

II—Capitalism Prepares Society's Doom

by LEWIS COREY

IT IS SIGNIFICANT, for this discussion, that Mr. Agar admits civilization cannot survive under monopoly capitalism, the capitalism dominant today. Only capitalist diehards will quarrel with that. For there are forces moving toward the destruction of civilization, whose final expression is the imperialist preparation of new and more destructive wars and the Fascism that deliberately turns back the clock of progress.

The restoration of widespread ownership of small productive property, as the means of averting the danger to civilization and as an alternative to socialism and communism, may sound American. But small property is not particularly American: it is a universal middle-class ideal. The Puritans under Cromwell fought for small property, and their left wing, the Levelers, urged the equality of small property ownership. Jean Jacques Rousseau's ideal was a society of small property owners, in which there should be neither opulence nor rags. Small ownership was, especially, the ideal of the Jacobins, who influenced the American democratic movement of the 1790's: Robespierre urged a measurable equality of income, while Marat advocated, in typical American language, a "wage sufficient to enable a workman, after three years of faithful service, to go into business for himself." This ideal of the middle class was everywhere limited or destroyed by the development of industrial capitalism and nowhere more so than in the United States.

Small ownership was most completely realized in the America of the 1820's, when 80 per cent of the people owned independent means of livelihood in the form of small productive property. That condition, however, was steadily and inexorably transformed, until today 88 per cent of our people are deprived of ownership in productive property as a source of livelihood — 80 per cent are dependent on jobs, either as wage workers or salaried employes, while another 8 per cent are farmers who do not own their farms.

The major factor in the older widespread ownership of property was the great scope of

agriculture and its constant renewal in the frontier. Around 75 per cent of the American people were farmers who owned their farms. Small property might be limited or destroyed in the older settlements, but it was renewed in the new frontier regions. As, however, industry became increasingly ascendant and the frontier ended, a smaller and smaller proportion of the people engaged in agriculture, until now only 15 per cent of the gainfully occupied are so engaged and most of them do not own the land on which they work. Agrarianism is the basis of widespread property ownership and agrarianism is gone beyond recall.

Another factor was handicraft production. Factories were still scarce, as the industrial revolution had only begun, and industry was largely carried on by master craftsmen and journeymen who expected to become masters. But with the onrush of the industrial revolution there was an inescapable technical-economic drive toward enlarging the scale of production. Small tools or machines used by one or two men gave way to increasingly larger and more complex machines requiring scores of workers to operate them and constantly more capital to invest in equipment and raw materials. Industry moved steadily toward concentration of productive units, with relatively fewer and bigger owners and larger numbers of propertyless wage workers and salaried employes.

These profound changes took place in the midst of that free competition and free market which Mr. Agar imagines are the assurance of widespread ownership of small property. The competitive system of production for profit must destroy small property, for the man who disposes of bigger property or capital can produce more efficiently, secure a larger share of the "free" market, and destroy the competition of the small man and the small man himself. That is the result of private enterprise, which, despite Mr. Agar's unreal distinction, is indissolubly connected with private property under the conditions of production for profit and the market.

The American small property owners waged

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the most militant struggle to survive — the Jacksonian revolt against monopoly, Populism and Bryanism, the progressivism of Theodore Roosevelt and the “new freedom” of Woodrow Wilson — and they were most decisively beaten. For they were struggling against the inevitable, since they accepted the production for profit and competition out of which industrial concentration and monopoly arise. Everywhere, to a lesser or greater extent, capitalism has destroyed widespread property ownership.

Underlying that development was the intensive industrialization which enlarged productive units beyond the possibility of ownership by men of small means. It is conceivable that industrialization might develop without producing monopoly and all its evils — but not under capitalist conditions: as, today, in the Soviet Union.

II

THE CONSTRUCTIVE aspect of the destruction of widespread property ownership is the technical-economic efficiency which now makes it possible to abolish poverty and make abundance available to all: something unknown in the earlier capitalism. But it is precisely that efficiency which now endangers capitalism and civilization itself. Capitalist industry is based on the making of profits and the conversion of profits into capital for the production of more profits. That cycle was always interrupted by recurrent crises and depressions, but after recovery the upward movement of economic activity and capital accumulation was again renewed.

Now, however, the movement is downward. It is downward because the immense productivity of industry limits profits and the accumulation of capital. Capitalism has become too productive for its own good: the abundance it is capable of producing is a threat to the price-and-profit structure. The claims or “price” of capital must fall if the abundance is to be made available to all the people. The rate of profit, always tending to fall as more capital was required to produce goods and the producing powers of society were developed beyond its consuming powers, moves economically and objectively toward zero. Capitalism creates the conditions of its own doom.

But the vested interests of capitalism resist

the doom. They resist by means of the imperialist struggle for foreign markets to absorb surplus capital and goods, a struggle which, with the perfection of the instruments of war, threatens the destruction of civilization in the event of another world war. They resist, moreover, by monopoly and the state deliberately and “planfully” limiting production to protect the rate of profit, while millions of wage workers, salaried employees, and professionals are condemned to permanent unemployment and want. That is the crisis of capitalism, which sets in motion a revolt against all the values and achievements (real, in spite of tragic limitations) of capitalist civilization.

The crisis of capitalism means a revolt against its greatest contribution to civilization: multiplication of the productive forces of society, the increasing limitation of scarcity and creation of potential abundance. Now, however, capitalism limits the productive forces and creates artificial scarcity in the midst of all the means for the realization of abundance.

Multiplication of the productive forces involved an increasing mastery of the world, for it was made possible by the technological application of science, and science is the mastery of natural forces to serve man. But, if capitalism must limit production to survive, it necessarily limits technology and science and *decreases* man’s mastery of the world. (It is ominous, moreover, that the technological application of science is now most active in perfecting the destructive instruments of war.)

After the misery of the industrial revolution there was, in the economically highly developed countries, a tendency toward improving mass well-being. Capitalist civilization gave the masses a share, however small, in the conquests of progress. Now even that small share is destroyed. For, with the limitation of production and lower levels of economic activity, millions of wage workers, salaried employees, and professionals are thrown into permanent unemployment, while lower standards of living are imposed upon those still at work. Increasing mass well-being becomes increasing misery.

This economic reaction sets in motion a revolt against the cultural values and achievements of capitalist civilization. In order to survive, decaying capitalism must increase its repressive forces. It now condemns the rational attitude to the world and the appeal to reason

THE FORUM

which it used in the struggle against feudalism. It must limit the scope of education and completely kill its independent spirit. For they are now all dangerous to vested capitalist interests. The ideals of liberty, equality, and democracy, most real in the America of the 1820's but since increasingly limited and degraded, must be completely destroyed. Capitalism moves toward the tyrant state, whose final and most brutal expression is Fascism: the organization of decline and decay, the new barbarism.

Underlying these developments is the revolt against progress, a concept created by capitalist civilization itself. For progress now means to go beyond capitalism to a new social order whose objective basis capitalism itself has created in the dominant economic collectivism. Within that collectivism the great majority of the people is dependent on the property of a small oligarchy. Economic activity is co-operative and collective, management is an institutional hired function and separated from ownership. To strip collectivism of its capitalist fetters — to transform collective property now privately owned into the collective property of the community — means to liberate the capacity to produce abundance and to create a new and higher socialist civilization, building on all the constructive values and achievements of capitalism.

III

THE RESTORATION of small property is impossible. Industries which even Mr. Agar admits cannot become the objects of small ownership employ at least 12,000,000 wage workers and salaried employees. They become an overwhelming majority if other industries (and professional people) are included. Break monopoly, and the underlying economic units are still too large for small ownership. The new technology, especially electric power, makes possible geographical but not economic decentralization of industry. There are today only 2,700,000 independent small enterprisers (including all independent professionals) and 3,500,000 farmers who own their farms: only 12 per cent of all persons gainfully occupied. That number might be increased, but never to 50 per cent. And even if it were increased to 50 per cent the nation would still be half free and half unfree, for Mr. Agar admits that the man who does not own his inde-

pendent means of livelihood is not a free man.

From one angle, Mr. Agar seems to propose that the larger industries should be socialized and the smaller owned by producers' co-operatives. But that is neither private property nor capitalism: it is a modified socialism. Civilization is to survive under capitalism by the practical abandonment of capitalism!

From another angle, Mr. Agar seems to propose merely a restoration of more widespread ownership of small property under the capitalist conditions of production for profit and of competition and the market. But the majority of the people would still be propertyless and unfree, wage-and-salary dependents on the property of others. Recurrent crises and depressions would still break out, and want in the midst of plenty. The problem of abundance would still torment capitalism, for the problem is unsolvable except in terms of production for use, not profit. Civilization? They have widespread ownership of property in France, and there too civilization is endangered by limitation of production, imperialism, and Fascism.

No: civilization to survive and flourish must go beyond capitalism to socialism. The economic planning of socialism is not tyranny: it means mastery of the productive forces (which are now our masters), and mastery is the beginning of freedom. Denial of the right of private ownership in productive property is not tyranny; it is merely the recognition of one necessary condition for a higher civilization. "The moral argument for property," says Mr. Agar, "is that it makes for responsibility, freedom, independence and for the stability of the family." But there are other sources of responsibility than property: is irresponsibility the mark of a college president who directs a socialized institution he does not own?

The most stable family in the world now exists in the Soviet Union, where there is no private ownership of productive property. Freedom and independence are limited by property: they are liberated by the economic security of socialism, its right to work and to an income. Socialism means the multiplication of abundance and leisure, of education and culture: the only real guarantees of liberty, equality, and democracy, arising out of the abolition of class domination and antagonisms. In a socialist civilization man becomes master of the world and of himself.

The New Crusade

Kagawa Preaches Economic Salvation

by **BERTRAM B. FOWLER**

THE GREAT SPIRITUAL leaders of the world have a way of appearing from the most unexpected quarters. When Philip brought word to Nathaniel that he had found the great leader whose coming Moses had prophesied, Nathaniel countered with a question that has ever since summed up our cynicism regarding the appearance of apostles, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Following Christ, Paul came from the ranks of the persecutors of Christianity to establish the teachings of the Messiah as a permanent and fixed philosophy. There have been a few great leaders since then. All of them have been men and women who interpreted the basic teachings of Christianity, opened new vistas, gave fresh impulse to theology, and blazed new paths of action for the human race.

So today the comet of Toyohiko Kagawa's gospel of economic Christianity is blazing across the heavens. Those who know of him and his teachings have accepted him as the great Christian leader of the age. For, following generations of preachers who taught a philosophy of ethics that creaked and groaned as it was bent and twisted to fit an unethical system of economics, this man has come with his flaming gospel of a theology that is practical and applicable to modern problems.

He preaches no Kingdom of God in some distant and shadowy hereafter but the Kingdom of God upon earth, to be brought in by the practice of co-operative brotherhood. And his method of teaching is as practical as is his message. He goes direct to the heart of the problem, to the starving millions of the underprivileged, and shows them how to form co-operatives, how to lift themselves out of intolerable conditions, how to better their present lot. He shows these men the workable plan of consumer co-operation and then tells

them: "This is Christianity. This is economic theology."

As a result Western Christians have been turning to this remarkable man, this man who more than any other figure of our times deserves the title of a present-day saint. The preachers and teachers of America turn to Kagawa, look upon the tremendous change he is working, and ask for counsel, ask him for words of advice. And to them Kagawa answers, "Form co-operatives. Help bring in the Kingdom of God upon earth. Reach out co-operatively and meet the Christians of all lands to build peace and plenty upon earth."

II

TO UNDERSTAND this man who is stirring the churches of the world to action as no man has stirred them in generations, it is necessary to understand his background, the tragic, moving story of his childhood and youth, as well as the stirring and monumental work of his manhood. The story of Kagawa is intensely human. It is a story that is a strange mixture of Oliver Twist, of Roland, of Francis of Assisi. The man and his work tower monumentally today. If his story had ended with his early struggles it would have made merely a story to touch the hearts of men. Instead it has gone on to move them to follow him along the road of a new phase of Christianity, an economic one, probably one of the most important in the whole history of man's developing understanding of the all-inclusive teaching of the great Messiah.

His birth was inauspicious. His father was of the Japanese nobility. His mother was a concubine. When he was four years old, both father and mother died, and he was brought to the ancestral home at Awa to be greeted by his stepmother with the words, "You are the son