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Fascist America?

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Five years of economic depression have produced a profound change in the attitude of large sections of our population toward the economic and political structure of American society. Millions of people are now more or less permeated with the feeling that the old “laissez-faire” system will never solve the problems of unemployment and poverty. They are dimly conscious of the fact that some fundamental change must take place.

As an offsetting tendency to these deep popular stirrings, we can observe the signs of an inevitable fascist counter current. And contributing directly toward this tendency is the attempt of certain liberals to convert our present economic society into that of State Capitalism while leaving political democracy intact. They do not realize that giving the state more and more power over the economic life of the people prepares the ground for Fascism. They wish to save political democracy but have no effective way of doing it, since they do not realize that a concentration of economic power in the hands of the state would be impossible without a like concentration of political power. What safeguards can they propose to prevent the state from overstepping the bounds of economic dicta-

torship? How can they prevent the infiltration of dictatorship into every phase of life?

Because of a shrinkage in the foreign market, American capitalism tends to become more nationalistic. It is compelled to derive its nourishment by a more intensive exploitation of the workers at home. In its quest for the ever-shrinking foreign market it is preparing to wrest it from other powers who are in a similar position. This leads to war. These two tendencies, a growing nationalism, and a belligerent imperialism are outstanding characteristics of fascism.

The declining standard of living, the increasing discontent of the workers is shown by the wave of strikes, and the fear of more serious outbreaks, increase and solidify the reaction. The repressive organs of the state tend to increase. Democratic rights are curtailed, and the radical movement becomes subject to more intensive persecution.

A large and discontented middle class which is rapidly being shaken from its economic foundations by finance capital and big industry, may look to fascism as a way out. Those who, like the liberals, are inclined to exaggerate the potency of the democratic traditions in the U.S. should note such organizations (middle class in interests) as the K.K.K., the "vigilantes", the American Legion (who were given 75,000 rifles by the government), and other veteran organizations. Let them remember that the "sunny" South, land of race hatred and lynching, will extend a hearty welcome to the fascists (witness Huey Long).

The Pacific Coast is noted for its fascist inclinations, the Criminal Syndicalist laws, the Everett Massacre, the Centralia Case, the Mooney-Billings frame-up, the recent San Francisco murders, etc. The notorious anti-red raids under Palmer and Mitchell, the mass deportation of workers (which is still going on), the Sacco-Vanzetti murders, all go to show to what lengths a hysterical and blood thirsty bourgeoisie will go. There is plenty of hatred for foreigners, Jews, Catholics, negroes, and radicals among the Jingos and Bab-

bitts. The innumerable fascist organizations springing up throughout the land find ready recruits among these elements.

We have also to reckon with the yellow press (a la Hearst), the Boy Scouts, the pulpit, the radio, the chambers of commerce. All these agencies are constantly spitting their venom, preparing the ground for fascism. The Civilian Conservation Corps directed by army officers, the transient camps, etc. may well become the American prototype of Hitler's concentration camps and forced labor hells.

It is evident that what is left of the American democratic traditions will not of itself be able to counteract the tremendous pressure of the forces that are making for fascism in this country. The real reasons for this feeble development of fascism ([instead} of the spectacular, openly murderous German, or Italian variety) here are: first the rule of American capitalism is not as yet being seriously challenged by any revolutionary movement; second, there is the possibility of the gradual growth of a more subtle type of fascism, that is, an extremely nationalistic state capitalism without most of the superficial aspects of German or Italian fascism. For, the democratic illusions of the American people, which are much stronger than the degree of democracy existing would warrant, make it easier for the dominant group of capitalists to utilize the present political structure for instituting step by step their "corporate state", to pass law after law which, directly or indirectly, will deprive labor of whatever rights it now possesses in order to be able to lower wages, which will give even greater monopolistic powers to small groups of capitalists (note the effects of the N.R.A.) and finally to the reactionary point of self-sufficiency.

Fascism threatens when the ruling class can no longer exist side by side with a revolutionary mass movement. It then becomes necessary for the reaction to put an end to political democracy and destroy the labor movement. The capitalist class can then function only as a dictatorship by incorporating itself with the state.

When the contradictions of capitalism have reached the breaking point, when it can no longer make concessions to the starving and rebellious masses, a decisive battle between the revolutionists and reactionaries becomes inevitable. The conflict can end in only one way—either fascism or the social revolution.

American capitalism has not yet reached this point. It is wealthy and one can still make concessions—but it cannot continue to do so indefinitely. It cannot lower the standard of living without generating a revolutionary movement, without protests and uprisings. Toledo, Minneapolis, San Francisco and the Gulf have shown the American worker will fight. The fighting traditions of the American Labor movement will be revived. A series of mass movements will be the answer to the assaults upon the standard of living. All the pent up bitterness and discontent of the worker will explode.

To hasten the growth of effective mass movements, to crystalize and strengthen them for the social revolution is the great task of the revolutionary vanguard.⁽¹⁾

Unfortunately there is no revolutionary movement of any importance in this country. The socialists are class collaborators and their parliamentary twaddle, their disgusting opportunism was responsible to a large degree for fascism in Germany. The Communists do not believe in, nor do they practice, workers' democracy. Their autocratic methods, their policy of Rule or Ruin, has brought great harm to the labor movement both here and abroad. They aim to subjugate the labor movement to a party bureaucracy. They lead the workers to think only in terms of Dictatorship, thereby prejudicing them against democracy.

The revolutionary movement in America has yet to be built. The mind of the American workers must be conditioned against any and all dictatorships. The democratic traditions of the American

people must be used to show that only a workers' democracy can prevent Fascism, that only the democratic economic organizations of the workers, such as revolutionary industrial unions, can combat Fascism. The experiences of the proletariat in Italy, in Germany and in Spain must be related to them to show the value of direct action and the futility of parliamentary tactics and political parties as a means of fighting against Fascism.

A united front of all those who believe in workers' democracy as opposed to authoritarian socialism and to the domination of the labor movement by a political party must be formed. A realistic approach to the practical problems of organization must be worked out and a revolutionary program with direct action tactics and consistent with workers' democracy and the ultimate aim of socialization of industry and the abolition of the political state must be developed. FAnd, armed with such a program, we can indeed prepare ourselves for the fight against Fascism.

⁽¹⁾ The term "vanguard" is intended to indicate the most militant and direct action-oriented workers, not a dictatorial party formation of the Marxist-Leninist type.