

Can A Socialist Be An Anti-Communist?

BY HAROLD LORD VARNEY

ONE of the truly comic exhibits of our times is that of the nation's Socialists frantically running away from their own name.

Lifelong and class-war-hardened Socialists give the cold and stony stare when asked about their alignment and declare themselves "liberals" or "progressives" or even "New Dealers." The Socialist who frankly admits his identity nowadays is a rare specimen. He is apt to be a Trotskyite or an addict of one of the more dedicated collectivist sects. The practical-minded, go-getter Socialist who wants to go places politically is marching today with McCarthy and Brownell and Jenner in the anti-Communist army.

True, he has his own left wing division in that army, and he spends more time abusing McCarthy than exposing Communists, but still he is an "anti-Communist."

A case in point is Americans for Democratic Action, unquestionably the most influential political body now working for Socialist ends in America. Behind the figureheads like Francis Biddle who front for ADA, the controlling hands in the

organization since the beginning have been the two former Socialist Party members, Walter P. Reuther and David Dubinsky. The organization has been a catchall for most of the footloose Socialists now at large. And yet a careful reading of *ADA World*, its official monthly, or of the garrulous Reutherized statements that it so frequently issues, would give the reader no hint that what ADA was advocating was a watered-down Socialism. By a sort of gentlemen's agreement with reporters and correspondents who cover the organization, ADA is always described as an "anti-Communist organization" in press mention.

It is a confusing and bemusing political situation when individuals at the polar opposites of American politics all call themselves by the same name. It is also extremely good politics on the part of the Socialist old-timers.

Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, writing his involuted social gospel theorizings for the church press, finds himself no longer isolated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation or with the American Student Union: his

writings now are featured in the slicks and he has become a personage in the Ford Foundation and in UNESCO. Roger N. Baldwin, after years of unrecognized labors defending Socialists and Communists, puts on the anti-Communist regalia and, presto, he is transformed into an adviser to General MacArthur in Japan, a consultant to the United Nations, and the subject of a two-decker profile in the *New Yorker*. Paul R. Porter, after a lifetime of obscurity as editor of a labor-Socialist paper in Kenosha, Wisconsin, becomes an anti-Communist and reappears near the W. Averill Harriman throne as Deputy for Economic Affairs of MSA. J. Donald Kingsley, after an unrecognized career as an academic radical, becomes an anti-Communist and rises dizzily to such offices as Assistant Federal Security Administrator and Director of the UN Rehabilitation Commission.

We could extend the list, but the effect would be the same. Anti-Communism has been an extremely rewarding career for many ambitious Socialists.

OF COURSE, no one would begrudge these emoluments if there was assurance that the recipients were actual anti-Communists, or were doing an actual anti-Communist job. Ex-Communists and ex-Socialists constitute some of our most zealous and hard-hitting anti-Reds.

What distinguishes the first group

from the second is that the first have never publicly repudiated Socialism, while the second have.

Anyone who has ever held the hard, absolutist dogma of Marxian Socialism knows that one does not escape from this mind-trap without an extremely painful wrench. The man who has purged Socialism out of his system is such a radically changed man that he does not act like a Socialist thereafter. If his conversion from Socialism is genuine, he wants to tell his fellow-Americans the reasons for his change of faith. He finds himself inescapably becoming a proselyter for free enterprise, whether he intended it that way in the beginning or not.

A memorable name in Socialism is that of John Spargo. Mr. Spargo was a much more important figure in the Socialist Party, in his time, than any of the individuals above cited. When he broke with the party in 1917 over the St. Louis anti-war resolution, he did not immediately break with Socialism. He continued to write and lecture brilliantly as a Socialist until 1924, or thereabouts, when he officially became a Republican. But having lost his faith in Socialism, he did not continue to linger in an ideological no-man's land—ready to leap back to Socialism if expediency dictated. He did what any honorable man would do: he made a public statement declaring that he no longer believed in Socialism and, at the same time, threw the weight of his personal in-

fluence and prestige behind capitalism — something which the more recent crop of ex-Socialists are conspicuously unwilling to do. He burned his Socialist bridges behind him.

UNTIL the Reuthers, the Niebuhrs and the George S. Counts take the courageous step that Mr. Spargo took, the genuineness of their anti-Communism will remain a moot question to many. For in order to repudiate Communism, without reservation, one must also be willing to repudiate Socialism. So long as one entertains a belief in the basic tenets and postulates of Socialism, his feet are still half-way in the Communist camp.

Thus, it is not accident that ADA, while shrilling its anti-Communism, is presently engaged in a campaign to shrink the power of the FBI, and to abolish outright the Committee on Un-American Activities and the Smith Act — thus striking simultaneously at our three most effective government weapons against the Communists.

It is not happenstance that the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, now coasting on the momentum of its one achievement — the disruption of the Waldorf-Astoria Red peace congress of 1949 — is currently devoting its energies to a furious smearing of Joe McCarthy and to a defense of James A. Wechsler, editor of the *New York Post*, against the hard-hitting truth-tell-

ing of Walter Winchell. The Committee, as is well known, is headed by the ex-intellectual-Communist, Sidney Hook, and numbers among its leaders such facing-both-ways notables as Reinhold Niebuhr, Roger N. Baldwin, George S. Counts, Francis Biddle, James A. Wechsler, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (who has redefined Socialism as the "Vital Center") and Irwin Shaw (who has redefined it as the "Mixed Economy").

AMERICANS must face the painful fact that the Socialists and the pseudo-Socialists are dubious material out of which to construct an anti-Communist crusade which will stick. The point is an important one because, during the Truman administration, major emphasis was placed in the ECA, and in State Department policies upon the strategy of using European Social Democrats as the favored protégés of the United States to spearhead the resistance to the Communists. Schumacher and Reuter in East Germany, Saragat in Italy, Mayer in France and the whole Social Democratic apparatus of the International Federation of Free Trade Unions were the beneficiaries of flattering American attention and aid. Some of this aid paid dividends, notably the labor-wise activities directed in Europe by Irving Brown and the American Federation of Labor. As a long-range program, however, the strategy was full of very risky "if's."

The historic record of the Socialists in Europe, since the war, is damning evidence of the explosives which underly a policy of depending upon Socialists to man the anti-Communist dikes. The most tragic instance was the fall of Czechoslovakia. While many mischances converged to produce the ghastly climax of February, 1948, the treachery of the Social Democrats to the Free World was the decisive factor. The Social Democrats could have saved Czechoslovakia. Instead, the principal leaders of their party conspired with the Communists to deliver the country.

The decisive event in Czechoslovakia which brought the Communist seizure was the withdrawal of the twelve non-Communists from the Gottwald coalition cabinet to produce a parliamentary crisis which would block Red plans to steal the May parliamentary elections. The crisis found the Social Democrats split into two factions, one headed by Zdenek Fierlinger, who favored a pro-Moscow Socialist policy, and the other headed by Bohumir Lausman, party chairman, who was ostensibly opposed to Fierlinger's collaborationism. The one heroic Socialist figure who emerged in the crisis was Vaclav Majer, Minister of Food, who insisted upon resigning from the cabinet with the other twelve. Fierlinger bitterly opposed Majer, but when the latter turned to Party Chairman Lausman for expected support, he discovered to

his despair that in the emergency, Lausman had joined forces with Fierlinger. Together, Fierlinger and Lausman called a meeting of the party executive committee and drove through a resolution forbidding Majer to resign. The Social Democrats remained in the cabinet with Gottwald and helped him institute a Red regime in the nation. Fierlinger was even rewarded by a seat in the new Communist cabinet after the coup d'etat.

THE RECORD in Italy, the weakest link in the NATO organization, is an equally black one for the Socialists. Instead of aiding the anti-Communist forces to combat the powerful Togliatti-led Italian Communist Party, Italy's Socialist Party, under the leadership of Pietro Nenni, formed a coalition with the Communists, and have voted with them consistently in parliamentary divisions. A minority of the Socialists under Sarragat seceded to form an anti-Red Socialist caucus, but only a disappointing number of party members followed them. In the 1953 Chamber elections, Nenni's pro-Communist Socialists polled 3,440,222 votes and elected 75 deputies. If Italy goes under to the Communists, as some apprehend, it will have been the Italian Socialists who will have made the debacle possible.

While in France, West Germany, and Great Britain the Socialist record is cleaner, there are vast lacunae in the Socialist movements of those

countries which are influenced by Communism. An instance is the following of the powerful Aneurin Bevan in the British Labor Party. Bevan, who is likely to be a future British Socialist Prime Minister, was once expelled briefly from the party for signing a manifesto calling for a united front with the Communists. His present important faction of the Labor Party has paralyzed anti-Communist initiative by Attlee and other middle-of-the-road Socialists by opposing the Korean War, demanding the seating of Red China in the UN, and urging another conference (with Yalta implications) with Moscow.

But, it will be argued, American Socialists are different. European precedents cannot guide us in forecasting their anti-Communist procedure.

The argument, when examined, does not wash. Actually, the record of American Socialism vis-à-vis the Communists is one of the most vacillating and uninspiring in the international chronicles of Socialism.

What is too frequently forgotten by those who attempt invidious distinctions between American Socialists and Communists is that the Communists are the Adam's rib of the Socialists. The Communist Party was the product of the secession of the majority of the membership of the old Socialist Party in 1919. The pro-Russian faction actually captured the machinery of the party in most of our states and was on the

way to affiliation of the Socialist Party with Lenin's Communist International when a disastrous split among the left-wing leaders delivered the 1919 convention to the right wing and forced the formation of a new Communist Party (two of them, at first). These facts are now distant history, but they should be recalled by those who think of Socialists and Communists as separate and immiscible political entities. Historically, they are both branches of the same ideological tree.

THE EVENTS of 1919 would have less reference to the Socialists of today were it not for the fact that on two subsequent occasions, the remaining right wing of the Socialist Party has made overt gestures of alliance to the Communists, in each case only to suffer a humiliating rebuff.

The first of these instances occurred in 1921 when the remaining Socialist Party actually made application to the Communist International that it be recognized, instead of the new Communist Party, as the American affiliate of the international Communist body. Moscow, then in the grip of doctrinaires, rejected this overture by setting up a long list of impossible terms with which the American Socialists must comply, to be accepted.

The second instance came in 1934, when the so-called "militant" faction of the Socialist Party, headed by Reinhold Niebuhr and sup-

ported by Norman Thomas, won control of the party convention. The "militant" faction was dedicated to the policy of inviting a united front with the Communists. This Socialist wooing of the Communists came to nought when the Communists met it by their "United Front From Below" turn, and it reached its climax in a Madison Square Garden joint demonstration where the Communists violently barred the platform to the Socialists.

But even after these rebuffs, the Socialists actually entered a united front with the Communists in the State of New York in the American Labor Party in 1936. For eight years, until 1944, the New York Socialists and Communists collaborated politically in New York, under the encouragement of Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia, who himself enrolled as an American Labor Party member. The policy bore fruit for the Socialists in the election of Harry W. Laidler and Mrs. Gertrude Weil Klein to the City Council, and of Matthew M. Levy, Charles Solomon and Jacob Panken to the bench. It ended when the Communists, with Sidney Hillman's assist, won control of the city-wide ALP and froze the Socialists out. The latter then proceeded to launch their own Liberal Party.

These twists and turns of the Socialist mind may betoken nothing more culpable than a natural political desire to further the Socialist main chance. But they also reveal

an appalling lack of American-mindedness in the face of the self-proclaimed Communist conspiracy to subvert the nation. A Socialist mind which abhorred the aims of Kremlinism could not voluntarily contemplate alliance with the Kremlin's American stooges.

There are many admirable men and women who have once believed in Socialism who are enlisted in the anti-Communist struggle. But they are not to be found among the vaunted "liberals" who engrossedly watch the public opinion barometer to make certain that they are not left behind in the long swings between Socialism and free capitalism. They are not to be found among those who clutch desperately to their Socialist-Communist landmarks to be certain that they can become American Fierlingers and Nennis when, if ever, the Kremlin hour strikes.

Earl Browder has uttered a vast deal of nonsense but on one occasion he spoke with rare candor. Debating Norman Thomas in New York on November 27, 1935, Browder said the definitive thing about Socialism-Communism. "What is our fundamental point of agreement?", he asked. "It is that we both want to abolish capitalism; we both want to establish Socialism."

As long as Socialists and Communists share this common goal, the anti-Communism of the Socialists will be an irresolute and indecisive thing.



The Great Post Office

SNAFU

By WILLIAM BANCROFT MELLOR

TO MOST AMERICANS, the "Time of the Big Blizzard" was 1888, but to a lot of old post office employees the phrase refers only to 1916.

That was the year when the rural "Star Routes" which served one of the last pioneer areas in the West were literally snowed under by an avalanche of parcel post such as had never been seen before and hasn't been since.

That was the year the settlers of the broad Uintah Basin in north-eastern Utah called upon Uncle Sam to transport entire crops of hay and grain; bulky farm and well-drilling equipment; and even a two-story brick building — all by parcel post.

The Star Route carriers did the job, though their solid-tired trucks groaned under the heavy loads and their four- and six-horse teams broke down along the rough trails.

But when the job was done, the

Post Office Department at Washington put its official foot down. It decreed that thenceforth no parcel post consignment which weighed a total of more than 200 pounds would be accepted for delivery to one consignee if he lived on a Star Route. And to this day you can't mail more than that limit in one 24-hour period to anyone on a rural postal route.

Horace Coltharp was the cause of it all. He was the one who thought up the idea of mailing the bank building.

Coltharp is a tall, lanky cattleman with a big "spread" at Hayden, Utah, now, but in those days he operated a store in Vernal, a bustling little town which nestles in the lush green basin just east of the Uintah Mountains.

He sold clothing, hardware, farm implements, well-drilling muds, stockmen's supplies and just about