

the first World War, and from there to a short enthusiastic adherence to the party of Lenin to an "ultra-left" position, first from within, afterwards from without the party, and from there further on, during the last 20 years, to a new positive which seems to me in many ways similar to your present tendency as reflected by your issue of December, 1947—the last, so far, that I have seen. I think, however, that you are more or less aware of all the relevant shades of the present development, and thus probably know more about me than I could tell you in a short letter. I should not neglect, though, to tell you that I enjoyed your reprinting of my review of Trotsky's book, and so my pieces by Mattick and Pannekoek. Now I should be busy writing a review of the English edition of Pannekoek's excellent criticism of Lenin's philosophy for the *Western Socialist*. Yet I find it difficult to do so, since I said most of the things I had to say in my earlier review of the German text that appeared in Vol. IV, No. 5, of "Living Marxism," in 1938. If I wanted to improve on that now, after 10 years, I would have to deal with the newest attack of Positivism against Marxism that is contained in K. R. Popper's two volumes on *The Open Society and Its Enemies* that appeared in London (George Routledge and Sons Ltd.) in 1945, and which I got only now, after it had been reprinted in 1947. I find this book very loathsome, however, though it is ably written and has made a deplorably strong impression on some former leftists of the Pannekoek-Mattick stamp. Thus I find it difficult to make me read it through, and this again, up to now, has kept me from writing the review I had promised both to Mattick and the W.S. for the purpose of promoting the sale of Pannekoek's valuable book. If and when I write the review I shall send you a copy forthwith, since it is quite possible that the W.S. will find my review "too academical and too confused" again—as they did in regard to my review of Trotsky's book, and I really cannot blame them for thinking so from their own particular viewpoint.

I am absorbed, at present, in two different kind of studies, which will appear first in the German language, and in which I try to trace both the final results of the "Marxist" era of the workers' movement to the original *theory and practice* of Marx: 1) before, during and after 1848; 2) during the period of the W.M.I.A. in the 60's and 70's. I'll send you copies of what is ready as soon as I manage to translate it into English. (In case you can get German MSS. translated down under, I'll send you quite a selection of new and old writings which might be of interest to you—but I am afraid that cannot be done, and it is well nigh impossible for me to get copies of my English writings of the last 10-15 years myself.)

We have written and told K.K. that it can be done by two comrades in Melbourne. K. J. Kenafick is particularly able, and is also intensely interested in Bakunin; he has a Bakunin book now in the press.—Editor.]

In connection with the above described studies I plan to write on the theories of Bakunin, and more particularly on his theory of the State as pre-

sented in a book of 1873 which is widely unknown and does not exist in any non-Russian edition except in one of the Spanish editions which is nearly unobtainable, too. Thus it will take some time before I overcome the linguistic difficulties. I learnt Spanish now, and can read the Spanish translation myself, but I need help for the original Russian version, and I have to get photostatic copies of it because I can borrow the book itself only for a limited period, which is nearly exhausted. There are a few articles in which I dealt with the subject in the German periodical *Die Aktion* in 1928 and in 1931, but they have not been translated. So I was quite glad when Lain Diez sent me his article on the *Interpretation of the Paris Commune*, and I translated it into English myself, first from a French translation, and now from the Spanish original version, which turned out to be far better than the French version. I also made a few changes, with the consent of the author (whom I do not know in person). I enclose a copy of this article with a view to publication in your paper if you think that you can do so. In spite of certain obvious shortcomings, I think that the little article is well written and approaches certain important questions in a manner which might interest people who have not yet freed themselves from the Marx-Lenin-Trotsky legend to the same extent as you or I might claim it for ourselves.—Comradely greetings,

Karl Korsch.

## INTERPRETATION OF THE COMMUNE

By Lain Diez (*Santiago di Chile*)

1. The 28th of May, 1871, marks the end of an episode that shook European society and the whole world—the Commune of Paris. Since then, humanity has been shaken by so much more telling blows and disasters that this episode appears to be of secondary significance if it is judged only by its material proportions and the spectacular features of the events. However, from the ruins of 1871 there emerged a myth that gave nourishment to the revolutionary optimism for three-quarters of a century, that inspired beautiful columns and presided over the works of great creators of ideas and history.

On the contrary, from the catastrophe of the second World War there remains nothing but desolate ruins and a pessimism invading the hearts and finding its theoretical expression even in the programs of those parties and individuals who had looked at the proletarian revolution as the culmination of their struggles and as a long-contemplated denouement. For this reason, it is good to dive once more into the record of the Commune, and, across the classical interpretations to release the brief and heroic pages of this memorable episode.

2. In spite of the impending schism of the First International, the two camps, that of Marx, as well as that of Bakunin, embraced with equal fervor the cause of the Commune, and, by a paradoxical identity of evaluation, both acknowledged the great import of the movement. Bakunin took over the defence of the revolution against Mazzini, who in the columns of his just created

journal, *Roma del Popolo*, violently and unceasingly attacked the Commune, which he saw nothing but a chaotic movement without goal or order. The importance of Bakunin's contribution lies in the fact that he set the socialist opinion of the Latin countries (Italy, Switzerland, Spain, France) what Marx did with his *War In France* for the socialist circles of Germany, England, and the U.S.A. (1)

3. Naturally, Bakunin regards the Commune as a movement in the tradition of his own anarchist federalism. "I am a partisan of the Commune," he wrote in June, 1871, "because after having been crushed and drowned in blood by the hangmen of the monarchist and clerical reaction, it was reborn in a mightier in the imagination and in the heart of the European proletariat: I am its partisan, most of all, because it has been a bold and very outspoken negation of the State." (*Oeuvres* IV, 264) Indeed, the Commune, by negating the State and the established authority and proclaiming the autonomy of small groups, represented a federalism that secured a maximum of liberties for individual units. "The social order of the future," claims Bakunin, "can only be established from the bottom to the top, that is, through the free association and federation of the workers, first into associations, then into communal districts, nations and, lastly, into great international and universal federation." (*Oeuvres* IV, 264.)

4. We recognise in these words the ideal of Proudhon, who counted not a few followers among the French militants of the International; but Bakunin adds a conception of his own in regard to the revolutionary development. The logic of the events obliged the democratic and Jacobinic leaders to adapt themselves to the program of the socialist minority. "Those generous Jacobins," remarks Bakunin, "at the head of whom we naturally find Delescluze, great soul and great character, longed ardently above everything else, for the triumph of the revolution; and since there can be no revolutions without masses, and as the masses to-day are entirely possessed by a socialist instinct, and can no longer make any other but an economic and social revolution, the Jacobins in allowing themselves in good faith to be carried away more and more by the logic of the revolutionary movement were at last unconsciously converted into socialists." (*Oeuvres* IV, 256.)

5. The most remarkable representatives of anarchism sided unreservedly with this judgment of the Commune. To Kropotkin, "the revolution of 1871 was above all a popular revolution. It was the achievement of the people itself, it sprang spontaneously from the masses, and it is among the great masses of the people that it found its defenders, its heroes, its martyrs. . . . At the same time, the spirit that roused it was the idea of the social revolution, certainly vague and perhaps unconscious, but nevertheless an effort to gain at last, after a hundred years of struggle, the true liberty, the real equality for all men. . . . Communal independence was only a means for the people of Paris, the social revolution was its goal." (Pamphlet, ed. London, 1896.)

The anarchists, in particular those the famous *Federation Jurassienne*, whom belonged J. Guillaume, the historian of the International, and a violent enemy of Marx, manifested a great surprise in face of the attitude taken by them, and they could not understand that they defended the Commune, and even less that he described it as a proletarian and social revolution. In their view, the Commune meant the negation of all that Marx stood for, and Bakunin went so far as to impute to this great revolutionary the quite natural but petty desire to profit by the enthusiasm that it filled forth among the proletariat.

"The effect of the Communal insurrection," wrote Bakunin, "made such a terrific impression everywhere that even the Marxists, whose every idea is negated by this revolution, found themselves compelled to pay homage to it. They went even farther, and, contrary to all logic and to their own inner sentiment, they made common cause with its program and its goals. It was a communal travesty, though a necessary one. Nothing else remained for them but that they did not want to be repudiated by all, so strong was the surging passion that this revolution called forth in the whole world." (Quoted by Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, II, 192.) And Guillaume himself, improving on him: "The Commune that was a protestation of the federalist idea, had nothing in common with the socialist state or *Volksstaat*," which the Marxist social democrats inscribed on their banners."

7. Strange error of Guillaume, as the program of the social democrats was not Marxist, not even at the time of the Congress of Gotha in 1875 that united the two currents composing the workers' movement in Germany: that of Lassalle, who died in 1864, the most important one, and that of Liebknecht and Bebel, who professed adherence to the teachings of Marx. The latter sharply criticized the theoretical concessions of his partisans, as well as their craving for unity at all costs. He expressed at the same time and in conformity with his evaluation of the Commune an irreconcilable opposition to the State whose intervention he rejects in all fields, and especially in those of education and of the co-operatives.

"What should be entirely rejected is an education of the people by the State." . . . On the contrary, the Government and the Church must be equally excluded from any influence upon the schools." Marx does not even tolerate the intervention of the State in the co-operatives. These latter "have value only in so far as they are independent creations of the workers, and are not fostered either by the governments or by the bourgeoisie." And in order to leave no doubt in regard to his anti-Statism, he rages against the unification program as "despite its democratic trimmings, it is tainted through and through with the servile belief of the Lassallean sect in the State." (2) [Servile belief . . . in the State is closer to Marx's German phrase, and seems somewhat stronger, too, than 'belief or subjection' of the State.—K.K.]

8. In the opposite camp, Engels, too, gives proof of a strange lack of comprehension of the anarchist position. "But what is still more remarkable is the correctness of so much that was

actually done by the Commune in spite of its Blanquist and Proudhonist composition. Naturally the Proudhonists were chiefly responsible for the economic decrees of the Commune, for those that are praiseworthy as well as those that are not, and the Blanquists were responsible for the political achievements and failures. And in both cases the irony of history decreed—as usually happens when doctrinaires take the helm of the State—that both did the opposite of what the doctrines of their schools prescribed." (3.)

9. This peculiar identity of the criterion used in confronting the acts with the theories of the adversary, results from a mistaken estimate of the relative importance of the doctrines and the experience, i.e., of the revolutionary practice. It has become an everyday word to say with Trotsky: "It is the program that makes the party (and not the reverse)." The idea, the theory, are thus allowed to occupy a pre-eminent place at the cost of the sentiment, of the instinct and the will of the masses, of their spontaneous action. In practice, Trotsky never went so far as Lenin, who did not hide his scepticism in respect to the workers' initiative and his contempt of the "adorners of spontaneity." Rosa Luxemburg, on the contrary, regarded the "self-activation" (the word used by Rosa Luxemburg) of the masses as the fundamental condition of success in the revolutionary fight.

10. We must remember that Lenin maintained that "the working class, left to its own resources, can develop not more than a merely and exclusively trade-unionist consciousness, i.e., the conviction of the need to group itself into associations, to fight a battle against 'the boss,' to demand from the government such or such a law that is needed for the workers, etc." And he proceeds to an even more extreme position by adding, further down, in a peremptory manner, that "in Russia the theory of the social democracy developed quite independently from the spontaneous currents of the workers' movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable consequence from the ideological development of the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia." (4.) On this subject one may also consult the two essays of Rosa Luxemburg, *Leninism or Marxism?* and *The Russian Revolution*, and the additional evidence presented by Sprenger in his remarkable essay about Bolshevism. (5.)

11. In order to support this dualist concept of the socialist development, his theory of the co-existence and of the parallel evolution of the workers' movement and of the ideology, Lenin leans on the authority of Kautsky, who had then just stated his opinion on this point in connection with a proposed change of the platform of the Austrian party. The views quoted by Lenin in 1902 from Kautsky's article in *Die Neue Zeit* (vol. XX, 1901-02, pp. 68ff) run as follows:

"In this context the socialist consciousness is made to appear as a direct and necessary result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is incorrect. . . . The modern socialist consciousness can only arise on the basis of a profound scientific

insight. In fact, present-day economic science is a preliminary condition for socialist production, just as much as is present-day technology, while the proletariat even with the best of intentions can not create either the one or the other; both emerge from the present process of society. However, the carrier of science is not the proletariat, but the *bourgeois intelligentsia* (underlined by K. Kautsky); modern socialism originated in the minds of certain individual members of that layer; they handed it on to the most advanced and most distinguished proletarians, who in their turn introduce it into the class struggle of the proletariat wherever conditions permit. For this reason the socialist consciousness is something that is introduced into the class struggle of the proletariat from without, and not something that has arisen congenitally from within."

This essential identity between the thought of the "renegade" Kautsky and that of Lenin has had a number of grave consequences for the fate of the Russian revolution and of the world, more important than the differences of second order referring to the greater or lesser proportion of democracy or dictatorship, or the greater or lesser dose of terror which constitute the central theme of the polemics of Lenin and Trotsky against Kautsky and which have only served to obscure the underlying problem.

12. The explanation of the "paradox" of the Commune is easily found if one takes account of a fundamental aspect of Marxism that has been far too much neglected in the Leninist history as well as in the Bolshevist practice. I refer to the primary philosophy of Marxism that is summed up in the thesis according to which "the main social ideas and spiritual trends express the aims of the classes, i.e., the needs of social development, and change with the class struggles themselves. . . . This is the content of Marxism, as it grows among the workers as a living and stirring power, as the theory expressing their growing power of organisation and knowledge." (6.) This interpretation agrees with the Marxist thesis of the determination of ideas by society or, more strictly conceived, by the classes. It agrees with its most general philosophic formula according to which it is not the idea that determines the being, but on the contrary the being that determines the idea. (7.) The secret of the success of a revolutionary theory consists exactly in its power to interpret and to express the struggle of a class for its emancipation. This is the reason why Marx adapted his ideal communism to the real communism that strove to assert itself in the Paris of 1871 and that was only a certain stage of the development of the French proletariat which had originated from the Sections of the Commune from 1791 to 1793.

13. The dualism of Lenin which justified his critics of the left, Pannekoek, Ruhle, Sprenger, Mattick amongst others, to speak of the bourgeois role of Bolshevism, derives from his pessimist conception of the creative capacity of the proletariat on the one hand, and, on the other hand, from his authoritarian

and ultra-centralist concept of organization. The Bolshevik party, with its iron discipline, was an excellent weapon for the conquest of power, but it was not fit to arouse the struggle of ideas in the hearts of the working class nor to develop its capacities for criticism and to stimulate all its peculiar and creative abilities for the purpose of sustaining genuinely proletarian institutions that would be apt to inaugurate a new era in the history of human civilization.

Trotsky was aware of the danger. In 1904, in his controversy with Lenin, he wrote: "The organization of the party substitutes itself for the party; the central committee substitutes itself for the organization; the dictator substitutes himself for the central committee." The evolution of "the workers' state" reproduced this scheme of Trotsky, for the new form of government was not more or less than the party made into the State. It is true that historic circumstances, among them the isolation and the backward state of Russia, as well as its huge peasant population, permitted the rapid rise of a parasitic bureaucracy and the degeneration towards a regime of dictatorial State-capitalism.

14. However, the historic circumstances are after all only conditioning factors that may delay, accelerate or diverge a movement to a certain extent. What really determines the general law of its development is the inner logic of a movement. And this again is nothing but the reflection of the play of forces aiming at a balance. Among these forces, the decisive weight rests with the conscious volition of the party that assumes the historic responsibility of the movement. Thus, the State that arose from the coup of October was nothing else but the continuation of the power of the Bolshevik party whose orientation was determined by the own laws of this party, together with the tasks which the particular situation of Russia imposed and with the personal conceptions of Lenin.

The convergence of the material current and of the ideological current concentrated itself in the Bolshevik party, and, at the eve of the "coup d'etat" endowed it with a determining specific weight, that from day to day acquired a more and more decisive importance from the instant in which the Bolsheviks consolidated their power.

To oppose the sound theory of Bolshevism of "before" to the despotic practice of "after," with its elimination of sovietism as a dominant political factor, means to fall into a new social illusionism that raises itself as a formidable obstacle against the efforts of the working class to find the path to its liberty.

15. Even Trotsky, in his admirable *History of the Russian Revolution*, and in his polemics with Stalin, has contributed to separating the principles of the development of the U.S.S.R. from its historic contents; he concentrated his attention on the conditioning circumstances, the details of the economic structure, in short, on the form. It is a characteristic feature of Bolshevism, exaggerated by the Stalinist practice, and in general by the bureaucratic spirit, to sacrifice the essence to the form, as has been demonstrated by

Marx in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*. (8.) This process of dissociation imposed itself on Trotsky, who, although aware of the danger of the bureaucratization and fighting against it with all his strength, alas too late, declined to find his historic antecedents in Bolshevism. His idealization of the Bolshevik party, after having incorporated himself in it—in part the consequence of a revolutionary optimism, which never abandoned him—is a remarkable example of the psychological complexity of "before" and "after" that is characteristic of the wake of a great historic commotion. He could find a theoretical justification for his "Leninism" in the accidental coincidence of his theory of the permanent revolution with the theory of the continued revolution sketched in an article on "*The Stages, Tendencies and Perspectives of the Revolution*," that had been written by Lenin at the beginning of 1908 (Selected Works, III, 134-5). It had anticipated the revolutionary tactics of 1917 and the abandonment of the idea of stopping at the bourgeois and agrarian stage of the revolution, which until the *Theses of April* of 1917 had inspired the program of the Bolshevik party.

It is certain that the personality of Lenin contributed to the decisive step taken by Trotsky, besides such other and secondary aspects as the isolation that threatened him more and more, as his group of Mezhrayontsi was crumbling under his eyes, while concurrently the Bolshevik party was constantly growing both in the number of its followers and by the support of the working masses. His adhesion to Bolshevism was for him a question of political life or death, and, by the "realism" that becomes a great agitator, he understood the necessity of a step that, though fruitful for a good number of his revolutionary initiatives, comprised the secret of his future impotence. There are few historical examples that could present in a more tragic manner, and with more sinister consequences for the fate of humanity, what is illustrated by the singular maxim of Goethe: "In the first step we are free, in the second we are slaves."

16. The Commune of Paris became a favorite topic for all those who, attached to the norms of the Marxist education, studied the past for their present orientation and for deriving from it the strategic and tactical lessons of the revolution, and so to enable themselves to wage the struggle in a given situation. Lenin and Trotsky have dedicated to it many pages of their writings. However, the reader is left with the impression that they have rather looked for a parallel with the Russian revolution in order to exalt the success of the latter in comparison with the failure of the insurrection of '71. Their interpretation reveals a hardly dissimulated apologetic intention, and does not present an explanation of the present through the past, but, on the contrary, of the past through the present. They project the revolution of October and the Bolshevik dictatorship upon the insurrection of March, and the personal problems they had to face themselves, upon the scenery of the Commune. Trotsky, in particular, finds

in its lack of consistent terroris of the chief reasons of its defeat.

That is why the *Address of the International*, entirely written by remains the outstanding document of the evaluation of the episode of the Commune. Nowhere else is it possible to find an equally exact and vivid picture of its essential features. It is no example in socialist literature of an equally eloquent and passionate defence of a lost cause. Profound analysis, crushing moral portraits, but indignation, biting irony—all blend to accomplish a well-balanced literary form that is ennobled through an ardent passion of justice and truth.

Marx's *Civil War in France* summed up by Engels in the following words: "Well, gentlemen, do you know what the dictatorship of the proletariat means? Look at the Commune of Paris. That was the dictatorship of the Proletariat."

17. The verdict passed on the Commune by the founders of scientific socialism naturally raises the problem of the evaluation of the Spanish revolution. The socialists formerly gathered around *Living Marxism* (10)—Mat Pannekoek, Korsch and a number of others who refer themselves to movement of the Workers' Councils who to-day represent the most authentic form of the Marxist thought—were certainly right in taking an attitude of sympathy and admiration towards the Commune. Aside from purely political errors that are incontestable, that the collectivization applied by the FAI and the CNT in Spain in 1937 has been much more the tradition and in the further revolutionary extension of the Paris Commune of 1871 than the Bolshevik practice of authoritarian and centralized socialism that has only succeeded in creating a convenient field for bureaucratic degeneration. The achievements of the economic regime in Catalonia were remarkable and surpassed all predictions. The final defeat, following the treason of the "democratic" powers, and the blackening of Stalin, can not obscure the fact that the success of this collectivist attempt that made it possible for the loyalist armies to make a good stand for more than two years against a much superior and powerfully armed enemy.

The Spanish revolution was a socialist victory that turned into a military defeat, in contradistinction from the Russian revolution as a military victory that turned into a socialist defeat. However, the legacy of the revolution in Catalonia is positive and demonstrates the superiority of the worker's initiative, of his class-organization for solving "from the bottom to the top" the problems of communistic production and distribution. It is therefore with full justification that we can say of the civil war in Spain, in parody of Engels: "Do you want to know what the dictatorship of the proletariat means? Look at the Commune of Catalonia."

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(2) Marx, "Critical Comments on the Platform of the German Labor Party, 1875" *A The Gotha Program*, by Work-

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(3) *Engels: Introduction to the third of Marx: "The Civil War in France"* (Address of the General Council of the W.M.I.A.), ed. Kerr, Chicago, 1934, p. 21.

(4) *Lenin: "What Is to Be Done?"* 1902, Spanish ed. by Claridad, Buenos Aires, 1933, p. 45.

(5) *Rudolph Sprenger: "Bolshevism, Its Roots, Its Role, Its Class-concept, Its Method,"* published by International Review, New York, s/d (1937?).

(6) *Anton Pannkoek: "Lenin as Philosopher."* A critical examination of the philosophical basis of Leninism. English ed. by New Essays, New York, 1948, pp. 67-68.

(7) *Marx-Engels: "Ludwig Feuerbach,"* chap. II, Idealism and Materialism.

(8) Consult also *S. Frank: "The Bureaucratic Spirit,"* in *New Essays* (continuation of Living Marxism), vol. VI, No. 3, 1943, pp. 17-23.

(9) *Trotsky: "Terrorism and Communism" (Anti-Kautsky),* London, 1935 (chap. V).

(10) *Living Marxism,* particularly vol. IV, No. 3, May, 1938, and No. 6, April, 1939.

## ARE WE DOGMATIC?

[Reply from *The Western Socialist* to a contribution to this paper.]

In a paper now circulating, issued by "Workers' Political Education of Detroit," the W.S.P. and its companion parties are castigated as "pure socialist" groups; "a small group of ideologists" who have set up "a perfect party (on paper), with all the i's dotted and the t's crossed." According to that paper we are a sect, beset with a dogmatism completely out of this world. We are denounced for holding ourselves aloof from the "concrete class struggle, i.e., the efforts of the workers in their unions to resist the downward pressure on their living standards, and also the efforts by politically backward workers to fight out their problems within the pseudo-socialist, labor parties of this, and other countries.

This enemy of dogmatism proves, at least to his own satisfaction that we are doctrinaire socialists who have a completely wrong approach to the problems of the socialist movement. How does he prove this? Simply by setting forth quotations from the very people whose system we are accused of dogmatically following. Marx, Engels and Luxemburg are trotted out as allies in the fight against "sects." The fact that these same writers can be quoted, would we so desire, to set forth a position of no compromise and no political shading does not at this time interest us greatly. We are not followers of Marx, Engels or Luxemburg any more than we are followers of Isaac Newton or Albert Einstein. The very Marxian method itself completely negates the folly of blindly adhering to great authorities.

If the author of "The Practice of class Struggle versus 'Pure Socialist' exclusiveness" wishes to utilize tactics that may have been scientific at the time

they were set forth by the founders of scientific socialism, that is his business. For our part, any dogmatism we may be accused of having is based upon the scientific analysis of the capitalist system of production and the materialist conception of history, not on tactical approaches to 19th Century problems.

A salient reason behind the erroneous approach of the writer to the problem of sound socialist tactics in these times is brought out in the very opening paragraph of this attack. He argues that:

"The total wage consists of the total goods and services which the workers are able to command from the capitalist system at any given period. This includes the kind of homes the workers live in, the unemployment insurance they receive when out of work, old age pensions, recreational opportunities for their children, etc."

First of all, let us not become sidetracked by a rephrasing of the Marxian explanation of wages. If our critic's definition of the total wage is correct, then wouldn't he have to include libraries, museums, hospitals, sanitation departments, fire and even police departments as part of the services included in his total wage? Joseph Chamberlain, with brutal frankness, refers specifically to parks, libraries and museums as "the ransom paid for the privilege of holding property." (Quoted in "A Fabian and His Fabianism," *Socialist Standard*, December, 1947.) If such reform measures were part of wages, there is no question but that we should fight for them. But it is concepts such as these that makes the W.S.P. insist that the working class must first understand at least the rudiments of capitalism before they can hope to effect a cure for the problems that beset them.

Wages is the price of the commodity labor-power and the total wage is limited to the value of this commodity. The value of the commodity labor-power is determined on the average by the amount of socially-necessary labor (food, clothing, housing, etc.) required to produce and reproduce the laborer. It is true that due to certain historical factors, the value of labor-power is higher in the United States than it is in other countries. But it is also true that most of what our denouncer includes in his "total wage" are so-called "benefits" granted by the capitalist class in the best interests of preserving their system.

The "W.P.E." paper then goes on to some lengths to prove that socialists can, by supporting reform struggles such as the fight for more adequate housing and recreational facilities, accomplish much valuable socialist work.

"In such a party the socialist can function effectively just as much as he can in the union. He will have a chance to serve on committees; to take part in proceedings, to express his views on the issues immediately pending. Just as in the union he exposes the labor bureaucrats, so in the labor party can he expose the political bureaucrats. Just as in the union he shows the shortcomings of the every day fight for better conditions, so in the political

party he can explain the limitations of reforms. Just as it is possible to function in the union as a socialist without succumbing to the rotten opportunism of power struggles, so in a labor party it would be possible for the socialist to maintain his socialist integrity."

With all of the confusion in political thought existing to-day in America, the "W.P.E." wants still more. It is much more fun for that type of reasoner to help build up another straw man and help knock him down, than it is to concentrate his efforts on building a movement with a solid socialist foundation. But he is so busy fighting "dogmatism" that he cannot relinquish the old dogmatic approach so beloved by liberals, "progressives" and reformers of every conceivable stamp. We have always contended, and certainly the facts have borne out our contention with a vengeance, that "boring from within" tactics can only lead to one of two results. Either the borer gets stuck within and keeps his opinions to himself, or he comes out the other end; a sadder if not a wiser man. We have in mind an illustration which is typical of what we mean.

About eight years ago a well known writer and translator of socialist studies entered the ranks of the so-called Socialist Party of America to the accompaniment of front page *Call* acclaim. He was going to infiltrate the S.P. with socialist understanding by means of his articles for their paper and socialist study classes for the members. He wrote some fine socialist book reviews for a short period of time until his analyses began to cramp the corns of the Christians, United Fronters and State Capitalist idealogises of that organization. This soon led to the effective throttling of that socialist writer. He bored his way completely through and landed on the outside. Other such examples can be given; although perhaps in the majority of cases those who entered the reform parties with the thought in mind of educating the membership became themselves miseducators.

Another point in which our opponent errs badly is in his likening the struggle for political reforms to the fight on the economic field for working conditions through unions. While it is true that a large proportion of union activity centres around capitalist politics, the basic reasons for the existence of labor unions themselves are quite different than in the case of reform political parties. Long before unions had gained any kind of recognition, all during the time they were organized in secrecy, the parties of capitalism were compelled to advocate reforms of various types. In the one instance the movement is instituted for the purpose of patching up capitalism, in the other, the workers band together for the purpose of bargaining over the sale of labor-power. The "dogmatic" W.S.P. urges its fellow workers to resist the tendency of the labor leaders to make political machines of the unions for the benefit of capitalist politics, whether reactionary or reform.

We are attacked for concentrating all of our efforts upon open-air meetings, class-room instruction and education via