

# Chapters from the Book of Tomorrow

Socialism—"a fact as sure as the earth, as sure as love." Ruth McKenney draws a lesson from the Soviet Union. A preview of 2041.

IN 1911, when this magazine published its first issue, socialism was an idea in the minds of scientific economists, a beautiful dream in the hearts of the great dreamers, the people. Today, as I write this article for the thirtieth anniversary of the *Masses*, socialism is the most important fact of modern life.

Where are the words to sing such a vast triumph? Only think, in twenty-four years, hardly enough time to grow a complete man, the Bolshevik Party came up out of an exile everyone but its members thought hopeless, to lead 160,000,000 people, citizens of an immense and once tormented land, into the bright horizons of socialism. Look upon the facts carefully. In a little more than two decades, an insignificant span against the great sweep of history, the people of the Soviet Union have found their way past the final barrier of barbarism to realize at last man's 5,000-year-old dream of rational living. The prophets of doomed capitalism in the rest of the world greet this astonishing achievement with maddened invective; but we can afford to laugh at their mewling little words. For the world changed on Nov. 7, 1917, no matter how the capitalist little folk may deny it.

But perhaps it is difficult for us to measure the proportion of contemporary events. Then look at history, the way it may be written for the school children of 2041. I can see the teacher surveying her rows of plump, freshly washed dumplings, aged nine, and saying, "The class will now turn to Chapter I." Chapter I, the book will say, "Man Struggles Against Nature." Maybe there will be that picture of the Neanderthal man that used to fascinate me so, or perhaps they will

have dug up better bones. Anyway the chapter will tell of man discovering the use of fire, man developing his first grunts and howls into language, man whittling the first tool and constructing the first wheel, man writing the first sentence. After a slight pause for the cave art of France, the youngsters of tomorrow will whip through the glory that was Greece, the difficulties of medieval times, the discovery of the new world, etc., etc., and then finally will come Chapter VI, "Man Discovers the Powered Machine: The End of his Long Slavery to Nature."

The 2041 historians will devote quite some space to the construction of that famous steam spinning jenny and the mercantile civilization which produced it. Then, the children will read something cold and rather angry, like this, "Human beings, with the invention of the power machine, now had at their disposal the device which was to liberate them from their ancient bondage to the business of eating, finding shelter, providing clothing, and keeping warm. However, all you boys and girls will be very shocked to know that it took some hundreds of years for men to find out how to use the machine. Indeed, this very same machine, which was to set men free, produced slavery and misery upon the earth's surface such as had never been seen before. Please turn to Chapter VII."

Chapter VII will be entitled "The Horrors of Capitalism." Probably, since this is a textbook for nine-year-olds, the historians will omit some of the items included in the high school history. For after all, the children of 2041 have never come face to face with a cruel society, and although it is important that they understand the development of civiliza-

tion, I doubt if teachers will want to tell the small ones about lynchings and torture in the prisons, about innocent men shot to death in strikes, about women kicked in demonstrations, about chain gangs and electric chairs, third-degree and child labor. But even the text for the fourth grade will have to describe capitalist war. There may be a picture of the trenches in the First Imperialist War, and probably the text will describe the bombings of Barcelona and London, Chungking and Berlin. There will have to be something about unemployment and sharecropping, annual wages paid to workers, and the teacher may let the children sing the great song about Joe Hill, so that they will know something of the pain and the yearning for life, in 1941.

Perhaps this song brings tears to the eyes of the little girls in the fourth grade, perhaps it makes the boys double up their fists and scowl, but the class soon cheers up, for Chapter VIII is "Socialism: How It Was Won; Our Heroes of the Past." The chapter begins with the story of Lenin, and the first imperialist war. Perhaps there is a quotation from Lenin's essay on the question: Will the Bolsheviks Take Power? I hope there is, so that the youngsters of 2041 can feel the burning passion, the fierce determination of that hero of the past, on the eve of the Revolution. Certainly the book will tell about the intervention, and maybe there will be a picture of the sailors of Kronstadt who held the line at Petrograd.

And then of course the children will learn how socialism was finally built in a backward agrarian country in 1917. The great figure of Stalin will overshadow this section; the youngsters will learn what it meant to be a missionary for collectivized farms when the kulaks were still strong. There will be a few blistering paragraphs on capitalism's internal attack on the Soviet Union and how it was defeated through the Moscow Trials. "The story of building socialism in the Soviet Union," the book will say, "is the story of the self-sacrifice, the single-minded determination of the working people. Never think for one moment that socialism was as easy in those days as it is now."

Finally the youngsters will come around to the passage, "Now perhaps all you readers wonder what was going on in the rest of the world while the first Soviet country under Lenin and Stalin made socialism with such heroism and sacrifice. Well, of course the capitalists tried to behave as though nothing had happened in the world. They went right on treating the workers cruelly, waging wars, and they even tried a worse form of capitalist government—fascism. When you grow up, if you specialize in history, you will find out all about this period and you will learn the



Nazi Winter Relief

A. Jamison



# Peace

## I

Abel lying meekly dead  
halo of blood about his head;  
Cain says "Earth hath peace."

Judas runs to Christ and stops;  
kissing, whistles in the cops,  
Says, "Jesus sold, buys peace."

"When discontent is loud at door  
peace needs war; find peace in war,"  
Says Cæsar planning "peace."

## II.

Cain on Wall Street, trades in peace,  
war by product, blood to be  
a depreciate currency.

Judas in Congress, kissing peace  
through a long AP release  
turns to vote war loan increase

And the Cæsars, promising peace  
after triumph, after war  
tensely watch the camouflaged door.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.



names of such treacherous, cruel people as Roosevelt and Churchill, Laval and Hitler. But for our history book, all these events were really not very important. The main thing was during all those years the workers everywhere in the world were finding out about socialism and organizing to bring it to their countries. For as soon as the Soviet Union finished its first Five-Year Plan and completed the collectivization of agriculture, socialism was a fact. And since socialism was the only possible rational way to use the machine, capitalism was doomed, even if the capitalists didn't admit it. [Laughter.]

"But of course you children must not think that bringing socialism to the other countries was an easy thing to do. The capitalists were desperate. They told the most outrageous lies about the first Soviet country, for in those days the workers did not own the press. Even worse, they persecuted and tortured the Communists who fought everywhere for socialism. You all know the great names of the Communist leaders of those days, Thorez and Thaelmann, Dimitrov and Palme Dutt, and in our own country, Earl Browder, William Z. Foster, and James Ford. And besides these famous men, there were countless, numberless Communists, obscure and modest, who suffered and sometimes died, so that you children, you who read this, could be free. None of us must ever forget the limitless courage, the cool, efficient work of those Communists of long ago.

"However, it must be understood that socialism for the world was just a matter of time, after the Russian Revolution—time and organization, time and the lives of brave men. For the main thing to remember is that the

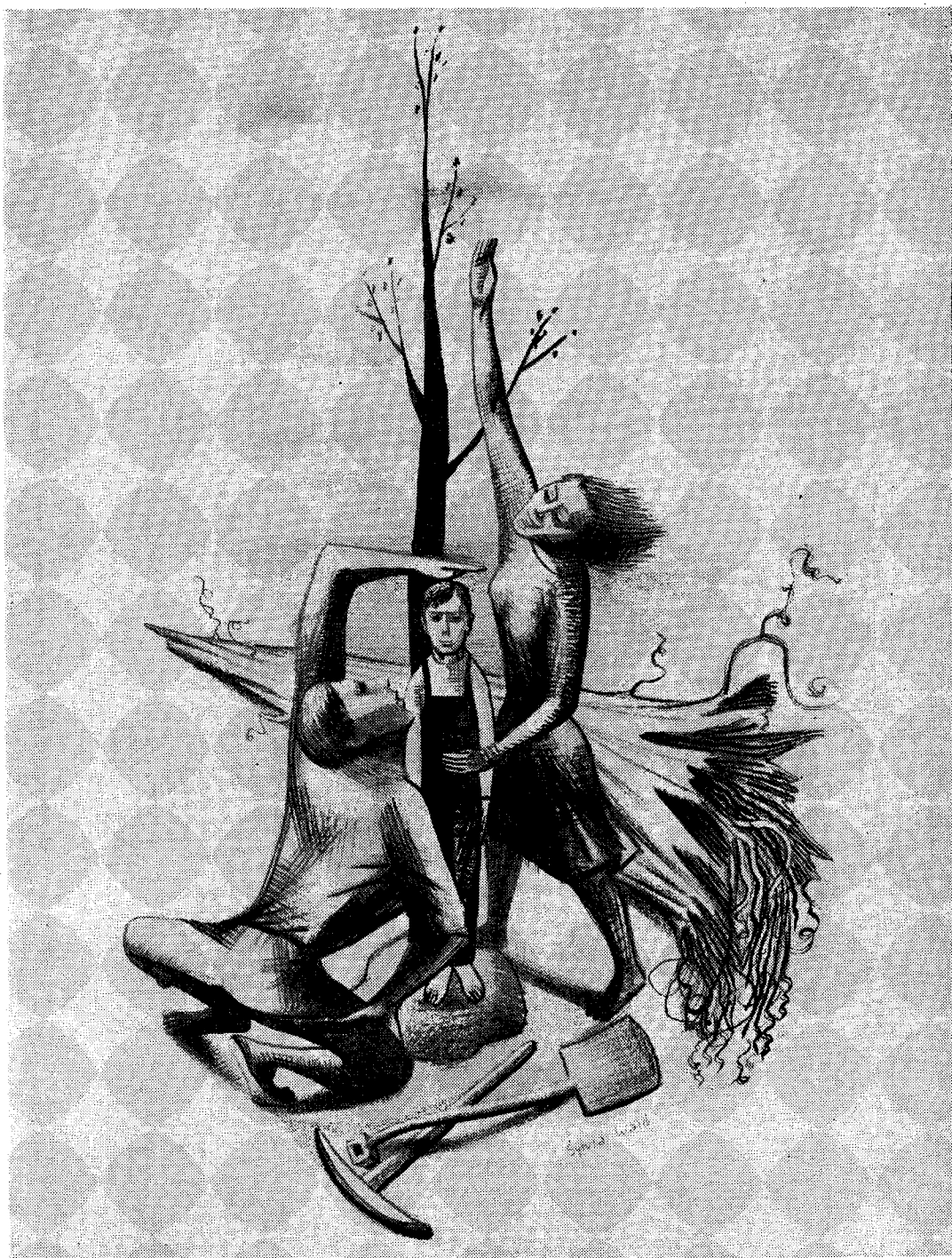
socialist era began Nov. 7, 1917, in what was then known as Petrograd, Russia. Human beings began, from that date on, to lead the rational life. It was the great triumph of men over nature, one of the few important landmarks of all written history. And although it took some years for socialism to become a fact throughout the world, we wish we could tell you children, you who have never known hunger or suffering, a cruel and mad social system, what the Russian Revolution meant to the people who lived then under capitalism. To your American forefathers, Nov. 7, 1917, was the declaration of freedom for all mankind. And for many years, men lived in the darkness of capitalism sustained by the bright, bright vision of socialism in that first of revolutionary countries, the Soviet Union."

But please don't misunderstand me. I think

the children will be reading about the birth of socialism in the United States long, long before 2041. But I can see in my mind's eye with perfect clarity, those happy children of tomorrow solemnly studying the history of man's long climb out of the slime of primeval life. I know this is not just a vision to blot out the misery of life in my country today; it is a fact, as sure as the earth, as sure as love. For the Soviet Union is the scientific demonstration of hope, the mathematical proof of the future.

The readers of NEW MASSES, who for thirty years have kept this magazine alive, need not be assured of the victory. For we all know that the fact, just the fact of the Soviet Union is the proof we can never fail. The future belongs to us.

RUTH MCKENNEY.



*After the Clearing*

Sylvia Wald