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Americanism and the Soviet

By EVANS CLARK—Extract from New York "Nation," March 22

ONE OF THE most characteristic features of American culture is the unusual divergence between our political ideals and our political reality. Nowhere is this more marked than in the form and structure of our national government. Students of American politics of as divergent views as Burgess and Beard have emphasized this particularly glaring inconsistency. There is a fundamental antagonism between our democratic pretensions and the rigidity of our Constitution. The American nation is a youth, lusty and growing, but clothed in a straight-jacket. The change and expansion of our national life must in the end either bend our Constitution or break it. If the Supreme Court had not by the main force of constructive analogies stretched the Constitution far beyond the intentions of its makers the break would long since have occurred. Constrained by a Constitution written by men dead a century ago, and under the domination of courts pledged to maintain its integrity, not even the representatives of the people in Congress assembled can recast the American machinery of state. As Professor Beard has pointed out, "the extraordinary majorities required for the initiation and ratification of amendments have resulted in making it practically impossible to amend the Constitution under ordinary circumstances."

No such restrictions now bind the people of Russia. As in England, the national legislature

itself is the designer and repairer of the government machine. The hand of the past does not rest, an autocracy of death, upon the institutions of the Soviet state. The All-Russian Soviet fashions the instruments of government and can re-fashion them at will to fit the circumstances of change. The Russian state, thus formed, may well be described as a pyramid of responsibility. At its base are the voters of the cities, towns, villages, and rural sections. Elected by them, and forming the next tier in the structure, are the local Soviets; representatives of the people in whose hands are centred all legislative and executive authority over the territory from which they were returned. Elected by the local Soviets, are the provincial congresses of Soviets; similar bodies with jurisdiction over wider areas. At the top of the pyramid stands the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, a body composed of delegates elected by the local and provincial Soviets, which is, in the words of the Constitution, "the supreme power of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic." Each Soviet from the lowest to the highest acts as a general legislative and policy-determining body; but it delegates administrative and even legislative authority between sessions to an executive committee, which, in turn, assigns routine administrative matters to councils composed of the heads of the several executive departments. Each executive committee and council is at all times

under the control of the body that elected it. Thus is the pyramid built. The mortar that binds the whole structure from peak to base is the power of popular control.

One of the many divergences between American democratic ideals and American political practice lies in our electoral machinery. We talk of the will of the people, but we know it is more often the will of the boss and the boss of the boss that controls our political life. The manner of election of our legislatures is in large measure responsible for this anomaly. There is no intimacy between a representative and his constituency. In his nomination, his election, and his service as a lawmaker, the American legislator has closer touch with the professional politician than with those he is supposed to represent. For years forward-looking American political scientists have realized this and have talked of the value of economic over geographical representation as the only reasonable remedy. Men's interests, they have said, are essentially economic. People are bound together more closely by their occupation than by the neighborhood in which they happen to live. It might well be that legislative bodies representing different economic interests, instead of districts arbitrarily assigned on a map, would give more adequate expression of public opinion, and would bring the legislator into more constant

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Problems of American Socialism

BY LOUIS C. FRAINA

THE attitude of American Socialism toward the Bolsheviks is characteristic of its general policy, of its anaemic, petty bourgeois spirit.

The accomplishments of the Bolsheviks are epochal. They have maintained for fifteen months a revolutionary dictatorship in Russia, have accomplished the first stage of the international proletarian revolution. They have organized a new state, upon the basis of which alone can Socialism be introduced. They have issued the clear, magnificent call to the international proletarian revolution; and they have been a decisive factor in the coming of the proletarian revolution in Germany. They are active in the struggle to develop the revolution in the rest of Europe, and the world; and they are preparing to wage a revolutionary war against international imperialism, if necessary, in co-operation with the revolutionary proletariat of Germany. The Bolsheviks have subjectively introduced the revolutionary epoch of the proletariat, objectively introduced by imperialism and the war. Socialism in action, Marxism become life—that, in sum, constitutes the accomplishments of the Bolsheviks.

But while the Bolsheviks have issued the clear call to the revolutionary struggle against capitalism and imperialism, they have equally issued the clear call to the revolutionary struggle against the dominant, petty bourgeois Socialism.

In Russia and in Germany, the great enemy of the proletarian revolution was not capitalism, per se, but moderate, petty bourgeois Socialism—that

majority Socialism become part of the national liberal movement, corrupted by petty bourgeois politics, allied with the middle class and with social-imperialism. Before the proletarian revolution could conquer capitalism and imperialism, it had to conquer the dominant Socialism. Why? Because the dominant Socialism, operating in an epoch of peaceful, national struggles, had become moderate; had become part of the governing system of things, indirectly its ally and protector, had, it is true, accomplished great things, but which did not and could not adapt itself to the new requirements of the revolutionary epoch introduced by imperialism and the war. Instead of promoting the proletarian revolution, the dominant Socialism was a fetter upon the revolution and betrayed the revolution. This is not true alone of Russia, Germany and Austria; it is true of every European nation, except Norway and Italy, where the tactics and requirements of the new revolutionary struggle are being adopted. Everywhere else, including the United States, the dominant Socialism pursues its old legalistic and corrupting policy, is the slave of petty bourgeois illusions, has its face turned to the past and not to the future, is not aware of the call to international action.

Out of life itself, and the relation of Marxism to life, the Bolsheviks and the proletarian revolution in Russia and Germany have developed the new policy and tactics of revolutionary Socialism:

rally the proletariat for the immediate revolutionary struggle against capitalism and imperialism; abandon the old tactics of parliamentary conciliation and compromise; depend upon the proletarian class struggle alone; carry on this class struggle by means of revolutionary mass action and the dictatorship of the proletariat!

These are the immediate purposes and tactics imposed upon Socialism by the prevailing conditions; these are the immediate purposes and tactics of the Bolsheviks, which alone can make Socialism vital and vitalizing.

Nor are these simply the purposes and tactics required when the proletarian revolution is actually in action; they are necessary in preparing the revolution, in preparing the forces that will direct the revolution to the conquest of power by the proletariat.

While the proletariat is revolutionizing capitalism, it is equally revolutionizing Socialism; what is the response of American Socialism to this epochal circumstance?

The Socialist Labor Party never responded adequately to the Bolshevik call to action, in spite of its revolutionary pretensions. Shortly after the Bolsheviks conquered power, the National Secretary of the S.L.P. published an article in the "Weekly People," declaring, in substance, that a proletarian revolution was impossible in Russia, because of its economically undeveloped condition and because the proletariat was not organized into

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