

FOR REVOLUTION

by

V. F. CALVERTON

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HE American people are thinking seriously today, but in the wrong direction. They are devoting their energies to the common task of averting revolution, when what they should be doing is thinking in terms of revolution, breaking the ground for it in preparation for its arrival. Not a revolution tomorrow—but the day after tomorrow, if you will, for in the end, whether we like it or not, it is only a revolution which can solve the social problem at stake.

The American people as a whole are all thinking about the same thing today—namely, how to get out of the present depression before society collapses into chaos. Everyone is concerned with that same thought, the President, Congress, the bankers, the industrialists, the workers—and the intellectuals. Each group, however, has devised a different solution, a different method of escape. One group believes that it will be through liquidating frozen assets and starting more money into circulation; another that it will be through inaugurating state projects which will employ millions of workers and thus endow the nation with the renewed purchasing power necessary to restore the economic equilibrium; others believe it will be through endowing the president or some other official with dictatorial powers that a way out can be found; the majority of the workers, who should believe the opposite, are convinced for the time being at least that the election of a Democratic president and the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment will provide the best solution; and still others, in particular many of the intellectuals, are convinced that it will be only by means of a planned economy that any form of rescue can be achieved. However much these groups differ in their respective plans and methods, they are all in agreement on one thing, and that is in their united opposition to revolution. Revolution is their common *bête noire*. It is the common enemy of President Hoover, Speaker Garner, J. P. Morgan, Jr., Owen D. Young, Charles Schwab, William Green, Nicholas Murray Butler, Charles Beard, Stuart Chase, Gerald Swope, and Gilbert Seldes.¹ In short, they are all opposed to revolution because they believe, each in his own way, that whatever is wrong with the present order can be changed and repaired without destroying the order itself, or

¹ Cf. Gilbert Seldes' pamphlet, *Against Revolution*, (No. 10) in the John Day Pamphlet Series.

if, as in certain cases, they believe the order has to be scrapped, they are convinced that the scrapping can be done bit by bit, by infinitesimal gradations, without resort to force or violence.

The aim of this pamphlet is to show that all such opposition is dangerously misguided and futile; that the task which confronts us is not to work to avert that revolution but to work to hasten it and in such ways as will make it possible to bring it about with a minimum of difficulty and disorganization. If we attempt to avert or delay that revolution, we shall only be plunged into a worse state of chaos when it comes. If, on the other hand, we endeavor to hasten it and in so doing consciously prepare for it, we may manage to save ourselves from much of that chaos which otherwise cannot be escaped. To ally ourselves, therefore, with the forces that are attempting to avert revolution is but to create more misery instead of less; to ally ourselves, on the contrary, with the forces which are preparing for revolution in order to give them more intelligent guidance, is to create ultimately less misery instead of more.

But what is it about our way of life which makes revolution so imperative?

To begin with, the capitalist order is no longer in a progressive, expanding stage but has entered into its period of decay; its colonies are no longer able to support its imperialistic needs; its major foreign markets have been crippled by post-war dissension and revolt. The British workers, for instance, can no longer live upon the backs of the Indian workers and by sharing thus in the plunder of another people be kept from experiencing the tragic contradictions in their own internal economy; the American proletariat, caught by those same contradictions, is becoming aware today that it can no longer share, however infinitesimally, in the profits of the American financiers and industrialists when those profits have been destroyed by the collapse of the credit structure of European economy. The artificial situation created by the war, which made it possible for markets to be supplied upon the basis of paper claims upon the future, only hastened the decay of the financial superstructure of that whole economy. The only country which temporarily escaped that crisis was the United States, which, by virtue of becoming the great creditor nation of the world, was able to achieve an ascending prosperity curve between 1922 and 1929. In 1929, caught by the same crisis, that prosperity collapsed and panic followed. But the very fact that all that is true, Messrs. Chase, Keynes, Salter, and Beard would answer, is all the more reason why a planned economy, fiscally as well as industrially, is

necessary—in order to escape the revolutionary implications inherent in its absence. When all is said, however, what their plans and programs really do is to complicate rather than clarify the crisis.

The basic fact which these “planners” neglect and the neglect is most revealing—is that man is a “political animal,” and that all the plans which they concoct can have no meaning without consideration of that fact. Their plans are based upon the erroneous assumption that society is a unit instead of a conflict of units or classes, and consequently they do not realize that it is that very conflict which cannot be reconciled within the system of society that they advocate. In addition, they fail to see that the conflict of interests which that discord of classes represents is rooted in the basic problem of economic power. Economic power in the modern democratic state is not vested in the state itself, but in the groups which control the action of the state; attempts to reorganize the economic set-up of society can, therefore, have no meaning in terms of appeal to the state—or to human reason as a supposed adjunct of state wisdom—but only in terms of appeal to those who possess economic power, the bankers and industrialists. It is one thing to devise plans whereby the economic organization of society is recast in accordance with the schemes of the social engineer, but quite another to get control of the sources of power necessary to do the remolding in question.

As to the need for remolding there is little argument; the debate, in these days of doubt and fear, is as to how the remolding can be done, by evolution or by revolution. The evolutionists, believe that the appeal can be addressed to the bankers and industrialists, who by the persuasion of logic or the pressure of circumstance can be made to agree to remold the system in keeping with a more socialized form of production and distribution; the revolutionists believe that the appeal must be made to the workers and farmers, the disinherited, who will provide the force necessary to overthrow the power of the bankers and industrialists.

Now, why won't the evolutionary program work? Why won't the finespun logic of the “evolutionists,” the “planners,” work out in practice? There are two fundamental reasons why it will not work: first, because the bankers and industrialists who constitute the ruling class in every advanced nation will not surrender their power except by force, but will naturally use every means at their disposal to perpetuate their power; and second, since the power of the modern nation inheres in their hands, they will not agree to dispense

with the essential incentive of our society—namely profit-seeking, for it is through the profit drive that they have acquired and continue to maintain their power. It is the profit motivation which makes the whole system revolve. Subtract the profit motif and their power would be robbed of its efficacy and meaning.

In short, the present ruling class, like every other ruling class in the past, is caught in a contradiction which economically it cannot escape—except by giving up its position of power and thus canceling itself out of existence. By retaining the profit drive it only aggravates the economic chaos which its form of production inevitably creates, making it more and more impossible to bridge the catastrophic hiatus between production and consumption, and intensifying thus the antagonism between itself and those not in power. No ruling class has ever or will ever give up its power save by having it wrested from it; individual members of the class might be willing enough to surrender power but the class as a whole cannot. It is caught by the very mechanisms which it has created. An individual banker, for example, might be a very kind, generous person who would lend money to his various friends without security, and even without interest; but a bank cannot function so. The bank is an agency of a class; it operates by certain economic principles; it is the inexorable product of a social system and it must function in accordance with the necessities of that system. It may err but it errs within the radius of those necessities. While an individual banker or industrialist might be willing "to listen to reason," then, and surrender power without a struggle, bankers and industrialists as a class cannot. As a class they are bound by the system of which they are a product, and will defend it by force as long as they have power. A class, defending class interests, does not function like an individual; it functions like a social mechanism, forced to resort to whatever devices are needed to salvage and perpetuate that mechanism.

To appeal to the bankers and industrialists, therefore, or even to the lower middle class as many of the "evolutionists" and "planners" are wont to do, is futile. In the end such appeal, faced by an emergency, is bound to lead to dictatorship, for when the situation grows acute, and action becomes imperative, the bankers and industrialists in order to preserve their power will unhesitatingly discard democracy and establish a financial dictatorship. In the event that such power should be seized through a movement of the lower middle class, as in Italy, an open fascist dictatorship would result. In that connection, of course, it is the Father Coxes and not the

Owen D. Youngs who are most dangerous, for it is of such types that the American fascist leadership will be born. It is important that we bear that distinction in mind, for otherwise the word fascism is robbed of its intrinsic meaning. In either event, we can be sure of one thing, that power has always been maintained in human society by virtue of force ("Der Staat ist Macht," wrote Hegel years ago, in his analysis of state power); when that power is not threatened the force behind it remains invisible, but when it is threatened the force becomes immediately visible and vicious. If the planning necessary to comply with the logic of the "planners" is to be undertaken, it will inevitably necessitate a dictatorship in order to carry it out, for within the capitalist class itself are contradictory elements which will have to be disciplined during the crisis, and within the ranks of the disinherited there are elements which will have to be subdued. This dictatorship would have to use force as an open weapon. At the same time, however, it would not be able to solve the difficulties inherent in our system of society; it would not be able to reconcile any better than has fascism in Italy the contradiction between production and consumption, for the continuance of the profit motif even among large units would deny that possibility; moreover, it would not succeed in eliminating in any way the class antagonisms which make it impossible for society to function as a solid unit, in the sense that society does in Soviet Russia today.

In order to create a society which will reconcile those contradictions, eradicate the profit motif and eliminate class antagonisms, nothing short of a social revolution will suffice. The present class in power will not surrender its position of supremacy unless it is wrested from it by force; it will use force to the utmost to defend it, as it has already done this very year in Detroit, St. Louis, and Washington, and it will only be by countering that force by a greater force that it can be overthrown and a new society based upon the elimination of profit-seeking and class antagonisms be born.

To talk in terms of avoiding that revolution, therefore, is but to betray the cause of human progress, to dam up the creative energies of the race which need to be released if they are not to be stifled by the throttling devices of a ruling class which has already outlived its function. It is only a revolution that can save us from being plunged further and further into the abyss of social and economic decay.

Despite the revolutionary tradition upon which this country has been founded, and by virtue of which it has advanced, an entirely false idea of the historical rôle of revolution has been inculcated in the country as a whole. The notion which prevails, and which as a defense mechanism has been cultivated by the bourgeoisie throughout the western world, is that revolution is an unmitigated evil, and that all thought of social change should be conceived of in peaceful, evolutionary terms. No better form of social logic could be devised by a class which wishes to retain power, for by persuading the masses that force is unnecessary, since everything they wish to gain through revolution can be acquired through evolution, it can use the force which it possesses to perpetuate its power without molestation. Beneath the guise of such logic, it can, functioning as the state, use force to put down any resistance to it, and at the same time deny the use of force to any group which might resist it. Thus, the workers and farmers are first disarmed on the basis of social theory, and then combated with arms whenever necessary on the basis of social practice—as, for instance, in the recent Detroit massacre or the routing of the veterans from Washington by the militia. The contradiction involved therein can be fought only by the realization of the futility of the evolutionary theory of social change.

Revolution, in terms of the future as well as the past, must undergo a process of reevaluation. We must come to realize the significance of revolution as a cleansing force. We must learn to emphasize the virtues of revolution instead of its vices, and appreciate what Engels described as “the spiritual uplift that is the consequence of every successful revolution.” There are always two ways of looking at any social revolution—from the point of view of its tragedies or the point of view of its achievements. The class that is victorious naturally exalts its accomplishments. The advantages or disadvantages of a revolution depend, therefore, upon the class point of view from which it is judged. The French Revolution was a great achievement for the bourgeoisie who gained everything from it, but a tragedy from the point of view of the feudal aristocracy which lost everything in it. The Bolshevik Revolution was a momentous achievement for the proletariat and the peasantry which gained everything from it, but a calamity for the aristocracy and bourgeoisie who lost everything by it.

While a social revolution is inevitably associated with an abundance

of misery and chaos, it is also accompanied by a release of energy which can, if well directed, remake the entire structure of civilization. In a word, the evils must be counterbalanced against the goods if a sound historical judgment is to be made. It is only by a revolution that old, outworn social habits and psychological tendencies can be discarded and destroyed. Without the Bolshevik Revolution, for example, it would have been impossible for the Russian people to have broken with the old ways of life and thought in Russia and found the social release which has overwhelmed the nation in consequence of that revolution. The same was true, in a different and a less significant sense, of the French Revolution where the bourgeoisie instead of the proletariat profited by the change. Wherever a social class has outworn its economic function, it tends to hold back instead of to stimulate the movement of progress—and to thwart the advance of the human mind.

From that point of view alone a social revolution is a psychological therapeutic.

Instead of emphasizing, therefore, the lives that are lost in social revolutions, it would be historically more pertinent to estimate the goods that are gained by such revolutions. In fact, it would have been impossible for man to have advanced without them.

The bourgeoisie, advocates of revolutionary change in the early stages of its career when it was an advancing creative class, has now become a definitely anti-revolutionary class. It has only been since it has acquired power that the middle class has adopted the evolutionary outlook; when it was struggling for power it was revolutionary to the core. And yet by becoming anti-revolutionary, the bourgeoisie has not by any means become a peace-loving class. On the contrary, it was under the leadership of the middle class that the nationalistic outlook of modern society was born and modern warfare was made into the horrendous destroyer of millions. The middle class thus has not eschewed violence on principle; rather it has encouraged it wherever it has abetted its ends. War has been its favorite technique of expansion. It has opposed violence only where violence has become a threat against its power. Consequently it has advocated patriotism, which has been a philosophy of violence as applied to war, but opposed "proletarianism," which is a philosophy of violence as applied to revolution.

As a result of that contradiction, the violence of revolution has been condemned by bourgeois civilization, but the violence of war has been defended. Insofar as the masses are concerned, however, the violence of war is infinitely worse than the violence of revolution.

It is only with the ruling classes that the opposite is the case. In simple quantitative form, war has always cost more lives than revolution, and yet our civilization is ever quick to stress the tragedy of the latter and to neglect the far greater tragedy of the former, disregarding also the social wastefulness of war and the social fruitfulness of revolution. "No doubt there were single hours in the World War when more Russian lives were consumed than the Red Terror ever took," Professor Edward Allsworth Ross wrote in his book, *The Russian Soviet Republic*, and then added with telling significance, "but the world is so snobbish at heart that it is horrified by the victims of the latter as it continues to be horrified by the less than 17,000 victims of the Terror in the French Revolution. In both cases persons of social standing were losing their lives."

Therein lies the crux of the matter. In a successful revolution the ruling class pays the price with its heads; in a war the masses pay the major price with theirs. The ruling class of the vanquished side in war is, of course, forced to pay a price for its defeat, but unless there is a revolution within the state, as was the case in Russia and Germany after the last war, it still manages to save its heads and retain its power.

In its anxiety to exaggerate the miseries and horrors of revolution, middle class thought has endeavored to conceal or at least to minimize the importance of the miseries and horrors of the daily life of the proletariat. We over-emphasize the sudden deaths that a revolution occasions but entirely neglect the slow living deaths that large parts of the working class experience day by day. Historically speaking, the few thousand physical deaths which might be occasioned by a revolution would certainly be less important than the millions of living deaths which have to be endured daily by the masses in our cities. To weep over those few thousand and to neglect those millions is vicious sentimentality. If in a war to make the world safe for democracy, in which in reality the great mass of men died to save other men's dividends, we could risk millions of lives, there should be no reason for us to become unduly excited over the prospect of hazarding a few thousand lives in a struggle the whole aim of which would be to bring about that democracy for the masses which the past war failed entirely to establish. Compare, for example, the cost of life occasioned by the Civil War, and then weigh it side by side with the gain made in the eradication of bond-slavery, and it will be seen at once that the loss was far less significant than the gain. The removal of the suffering alone which the Negroes had to endure under the system of bond-slavery was suf-

ficient in itself to compensate socially for the fifty thousand lives lost in the war. Once the vast mass of the American people see wage slavery as a menace scarcely less vicious in its effects than bond-slavery, they will realize the necessity of preparing for a new revolution, a revolution greater than the French Revolution, and greater far in its consequences than the Civil War.

While the objectives of that new revolution—a socialized society, collective instead of individualistic in its emphasis, and based upon a use instead of a profit economy, with exploitation eliminated and classes abolished—have been clearly enough defined in radical literature, the full implications of it are only beginning to be appreciated today. Such a revolution will release, for the first time in man's history, the full potentialities and power of the human race. In the past such release has been impossible. Vast energies which the race might have used have been dammed up by class oppression and dominance. The potentialities of the masses have never been tapped by the forces of civilization. Even in the modern world the intellectual potency of the masses has never been utilized; on the contrary, the conditions of life which have been imposed upon the masses have made it impossible to cultivate the mental powers they possess. Only the intellectual power of the aristocracy and the upper and lower middle class has been exploited by society in its struggle for advance. The waste alone involved in that procedure has been nothing short of criminal. There is not a shred of evidence to prove that the masses are not potentially as creative as the middle class or the aristocracy; on the contrary, with the new future which will mark the next stage in civilization the masses will become the productively creative element in society, with the middle class, withered at the root, rendered sterile instead of creative in its expression.

It is only when we realize how completely society in the past has throttled the mind power of the masses that we can appreciate how much civilization has lost in terms of its total creative energy. In literature, for example, as is shown by Professor Nicholson's synoptical tables, only two men of literary genius, Bunyan and Burns, emerged from the masses in a period of six hundred years (1265-1865). In the tables of Dr. Cooley, which appeared in his essay "Genius, Fame, and the Comparison of the Races," not one of the most distinguished seventy-one men of letters, extending from Bayle to Turgenev, was the product of the poverty-stricken masses. Turning to science M. de Candolle shows that only 7 per cent of the men of achievement elected to the French Academy of Sciences

descended from the working people. In short, although as J. M. Robertson states in his brilliant essay "Economics of Genius," "potential genius is probably about as frequent in one class as in another," the economic and educational opportunities which society has denied the proletariat have made it impossible for it to develop its intellectual proclivities and powers. "Individualistic society of the past is seen rather to have fixed conditions," to quote J. M. Robertson again, "which theoretically are almost the least favorable to a maximum (numerical) development of potential mental faculty . . . It has set us circumstances under which from a small minority only of the total population at any given moment could its best intellectual workers be drawn."

Only a revolution such as we have previously described, in which the class divisions in society would be destroyed, will make it possible for the race as a whole to utilize all the energies and potentialities at its command. To achieve that end alone would mark the beginning of a new page in history, for not only would it mean releasing the energy of the masses, but it would also mean realizing all those energies which in the past have been absorbed and consumed by the process of economic competition and social struggle.

III

But one way of betraying the cause of progress is to advocate making a revolution when the conditions are not ripe for it.

Are the conditions ripe for a revolution today in America? The objective external conditions are, but the subjective psychological ones are not. No other country in the world is so objectively prepared for a social revolution. Our technological advance has ideally equipped us for just such a revolution. Given the psychological factors necessary to effect it, a revolution could be accomplished here without any severe or drastic changes whatsoever. It is the psychological elements which are unfitted for revolutionary action. It was Lenin, who in his article on the Paris Commune, shrewdly observed that two conditions were necessary for a successful social revolution: "a high development of the productive forces and the preparedness of the proletariat." The first of those conditions—namely, the objective, has already been realized in the United States, as we pointed out above; the second, the subjective or psychological, is further from realization in this country than in any other industrialized nation in the world. In brief, we are admirably prepared physically for a revolution but miserably unprepared psychologically

for it; our technology is advanced but our ideology is backward; we have built up an industrial structure which can easily be converted from a competitive into a co-operative one, from an individualistic into a communistic one, but we have not built up a working class which has learned as yet the advantage of co-operation or the wisdom of communism. As a result of that contradiction, America is faced today with an objective situation which is potentially revolutionary, but with a working class which is ideologically unequipped to take revolutionary action.

But why should this contradiction exist in America? Why should the working class be so ideologically backward and unrevolutionary? The answer to this problem will help us understand an aspect of American psychology which has been too often neglected.

For over 275 years America has presented a unique environment for the individual. If one were to explain that uniqueness in a phrase one could best account for it in terms of the frontier force. It was the presence of the frontier, which Carlyle described as "the Door of Hope for distracted Europe," that provided the *h* element in the American equation. While in New England and the South, class distinctions were established from the very beginning, and as wealth grew those distinctions were accentuated instead of obscured, on the frontier all such distinctions were absent. The western frontiersmen advanced into the wilderness as equals, fought as equals, and established their communities upon an equalitarian basis. Class distinctions could have little meaning in an environment which demanded individual initiative, energy, strength, courage, and a willingness to work rather than willingness to live on the work of others. Society took on a fluidity which it has never experienced before and will never experience again. Individuals found themselves for the first time in their lives unfettered by class or rank, unencumbered by the cultural and economic vestiges of the past. The air tingled with new possibilities, the promise of a petty bourgeois millennium. It was only in such a state of economic flux, where individual advance was comparatively unimpeded, that a philosophy of individualism could drill itself so deeply into the lives of a people.

But this frontier force did not stop with the frontier. In a very significant way, it affected all of America. Moving ever farther and farther west, opening up new possibilities as it spread, the frontier provided a psychological as well as an economic outlet for the pent-up population of the cities. It not only supplied a means of escape for the oppressed petty bourgeoisie in the East, but it also

held forth an ever-promising escape for the worker, who, by virtue of its promise, adopted a petty bourgeois psychology instead of developing a proletarian one. Although the workers in the East felt the pressure of class subordination, the ever-stirring prospect of the West prevented their minds from becoming proletarianized in any lasting way. Even when they organized themselves into unions in the nineteenth century, it was under the banner of petty bourgeois political demands and not proletarian ones that they fought. To this very day, as a matter of fact, the official labor movement in America in its ideology is nothing more than a tail kite of the petty bourgeois movement.

It is impossible to understand the American mind, the mind of the American masses, unless we can appreciate the verticalizing influence which the frontier factor exercised upon the general character of our life. The frontier, with the wide areas of territory which it constantly opened up for new settlements, new towns, and new cities, afforded a spur to individualistic enterprise which spread from coast to coast. When we remember that in 1840, primarily as a result of the frontier, almost one-quarter of the total population of the United States was classified as land-owning, we can easily enough realize why the petty bourgeois ideology rooted itself so deeply into the mind of the nation. Moreover, because of the tremendous sweep of territory on the frontier, congestion could not swiftly occur, nor the individual be mowed down as readily by the machine. As a result of those factors, *individualism secured in America a foothold that it never acquired in any other country*—a foothold in the mind of the nation, as it were, rooting itself like a religion into the very essence of our culture.

In England, save for a brief period, individualism was primarily the property of the middle classes. It did not mean enough to the workers for them to adopt it as part of their philosophy. While before 1870 the English workers dallied with middle-class ideas, after 1870 that dalliance ceased. Before 1870, the frontier force had even played a part in English life. The frontier prospects of South Africa, and even of Australia and Canada, did not lose their appeal until the seventies. But even at the height of their appeal they never exercised the influence over the English masses which the frontier force in America did over the American masses. Geographic disparities alone prevented that possibility. Only in America, as we have seen, and for the reasons which we have recounted, did individualism become a propelling motivation with the working class as well as with the middle class. It was that fact which made the

American working class adopt a petty bourgeois philosophy of individualism instead of develop a proletarian philosophy of collectivism. It was that fact which made the workers think of themselves as potential capitalists rather than as inevitable proletarians. It was that fact which made it possible for them to become wage-conscious without becoming class-conscious. It was that fact which made it possible for the capitalist ideal, interpreted often as rugged individualism, to become the embodiment of what is commonly described as American idealism.

It was the nature of the country itself, then, which kept the American workers and farmers from developing a radical proletarian ideology, and has left them intellectually unequipped for revolutionary action today when nothing short of revolutionary action would be of any avail. Due to the presence of the frontier, with its agrarian emphasis and promise, the American workers and farmers developed a radical, agrarian ideology, instead of a radical, proletarian one. In fact, the development of this radical agrarian ideology definitely thwarted the evolution of a radical proletarian one.

Ever ready for violence—and the American masses in that respect have been perhaps the most violent masses of the world—they are unready for revolutionary action which implies the necessity of social intelligence and a collective, class-conscious program. Until they acquire such intelligence and such a program, they will spend their violence in unrewarding protest and self-defeating struggle.

Within the last few years, however, America has entered a new and more critical stage in its history. In the past, whenever the workers and farmers began to shed their lower middle class ideology, a return of comparative prosperity would rob their rising class consciousness of conviction, and turn the majority of them into self-deluding petty bourgeois again in their psychology. That past, however, is gone. The prosperity rise between 1922 and 1929 will never be repeated again. Not that there will not be a recovery from the present depression. There will. But it will not be a recovery to prosperity, but merely to one of less depression. The economic set-up of our society is so constituted today that, regardless of whatever recovery we ever make, we shall never be able to restore the vigor to the lower middle class psychology which it possessed in the past.

While the struggle between the big bourgeoisie (big business) and the petty bourgeoisie had been settled insofar as fighting was concerned even before the decade of the twenties, it was the developments of industrial enterprise in the twenties which put the final

quietus on the struggle, leaving the petty bourgeoisie in a state of blind and helpless retreat. The Democratic party, which in 1912 still represented the interests of the lower middle class, had already begun to ally itself with the interests of big business by the turn of the twenties. The twenties furthered that alliance. A number of the small industries, headed by individuals who were members of the Democratic party, were transformed into large industries during that decade, and it was those individuals whose interests had become identified with those of big business who secured control of the party. At the present time, for instance, the dominant controls in the Democratic party, represented by such big business men as Raskob, DuPont, Young and others, are more definitely allied to big business than to small business. This change, reflecting the surrender of the lower middle class on the political field as well as on the economic, predicates the beginning of a new epoch in the political as well as economic life of the nation. The lower middle class, becoming more and more absorbed into the maw of the industrial structure and shot off into the proletariat, can no longer function as a decisive force in the country. Even in 1924, when LaFollette arose as the political and economic defender of the lower middle class, declaring himself in favor of a return of the days of 1776 and an opponent of all forms of trusts and monopolies, the lower middle class challenge had lost its sting. If the boom years which preceded the crash of 1929 saved the lower middle class for a time from appreciating the real nature of its status, the panic years which followed taught it the truth about its situation. At this very moment the remaining strength of the lower middle class is being sapped at the root by the economic crisis which is upon us. Although when this panic is over and the wheels of industry begin to run once more, the lower middle class will not vanish as a class, it will never be able to regain even the waning vigor which it possessed before the crisis. The entire direction of our economic life will prevent it.

It is the collapse of the lower middle class which is helping to prepare the way for the rise of the proletariat. Along with the breakdown of the petty bourgeois ideology will disappear, slowly perhaps but steadily, the petty-bourgeois-minded outlook of the American proletariat. As the conditions of economic life make it impossible for the philosophy of the lower middle class to inspire the masses any longer with its promise of individual opportunity and advance, the American working class, in consonance with the European working classes, will adopt a proletarian ideology in

keeping with the realization of its new status. The very structure of industrial enterprise in America at the present time is inevitably bound to increase the strength of the proletariat at the same time that it weakens the position of the lower middle class.

In the light of these facts, we can look forward in the next decade to a greater harmony between the objective situation and the psychological forces in our civilization. Big business will undoubtedly develop dictatorial tendencies in its control of the state,¹ and the working class will become ideologically conscious of its class rôle, and thus learn to prepare itself for the revolutionary action which in America today it is so unfit to undertake.

IV

In recent decades, there has been a definite attempt to inculcate the idea that America has been a land in which force has played little part in the determination of its destiny. Nothing could be further from the truth. Force has functioned as conspicuously in American history as in that of any European country. As a matter of fact, the American people have resorted to force for every important progressive step they have made. The belief that progress in America has been made by virtue of the ballot, or Congress, is nothing more than a myth perpetuated by the ruling class as a protection against its overthrow. In both the Revolutionary War, out of which the American nation was conceived, and the Civil War, as a result of which the American nation was united, force was a necessary expedient. Without resort to force, America might have continued a British colony, and without force, the North and South might have remained divided with bond-slavery still a part of our economic fabric. Shay's Rebellion was put down by Bowdoin's militia; Dorr's Rebellion in favor of equal suffrage for all Rhode Islanders was suppressed by use of force on the part of President Tyler; Negro revolts were ruthlessly suppressed by force; striking workers have been suppressed by the military arm since 1828, resulting in widespread murders and massacres, and recalcitrant farmers have fre-

¹ What we are moving toward at the present time is a modified form of state capitalism, what with the state practically supporting and subsidizing the industrial and financial set-up of the nation by means of the monies afforded by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. In time, if such subsidies continue, and the railroads and industries which have accepted them cannot meet the obligations that they necessitate, there will be no other recourse than for the State to take them over.

quently met with treatment not less vicious; the Filipinos were subdued by force as were also the natives of various South and Central American countries who resisted the "peace and order" command of the American marines. In fact, American history is replete with a record of force and violence which completely belies the belief that we are lovers of pacific government, preferring to debate in Congress instead of fight in the actual field of conflict. A frontier people, we have been hardened to the uses of violence, and just as we exalt the prize-fighter into a national hero and make of the baseball star a popular idol meriting front page recognition, we cannot deny that the spirit of physical fight is in our blood. When the World War was on, and America decided to partake in its butchery, the whole country did not hesitate to boast of the American fighting spirit, contending that doughboys were the best fighters in the world, that a single American could lick a dozen Huns. The very nature of such braggadocio, exalting physical prowess, is typical of the spirit of the nation as a whole.

What is more, we have idealized our men of force. Both Washington and Lincoln, the one who used revolutionary force to defeat the British and the other who employed it to preserve the Union, have been haloed as the two greatest figures in American history. Theodore Roosevelt has run them a good second mainly because he was known as "fighting Teddy." Even military men *per se* have played a conspicuous rôle in our political history. Beginning with Washington, the presidency has often been filled by men such as Andrew Jackson, Tippecanoe Harrison, and Ulysses S. Grant, all of whose main appeal to the public has been through the prestige which they won on the field of battle. In short, the use and exaltation of force is not a new thing in America. We are a people swift to resort to force and quick to turn it into violence. What is necessary, therefore, is not to educate the American people to be willing to use force in a social emergency—they need little education in the advantage and wisdom of force—but to teach them to use force in the right direction—namely, to destroy the present capitalist order of society and replace it by a collectivist one in which economic life can be socialized and classes abolished.

In the light of these facts it becomes nothing short of preposterous for American leaders in political, economic, and educational life to declare that America is a country in which ballots have always prevailed over bullets, and in which the use of force has appeal only to the foreign elements in our population and not to the native. It has been the native elements which have been the most violent.

The trouble has been that their violence has had no ideological direction. It was the violence of excited frontiersmen and not of intelligent revolutionaries.

Not only has American life been full of the presence of force, but even the American tradition, expressed in records, speeches, statements, and documents, is rich with the same revolutionary inspiration. Few more revolutionary documents have ever been composed than the American Declaration of Independence. "Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends" (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness), the Declaration reads, "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." In a later sentence, the Declaration explicitly states that whenever a government tends to disregard the people's rights, it is not only their right, but "it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security." The Declaration of Independence was a revolutionary document; it was the Constitution which was a reactionary document. It is the Declaration of Independence, therefore, which should be cherished as part of our indefeasible revolutionary tradition—and not the Constitution. (The only part of the Constitution which retains any revolutionary significance is the Bill of Rights.) Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson were the men who did more than any others to carry on that revolutionary tradition. It was Jefferson in fact who, suspicious of the Constitution, endeavored to keep alive the revolutionary state of mind out of which the Declaration of Independence had been born. Shay's Rebellion, which so frightened the bourgeoisie of the time, was welcomed by him in words which have gained rather than lost their challenge in recent days:

"Can history produce an instance of rebellion so honorably conducted? . . . God forbid that we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion . . . What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that the people preserve the spirit of resistance. Let them take arms. The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of tyrants. It is its natural manure."

As Jefferson's words definitely stated, he was always ready for the oppressed to use arms to overthrow their oppressors. But not

only did Jefferson's words vibrate with the spirit of revolutionary challenge. Even the state constitutions of the time carried over something of their challenge. The constitution of Florida, for instance, states that the people "have at all times an inalienable and indefeasible right to alter or abolish their form of government in such a manner as they may deem expedient." A similar statement can be found in most of the state constitutions of the period, including those of Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky and Connecticut, and later on in those of Kansas, Oregon, and many others. There is nothing equivocal in themselves about the words "alter" or "abolish," except in the way they may be interpreted by those in power. It was no less a leader than Abraham Lincoln who, in time of crisis, gave their meaning explicit form when he avowed that whenever the people of this country "grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, *or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it.*" [italics mine]

But we need not turn only to our political leaders to find evidences of the American revolutionary tradition. American literature is impregnated with much of the same spirit. The American literati, contrary to the usual notion, have not been a passive, sterile type. In times of crisis, they have often become explosively social-minded. The Revolutionary War found in the personages of Freneau, Hopkinson, Trumbull, and others, ardent advocates of force and violence on the part of the colonies. The slavery issue again stirred the literati to vigorous action. The spirit of fight burned through the very core of their words.

"If there is a hell more unprincipled than our rulers and our people," Thoreau wrote in an attack upon the institution of slavery, "I feel curious to visit it. If we should save our lives, we must fight for them." Bryant was just as eager for the fight as Thoreau, and in words that were unmistakable in their advocacy apostrophized the use of force as the necessity of the moment.

Lowell was not less emphatic in this insistence upon force as the only way out:

"Not with words; they laugh them to scorn,
And tears they despise;
But with swords in your hands and death
In your eyes!
Strike home! leave to God all the rest;
Strike! Men of the North and West."

After the Civil War, Wendell Phillips, who had been one of the most ardent of the Abolitionists, carried the fight still further into the camp of the enemy, and declared that the eradication of wage-slavery had to follow the destruction of bond-slavery in order to make the disappearance of all forms of slavery complete:

"We affirm, as a fundamental principle, that labor, the creator of wealth, is entitled to all it creates.

"Affirming this, we avow ourselves willing to accept the final results of the operation of a principle so radical—such as the overthrow of the whole profit-making system, the extinction of all monopolies, the abolition of privileged classes, universal education and fraternity, perfect freedom of exchange, and . . . the final obliteration of that foul stigma upon our so-called Christian civilization—the poverty of the masses . . . Resolved, That we declare *war* with the wages system, which demoralizes alike the hirer and the hired, cheats both, and enslaves the workingman."

Even Mark Twain was not silent on the social issue and the necessity of action:

"You see my kind of loyalty was loyalty to one's country, not to its institutions or its office-holders. The country is the real thing, the substantial thing, the external thing; it is the thing to watch over and care for, and be loyal to; institutions are extraneous, they are its mere clothing, and clothing can wear out, become ragged, cease to be comfortable, *cease to protect the body from winter, disease, death*. To be loyal to rags, to shout for rags, to worship rags,—that is loyalty to unreason, it is pure animal . . . I was from Connecticut, whose Constitution declares 'that all political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority and instituted for their benefit; and that they have *at all times an undeniable and indefeasible right to alter their form of government* in such a manner as they may think expedient.'

"Under that gospel, the citizen who thinks he sees that the commonwealth's political clothes are worn out, and yet holds his peace and does not agitate for a new suit, is disloyal; he is a traitor."

Or suppose we turn to Walt Whitman who spoke out, as Horace Traubel has informed us, with even more forthrightness. The fol-

lowing conversation between the two men, recorded by Traubel, testifies to Whitman's stand:

Traubel: Do you think that the class that has robbed the people will hand their loot back?

Whitman: I'm afraid not. I'm afraid the people will have to fight for what they get.

Traubel: Why, Walt, you're a damned good revolutionist after all.

Whitman: Didn't you always know it? What could I be if I wasn't?

The American tradition, then, has not been founded upon any theory of quiescence. On the contrary, it has been one inspired by the realization of the importance and necessity of force in the social process.

V

There remains still the final and all important question of how to bring about that revolution.

Objectively speaking, the revolution will result from the contradictions in the capitalist system itself which will make it impossible for it to sustain itself against the forces within, which will tend to break it down, and the forces without, which will tend to overthrow it. The contradictions within, represented by the inherent conflicts of interest on the part of the capitalist class, the impossibility of social co-operation within the framework of a profit economy, the inability to find sufficient foreign markets to dispose of the domestic surplus, the impossibility of solving the unemployment problem intensified by technological advance, combined with the inability to prevent the outbreak of war resulting therefrom—those contradictions, it is obvious, are operative on a more catastrophic scale today than ever before. The contradictions without, represented by the development of the forces of opposition to the capitalist class, the workers' and farmers' movement and all those movements allied to that same base, are just as active and advanced in many European industrial countries as the contradictions within.

It is only in America that the contradictions without have not been paralleled by those within. The workers and farmers in America have not yet developed sufficient class consciousness to constitute an opposition movement to the capitalist system as a whole. In fact, in an important sense it can be said that the American workers even at the present time are on the whole ideologically less advanced than they were some decades ago. Yet it is only such a movement,

built about a workers' and farmers' base, that can effect such a revolution as has been described. Any revolutionary movement which does not make its fundamental appeal to the workers and farmers is bound to fail. The dissatisfied bourgeois elements in the population, the declassé intellectuals, may participate in such a movement, may even in certain cases by identification with it become leaders within it, but they cannot be depended upon to form its base. That base must be formed by the disinherited who have nothing to lose by the destruction of an economic system which has been their constant enemy.

The problem that faces us, therefore, is simple in outline but difficult in execution. It is the problem of educating the American workers and farmers to recognize the nature of their own interests, of making them creatively class-conscious. Once that step has been made it will be but one more step to make them revolutionary-minded. It is absurd, however, for us to talk about making a revolution until those steps have been taken—at least by a considerable vanguard of the workers. Indeed, it is absurd for us to talk about taking the second step before we have made the first. The fact of the matter is we have not yet learned how to make the first.

In an article entitled "The Road of Revolution" (*New Republic*, July 6, 1932) Stuart Chase has described the terrible fate which is in store for any technological nation which is forced to undergo the experience of revolution. Without doubt there is a certain truth in Mr. Chase's words if a revolution is undertaken by those who are unequipped to carry it through to a swift success. Mr. Chase's error lies in the fact that he exaggerates the difficulty of developing such equipment. That we are not equipped to undertake such a revolution now is obvious, as I have continuously stressed throughout this pamphlet; the important thing, however, is to realize the necessity of that revolution, and to devote our energies to equipping ourselves for the task of carrying it out. Such equipment requires an ideologically advanced working class, and a revolutionary organization, expressing the spirit of that working class, disciplined for swift and certain action. By the time such equipment has been developed, however, enough technicians will have swung over to the radical cause so that Mr. Chase's worries on that score need no longer concern him. The important thing we should not do is to try to dodge the necessity of that revolution, as Mr. Chase does, and cultivate the idea that the same ends can be attained by social evolution.

The first part of the problem that confronts us, then, is how to get the American workers and farmers to think in class-conscious terms.

relation to her neighbors the humane principle of equality, and not the serf principles of privileges that humiliate a great nation."

It is such "national pride," if you will, that must be stirred up in the American workers and farmers—a pride in their revolutionary traditions. Such pride can help inspire them with the fight necessary to overthrow the present ruling class of financiers and industrialists. The American workers must learn to hate the "violence, oppression, and mockery (which their) beautiful motherland is being subjected to" by those financiers and industrialists. Hate and not love is the emotion which they must nurture. The gospel of love belongs to the ruling class; it is its best protection, for by its very preachment it tends to prevent the misery it spreads from volatilizing into violence. The gospel of hate belongs to the proletariat, for it is only by such hate that the energy necessary for its struggle can be engendered. More, it is only by virtue of that hate that a new social world can be created in which the gospel of love can have either place or meaning.

"Between communism with all its chances, and the present state of society with all its sufferings and injustices," John Stuart Mill wrote, "all the difficulties great and small of communism would be but as dust in the balance." It is that realization which many American intellectuals have already reached; it is that realization which many American workers will reach within this decade if their growing spirit of protest and revolt is not channeled off into futile directions.

It is only by revolution that that realization can be translated into action. Society can be saved in no other way. Our task is to create that revolution, to cultivate the forces that are necessary to its success. It is no little task that confronts us, and it behooves us to gather up all our energies and dedicate all our strength to its achievement. To do less is but to fail. And to fail in that task is to betray the cause of human progress, to sacrifice the future freedom of the human race.

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