotton to Japan to be used in making war on China in violation of our principles and pledges and against our own interests. It was because we need a market that we sold Italy twice as much cotton for the first six months of the war as we sold her during the same six months of 1938-39. According to an official memorandum, these shipments "were facilitated by credits from the Export-Import Bank," a government agency. Yet our government knew that some of this cotton would make explosives for Hitler whom it was expecting our boys would have to fight. The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has just replied to Lindbergh's appeal that we keep our materials out of the European war that, since we sold Hitler the materials to build up

his war machine, it is only fair that we should sell Great Britain the materials wherewith to fight him. This correctly puts the whole national economy in the category of Merchants of Death, in which the testimony before the Nye Committee and similar data brought to light in Europe show the munitions makers to be. Like them the whole economy is now selling and producing death; it has become a means to make wars and get us into them.

The most conclusive and dramatic demonstration of the failure of the capitalist economy is mass unemployment. No matter how the present war comes out, this fact remains to trouble both victors and vanquished. Capitalism has found no remedy for it, except war production and war. So one of our columnists calmly says that there is no alternative to the possible social revolution the soldiers may make when they get home and find no jobs, except the liquidation of several millions of European youth in the war.

The fact that the fascist economy cannot find jobs for its youth except in war means that millions of them will stay in uniform, on garrison duty. The twin fact that democratic capitalist economy cannot find jobs for its youth increases the pressure toward more war. It produces the mood of mothers who would rather their boys went to war than become pool room loafers and gangsters, and the mood of young men who willingly exchange the insecurity and monotony of unemployment and part-time employment for military training and the excitement of anticipated war. It was the unemployment situation, and the business stagnation behind it, that pushed us into behaving just like Goering whose principles we detest, and into giving our people battleships and war planes

instead of food, health and education some time before the present war began.

This underlying impulse toward war preparations contains also the urge to use them. It is a well-known pattern of history that those who cannot solve their domestic problems turn easily to foreign adventure. Sandburg has just made public a letter from Seward to Lincoln just after his election, urging him to avoid the slavery conflict by picking a foreign quarrel and suggesting several places where one could be had. Who is to use later the airplane plants we have been building for the Allies? One of our business journals asks why not be honest and call our defense program what it is—a war program. Yet it is evident from our experience in and after the last war that the stimulation which war orders gives our economy is artificial. Our production for war can only bring more dislocation of the profit system and push it further into decline, thus increasing its pressures that push toward war.

It is the basic fact of economic decline that explains the increased movement of our nation and the rest of the world toward war in the period of the strongest desire to keep out of it in the history of man. But for that, the other tendencies toward war inherent in human nature and accumulated in history could have been halted. A bigger fact than the desire to find an escape from war through a League of Nations was affecting the situation. It was the fact that the capitalist economy was passing its peak in production and capacity to employ, and was starting down hill. This explains why there was about a hundred and fifty years between the Napoleonic Wars and the World War and only about twenty years between the World War and this one. The period of capitalist expansion

produced a series of wars between the great powers and the lesser nations which led to the World War. The period of capitalist decline is producing a quicker series of wars, leading to a more general and devastating conflict.

What does this prospect of war, and economic organization for war, mean for the future of our democracy and the possibility of the social change the people need? We are now being told by the most eloquent of those who want us to defend democracy by force of arms that it is falsifying history to say that if we go to war for liberty we will thereby lose our liberty. They point to the wars in which liberty was won, including our own war for independence. It is true that there is no historic necessity that a nation should destroy its democracy while fighting to preserve it. That is not happening in China. Whether it happens anywhere depends upon whether the war has imperialist as well as democratic objectives, upon the methods by which it is conducted, upon whether the democratic or the antidemocratic forces are in control of the government.

A war to found a democratic nation in the days of the new capitalist order was plainly quite a different thing from a war in the declining days of monopoly capitalism and its financial imperialism, when the antidemocratic forces are in control of key points in the nation. A war fought for the actual defense of a nation's liberty against invaders is quite different from a war fought for trade, investment, and the balance of power. A war fought by a People's Army, with the common objective of defending and extending the democratic rights of all, is quite different from one fought by an army like ours, with officers trained at West Point in a caste

system imported direct from Prussia, or in a National Guard dominated by business men and used on many occasions to defend their class interests. We are in a new factual situation, and the question is what do the facts show about the chance of preserving and extending our democracy if we go to war, or mobilize our population for war preparations?

It is a commonplace that modern war is totalitarian in its nature. It requires the mobilization and regimentation of all national resources under concentrated authority. Hence when the democracies fight they begin to adopt fascist types of control. The degree to which democracy has abdicated in the present war shows what may be expected. The British Parliament was never informed about, and so never passed upon, the sending of an army to fight in Finland. The order was announced after Finland rejected the plan. Yet this act would have changed the objectives and nature of the war that Parliament had previously voted against Germany. The Canadian Parliament never passed upon the sending of a volunteer expeditionary force to the war, nor upon the Defense of Canada Regulations, beside which the British War Regulations look quite liberal. The British Parliament has given to Churchill authority not much below that wielded by Hitler and Mussolini. Congress has given our President discretionary control of vast funds voted for national defense, executive authority in specified emergencies never before given a President, and proposals are pending to give him still more. It is true that Congress, like Parliament, is still the final authority, that dictatorial powers have been given the executive only for the war emergency, but how long will it be before the world gets out of this emergency? And what happens, if under these

undemocratic controls the people democratically attempt social change? The record of Germany shows that the descent to the hell of dictatorship is both steep and slippery.

This is also made plain to us by what the war in Europe has already done to the civil liberties, the democratic rights, and the democratic procedure which give the people the opportunity to resist the misuse, or undue continuance, of war-time extraordinary executive powers. No Congress in our history has had before it such repressive legislation as this one which meets under the shadow of war. An omnibus bill against aliens, reviving repressions considered un-American since the Alien and Sedition Act of 1790 was repealed, imposing pains and penalties never before proposed, including registration and fingerprinting, has been passed by both Houses. From repression of prospective citizens to repression of citizens is only a step. They also passed a Bill forbidding the employment of Communists or American Nazis by W.P.A. The Senate has passed amendments to the La Follette Bill drafted to prevent employers from using espionage and private armed forces, which forbids the hiring of Communists, Nazis or aliens above 10 per cent of the total force. The House passed a bill to deport Bridges, leader of the longshoremen's union—an Australian who years ago applied for citizenship but failed to complete the procedure—because his presence was "hurtful" to this country. There is no legal ground for this action. Acting as Special Examiner for the Department of Labor, Dean Landis of the Harvard Law School, after a voluminous hearing, decided that Bridges was neither a member of the Communist Party nor attached to it in the meaning of the law which orders an alien deported for such

connections. The action of the House was a Bill of Attainder—a legislative act imposing penalties without judicial procedure—which is expressly forbidden by Section 9, Article 1 of the Constitution. With a similar disregard for the Constitution and the basic principles of democracy, bills have been introduced to keep the Communist Party off the ballot and others to make it illegal.

Another, proposed and drafted by men who have long defended civil liberties, would compel the Communist Party to make public its membership lists. This permits what the secrecy of the ballot was designed to prevent—intimidation and blacklist. Already in California all Communists have been dismissed from the staff of the Social Security Administration. Also the officers of a C.I.O. union have been sent to prison for refusing to give its membership roll to a legislative committee which was hunting Communists. In several other states, contempt cases for a similar refusal to the Dies Committee are pending against Communist Party officers. If compulsion to make public membership lists is constitutional, then the Constitution is subverted. If people who have the constitutional right to make and join political parties can then be starved for doing it, what are the guarantees of the Bill of Rights worth?

In preparation for further repression Congress has given the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice an appropriation several times larger than it had in 1929. The chief of this bureau, J. Edgar Hoover, used the hysteria generated by the World War and the Russian Revolution to conduct a series of raids upon labor and radical headquarters which were described and condemned by a

committee of prominent lawyers in a pamphlet, entitled *Illegal Actions of the Department of Justice*. Mr. Hoover later admitted that there was no warrant in law for these actions. Also without authorization by law, he built up a file of radical suspects, including even United States Senators, which was shortly thereafter ordered discontinued and disused by Attorney General—now Supreme Court Justice—Harlan Stone. Mr. Hoover recently informed the Appropriations Committee that he has now "complete, extensive indexes of individuals, groups and organizations engaged in these subversive war activities that are possibly detrimental to the internal security of the United States. The indexes have been arranged not only alphabetically but also geographically, so that at any time, should we enter the conflict abroad, we would be able to go into any of these communities and identify individuals or groups who might be a source of grave danger to the security of this country."

A part of the enlarged appropriation granted the F.B.I. was specifically requested for the expansion of this index, still unauthorized by law and embodying the political prejudices of one man. The Department of Justice is supposed to be a law-enforcement agency, but this activity of Mr. Hoover is preparation for political persecution. It is the kind of thing that Hitler's Gestapo does in preparation for crushing opposition or taking over a country. Responsible Washington journalists write that in this activity, and in others of a similar nature, Mr. Hoover has had the authorization of the President and his support in the criticisms that followed. Last April, this man, who recently admitted before a Congressional Committee that he had engaged in wiretapping after the Supreme

Court had declared it unconstitutional, whose illegal actions in recent raids have been admitted by his own agents and described in a report of the Civil Liberties Unit of the Department of Justice, was recently given the Public Welfare Medal of the National Academy of Sciences because "in spirit and performance" his work "has exemplified the scientific way of life." Thus are we preparing to defend our ancient liberties!

Our democracy is threatened still further by the present plans for national defense. As the War Department sees our defense needs, they require a totalitarian administration. Its Mobilization—M Day—Plan makes that clear. All the provisions are not known save to the officials involved and a few senators, who advised that they be not put before the committee concerned until the nearness of war made that necessary. Consequently the War Department refuses all requests for a copy of the plan. What has been discussed before Congressional Committees, with national labor leaders, and made public, is "The Industrial Mobilization Plan." This provides for complete regimentation of our total economic resources—human and material—under an industrial-military dictatorship. Labor has no determining share in the controls. The recently established democratic rights of labor are ruled out. The general provisions of the plan enable the complete control of the agencies of public opinion and forecast the utmost regimentation of mind and conscience.

We are now being told that a part of this plan needs to be put in operation now. A strong campaign is under way for universal military training. Leading papers and magazines are telling us how democratic it is, and giving us the time-honored example of Switzerland, as though there were any

comparison between a small democracy and a democratic imperialism like ours, and as though in either case the armed force did not represent the class divisions of society and in time of necessity enforce its class controls. Now the President informs his Press conference that he is going to submit to Congress a proposal for universal training for youth, mostly in labor necessary for national defense, and he prefers to call it "universal government service." He is reported as saying that the proposal is aimed less at military training than at teaching discipline and stamping out "isms" among American youth. So already our economic decline and the fascist threat have brought us to talk about borrowing of one of Hitler's main methods—the regimentation of the body and mind of youth. In plain language this is labor conscription. The very fact that it is thought of as "government service" indicates its relation to democracy as the power of the people to govern themselves. It is the state ordering the lives of youth, not the people planning them together. It is the state becoming all powerful. A people's democracy can plan a relationship between youth and the government which will make for the protection and development of both, but not a class-divided state.

The danger to democracy in war time comes not only from extension of executive powers and governmental repressions, it comes also from the people themselves. What the majority in this country did to the minority in the last war shows that war-time emotions enlist the crowd against liberty. In peace time the fight for democratic rights is that of the people against the special interests and their representatives in government; in war time it is the struggle of the minority against

the majority. Swayed by the fear and the hate that war generates, which are then skillfully increased and used by the interests which profit from the war, the people themselves demand unity and seek to compel it. They will not tolerate dissent because it seems to endanger the national safety. Reaction, moving to take away their liberties, dopes them with propaganda. This serves the same purpose as the Japanese drugging of the peasants of Manchuria and China with opium.

Consider how the Fifth Column fear has been turned away from those who are inspiring and passing legislation that destroys the Bill of Rights. The Washington correspondent of the *New York Times* reports that there the Fifth Column means the Communists and those like them who want a new economic order. The President makes it cover those who have an "unreasoning scepticism" toward the program of the administration. The journalistic spokesmen for the business world make it cover those radicals and reformers who are hindering national defense. Practically, this Fifth Column propaganda works out in local attacks, destructive of the foundations of our democracy, on the constitutional rights of the Communist Party and the antiwar sect called Jehovah's Witnesses. Their members are beaten and arrested, in the one case when they are distributing antiwar literature, in the other when they are circulating petitions to get their Party on the ballot. In two states the names of those who signed such petitions have been made public for purposes of intimidation and blacklist. The voice in the White House which could stop this infringement upon the political rights and the secrecy of the ballot without which none of us can be free, has not been raised.

It is inevitable that reaction should try to use the war situation to take away the social gains recorded in recent labor and welfare legislation. Patriotism is the last refuge of reactionaries as well as scoundrels. Labor is expected to sacrifice itself in the interest of national unity to that part of the nation which profits from war, and its conservative leaders take great pride in leading such sheep as will follow them to be shorn. The antilabor section of the business world, with the support of the Army and Navy Departments, is insisting that in order to get speed and efficiency in war production the labor standards required in government contracts by the Walsh-Healey Act must be removed. This has already been made possible by a clause in the Naval Bill permitting the President to suspend competitive bidding, because the labor standards are prescribed only for government contracts thus secured. The further lowering of the living standards of the majority of the people, thereby weakening both our national defense and our democracy, is made inevitable by the plans for financing the new defense program. The income tax is to reach down to levels which were never before included, because they provide no more than a socially necessary standard of living. So much of the burden is placed indirectly upon the consumer that those of small income who are now living on too little for health must live on less. This, of course, is not even intelligent national defense; but it is the way the capitalist economy makes men think and act—first the goods and the profits; the people last.

The menace to our democracy from war and war preparations lies in the dominant place that monopoly capitalism and its financial imperialism have acquired in our national life, in

their use of war and war preparations for ends which are more capitalistic than democratic. As long as capitalist interests have a veto over the conduct of war because of their financial controls, as long as capitalist ends are mixed in with democratic objectives, democracy is weakened by war. The antidemocratic aspects of war, which can be overcome by a nation fighting democratically for its democratic life, are joined to the antidemocratic aspects of capitalism. One strengthens the other. The majority of the people are led to renounce their liberties in the name of national safety and then whipped by propaganda into the hysteria that takes away the rights of the minority. This is the way that democracy changes itself into the fascist state.

This brief summary of the attacks upon the right of the people to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness that have been made in this country in the few months since the war in Europe began, the further attacks upon all democratic rights that are included in the plans to meet the threat of fascist penetration in this hemisphere, make it clear that the only defense a democracy dependent upon monopoly capitalism can make to the fascist threat from without is one that develops the fascist threat within and puts democracy in mortal danger, with only a desperate chance of recovery.

Is there then no alternative? Can we defeat foreign fascism only by bringing native fascism to power? There is a way out of this terrible dilemma. It is to defeat the antidemocratic forces within our democracy. This can be accomplished only by successful resistance to every incitement to war except the concrete threat of invasion and to every attack upon democratic rights and social well-being, by putting the people's

control over genuine national defense. This means that the democratic forces have to become strong enough to take control away from monopoly capitalism and its political agents, to establish a people's government, and then to lay the foundations of a democratic social economy so that a new base for peace can be offered to the rest of the world.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *What Now?*

THE USUAL CRITICISM of those who write on the future of the United States is that they do not offer a working program. In the nature of the case it is impossible to make a blueprint of the transition from capitalist to socialist society; all that is possible is a rough chart. It is a journey of discovery, whose events are determined by the obstacles and enemies met, by the strength and weakness of the adventurers. Those who must have a detailed map and a timetable will never make the venture.

From the history of the capitalist-democratic revolution in its course around the world, and from the experience of those nations in which the attempt to establish a socialist society has been made, we know the general direction in which we have to move and the main things to be done. The rest we have to find out by experimental action. That is all that science has to go on in the laboratory when it starts to make a part of the future for us; and it is enough.

The tactics of the struggle for social change depend, as in

war, upon the strength, position and moves of the enemy. The strategy depends upon the national background and characteristics. For example, how far we could go toward a planned and planning social economy in one move is determined by our exceptional capacity to achieve an economy of abundance. How we would make the move depends upon the position of economic and political forces at the time the effort is made. Again, because of the different historic backgrounds, the struggle over social change on the continent of Europe and in Latin America can develop into civil war more quickly than in the British Commonwealth and the United States; and again more quickly here and in Canada than in England. Just as the course of the capitalist-democratic revolution in each country was determined by the strength of feudal reaction, so the course of the change from capitalist society to socialist society in each country will be determined by the strength of capitalist reaction, including the mass psychology that enables it to organize the fascist state.

In the historic discussion of the strategy of change from capitalist to socialist society the great debate has been over the question of gradualism—shall the change be made piecemeal by parliamentary discussion and action, or swiftly by the revolutionary seizure of the state? History is now closing the debate. Most of the steps toward a new economic order that can be taken without a definite break with capitalism have already been taken, or attempted, in the democratic nations. Reaction has discovered how to use fascist violence and to organize the fascist state to subvert and destroy the parliamentary process and make any further change impossible, except by violent revolution. This can be prevented

only if the democratic forces are able soon enough to control the full powers of the state and use them to prevent reactionary violence from overthrowing democratic decisions. At the same time they have to take over and operate all the major features of the national economy that must be harnessed together before a planned and planning economy can operate. Otherwise society breaks down. Small enterprise can then be brought into the new order gradually.

It has sometimes been said that the job before us is like building a new railroad station on the old site and keeping the trains running while doing it. But before that can be done the decision to build the new station must be made, and those who are doing it must have complete possession of the property and the necessary equipment. So, before the American people can get a more effective economy they have to decide to break with the present one, and they have to possess themselves of the necessary powers to establish the new one.

One result of the capitalist crisis is a new gradualism advocated by some of our intellectuals. They have discovered that our present economy is pluralistic in form, that is, it combines several forms—big business, small business, city, state and national ownership and operation, cooperatives. So they conclude the next stage in our economic development will also have several forms, and there is no either-or between capitalist and socialist economy. Aside from the unwarranted conclusion, this says no more than socialist literature has been saying from the beginning. Twenty-five years ago the I.W.W. was writing about the new order being in the womb of the old. Long before that Marx was writing—as Russia has demonstrated—that some capitalist forms would persist for some

time in the new socialist society. But in neither case is there any doubt about the nature of the economic order. That is not pluralistic. It is either capitalist or socialist. In one situation the capitalist forces control the economy and determine its direction; in the other situation the socialist forces do this. The decision of who shall control our economic life, and to what end, is now being put to the people of these United States by the course of events. This is the decision the new gradualists are trying to avoid; but it cannot be avoided. If the democratic forces of the people do not decide it one way, the fascist forces, inherent in monopoly capitalism and in the nature of the state, will decide it another.

The advocates of the social change called for by the need of most of the population have now to prepare the American people for this decision, with little time in which to do it. Before the people can understand the choice before them, the power of the profit psychology has to be broken. Many of the victims of the economic breakdown are now helpless because they still cherish the illusions created by stories about the few prominent citizens who have passed from poverty to riches in a society which regards material possessions as the chief end of man. They think that what has happened to them was somehow their fault, or because they got a bad break. The system can't be wrong. Things will soon look up again. Obviously before such people can help to organize an economy which intelligently uses the efforts of all to meet the needs of all, they have to undergo what is called in religious circles a change of heart. They have to get a different attitude toward life. The pressure of economic events alone is manifestly not enough to bring this about.

True, the millions who despite all their petty gambling find themselves continuously without any chance of getting a foothold on the lowest rung of the financial ladder are beginning to see that it was never big enough for more than a few of the strongest or most unscrupulous. True, the millions who are losing the cars, the comfort-making-gadgets, and the homes which high-powered salesmanship have pressed upon them are beginning to see that the promise of comfort and security held out to all who were willing to work was only a mirage. But it will take ceaseless and well-organized educational propaganda to interpret these experiences in terms of the forces that produced them and the program of action to remove them. Unless this is correctly done, in terms of the American background, the losses the people suffer from the breakdown of the profit economy will take them into the fascist camp.

Another job that has to be done to prepare the people for the choice before them is to rescue our democratic tradition from the hands of those who are using it to destroy democracy. No strategy of social change can win here that is not worked out in its terms, because it embodies and expresses the ideals which are calling life in the same direction that the economic forces are now pushing it. The greatest limitation upon the effective use of our democratic tradition for social change is the fact that historic circumstance has cast it in terms of individualism, which survives as a powerful myth after the facts have changed. In our standardized forms of production, distribution, transportation, communication and education, in our mass action, our herd-mindedness, our fear of being different and queer, we are a collectivized people.

But the dead hand of "rugged-individualism" is still heavy upon us. Our gospel is still largely individual success and personal salvation. The watchword of most of our progressive education has been self-expression. Even when we talk of social service and social conscience what we usually mean is behavior and attitudes between individuals.

We seldom see society as a whole. Our social sciences have their separate domains, their boundaries, as jealously guarded as those of national frontiers or craft unions. So we have no science of society. The problem of the interpenetration of the individual and organized society has troubled our philosophers and psychologists scarcely at all. Even those who proclaim the ideal of cooperative living have little zest to master it in the experience of politics, or the organization of their trade or profession. Most of them prefer to attend meetings to hear other people tell about it. So they are the easy victims of economic fakirs, and of their overlords who control the collective aspects of our life under the guise of preserving individualism, who destroy equality of opportunity while they loudly praise it.

Our American emphasis upon social equality and the obligation to serve society through some useful work will be used to take us backward if they are not enlisted for social advance. They derive from the religious strain in Anglo-Saxon democracy which shared and inspired its earliest economic and political struggles. From this heritage has come an amount of social idealism in educational and religious circles, especially among youth, which can be an active force for social transformation. If it is not thus used it will be seized and directed by fascist reaction, which covers up its tyranny by a

false appeal to the emotional idealism of youth. Our social idealism can be saved from this fate only by a sufficient dose of economic realism to put some iron into its blood. It has to move from general principles to concrete actions. It needs the actual struggle for democratic rights and against enforced poverty; it needs expression in the picket line as well as in the pulpit and on the platform. At the same time it has to learn that monopoly capitalism produces the attack upon democratic rights, and it has to see the trend in monopoly capitalism toward the fascist state.

Another fact whose meaning has to be understood before the American people are prepared to make the choice that now faces them is the possibility here of an economy of abundance as the basis of the good life for all the people. The socially useful workers of all sorts who have the power to carry further the technical revolution which the profit economy is now checking, and the democratic revolution which it is beginning to destroy, will not be able to use this power until they know they have it. They will not be sure they have it until they begin to use it. Until that time the force for social change that exists in the difference between our ability to produce and what the profit system permits us to consume in goods and in services will not be operative. The mere proclaiming of the fact will not produce the needed result. What happens depends upon what meaning is found in the facts, to what end they are directed.

One wing of the Technocrats which effectively diagrammed the technical failure of the economy of scarcity proclaimed shortly after the smashup in 1929 that the system would fall from its own incapacity. They repeated the error of inevita-

bility—that easy solution of the problem of social change—which had previously enticed some misinterpreters of Marx. How does that prediction look now? The evolutionary school of socialists have long proclaimed that the industrial barons and the overlords of finance were making it easier to pass into a socialized order of living by their organization of our economic procedures on a national scale. Technically it is true that in steel and its subsidiaries, transportation and communication, light and power, merchandise distribution and some other essentials, a lot of the basic work toward the organization of a national economic machine has been done. But it does not follow that it will be easy to take this over and run it for a social purpose. As the experience in municipal ownership shows, the capitalists will have a lot to say about that.

Along with the collectivist technique of monopolistic capitalism there has gone a corresponding concentration of political power. Also the interests of the small business men and farmers are so tied in with those of big business by inherited tradition and specious propaganda that they easily become the political tools of big business. Thus monopolistic enterprise has acquired a resistance power to the extension of democracy which more than counterbalances what it has done in its forms of organization to make needed social change possible. It has shortened the work to be done in organizing an effective national plant after the people decide that they must have one, but it has increased the severity of the struggle to get control of the present base for it. The centralization of economic and political power achieved by monopolistic business makes the evolutionary trend move toward state capitalism, not toward social democracy. If that comes, the fascist

trends in the nature of the state and in capitalist monopoly are united. The fiction of the impartial state, representing all interests, binds the people once more in chains through their superstitious devotion to a political instrument which is the work of their own hands.

To avoid this outcome, the proclamation of the possibility of an economy of abundance has to be accompanied by the explanation of what has to be done to get it. The American people will not realize the possibilities of life in this fair and bounteous land until they find out that there is no way to get them under the profit system. Idealists have been saying this for years. Now scientific analysis sustains the finding. But it will take more than economic pressure to change the habits and attitudes of most of those who have grown up under profit-seeking economy. Observe how the anticapitalist feeling generated among the lower middle-income group by the breakdown in 1929 has been dissipated in support of quack economic remedies offered by demagogic leaders, many of whom got their source material from international fascism.

This brief summary of what has to be done to change the minds of the American people if they are to find their way out of the present crisis emphasizes the fact that the struggle for change requires coordinated action on three connected fronts—political, economic, cultural. It is a war of ideas, economic forces and political alignments. Because the strength of the profit system is in the prestige of its ideas and ideals and not in its economic results, the struggle of ideas and ideals is of major importance. As it was in the imperial days of bread and circuses, so in the democratic days of movies and radio, the struggle for social change is in large part a battle of

propaganda, with the odds on the side of the vested interests. But Napoleon's saying that victory always goes to the heaviest battalions is not always true. The demonstration of events is so powerful that the falsity of the ideas upon which the profit system depends, the spurious nature of its moral claims, break through even the skilled propaganda of the capitalist press.

When change is demonstrably needed for the well-being of society, then its advocates are the bearers of the truth which in the end becomes mighty enough to prevail. Because the advocates of change are expressing the forces of life that are struggling to achieve a new organized form, their artistic expression has a vitality that cannot be achieved by those who express the decay to which the old order is passing. As long as the heralds of the new order can speak, print, put on their plays and music, they can overcome the advantage reaction has in capitalist control of cultural institutions and the means of communication. All they need is freedom. It was the perception of this fact which led a reactionary Congress to use the axe of retrenchment to cut out the drama section of the W.P.A. at the first opportunity. This was why the Cedar Rapids Board of Education the other day removed from the city junior high school curriculum certain social science text books because they "contained material presented to create prejudice against the American economic system in the minds of immature students and to pave the way for the establishment of a new collectivist order." The Nazi repression of culture is beginning to happen here.

The relation between the cultural and the economic fronts in the struggle for a new order is different today from what it

was in the capitalist-democratic revolution. Then the ideas and ideals that worked to bring about the change joined with the economic power of the rising capitalists to give wider horizons to human living. Now these ideas and ideals have to be set free from the limitations and misuse of monopolistic capitalism and joined with the economic need of the great majority who have the capacity, but not the political power, to meet their needs. This unused economic capacity now makes possible the social change that life is calling for but does not compel it, as the new economic power did at the beginning of the capitalist era. A conscious choice is now necessary. There have appeared no new instruments of production and distribution whose use humanity will not forego. The economic situation is compulsory only to the extent that it faces us with the choice between ordering our collective life differently or meeting disaster.

The people cannot avoid disaster unless they know what they are doing. Without the necessary knowledge they can only perish, as millions of them now are. What they need to know is how to use in all situations the most important piece of general knowledge that the capitalist era has given us—the knowledge that economic activities play the leading part in determining the kind of political institutions and cultural life we have. When they know this, the people can understand the relation of their day-by-day activities to what is going on in the world; when they understand how to use this knowledge they can change the course of the world. This is where the cultural front of the struggle for needed social change joins the economic front in a joint campaign of social education. This has been well begun. It needs now to be extended

in all the organizations of the people—their unions, their churches, their cultural associations—until they understand the economic forces behind the experiences they are now going through, and gain the power to control them in a different direction.

It is only in this way that the economic and political fronts of the struggle for social change can be effectively coordinated. Already the capitalist breakdown has merged them. The separation of politics and economics was a capitalist illusion in the days of small business; in the days of monopoly enterprise it is a profitable fiction. The political struggle is now over the basic question of the continuance of the profit system. The question of a new economic order is not now an academic discussion but an issue of practical necessity. Both war and fascism threaten us because of our failure to solve the economic problem. In the terms of traditional politics, the fight against the coming of fascism is the fight to prevent the destruction of our inherited democratic rights. But no war can be won by defensive operations alone. If our traditional liberties cannot now be used to extend the democratic process and democratic power to our economic life, the fascists win.

Our recent experience shows that the continuance of the economic breakdown and the approach of war increase the repression of civil liberties and all democratic rights. Hence Democratic Front activities are inadequate unless they develop the consciousness of the economic cause of the situations they are trying to remedy. If this is not done, the resentment that has been diverted from the system itself by progressive social reforms will be used by fascist propagandists against

Jews, communists and bankers. Then the progressive movement, as in Europe, will have served as midwife to the fascist regime. Already the forces of reaction are trying to make democracy and the profit system the same thing. There are court decisions of recent record which declare that capitalism and democracy are identical. The records of the Dies Committee show plenty of questions which seek to identify utterances against capitalism as subversive and un-American activities. The late Huey Long, the best candidate for Fuehrer we have yet produced, once said that if fascism came here it would come under the banner of antifascism. Put the other way round, this correctly says that if democracy is destroyed here it will be in the name of democracy. This is exactly what is being done when democracy is made identical with the capitalism which is now its enemy.

The present political struggle of the forces for social change concentrates on opposition to entering the war; defense of democratic rights; resistance to using the need for national defense as an excuse to stop social reforms, cut social welfare, impose additional tax burdens upon the people of small income, and strengthen our imperialism. It is in these activities that the people will feel the power and see the nature of the present state; will discover that the democratic process must be used to reorganize democratic power over the economic system and develop the cultural life; will acquire the democratic power to make whatever changes are necessary to meet their needs; will acquire the capacity for the job of construction that lies before them.

The vital point in the defense of civil liberties is the political rights of the Communist Party or any other which may

take a similar position. If the liberals who believe in our Bill of Rights now permit the Communist Party to be outlawed or its members blacklisted for unemployment and slow starvation, they will stand in history in the growing company of those who in this crisis betrayed democracy. The vital point in the struggle over the war and national defense is to prevent the people being stampeded into imperialist adventures and the surrendering of their democratic liberties by hysterical exaggerations, to insist that the defense program be based upon the findings of technical experts, not the rhetoric of politicians. Of vital importance is a new direction for our foreign policy. If the American people are to develop their democratic tradition, their affinity lies not with those who have brought Europe to its present disaster, but with those who are seeking to develop democracy in China, in India, in Mexico, in Chile, in Cuba, in Russia, and anywhere else that democratic forces of the people appear.

The forces of reaction moved to stop social progress as soon as the war began in Europe. Last time they did not swing into action against labor until the war was over. Then the Open Shop movement, using the Red scare created by the Russian Revolution as its impetus, tried to take away from the unions the gains secured during the war. The drive failed because enough intellectuals joined with the organized workers in a counter campaign that prevented the American people from being fooled. This time the drive is wider and has more support. Now that the first shock of the breakdown is over and the war has supplied another emotional atmosphere, the reactionaries have taken the measure of the reformers and have organized a powerful offensive against all the labor and social

legislation passed under the New Deal. This drive can be stopped by the same tactics that stopped its predecessor after the last war. If enough of the professionals and the farmers will join with the enlightened section of the city workers and the unemployed in exposing and resisting the pro-war and anti-Red propaganda, the reactionaries can be defeated again. With sufficient pressure from enough votes, the surrender of the administration to the moneyed interests and its progress toward the fascist state can be checked. It was done recently in the case of the arrests in Detroit by the Department of Justice, and in New York City in the case of the recognition of the contracts the transport workers held with the private companies when the city took over some subway and elevated lines.

There are strong democratic forces now organized which were not present in 1918. There is a Youth Congress and a Negro Congress. Many of the students and teachers are organized. There is a labor movement of about eight million members, a big section of it intelligently concerned with national policies—domestic and foreign. The most promising sign in our present situation is the stand that this progressive section of the labor movement is taking against entering the war, also against the attack upon the democratic rights of others as well as their own. While the intellectual section of the peace movement, including some of the preachers, is moving toward support of the war just as it did the last time, out of the labor movement there has come a slogan which is capturing the workers and youth—"The Yanks Are *Not* Coming." Labor and youth gatherings are issuing the most

intelligent and positive declarations against our going to war. Their joint demand is for "Peace, Jobs and Security."

The kind of political activities required in the present crisis need a new form of political expression. None of the things just mentioned can be carried through by the old-line political parties, which are themselves a product and a part of the profit system. The limit of the social advance that can be accomplished by that kind of political organization has been reached in the defeat and surrender of the New Deal. Our present political apparatus is as much out of date as our economic organization. Its base is the individual, who is controlled and rendered helpless by the boss-controlled machine. The base for the social struggle and the social construction that lies ahead, the only democratic base for politics in a collectivist society, is the occupation in which individuals get their living and make their basic contribution to society. Politics and daily work have now to be blended. Then politics and economics will be truly united. Is there any doubt that a Congress based on occupational representation would be more representative and would know more about our social needs than our present body composed mostly of lawyer-politicians who represent either special interests or the business point of view?

A society organized around socially useful labor will have no place for the professional politician, except as a museum specimen. Its citizens will express themselves politically in and through their occupational organizations. They will not be too tired to turn out to political meetings. Their work and their politics will run together. The base for democratic political activity toward a new economic order is in the unions, the

farmer and professional organizations, with a fringe of general groupings like the Youth Congress, the Negro Congress and the progressive women's organizations. It is in these fellowships that the discussion of the present crisis and what is to be done about it has to be carried on. In so doing, the people prepare themselves for democratically taking power. In the struggle against reaction at the point where it touches their own trade or profession they find their need of alliance with all others who are in like manner threatened. Then the conflict of interests under the profit system, like that between farmers and industrial workers, can be modified and its adjustment under an inclusive economy prepared for. Also there emerges naturally the question of what economic changes are required before each vocation can perform its service to society fully and efficiently. Thus the people prepare themselves for taking power effectively because they thereby learn what has to be done constructively.

Already the Democratic Front organizations are getting the people to make policies instead of leaving that to the politicians. In resisting antidemocratic activities, war preparations and policies, race discriminations, cuts in W.P.A. and farm relief, most of their members are democratically engaging in policy making for the first time. They are doing more than passing resolutions; they are trying to get them carried out. This is democracy at work and preparing itself to take power. Here is the basic reason for the attack of reaction on the United Front organizations. Naturally enough reactionary politicians regard any attempt to form a People's Front government as a subversive movement. It is subversive of their careers and perquisites. They will therefore fight it as the

capitalists fight the labor unions. But plainly it is forecast by actual developments, and by need, as the next step in democratic development.

How far such a movement can go, as well as how long it can hold together, obviously depends upon the degree and rapidity with which it can become conscious of its need to replace the profit-seeking economy. That depends again upon the speed of the breakdown of capitalism and the unpredictable outcome of a general war in which we participate. Also it depends upon the timing of political moves by its leadership. Pushed too soon, the main offensive against capitalism disintegrates the democratic movement. Delayed too long it puts the fascists with their fake solutions in power.

If the historic moment is correctly judged, then comes the crucial question of whether inevitable inner jealousies and organizational ambitions will permit a sufficient and efficient leadership. That question has to be left to history, whose record provides hope for the outcome. The present duty is to proceed with the mobilization of the democratic forces and trust the people. This is the essence of democracy—faith in the capacities of the people. It is time to act upon it, remembering, through all defeats, that the future belongs to the forces which seek to push life forward. The forces of death may win some battles, but they are doomed to defeat in the end.

Because of the strength of American capitalism, our habit of direct action, and the social ignorance of the upper-income section of our population, the fiercest struggle between democratic forces and the fascist state will take place on our soil. The antidemocratic force may win; but they cannot hold what

they take. The principles of freedom, fraternity, equality cannot be killed. In age after age those who proclaim them and try to put them in practice are persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and killed. But always there come others to the same fate, and in due time the world moves in the direction of the truths they have proclaimed, the ideals they have uplifted. Time after time the people plunge themselves into darkness and disaster by their ignorance and folly. Then once more they move toward the light, and each time new light breaks upon their path.



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## *About the Author*

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Harry F. Ward has for many years been a leader of liberal churchmen throughout the country, his influence extending over hundreds of prominent ministers who have studied under him at Union Theological Seminary. He has, moreover, represented the pulpit among many progressive national organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union, of which he was for 20 years the chairman. This activity has made his name, person, and writings familiar to hundreds of thousands of active, intelligent citizens. Dr. Ward's previous works have all been concerned with current social and economic thinking, and this book is, in his own eyes, the culmination of his work. He is the author of *In Place of Profit, Which Way Religion, The New Social Order*, and many other well-known books.

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