

II—Capitalism Breeds War

by HARRY W. LAIDLER

IN DISCUSSING this question, there is one thing on which all of us can agree: under capitalism, international conflicts have been frequent and disastrous, and there is no immediate prospect of permanent peace. These facts Mr. Seligman will not attempt to deny. However, while admitting the persistence of wars under capitalism, he maintains that there is no causal relation between capitalism and war.

First, he maintains, wars existed before the capitalist era. This, of course, the socialist readily admits. What he maintains, however, is that under capitalism, as under previous systems, powerful social and economic forces are at work leading to international conflicts.

Secondly, Mr. Seligman asserts that socialists base their theory of war under capitalism on the premise that capitalism is decaying. This is not correct. Socialists accept the diagnosis of Mr. Seligman's distinguished father, Professor E. R. A. Seligman, that capitalism passes through at least three stages of development. In the first stage, the capitalists concentrate on the building up of their national industry. In the second period, they have a surplus of manufactured goods which they seek to sell abroad in exchange for raw materials. In the final stage, they have surplus profits which they can invest more profitably in less developed countries than they can in their own land.

The second stage of capitalism gives birth to wars over markets. These wars dotted the pages of history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the third stage, there occurs a struggle for investment areas, a struggle that often becomes more intense and important "than was the previous competition for the commercial market." England reached the third stage of capitalism in the last half of the nineteenth century; Germany, in the twentieth century. It was the attempt of Germany to "enter the preserves hitherto chiefly in the hands of Great Britain [declares Professor Seligman] that really precipitated" the World War.

Under a declining capitalism, domestic unrest further complicates the international scene. After capitalism passes its zenith, economic insecurity increases, unrest grows, and

the capitalists of a nation frequently engage in imperialistic adventures abroad as a means of diverting attention from the problems at home, as well as of acquiring new sources of economic strength.

Mr. Seligman denies that our capitalist structure is on the decline. We are now, it is true, in the seventh year of the worst depression in our history. Between 10,000,000 and 12,000,000 men and women are still jobless throughout the land. But, he asserts, we are on the road to recovery. Therefore, our system is expanding, not contracting. There is nothing, he contends, in the theory that under capitalism the masses are not able to buy a sufficient quantity of goods, and that such underconsumption leads to depressions. It is the lack of *business* spending, not *mass* spending, he asserts, that causes crises.

Space does not permit arguing this question at length. In passing, however, two things may be said:

(1) If one seeks to find out why business fails to spend money to put up more factories and other productive equipment, he will usually discover that business has come to the conclusion that the additional factories will find no market for their goods; in other words, that, because of lack of mass purchasing power, it would be unprofitable to invest more capital in productive enterprise.

(2) Secondly, it may be said that, while Professor Slichter, whom Mr. Seligman quotes as an authority, may agree with Mr. Seligman in his theory of business spending, the Harvard professor utterly fails to share Mr. Seligman's optimism regarding the recuperative powers of capitalism. His discussion on insecurity at the recent meeting of the American Economics Association clearly showed that Professor Slichter strongly suspected that capitalism was on the decline.

In the past, after a major depression, we could settle new lands in the West, build up new portions of the country, and continue our march to the Pacific. We could expand our foreign markets and sell our goods to an ever growing population.

THE FORUM

Our country is now settled. Our foreign markets are ceasing to grow as formerly. Our population is almost at a standstill. Our price system, under conditions of increasing monopoly, is becoming high and rigid. Our debt structure is mounting. Our rapid technological changes are throwing men by the thousands out of work. All of these forces are making for increased insecurity in the days ahead, bringing with it more bitter struggles for survival between the nations of the world.

II

MR. SELIGMAN admits the power of economic forces under capitalism as a stimulus to war. However, he asserts, the same forces would be operative under socialism.

Is this true? I deny it. Take the question of our foreign investments. Today, as Mr. Seligman's father so clearly points out, the scramble for investment areas is back of many of our international difficulties. Capitalists obtain large sums of money that they cannot spend to advantage. They first invest their surplus in American industries. Sources of profitable investment, because of the scant purchasing power of labor, begin to dry up. Capital goes abroad. The investor demands high profits for high risks and then, in case of any disturbance in the undeveloped country where the investment is made, he appeals to his government to assume the risk.

Under socialism, there would be capital to invest, it is true, but most of this capital would be owned by the community, the owner of the essential industries. Income would be distributed not on the basis of ownership but on the basis of ability, industry, and need. Extremes of wealth and poverty would disappear. The capital of the nation would be, to a larger extent than at present, absorbed at home, for labor would be in a position to buy more of the good things of life. No one person would possess great sums of money crying for investment abroad. Investment here or abroad would not be based on the rate of interest obtainable but on the needs and welfare of the many.

The useful workers by hand and brain, not a small group of capitalists, would be in control of the political and economic machinery. In case of war it would be they and their loved ones who would have to make the final sacrifice. An adventure abroad to dominate invest-

ment areas might mean to each of them — if it were successful — a few more dollars in their pockets at the end of the year, but it might also mean injury or death itself. The workers would thus probably decide that the game wasn't worth the candle.

Under socialism, likewise, the problem of relieving a country from the evils of population pressure would not be likely to lead to the same conflicts as at present. Even where a people remained in a comparatively overcrowded country, its condition under socialism would be far better than under the present system. In a planned socialist economy, competitive wastes would be eliminated. The nation's equipment would be utilized to the full.

Where an attempt was made to make a shift to more sparsely developed countries, organized on a co-operative basis, there would be less opposition in the latter countries to such shifts. Today the wage earners seriously object to immigration from abroad. A large influx of wage earners from other lands, it is contended, might seriously depress the labor market. Under socialism, on the other hand, wages would depend primarily on the amount produced, and the incoming of additional workers would have little effect on living standards.

The broad humanitarian program of the Labor and Socialist International and other working-class groups on the question of raw materials, shifts in population, trade and currency relationships are strongly indicative of what might be expected of the workingclass when once it began to socialize industry. And I wish to submit that, under our capitalist system, our business interests have shown little inclination to sweep away the barriers to world peace. Since the War, they have raised rather than lowered tariff walls between the nations. They have ignored the problem of a better allocation of raw materials. They have utterly forgotten their promises to disarm.

As long as international policies are determined by capitalist interests which place profit before human life; as long as, within each country, we are engaged in class warfare and in human exploitation; as long as the motto of our industrial system is "each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost," so long it will be difficult, if not impossible, to adopt an international policy that means the abolition of war.

Halfway to Infinity

The Conquest of Space

by **PETER VAN DRESSER**

IDEAS HAVE often been compared to living organisms; they are born, grow, multiply, and die in their season, leaving seeds which in due time germinate in fresh and variant forms. They also may exist in a kind of spore-like state, maintaining life for centuries by seizing upon the minds of a few individuals in each generation and utilizing them as hosts. When an era arrives which provides a congenial psychic and physical environment, they may burst into active and luxuriant growth.

Steel and steam and electricity, pulsing motors and chanting dynamos, power empires and transport networks, voraciously versatile machines and intelligent electrons — this overworld of modern technics, in which matter is made for subjugation and space for conquest, is providing an environment in which one dormant spore idea, charged with enormous potentialities, is slowly coming to life. This idea peers at us out of the works of philosophers centuries, milleniums apart. Lucian, Kepler, Giordano Bruno, many others pose the question: Are there other worlds? And, if so, can we reach them? Some have even proposed ways and means: antique Bishop Wilkins with his flying chariot, Francesca de Lana with his lodestones and his hollow copper spheres.

Such notions have stayed in a dream world of suspended animation, completely lacking the solid sustenance of practical possibility which alone can actualize them. But in the last century we have arrived at the point where we can at least define quite clearly just what this process of actualization requires. The notion of interplanetary travel, to give it its modern title, will entail for its fruition an environment very rich in *velocity, energy, and technical skill*. It need not be remarked that the atmosphere of contemporary life grows increasingly rich in these elements.

To the speculative soul who gazes at the broad and enigmatic disk of the moon, at the ruddy glow that is Mars, or at lucid Venus and asks, "Shall we ever be able to fly to these distant worlds?" it is now possible to answer: "No, we will never be able to fly to them but we may some day be able to *fall* to them."

This disconcerting affirmation is based on the rather complete knowledge of celestial mechanics which modern astronomy has evolved. All bodies of the solar system are, so to speak, in a state of perpetual fall — they are all moving in curves resulting from the interaction of their motions with their mutual gravitational attraction and that of the sun. This is exactly the state which we on earth call falling. It is necessary, therefore, only to impart velocity in the right direction to an object, and it will fall, obedient to gravity, in a calculable curve which may conceivably extend to any portion of the universe.

Accordingly it is possible for a good ball player to impart, by contact with his bat, motion to the ball which will carry it through the arc of an ellipse to just that zone of the outfield which he chooses. It was also possible for gunners during the late war to impart sufficient motion to a projectile to carry it some 30 miles high and 70 horizontally to a predetermined target on the earth's surface. This achievement represents about the present limit of man's power of "animating" inanimate objects with velocity. To extend this principle, to impress motion on projectiles such that they will follow curves leading far above the earth's atmosphere, on into outer space, even to the nearer planets, presents colossal difficulties.

THE WAR AGAINST GRAVITY

THESE DIFFICULTIES have principally to do with energy. All the resources of modern