

Proletarian Literature Today

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THE role of the labor processes which have transformed the erect animal into a human being and have created the basic foundations of culture has never been investigated as comprehensively and profoundly as it deserves. This is natural, since such an investigation is not in the interests of the exploiters of labor, who, transforming the energy of the masses, like raw material, into money could not, of course, in this case raise the value of the raw material. Beginning with antiquity, from the time of the division of men into slave-owners and slaves, the living power of the toiling masses has been used, and is being used, as we are now using the mechanical power of the current of rivers. Primitive men have been described by historians of culture as philosophizing idealists and mystics, creators of gods, seekers of the "meaning of life."

You know that the data of archeology and reflections of the ancient religious cults served as the material for the history of primitive culture, and these relics were considered in the light and under the influence of Christian philosophic dogmatism, which was not alien also to atheist historians. This influence is quite clear in the theory of super organic development of Spencer, and not only with him; it is also not alien to Fraser and to all the others. But none of the historians of primitive and ancient culture has utilized the data of folklore, the oral creativeness of the people, the evidence of mythology, which, in general, is a reflection of the phenomena of nature, the struggle with nature and the reflection of social life in broad artistic generalizations.

The historians of primitive culture were entirely silent about the completely clear signs of materialist thinking, which were inevitably initiated by the processes of labor and the whole sum of phenomena of the social life of ancient man. These signs have come to us in the form of fairy tales and myths in which we hear the echoes of the work of domesticating animals, the discovery of herbs, the invention of implements of labor. Men were already dreaming in the era of antiquity about the possibility of flying. This we may see from legends about Phaeton, Daedalus and his son Icarus, and the tale of the "flying carpet." Men were dreaming about acceleration of movement over the earth in the tale about "seven-league boots," and mastered the horse. The desire to float down the river faster than its current has led to the invention of the oar and the sail. The striving to kill the enemy and the beast from afar has been the motive for the invention of slings, bows and arrows. Men meditated upon the possibility of spinning and weaving a huge quantity of material in one night, of building a good habitation overnight, even a "palace,"

i.e., a habitation fortified against the enemy. A spinning wheel, one of the most ancient implements of labor, and a primitive handloom for weaving were created and the fairy tale about Vasilisa the Wise was invented. One could cite dozens more proofs of the purposiveness of fairy tales and myths, dozens of proofs of the farsightedness of the imaginative and hypothetical, but already the thinking of primitive men along technological lines rises to such modern, to us, hypotheses as, for example, the utilization of the forces of rotation of the earth on its axis or the destruction of polar ice. All the myths and tales of antiquity are crowned, as it were, by the myth about Tantalus. Tantalus stands up to his neck in water, he is tortured by thirst but he cannot quench it—such is ancient man among the phenomena of the external world that are not understood by him.

The ancient tales, myths and legends are known to us, but I should like their basic meaning to be understood more deeply. This meaning amounts to the striving of the ancient workingmen to lighten their labor, to increase productivity, to arm themselves against four-legged and two-legged enemies and also to influence the elemental phenomena of nature, hostile to men, by the force of the word, by the method of "pleas" and "invocations." The latter is particularly important since it signals how profoundly men believed in the force of their word, and this belief is explained by the clear and perfectly real advantage of speech, which organizes the social interrelations and labor processes of men. They even tried to influence the gods by their "invocations." This is quite natural, since all the gods of antiquity lived on earth, were man-like and also behaved like men: well disposed to the obedient and hostile to the disobedient; like men, they were envious, revengeful, ambitious. The facts that the gods were man-like is one of the proofs in favor of the opinion that religious thinking did not arise from the contemplation of the phenomena of nature but arose on the basis of the social struggle. It is quite admissible to think that the "notable" people of antiquity were the raw material for the manufacture of gods: Hercules, the "hero of labor," and "master of all trades," was eventually raised to Olympus among the gods. In the imagination of primitive men, god was not an abstract conception, a fantastic being, but a perfectly real figure armed with one or another implement of labor; god was a master of one trade or another, a teacher and co-worker of men. God was an artistic generalization of the successes of labor, and the "religious" thinking of the toiling masses must be placed in quotation marks, since it was a purely artistic creation. While idealizing the capacities of

men and having a presentiment, as it were, of their powerful development, the creation of myths was fundamentally realistic. It is easy to discover in every flight of ancient fantasy its stimulus, and this stimulus was always the striving of men to lighten their labor. It is quite clear that this striving was introduced into life by people of physical labor. And it is quite clear that god would not have appeared and would not have existed so long in the every-day customs of men of labor if he were not exceedingly useful to the lords of the earth, the exploiters of labor. In our country, god is becoming obsolete, so rapidly and easily, precisely because the reason for his existence has disappeared: the necessity for justifying the power of man over man, since man must only be the collaborator of man, his friend, his comrade-in-arms, his teacher, but not the lord over his mind and will.

But the more mighty and powerful the slave-owner became, the higher have the gods risen in heaven, and there appeared among the masses the struggle with god, as embodied in the images of Prometheus, the Estonian Kaleya and other heroes, who saw in god a lord of lords, hostile to them.

Pre-Christian, pagan folklore did not preserve any clearly expressed signs of the existence of thought about the "essences," about "the first cause of all phenomena," about "things in themselves" and, in general, into signs of thought which became organized into a system in the fourth century before our era, by the "prophet of Attica," Plato, the founder of the conception of the universe abstracted from the processes of labor, from the conditions and phenomena of existence. It is known that the church stubbornly fought from the beginning the "survivals of paganism," and these survivals were the reflections of the labor and materialist conception of the universe. It is known that as soon as the feudal lords began to feel the power of the bourgeoisie, there appeared the idealist philosophy of Bishop Berkeley, the reactionary significance of which is elucidated by V. I. Lenin in his militant book against idealism. It is known that on the eve of the French Revolution, at the end of the 18th century, the bourgeoisie utilized materialist thought for the struggle with feudalism and its inspirer—religion; but, having conquered its class enemy and in fear of its new enemy—the proletariat—the bourgeoisie immediately returned to the philosophy of idealism and to the defense of the church. Feeling more or less alarmingly the illegitimacy and precariousness of its power over the toiling masses, the bourgeoisie tried during the course of the 19th century to justify its existence by the philosophy of criticism, positivism, rationalism,

pragmatism and other attempts at the distortion of pure materialist thought springing from the processes of labor. One after another of these attempts revealed its impotence to "explain" the universe, and it was once more recognized in the 20th century that the idealist Bergson is the leader of philosophic thought, the teaching of whom, by the way, is "favorable for the Catholic religion." If to this definite recognition of the necessity of moving backwards be added the modern wailings of the bourgeoisie on the destructive significance of the irresistible growth of technique, which has created the fantastic wealth

of the capitalists, we get an entirely clear idea of the degree of intellectual impoverishment of the bourgeoisie and of the necessity of destroying it as an historical survival. In its decomposition the bourgeoisie is poisoning the world by the putrefaction of its corpse.

Intellectual impoverishment has always been caused by a deviation from the perception of the basic meaning of the phenomena of reality—a flight from life in consequence of fear of it, or in consequence of an egoistic striving for repose, in consequence of social indifference called forth by the most vulgar and disgusting anarchism of capitalist states.

technical culture. Facts of such resistance are generally known. They are as known as are their causes—cheapness of living labor power. It will be said that technique has nevertheless grown and attained considerable heights. This cannot be disputed. But it is explained by the fact that technique itself forecasts and prompts, as it were, the possibility and necessity of its further growth.

It goes without saying that the bourgeoisie was a revolutionary force in its time, for instance, in relation to feudalism, that it facilitated the growth of material culture, inevitably sacrificing the interests of the life and the forces of the working masses to this progress. But the case of Fulton shows that the bourgeoisie of France, even after its victory, did not immediately appraise the importance of steamships for the development of commerce and self-defense. And this is not a unique case which shows the conservatism of the philistines. We have to realize that this conservatism, in which is latent the concern for the consolidation and defense by the bourgeoisie of its power over the world, has limited in every way the possibilities of the intellectual growth of the toiling people. Nevertheless in the long run it has led to a new force coming into the world—the proletariat, and the proletariat has already created a state in which the intellectual growth of the masses is not limited. There is only one sphere in which technical innovations have been accepted by the bourgeoisie without objection and immediately—the sphere of the production of weapons for the extermination of workers. It seems that no one has yet noted the influence of the production of weapons of self-defense of the bourgeoisie on the general progress of technique in the metal working industry.

The Praised Culture of Capitalism

THERE is every ground for hoping that when the history of culture will be written by Marxists, we will be convinced that *the role of the bourgeoisie in the process of cultural creativeness has been strongly exaggerated*—especially strongly in the realm of literature, and still more so in the realm of painting where the bourgeoisie was always the employer and thereby the legislator. In itself, the bourgeoisie has no craving towards the creativeness of culture, if this creativeness is to be understood as something broader than merely the continuous development of external, material living comforts and development of luxury. The culture of capitalism is nothing else but a system of methods for the physical and moral extension and consolidation of the power of the bourgeoisie over men, over the treasures of the earth, the energies of nature. *The meaning of the process of the development of culture has never been understood by the bourgeoisie as the necessity for progress of the entire mass of humanity.* It is known that by force of bourgeois economic policy, every nation, organized as a state, was hostile to its neighbors, and that tribes, weakly organized, were slaves of the bourgeoisie, especially colored tribes, who suffered even greater oppression than the white-skinned slaves.

The peasants and workers were robbed of the right to education—the right to the development of reason and will for the knowledge of life, for changing its conditions, for lightening labor conditions. Only obedient servants of capitalism, believing in its unchangeability and legality, were educated and are being educated in the schools. "Education of the people" was written and spoken about, and a boast was even made of the success of literature, but in reality, the toiling people were divided, by being inspired with ideas of the irreconcilable differences of races, nations and religions. By this preaching is justified the inhuman colonial policy giving an ever wider scope to the senseless passion for profiteering, the idiotic greed of shopkeepers. Bourgeois science was at the service of this preaching, not being squeamish about stooping to the assertion that a negative attitude of men of the Aryan race towards all

others has "organically evolved from the metaphysical activity of the entire people." It is perfectly obvious, however, that if "a whole people" was infected with a shameful bestial hatred towards colored races or towards Semites—this infection was injected by the very real physical and most despicable activity of the bourgeoisie by "fire and sword." When it is remembered that the Christian church made this activity the symbol of suffering of the loving son of God, the sinister humor of this becomes obvious in all its disgusting nakedness. By the way, Christ, the "son of God," is the only "positive type" created by church literature—it is in this type of an unsuccessful reconciler of all contradictions of life that the creative impotence of church literature is shown especially strikingly.

The history of technical and scientific discoveries is rich with facts of the resistance of the bourgeoisie even to the growth of

Heroes of Capitalism and Its Literature

THE social and cultural development of people proceeds normally only when the hands teach the head, and, having become wiser, the head in turn teaches the hands. The wise hands again and to a greater extent contribute to the development of the brain. This normal progress of cultural development of toilers was interrupted in ancient days by causes indeed well known. A gap arose between intellectual and manual work, and human thought became divorced from worldly interests. Philosophers appeared and explained the world and the development of thought abstractly, independent of the processes of labor which change the world according to the interests and aims of people. At first they were probably organizers of labor, the same eminent people, heroes of labor, whom we see in our days in this country. Later on the temptation for power of one over many, this source of all social evils, sprang up among them as well as a tendency towards an easy life at the price of another's labor, an idea, at the same time ugly and sublime, of their

individual power. This idea was supported at first by the recognition of exceptional abilities in a given individual, although these abilities were only concentrated or reflected labor achievements of the working collective, that is, the clan or tribe. The historians of culture ascribe this gap between labor and thought to the whole mass of primitive people and consider the education of individualists by the masses a merit. The history of the development of individualism is given completely and clearly by the history of literature. The most profound, striking and artistically perfect types of heroes have been created by folklore, the oral creative power of the working people. The perfection of such types as Hercules, Prometheus, Mikula Selianinovich, Svyatogor, Doctor Faust, Vasilisa the Wise, the ironic, lucky Ivan the Fool, and finally Petrushka who defeats the doctor, priest, policeman, devil and even death—all these are types in the creation of which reason and intuition, thought and feeling have been harmoniously combined. This combination is

possible only if its creator directly participates in real life, in the struggle for the renewal of life.

It is extremely important to note that pessimism is quite alien to folklore notwithstanding the fact that the creators of folklore lived under difficult conditions. Their servile labor was deprived of all sense by the exploiters, and their personal life was lawless and defenseless. Consciousness of its immortality and confidence in its final victory over all hostile forces, however, appear to be distinctive of the collective. The hero of folklore, a "fool" despised even by his father and brothers, always turns out to be wiser than they. He is always the victor in all the adversities of every day life just as is Vasilisa the Wise.

Notes of despair and doubt which sometimes sound in folklore in regard to earthly life have no doubt been suggested by the 2,000-year-old propaganda of pessimism of the Christian church, and by the skeptical ignorance of the parasitic petty-bourgeoisie caught between the hammer of capital and the anvil of the toiling people. The importance of folklore is strikingly illustrated when comparing its fantasticisms based on the achievements of labor with the cumbersome and ungifted fantasticisms of the ecclesiastical "lives of the saints" literature and the miserable fantasticism of the novels of the age of knights and chivalry.

Epic and knightly novels are the creative products of the feudal nobility. Its hero is the conqueror. It is well known that the influence of feudal literature has never been particularly great.

Bourgeois literature begins in ancient days with the Egyptian "tales of a thief." It is continued by the Greeks and Romans and appears again in the period of the decline of knighthood in lieu of the knightly novel. It is truly bourgeois literature and its principal hero is a cheat, thief, detective and thief again, but now a "gentleman thief."

Beginning with the figure of Tyl Eulenspiegel at the end of the 15th century, that of Simplicissimus of the 17th century, Lazarillo of Tormes, Gil Blas, the heroes of Smollett and Fielding up to "Dear Friend" by Maupassant, Arsene Lupin, heroes of the "detective" literature of Europe of our days, we can cite thousands of books, the heroes of which are swindlers, thieves, murderers and detectives. This is true bourgeois literature which strikingly reflects the original tastes, interests and practical "morale" of its consumers. "Every cloud has a silver lining"; on the basis of this literature, lavishly fertilized with all kinds of banalities including the platitude of philistine "common sense," grew up such remarkable artistic generalizations as the figure of Sancho Panza, and many others. The well-known case of Ponson du Terrail is a weighty proof of the profound class interest of the bourgeoisie in the depiction of crimes.

When this author completed his many-volumed novel with the death of the hero, the readers organized a demonstration before



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his house, demanding a continuation of the novel, a success never before achieved by any, even of the most outstanding writers, in Europe. The readers received another two volumes of the hero who revived not only physically but morally. This crude example of a murderer and robber turning into a good bourgeois is widespread and usual for the entire bourgeois literature. The bourgeoisie admired the adroitness of thieves and the slyness of murderers with the same pleasure as the shrewdness of detectives. The detective novel today is still the favorite reading of well-fed people in Europe. Penetrating into the ranks of half-starved working people, this novel was and still is one of the reasons why class-consciousness is developing at such a slow pace. The novel rouses sympathy for adroit thieves, develops a desire for thievery, this partisan war of individuals against bourgeois property. Demonstrating how low the bourgeoisie estimates the life of the working class, this novel contributes to the increase of murder and other crimes. The great love of the European philistine for detective novels is strikingly illustrated by the great number of authors and novels and the wide circulation of these books.

It is an extremely interesting fact that in the 19th century when petty impostures acquired heroic and imposing importance on the exchanges, in parliament and in the press, the crook as the hero of the novel gave place to detectives, who in a world of quite obvious

crimes against working people, cleverly solved mysterious but invented crimes. Of course, it is not at all accidental that the celebrated Sherlock Holmes appeared in England and it is still less accidental that side by side with the highly gifted detective arose a "gentleman thief" who made fools of the wisest detectives. Those who consider this change of heroes "a play of fancy" are in error. Imagination creates what reality prompts. Imagination is influenced by quite real reasons which compel, for instance, the Right and "Left" French politicians to play football with the corpse of Stavisky, this gentleman thief, in their attempts to terminate this play in a draw.

Of all the artistic forms of literature which have influence upon people, drama and comedy, which lay bare the emotions and thoughts of heroes on the stage, are recognized as the most powerful. If we begin the progress of European drama from Shakespeare it goes down to Kotzebue, Nestor Kukolnik, Sardou and still lower; and the comedy of Molière declines to Scribe, Polieran; and in this country after Griboyedov and Gogol it nearly disappears altogether. Considering that art portrays people it could apparently be concluded that the decline of dramatic art demonstrates to us the degradation of strong, well-defined characters, that "great men" have disappeared.

Even today, however, there live, prosper and act such types as the contemptible Thersites in the bourgeois journalistic world, the mis-

anthropes Timon of Athens in literature, the usual Shylock in politics, as well as Judas the traitor of the working-class, and many other figures well portrayed in the past. From the 17th century up to our days the above figures have grown in number and have become still more abominable. The adventurer John Low is an urchin and a puppy compared to adventurers of the type of Stavisky, Ivar Kreuger and similar great swindlers of the 20th century. Cecil Rhodes and other politicians in the field of colonial robbery are not better than Cortez and Pizarro. The kings of oil, steel and others are much more dreadful and criminal than Louis XI or Ivan the Terrible. In the small republics of South America there are people no less terrible than the condottieri of Italy of the 14th and 15th centuries. Ford is not the only caricature of Robert Owen. The nightmare figure of Pierpont Morgan is unrivaled in the past, if one forgets the ancient king whose mouth was filled with molten gold.

The above types, of course, do not exhaust the variety of "great" men brought about by the practice of the bourgeoisie in the 19th and

20th centuries. All these people cannot be denied strength of character, highly gifted ability to count money, rob the world, cause international slaughter for their personal enrichment; they cannot be denied a wonderful shamelessness and inhumanity in their devilishly abominable work. The realistic criticism and highly artistic literature of Europe passed and is passing by these people as if unaware of them.

Neither the drama nor the novel depicts the types of bankers, industrialists and politicians with the same artistic force as literature portrayed "the unnecessary man." Nor were there portrayed the tragic and most usual fates of the masters and creators of bourgeois culture, representatives of science and art, inventors in the field of technique. This literature portrayed none of the heroes who fought for the freedom of nations which were oppressed by foreigners, or of dreamers of fraternity of all peoples such as Thomas More, Campanella, Pourier St. Simon and others. All this is not said as a reproach. The past is not irreproachable—but to reproach it is senseless. It must be studied.

the organization of democracy being understood by many writers and most readers as the necessity of protection against both the big bourgeoisie and ever growing attacks from the proletariat.

The development of the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat, his love for the fatherland created by him and the defense of that fatherland is one of the essential duties of literature.

We must select labor as the main hero of our books, *i.e.*, man organized by the process of labor, who, in our country, is armed with the power of modern technique, a man, who, in his turn, is organizing lighter and more productive labor and is raising it to the level of art. We must learn to understand labor as creativeness. Creativeness is a conception which we writers use too often, with hardly a right to it. Creativeness is that degree of intensity of the work of memory, when the swiftness of its work draws from the stock of knowledge the most prominent and characteristic facts, pictures and details, and includes them in the most exact, striking and generally understood words. Our young literature cannot boast of this quality. The stock of impressions and amount of knowledge of our men of letters are not large, and a special care for its extension and deepening does not make itself felt.

The main theme of European and Russian literature of the 19th century is the individual as opposed to society, the state and nature. The chief reason which induced the individual to place himself in opposition to bourgeois society is the abundance of negative impressions which he obtained from it contradictory to his class ideals and traditions of life. The individual felt that these impressions were crushing him, retarding the process of his growth, but poorly understood his responsibility for the vulgarity, baseness and criminality of the foundations of bourgeois society. Jonathan Swift wrote for the whole of Europe, but the bourgeoisie of Europe believed that his satire was aimed at Britain alone. And in general, the rebelling individual, while criticizing the life of his society, rarely and very poorly realized his responsibility for the shameful practices of society. A profound and correct understanding of social-economic causes was still more rarely the basic motive of his criticism of the existing order. His criticism arose more often either from a perception of the hopelessness of his existence in the narrow, iron cell of capitalism or by the striving to revenge himself for his failures in life, for its humiliation. And it may be said that when the individual turned to the working mass, he did it not for the sake of the interest of the mass, but in the hope that the working class, having destroyed bourgeois society, would insure for him freedom of thought and free choice of action. I repeat: the basic and chief theme of pre-revolutionary literature was the drama of the individual, to whom life seems cramped, who feels himself superfluous in society, who seeks in it a

Creative Impotence of Bourgeois Europe

WHAT has led the literature of Europe to the creative impotence displayed by it in the 20th century? Freedom of art and self-will of creative thought were defended furiously and loquaciously, the possibility of the existence and development of literature above class society, its independence from social policy, were strongly affirmed. This affirmation was bad politics, considering that precisely this affirmation imperceptibly compelled many writers to narrow the scope of their observations of real life, to give up a wide many-sided study of it and confine themselves "in the loneliness of their soul," to dwell on the fruitless attempts of "knowing themselves" by means of introspection without knowledge of practical life. The human being turned out to be unknowable beyond real life which is permeated with politics. The human being remained a social but not a cosmic unit like the planets, however artfully he might represent himself. Later on it was shown that individualism turning into egocentrism creates "unnecessary people." It was repeatedly pointed out that the type of "unnecessary individual" was the most artistically and convincingly portrayed hero of the European literature of the 19th century. Literature created precisely this type, having developed from portraying the technically unequipped human being who realized the victorious force of labor, to the feudal conqueror who understood that it is easier to plunder than to make anything, the crook of whom the bourgeoisie is so fond, its "teacher of life," who realized that it is easier to cheat and steal than to work. In its development literature passed by the striking fig-

ures of the founders of capitalism and oppressors of mankind who were much more inhuman than the feudal noblemen, bishops, kings and tsars.

Two groups of writers must be distinguished in the bourgeois literature of the West. One lauded and amused its class. One is: Trollope, Wilkie Collins, Braddon, Maryat, Jerome, Paul de Kock, Paul Feval, Octave Feuillet, Ohnet, Georg Samarov, Julius Stinde and hundreds similar to them. All these are typical "good bourgeois," insignificant talents, but cunning and banal as their readers. The other group is very small and consists of the most outstanding creators of critical realism and revolutionary romanticism. They are all outlaws, "prodigal sons" of their class, noblemen ruined by the bourgeoisie or children of the petty bourgeoisie who escaped from the close atmosphere of their class. The books of this group of European writers are of a double and indisputable value to us, first, as model works of literature from the point of view of their technique and second, as documents elucidating the process of the development and decline of the bourgeoisie. These documents created by the outlaws of this class portray its life, traditions and deeds from a critical point of view.

A detailed analysis of the role of critical realism in European literature of the 19th century cannot be given in this report. In its essence it depicts the struggle against the conservatism of the feudalism revived by the big bourgeoisie, the struggle by means of organizing democracy, that is, the petty bourgeoisie, on the basis of liberal and humanitarian ideas,

convenient place for himself, and not finding it, suffers and perishes; or reconciles himself to a society hostile to him, or takes to drink or commits suicide.

In our country, in the Union of Socialist Soviets, there must not, there cannot be any

superfluous people. Wide liberty to develop his capacities, gifts and talents is at the disposal of every citizen. One thing only is demanded of the individual: Be honest in your attitude to the heroic work of the creation of a classless society.

Philistinism Must Be Driven Out

"LEADERISM" is an ailment of the epoch. It is caused by the lowered capacity for living of the petty bourgeois, by a feeling of inevitable destruction in the war between the capitalist and the proletarian and by his fear of destruction, a fear which drives him to the side which he has long been accustomed to consider the physically stronger, to the side of the employer-exploiter of the labor of others, the robber of the world. Internally "leaderism" is the result of the outlived usefulness, impotence and poverty of individualism; externally, it is expressed in the forms of such purulent excrescences as, for example, Ebert, Noske, Hitler and other such heroes of capitalist reality. Here, where socialist reality is being created, such excrescences are, of course, impossible. But here there still remain as a heritage of the petty bourgeois a few pimples incapable of understanding the essential difference between "leaderism" and leadership, although the difference is quite clear: leadership, highly valuing the energy of people, points the way to the achievement of the best practical results with the least expenditure of energy, while "leaderism" is the individualistic striving of the philistine to stand a head higher than his comrades, which it is very easy to do with the possession of mechanical agility, an empty head and an empty heart.

Criticism yields too much place to semi-literate reviewers who only perplex and offend authors but are incapable of teaching them anything. It does not note the attempt to resurrect and to put into effect some ideas of popular literature and, finally, what is very important, it does not interest itself in the growth of regional literature, to say nothing of the literature of the Soviet Union. It must also be said that criticism does not concern itself with public statements from men of letters, with "how they are writing," yet such statements very much demand the attention of criticism.

Self-criticism is necessary, comrades. We are working before a proletariat, which, becoming ever more literate, is continuously making larger demands on our art, and together with this, on our social conduct.

The Communism of ideas does not coincide with the character of our actions and interrelations in our environment, interrelations in which an exceedingly serious role is played by philistinism which expresses itself in envy, greed, vulgar gossip and mutual disparagement.

We have written and are writing much about philistinism, but an embodiment of philistinism is not given in one person, in one image. And it must be depicted precisely in one person and as fully as the world types of Faust, Hamlet and others have been fashioned.

I will remind you that philistinism represents the numerous class of parasites, who while producing nothing, are striving to consume as much as possible and do consume it. Living as parasites upon the peasantry and working class, always inclining towards the big bourgeoisie, and sometimes by force of demands from outside, passing over to the side of the proletariat and introducing in its environment anarchism, egocentrism and all the vulgarities historically inherent in a philistine, the vulgarity of thought that is fed exclusively by facts of the mode of life and not by the inspirations of labor—philistinism, in so far as it thought and is thinking, always propagated and strengthened the philosophy of individual growth along the line of least resistance and sought a more or less stable equilibrium between two forces. The attitude of philistinism towards the proletariat is characterized most strikingly by the fact that even a semi-beggarly peasant, the owner of the most poverty-stricken strip of land, despised a factory worker who is deprived of all property except his hands. That the proletarian has also a head has been noticed by the philistine only when the hands of the proletarian began to act in a revolutionary way outside the factory.

Not all weeds are harmful or useless, since curative poisons are obtained from many of them. Philistinism only manufactures destructive poison. If the philistine had not felt himself such a contemptible part in the machine of capitalism he would not have striven so persistently and so fruitlessly to prove the importance and freedom of his thought, will and right to existence and would not have created in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries such a number of "superfluous people," "repenting nobles," "timeless heroes," men of the type of "neither fish nor fowl."

Dislodged, driven out from its nests, from hundreds of provincial towns, philistinism in the Soviet Union is scattered everywhere and, as we know, is even percolating into the Party of Lenin, whence it is always thrown out at every Party cleaning. Nevertheless, it remains and acts like a microbe giving rise to disreputable diseases.

The Party leadership of literature must be

strictly purged of all influences of philistinism. The Party people in literature are obliged to be not only teachers of ideology, the organizing energy of the proletariat of all countries for the final battle for its liberty, but the Party leadership must display in all its conduct a morally authoritative force. This force must above all introduce in the environment of writers a consciousness of their collective responsibility for all that happens in their midst. With all the diversity of its talents and continually growing number of new, gifted writers, Soviet literature must be organized as a united collective whole, as a mighty weapon of socialist culture.

The union of writers is being formed, not merely for the purpose of physically uniting artists of the pen, but in order that professional association should enable them to understand their collective force and to define, with all possible clarity, the diversity of tendencies of their creativeness, their purposes, and harmoniously unite all aims in that unity which directs all the labor-creative energy of the country.

What is in question here is not, of course, that individual creativeness should be limited, but to place at its disposal the widest possibilities of a further powerful development.

It must be recognized that critical realism has arisen as the individual creativeness of "superfluous people," who, being incapable of fighting for life, not finding for themselves a place in it and more or less clearly perceiving the aimlessness of personal existence, have understood this aimlessness only as the absurdity of all phenomena of social life and the entire historical process.

While by no means denying the wide and tremendous work of critical realism, while appraising its formal achievements in the art of word painting, we must understand that this realism is only necessary for us in order to throw light upon the relics of the past, for the struggle with them, for rooting them out.

But this form of realism has not served and cannot serve the education of socialist individuality, since while criticizing everything, it has affirmed nothing, or, in the worst cases, has returned to the affirmation of all that which it itself has denied.

Socialist individuality, as we see from the example of our heroes of labor, who are the flower of the working mass—socialist individuality can develop in the conditions of collective labor, which places before itself the highest and wise aim of emancipating the toiler throughout the world from the power of capitalism with its crippling effect on man.

Socialist realism proclaims existence as work, as creativeness the aim of which is the uninterrupted development of the most valuable individual abilities of man for the sake of his victory over the forces of nature, for the sake of his health and long life, for the sake of the great happiness of living on the earth, of which he, in conformity with the constant growth of his needs, wants to cultivate the whole as a splendid habitation of humanity united in one family.

The Meaning of Fascism

JOSEPH FREEMAN

FOR OVER a dozen years Fascism has been the subject of widespread discussion. There is an enormous amount of literature about it, especially in the past two years when the accession to power of the Nazis in Germany has vividly brought the issue home to millions who never thought very seriously about it before. Yet the real significance of Fascism—its logical birth and development as a part of capitalism today—has rarely been brought out. We now have what is probably the most trenchant analysis of it in R. Palme Dutt's book, whose very title is illuminating.¹ If the volume deserves John Strachey's judgment that it is "incomparably the best book on Fascism that has yet been written," it is because the author has given us not a study of Fascism in the abstract, but a study of Fascism as part of a social process in which it is the antithesis of social revolution.

Millions, shocked by the advance of Fascism over an increasing area of the globe, assume that it came like a bolt from the blue; yet, by a lucid collation of the facts and their acute diagnosis, Dutt is able to show that it is no sudden growth. Indeed, the whole of post-war social development has been incubating Fascism. Apologists talk about it as a national renaissance, the triumph of youth, the end of decadent liberalism and intellectualism, a progressive step toward a balanced and organized social order; liberals and social-democrats attack it as an expression of sadism, brutality and violence; the triumph of militarism and despotism, of national and racial egotism; as a revolt of the inferior mass against culture; as the destruction of liberty, equality and fraternity by the apostles of the "superman." But Dutt, like all real Marxists, sees in these attitudes only a melange of superficial phrases which ignore the basic forces involved. He analyzes Fascism in relation to the whole character of modern social development, of which Fascism itself is an expression. Above all, he gets down to "the basic movement and driving force of economy and technique, of which the social and political forms, including Fascism, are only a reflection."

Dutt's examination of the basic—that is, the *economic and technical*—facts of the modern world leads him to the following indisputable conclusion: The modern development of technique and productive power has reached a point where the existing capitalist forms are more and more incompatible with the further development of production, and the further utilization of technique. Between the existing capitalist forms and the further develop-

ment of productive power and technique there is an irreconcilable conflict which has grown more open and more violent since 1914. With the world economic crisis of 1929 this conflict entered upon a new and extreme stage. The nature of this conflict between capitalist forms and the productive forces is such, that one must destroy the other. Either the advance of the productive forces must end capitalism, or the maintenance of capitalism must end the advance of production and technique—and inaugurate their sharp deterioration. In actual fact the latter alternative has already set in. The delay of the social revolution and the continuation of capitalist forms has already resulted in the marked and continuing deterioration of the productive forces and techniques in all countries except the Soviet Union. The lone exception is the one country where capitalist forms have been abolished.

It is against this economic background, against the development of modern capitalist society as a whole since the war, that Dutt analyzes, with a wealth of specific detail, clarity of thought and brilliance of style, the history and significance of Fascism in various countries. He notes that in every field—economic, political, and ideological—the theories and practices which are becoming more and more dominant in *capitalism as a whole* are strikingly like the theories and practices of Fascism as a *professedly peculiar system*. From these facts Dutt concludes that Fascism "is no peculiar independent doctrine and system arising in opposition to existing capitalist society," but is, on the contrary, "the most complete and consistent working out, in certain conditions of extreme decay, of the most typical tendencies and policies of modern capitalism." All modern capitalisms, is, the fascist form included, have, to a greater or lesser degree, the following characteristics in common: The basic aim of maintaining capitalism in the face of the revolution threatened by the advance of productive technique and of class antagonisms; the consequent intensification of capitalist dictatorship; the limitation and repression of the independent working-

class movement and the building up of a system of organized class cooperation; the increasing suppression of parliamentary democracy; the extending State monopolist organization of industry and finance; the closer concentration of each imperialist bloc into a single economic-political unit; the advance to war as the necessary accompaniment of the increasing imperialist antagonisms.

To a greater or lesser extent, these factors are typical of *all* modern capitalist states no less than of the specifically *fascist* States; so that, in this wider sense, one may speak of the development of all modern capitalist states toward Fascism. But although the sum-total of the policies of modern capitalism provide already in essence the sum-total of the policies of Fascism (Dutt points out) they are not yet complete Fascism, which at present is realized in a limited number of countries. The specific character of complete Fascism, he explains, "lies in the *means* adopted towards the realization of these policies, in the *new social and political mechanism* built up for their realization." Fascism in this specific or narrower sense—in the sense of the Fascist movements or the completed fascist dictatorships of Italy, Germany and other countries—has definite familiar characteristics of its own. The Fascist movements are marked by terrorism, extra-legal military organizations, the fight against parliamentarism, national and social demagoguery, etc. The realized Fascist dictatorships are characterized by the suppression of all other parties and organizations (particularly the violent suppression of all independent working-class organizations) a reign of terror, the so-called totalitarian state, etc.

Of Fascism in this specific or narrower sense, Dutt gives us the best analysis published in English so far. Collating various statements by Mussolini and his ilk, Dutt concludes that all their verbiage fails to reveal the essential character of Fascism. The abstract general conceptions which the various fascist chieftains and ideologues trot out in explanation of their deeds have no distinctive character whatever. They are common to many schools of

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¹ *Fascism and Social Revolution*, by R. Palme Dutt. International Publishers. 1934. New York. \$1.75.