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POLITICAL
AFFAIRS

**THE MEANING OF
WATTS**

Editorial
Comment

Herbert
Aptheker

William C.
Taylor

EXISTENTIALISM AND MARXISM

Sidney Finkelstein

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Watts and the "War on Poverty"

Nothing has so glaringly disclosed the essential hollowness of the Johnson "war on poverty" as has the recent explosion in Watts. This violent upheaval had its roots in the long history of jim crow discrimination, robbery and brutality inflicted on the residents of that slum ghetto. But it was particularly a reaction to the unrelieved mass unemployment and misery which remains the lot of the Negro people in what has been so loudly proclaimed as an era of prosperity and plenty.

Urgent Need: Decent Housing and Jobs

The wretched economic condition of the inhabitants of Watts is amply described in the article by William C. Taylor in this issue. As he points out, fully one-third are without work and more than half are dependent on relief—and this while the Administration hails the reduction of the official unemployment rate to 4.5 per cent. Nor is this state of affairs peculiar to Watts; it is characteristic of Negro ghettos throughout the country. In Oakland, California, in 37 census tracts containing 91 per cent of the city's Negro population, unemployment in 1960 ranged from 20 to 32 per cent. In Oakland's poverty area, "the flats," were to be found 85 per cent of the city's relief case-load and 79 per cent of all aid to families of dependent children. (A. J. Lima, "Communists and the War on Poverty," *Political Affairs*, September 1965.) According to the 1964 *Manpower Report of the President*, in one wholly Negro census tract in Detroit, 41 per cent were jobless in 1960, and in census tracts elsewhere with populations 90 per cent Negro or more, the unemployment rates ranged from 24 per cent to 36 per cent. This is according to the *official* figures, which grossly underestimate unemployment. And this situation has changed little since 1960.

Those who do have jobs receive wages far below average, insufficient to provide more than a poverty-stricken existence. All too often, average earnings of heads of families are below the \$3,000 a year poverty line designated by the Administration. In Washington's huge slum ghetto, the Cardozo area, for example, wages paid by the federal government are frequently little more than the \$1.25 an hour legal minimum. In the service industries—the chief other source of

work—wage rates are even lower, and wages of \$45 a week for family heads are common.

The lot of the Negro youth is especially difficult. Here rates of joblessness ranging from 60 per cent upwards are not uncommon, and among teen-agers unemployment is in many cases well-nigh universal.

Equally shocking are the housing conditions. Growing populations are packed ever more tightly into ghetto areas whose housing facilities become increasingly fewer and more dilapidated. And here they are subjected to the most merciless rent-gouging and robbery at the hands of unscrupulous white landlords and merchants. Low-cost public housing remains infinitesimal, and urban redevelopment projects serve only to remove housing from the reach of the Negro poor.

An article in *Commonweal* (June 11, 1965) tells of 100,000 families in New York waiting—in vain—for apartments in public housing facilities. In Washington, writes James Ridgeway in the *New Republic* ("John's Model City: The Poverty Program in Washington," February 13, 1965): "There are 6,000 families waiting in line for public housing; estimates indicate that public housing is needed for 40,000 families. At present, 8,000 public housing units are in operation; 750 more are being built, far too few." And this is duplicated in city after city.

Such is the heritage of jim crow. And such are the most burning needs of the Negro people—jobs at decent wages and housing fit for human beings to live in. In the face of these needs, the Johnson program has shown itself to be pitifully inadequate.

The Inadequacy of the Johnson Program

In relation to what the problem demands, the sums provided under the Economic Opportunity Act still border on the negligible. The first year's outlays totaled less than \$800 million. For the coming year, \$1.8 billion has been authorized, and though much is made of the increase, it is generally acknowledged that many times that amount is required. How meager these programs are is indicated by the observation of Charles E. Silberman ("The Mixed-Up War on Poverty," *Fortune*, August 1965) that whereas New York City received \$25 million in the first year from the Office of Economic Opportunity, its welfare budget alone was more than \$800 million and its public-school budget was about \$1 billion. And even these much larger outlays, says Silberman, have admittedly done little to reduce poverty.

Moreover, the Johnson program skirts the basic problems of jobs and housing, and confines itself in the main to peripheral aspects as training, counseling and other measures of a social-work character.

Those measures designed to provide jobs are woefully limited, both in quantity and quality of the proffered employment.

The Job Corps program provides for a mere 40,000 youth in its first year and an ultimate maximum of only 100,000. Last March, shortly after the program was launched, Barbara Carter wrote in *The Reporter* (March 25, 1965) that by June 250,000 postcard applications were expected with but 20,000 places available, and with applicants faced with indefinite waiting periods and no provisions for work in the interim. Furthermore, youth with criminal records or with mental or emotional disturbances—indeed, those most in need of such programs—were largely excluded.

The Neighborhood Youth Corps program, which provides temporary employment for students and dropouts, covered only 145,000 in the summer of 1965 and will cover only 160,00 in 1966—a mere fraction of those who need work. (*New York Times*, September 5, 1965.) Then there is the much-touted Youth Opportunity Campaign, which Vice President Humphrey claimed had produced nearly 900,000 jobs by late August through appeals to employers (*New York Times*, August 22, 1965). But this is a greatly inflated figure; it is conceded that a large part of these young people would have found jobs without the campaign, and that many employers "cooperated" by merely offering jobs which would have been open in any case.

As for Negro youth, they have scarcely been touched by these job programs. Thus, in all of New York City only 17,200 were involved in the Neighborhood Youth Corps, and only part of them Negro, in the face of the program director's estimate that at least 80,000 were in need of it. Moreover, a cut to a mere 7,500 is threatened in the appropriation for the coming year (*New York Times*, September 1, 1965).

The housing situation remains totally unrelieved. Johnson's plea for the improvement and beautification of our metropolitan areas, says the *Commonweal* article referred to above, "would not, even if carried out tomorrow, make any difference to the 5,000 slum dwellers piled layer upon layer in the 27 rotting tenements . . . on East 100th Street in New York." The President's call for 35,000 low-rent apartments a year is less than a tenth of what is required to house properly the 38 millions now living in slums.

The rent subsidy program contained in the new Housing Act could be an important instrument, among others, for meeting the housing problem. But it involves an expenditure ranging only from \$30 million the first year to \$150 million after four years, enough to provide subsidies for but a limited number. Most important, the housing for

which the rent subsidies will be available, to be privately built by non-profit organizations, has yet to come into existence. And the subsidies will cover only those tenants *accepted* by these private organizations. In short, one year after the launching of the highly publicized "war," there is literally no improvement for the Negro slum dwellers who need it most.

Poverty Funds Diverted to High Salaries and Profits

Despite these severe limitations of the "war on poverty," the projects launched under its benefit can nevertheless be of some benefit, even though small. More significant, they provide a base for organized action capable of future expansion. But even these positive features have been largely negated by the manner in which the local anti-poverty programs have been set up. The Economic Opportunity Act places major emphasis on community programs and the largest single allotment of funds is for such purposes. These funds are granted initially on a basis of 90 per cent federal coverage, with the remaining 10 per cent to be borne by the municipalities or agencies involved. Almost universally, these funds have been seized upon by city administrations as a political bonanza—as a source of new patronage and a means of building bases for city political machines in the poor communities.

Almost at once agencies dominated by city officials were set up and high-salaried staffs employed. Not untypical is the situation described by *U.S. News and World Report* (June 14, 1965) in St. Louis:

The general manager of the poverty program . . . gets \$25,000 a year, the same as the Governor of Missouri, and \$10,000 more than the State attorney general. He has a deputy drawing \$20,000, two other assistants at \$16,000 each, a business manager at \$15,000, an executive assistant at \$12,000 and a chief accountant at \$9,600.

In Los Angeles, the article states, the head of the agency similarly draws \$25,000 a year, and two assistants receive \$23,000 and \$21,000. In other cities, top salaries of \$22,000 are not uncommon. If we add the salaries of secretaries, stenographers, clerks and other employees, administrative expenses are indeed considerable, especially in relation to the small over-all sums allotted to the anti-poverty programs.

Private welfare agencies have also sought a voice in the control of these anti-poverty bodies and a share in the funds provided. The result has been an alliance of city officials and welfare agencies in support of programs based purely on a social welfare approach no different from that of the past.

The big corporations, too, have found in the anti-poverty setup an opportunity for profit, which they have not hesitated to grasp. *Business Week* (April 3, 1965) noted that 32 companies had submitted bids to operate urban training centers and that a number of contracts had been granted, including such companies as General Electric, International Business Machines, Philco, and American Telephone and Telegraph. It referred to a critical article in the *Washington Post* headed "Big Business Seeks Profits in Poverty." And Erwin Kroll, in an article entitled "Progress on Poverty" (*The Progressive*, July 1965), commented that "financial writers have noted the profit potential of 'the expanding social legislation market.'"

Resistance to Participation of Poor in Program

With all these fingers in the till, there is not likely to be much left over for the poor. And not surprisingly these forces, especially the city officials, have strenuously resisted the participation of the poor themselves in the anti-poverty bodies. Their involvement is made mandatory by Title II of the Economic Opportunity Act, which calls for "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in the planning and administration of the programs. And since the Office of Economic Opportunities has insisted on taking this requirement with some degree of seriousness, it has become the subject of widespread controversy, with regard to both the inclusion of representatives of the poor on city-wide "umbrella" committees and the establishment of separately financed community organizations speaking for the people living in them.

The mayors of most cities have taken a dim view of these provisions, fearing the incursion of Washington politicians into their territory on the one hand and the establishment of independent bases of political power in the poor communities on the other. In a number of cities, administrative bodies were set up excluding representatives of these communities. Protests by Negro and other local groups, however, coupled with refusal of the OEO to approve grants in such cases, led in a number of instances to changes in composition. In New York, an initial committee dominated by city officials was replaced by a 62-man policy-making Council Against Poverty including six members to be named by community committees, and this was later enlarged to 100, with 32 places for representatives from 16 poor communities. In Philadelphia, elections were conducted in twelve poverty pockets to select a twelve-man committee in each and one representative from each committee to a city-wide Anti-Poverty Action Committee of 31. In New York, in addition, separate grants were made to community

organizations such as Harlem's Haryou-Act, the Lower East Side's Mobilization for Youth and the Brownsville-East New York Community Committee in Brooklyn. There have been similar developments in other cities. In Syracuse, New York, a further step was taken with the financing of a pilot project under the aegis of Syracuse University for the establishment of independent community organizations devoted to mass struggle against excessive rents, unsatisfactory housing conditions and other ghetto evils.

Such developments have served to arouse the ire of many city officials and to intensify their resistance. The director of the Housing Authority in Syracuse complained: "We are experiencing a class struggle in the traditional Karl Marx style and I don't like it." (*New York Times*, June 24, 1965.) At the Annual Conference of Mayors in June, Mayors Samuel W. Yorty of Los Angeles and John F. Shelley of San Francisco introduced a resolution charging OEO with "fostering class struggle." (Silberman, *Fortune*, August 1965.) Some mayors, notably Yorty and Chicago's Mayor Daly, fought bitterly—and successfully—against any inroads on their control of the anti-poverty agencies.

In Los Angeles, federal funds were held up for nine months because of Yorty's adamant refusal to accept participation of the poor, and the people of Watts were thus deprived of whatever benefits were available. These things contributed in no small measure to the ultimate eruption, which Yorty then met with such unprecedented brutality. Subsequently, Johnson sent Undersecretary of State LeRoy Collins to meet with Yorty, and together they cooked up a "compromise" which *New Republic* (September 4, 1965) described in these words:

The Los Angeles agreement carries the national poverty program to its final absurdity. The byzantine setup provides for a 25-member Economic and Youth Opportunities Agency. Of the 25 members, seven will represent the poverty areas. Most of the rest represent city and county agencies or are from private welfare agencies and generally are behind the Mayor. Yorty has gone to extreme lengths to protect himself even from the seven poor who are selected in this curious manner: Governor Collins appointed 10 prominent Los Angeles citizens, all of them Yorty supporters, and only one or two of them from the slums. They in turn will select a panel of 14 poor people. From this panel, the Mayor will select four members; the county supervisors will select three. These seven will represent the poor for an interim period while the American Arbitration Association constructs a "democratic process" by means of which seven others can be chosen on a permanent basis. . . . It seems unlikely that the Los Angeles poverty program will ever

reflect any other aspirations than those of Yorty.

This follows a similar surrender in Chicago. And with this, says the *New Republic*, the OEO "has come to adopt all the trappings of a Colonial Office."

For A Real "War On Poverty"

When all the foregoing features are added together, it is clear that the "war on poverty" has all too little substance—and for the people in the Negro ghettos virtually none. And so long as this continues to be the case, so long as no serious attack is made on the poverty of the ghetto, there will inevitably be more explosions—more such violent expressions of refusal to tolerate endlessly the poverty and degradation imposed by jim crow.

What is essential, of course, is the mounting of a real war against poverty. And in relation to this, the tug of war which has developed over participation of the poor is not unimportant. The fight for maximum representation on citywide agencies, and even more the fight to establish independent organizations of the poor in the communities, can become the means of making such bodies the instruments for an all-out anti-poverty war which tackles the central problems.

What is needed is a massive public works program to provide jobs for the unemployed, both Negro and white. What is needed is a national program for the reconstruction of slum areas, which would both tackle a basic problem and provide jobs for many workers within these areas. In the words of the Communist Party's *Program to End Ghettos and Fight Poverty*, it is necessary to "tear down the slums, renovate sound structures and erect low and middle income integrated projects at rents in keeping with the average income of the present residents and with subsidies for those who cannot afford the rent."

It is such programs as these which form the core of a serious fight against poverty. The mobilization of the people of Watts and other ghetto communities, the trade unions, the civil rights forces and the working people generally for such struggles, is the key to compelling the Johnson Administration to treat the war on poverty more seriously and making it a crusade capable of producing noteworthy advances.

Finally, not the least of the obstacles to a real war on poverty, as we pointed out in our editorial of last month, is the continued escalation of U.S. aggression in Vietnam and the consequent diversion of growing sums to military purposes. The welfare of the people of Watts, and of the poor everywhere, is inseparable from the fight to end the war in Vietnam.

Storm Over Los Angeles

Recent events in South Los Angeles, publicized as the Watts riot, have highlighted the need for some examination and re-examination of the fight for Negro freedom and dignity. They have sharply focused the eyes of all on the Negro's demand for full equality, decent jobs and housing, an end to *de facto* segregation, not only in schools but in the purchase of food, clothing and other necessities of life, and to be treated by county, city and federal officials, and particularly the police forces, as citizens of this our United States.

All of these demands were contained in the resentment that exploded during the week of August 11 to 17, 1965. To see the Watts explosion only as a riot with looting, burning and destruction featured by anarchy, is wrong. Nor was it a revolution. There was no attempt to take power or to change the power structure. The rebellion was not prepared, nor was it led by any group. The press, radio, television, together with the police, through dissemination of untruths and half truths, tried to project the impression that it was a race riot. Stories of snipers, particularly, were broadcast over the mass media day and night, though to this date no such story has been verified. Actually, the news media played a shameful role during the course of the upsurge, and even the worst of the reporters had to admit that they were often asked by participants in the events, "When are you going to tell our side?"

Conditions That Sparked the Explosion

The spontaneous action developed out of a long, constant struggle for all the issues mentioned. It had its roots in widespread chronic unemployment, which is even worse in the Green Meadows area, and the locale of the beginning of the explosion. Unemployment in this area runs as high as six or seven times that of the average of the city and county of Los Angeles. Thirty-four per cent of the adults are unemployed, and sixty per cent of the total population is on relief. When obtained, employment is at the lowest wages. In 1960, in the Los Angeles-Long Beach area, the average income of Negro men was \$3,740 per year, and that of women \$1,727 a year. The average income of white men was \$5,465, and that of white women \$1,957 per year. Coupled with this, the Negro worker must pay as high as \$6 per week for transportation by bus to his job, and this is a very slow method of going to work. Because of the inefficient

and expensive public transportation in Los Angeles, there are many more automobiles than in any other part of the state or country. Yet, in this heart of the Negro ghetto, almost one-half of the population must depend upon the inadequate public transportation.

Los Angeles is primarily a city of small homeowners. Only 42.6 per cent of its population are renters. In the Watts-Green Meadows area 68 per cent are renters. Many have the idea that the area is mainly a transient area with the vast majority of its residents having just arrived from the South. While it is true that this community, like most of Los Angeles and California, has a high number of newcomers, especially from the South, a recent survey showed that 50 per cent of the population has lived in their present homes for more than five years.

A sign of the poverty in the Watts-Green Meadows district is the absence of banks. The population has no use for them, and most of the small businessmen in the area bank where they live.

Although gains in minority representation have been registered in Los Angeles in the past few years, these gains are not fully reflected in the political life of the community.

The greater part of the community in revolt is located in the 21st Congressional District, represented by "Gus" Hawkins. His attempts to hasten the war on poverty in this district were stymied by the Mayor and the City Council, who were attempting to use the war on poverty to further their own political ambitions.

The representative to the State Legislature from Watts-Green Meadows is Reverend Ferrell, who has aroused the ire of the district because of his do-nothing policy. At the time of the writing of this article, not one word has been released from his office concerning the upsurge or alleviation of the conditions causing it.

The elected white representatives of the area are Kenneth Hahn, against whom I ran a little over a year ago in an attempt to change the lily-white composition of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and John Gibson, a member of the City Council, who has been very weak. It is important to note that although Gibson and Hahn are elected officials from the deprived areas of South Los Angeles, they both have been part of the machine playing footsie with the mayor in sabotaging the funds for the war on poverty. They have been strong supporters of Chief of Police Parker, Los Angeles County Sheriff Pitchess and their policies, which result in law enforcement by discrimination. By the way, Sheriff Pitchess was Southern California co-chairman for Goldwater in the 1964 presidential campaign.

The fight against discrimination received a set-back with the passage of Proposition 14 last November. The policies of the Parker-led police department, backed by Mayor Yorty, represent somewhat the same enforcement of law in the Negro community of Los Angeles

as is found in the Negro communities of Alabama, Mississippi, etc. The use of chauvinist epithets to and about Negroes is common among policemen. Raids on Negro homes are conducted without warrant at the whim of the police, and fear of savage reprisals prevents the people from making official complaints.

Police Violence Goes Unchallenged

The Negro community of Los Angeles contains all the characteristics of an occupied city, with "law and order" maintained by Parker's policemen at the behest of Mayor Yorty and most of the City Council, under orders of the bourgeoisie to maintain the "status quo."

For the average middle-class white the sight of a police uniform is an assurance of protection and security. He has little reason to distrust that uniform, having, as a rule, no personal experience with police arrogance, arbitrary acts and brutality. He may resent being stopped by a traffic officer and cited for a traffic violation, but he is not likely to be subjected to racist abuse, violence or arbitrary arrest in the process, his car and person searched on the biased theory that his pigmentation makes him a criminal. The accosting officer is most urbane and polite with middle-class whites. Such whites are, therefore, inclined to dismiss as unfounded the plethora of complaints from the Negro and Mexican-American communities of police brutality.

This is true, even of white liberals and white workers, despite the long history of police violence against American non-conformists and workers, white and black, engaged in strike struggles against starvation wages and miserable working conditions. As an example, the Los Angeles white community, with few exceptions, felt no outrage over the unprovoked police attack on the Black Muslims in 1961, during which unarmed Muslims were killed and disabled. Nor was that community concerned over the harassment of Los Angeles City Councilman Billy Mills by white policemen, who cannot conceive that a Negro, even an elected official, should have the right to use a city-owned car. On several occasions, the police halted Mills, challenging his right to the use of the automobile.

Most Los Angeles whites also viewed with complacency, if not approval, Parker's arrogant hostility to Negro Councilman Thomas Bradley at a City Council hearing on the causes and impact of the Watts upsurge. It must be observed that not a single white newspaper protested the indignity inflicted on Negro publisher Leon Washington in front of his newspaper office by white police.

Conceded that the average white person has no personal experience with police brutality and harassment, there are still criteria by which he can judge the truth of the countless brutality charges

emanating from minority communities. Parker has never made a secret of his contempt and hatred for Negroes and Mexican-Americans. Of our Mexican-American citizens, he commented, before the Federal Commission on Civil Rights, "Some of these people are not far removed from the wild tribes of inner Mexico." *Frontier* magazine, May, 1962, quoted Parker, "You cannot ignore the genes in the behavior of people." And fresh in everyone's mind is Parker's comparison of the Negro population of Watts with "monkeys in the zoo."

Is it not logical to expect such racist statements by the Los Angeles Chief of Police to have a powerful effect on his men, inducing them to emulate his fascist mentality? Can any one doubt that Parker's racist statements helped to pave the way for the infiltration of the Los Angeles police department by Birchites and other ultra-Right elements to the detriment of the impartial enforcement of law and order?

Wrath Directed Against All Exploiters

Even the less dishonest of the businessmen in the area practice legal robbery. Those who still have remnants of a conscience excuse it by pointing to the poverty of the people, declaring they are a credit risk, that they, the businessmen, must protect themselves by robbing. Those businessmen, whose conscience has been trampled upon by the competition of capitalism, exploit the community to the fullest, using high prices, high interest rates on installment purchases, and quick repossession to get the largest possible profit. Liquor and other stores charge a fee for cashing payroll, welfare or relief checks and, in addition, demand that the bearers of these checks purchase at exorbitant prices food and liquor which are not needed. While insurance rates for the area generally are high, to a Negro the rate goes even higher. Super-profits are wrung by these businessmen without conscience from the poorest people of the area.

While the uprising was spontaneous and unorganized, this did not prevent its participants from focusing their wrath on those white merchants who were notorious for their anti-Negro policies and robbery of the community. It must be recognized, however, that that wrath was also directed at some businesses owned by Negroes, Japanese and Mexican-Americans, while some white-owned businesses were protected by the community on the ground that their owners were "decent white people."

The white communications media has deliberately sought to conceal the fact that the cry "Get Whitey" was aimed not at all whites, but at unscrupulous white merchants, the white police and those sensation-seeking white outsiders who visited the embattled ghetto to enjoy the sight of Negroes being shot down and whipped into subjection.

A New Awakening and Alignment

The events of August were a revolt against deprivation, robbery and oppression, and some people outside the Negro community are beginning to see the need for new approaches to the problems. Certain steps have been taken to hasten the start of the war on poverty. Some state offices have moved into the area, where their facilities will be more readily available to the residents. Organizations and leaders outside the Negro community are beginning to recognize the need for a struggle against police brutality. In particular, the Young Democrats, certain California Democratic Council clubs, the First Unitarian Church, the A.C.L.U., the A.D.A., and some Left groups have been vocal. The Negro Councilmen have become more or less responsive to the issues of the community.

Bourgeois nationalism is not the dominant ideology of the Negro community of South Los Angeles. Aside from the Muslims, no other nationalist group has any sizeable strength. Although resentment against police harrassment of the Muslims has been widely expressed, this does not indicate full agreement with either their religion, or, more important, their policies. The residents of the ghetto want equality. One of the young leaders from Watts expressed it this way, "We don't just want civil rights, we want *equal* rights."

The ghetto Negro rejects any unequal alliance with white groups in which the latter seek to dictate the program, policies and tactics of Negro movements. He is also inclined to challenge the traditional Negro middle-class leadership on the grounds of its alienation from the Negro masses and its historic policies of accommodation, policies that find reinforcement in the compulsive desire of Negro middle-class elements for acceptance by the white-power structure.

The South Los Angeles uprising gave dramatic expression to the growing dissatisfaction with the old line Negro leadership, a phenomenon that is occurring in the ghettos across the country.

Within the Negro community a new realignment is beginning to appear, which can have a real impact on the 1966 elections. Until August, the two Negro representatives to the State legislature, Dymally and Ferrel, and two of the three Negro City Councilmen, Mills and Lindsay, had been pious followers of the Unruh-Yorty forces in the Democratic Party. In the Council, Bradley was the exception. However, two changes have been made.

First, with the exception of Assemblyman Ferrel, all elected Negroes have publicly broken with Mayor Yorty, on the issue of police brutality. At the same time, Dymally, Negro State Assemblyman from the Central Section, which is in the South Los Angeles area of the revolt, not only broke with Yorty on the issue of police brutality, but has taken the offensive in exposing the wanton deliberate attack on the Muslim Temple by the police. He has since been joined by Councilman Mills.

Congressman Hawkins played no small role in fighting for the concessions to guarantee that the war on poverty get off the ground quickly. Billy Mills and Gilbert Lindsay, while Thomas Bradley was out of the country, stood alone in the City Council in placing demands for investigation, and in opposition to a move in the City Council to whitewash Parker by a vote of commendation.

Second, the influence of Unruh in the Negro community is waning. A clever and shrewd politician, Unruh remained silent for almost three weeks, and then assumed a position which can best be described as on the fence.

Aside from the Negro officials, Governor Brown has been the only state official to go into the community and speak to the people, and, of course, is fast mending his political fences. At the same time, however, he continues publicly to support Parker.

The Immediate Issue and Role of The Left

The immediate and most pressing issue now is the freedom and defense of those arrested in the upsurge, as of this writing, 3,345. Viciousness of the worst colonial oppression has been expressed by city judges and prosecutors toward the victims of the police. At this writing, from two to three hundred children between eight and sixteen years of age still remain in the jail called Juvenile Hall. Excessive bail is demanded for all, whether old or young, with or without records. The legal load on attorneys and organizations of defense is enormous. This problem is complicated by the methods the police department has instituted in categorizing Negroes as criminals.

Any Negro citizen who has been arrested, whether or not convicted, or even charged, is characterized a criminal by the police. Therefore, many who have been arrested during the August events are characterized as criminal because they have such phony records.

Since August, many more are being arrested, and their possessions taken from them. The police have been conducting house to house searches in the South Los Angeles area for so-called "loot" taken from burned-out businesses. Thus, a family which has a new television set, new furniture, etc., and which is unable to immediately produce evidence of its purchase is arrested, the furniture confiscated—and a new criminal record is in the making.

Although rumors and reports of snipers operating during the explosion were rampant, not one victim of such snipers has been found. Of the people killed, 32 out of 37 were Negro, and all were victims of the guns of the police or National Guard. In Long Beach, after terrorization of the community following a printed report that a policeman was shot by Negroes, the police finally were forced to admit that he was killed by his policeman buddy. The other police-

man (a deputy sheriff) killed during the events is rumored to be a victim of the same fate.

The California Negro Leadership Conference, recently held at the University of California at Los Angeles, has called for the erection of a monument to those killed in the August upsurge. The A.D.A. and other organizations are calling for full freedom for those arrested.

The Party has played some role in the struggle for the demands of the people. During the curfew period, it mobilized the Left for relief in food and necessities in the first days. The *Peoples World* and *The Worker* carried full coverage of the events. Thousands of copies of the *Peoples World* were distributed in the community and were well received; many community centers not only accepted the paper, but helped to distribute it.

The experience of the Left was mobilized in the defense, and helped the United Civil Rights Committee, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Southside Defense Committee, etc., in approaches to the problems of bail and defense.

And, finally, the Party played no small role in initiating activity in the white communities to understand and to see clearly the events of August. Despite the red-baiting of Yorty and Parker, the Communist Party developed supporting actions.

New Base of Negro-White Unity

What are the conclusions that can be arrived at?

This upsurge was not motivated by any one issue, but developed out of the feeling of being "fed up" with unemployment, double standards in employment and income, police brutality, welfare insults and inhuman attitudes, double standards in the price and quality of food, furniture and other commodities, social worker and do-good approaches of whites, and from professional and middle-class Negroes.

The upsurge has resulted in a growing respect for the Negro and a deepening of the understanding of the fight of the Negro. Many are beginning to see that this fight is not a simple civil rights struggle, but a struggle for full economic, political and social equality. The fact that the "burning and looting" was not just a wild riot is shown by the fact that homes were not burned by design in the sixty-square-mile area. Ire was vented only against those places that had been cheating the people, whether owned by Negro, Japanese, white, etc.

There has developed a strong and growing unity in the Negro community. The vast majority of the Negro population felt as though they were participants, even though the active participants were relatively few in number. (About 200,000 people live in the area.)

The organizations of the Negro community have been maturing. Recently organized, the Watts Labor Community Council—composed of representatives from United Auto Workers, Laborers and Hod-carriers, Packinghouse Workers, Building Service Employees, Laundry Workers, County Employees and Social Workers Unions—has played a role in pressuring the Central Labor Union to act in the interests of the community.

The youth of the Watts-Green Meadows area have organized into a movement called SLANT (Self-Leadership for all Nationalities), and are ready to play a role in winning some of the demands of the community. New leadership has already begun to play a role, and especially is this true of Negro women.

Many committees, official and unofficial, are investigating and conducting hearings on the August revolt. In most cases, there is an attempt to whitewash the police. However, this was prevented by Councilman Thomas Bradley in a Committee of the City Council which is probing the situation. Through probing for the facts, and the searching questions, the open chauvinism of Parker was further exposed, and the Committee is continuing its investigation.

The Governor's investigation committee, headed by McCone, former head of the C.I.A., is viewed dubiously by the community. The role of the C.I.A. in Asia and Africa, as well as Latin America, is well known. In addition, another member of the Committee, the Reverend Charles Cassasa, a professor at Loyola University, a Catholic university, has been connected with ultra-Right activities. The work of this committee is awaited skeptically with an attitude of "wait and see."

Negro-white unity is developing on a more healthy base than ever before. This is the base of mutual understanding, and not invasion of whites into the Negro community. Outstanding activity has been carried on by California Democratic Council Clubs in the education of their own communities, the white communities.

Within the Negro community, there has developed a higher and stronger level of unity than ever before. This development has grown out of the recognition of the Negro middle class of their responsibilities in relation to the aspirations of the poor and the working Negro people.

IDEAS IN OUR TIME

HERBERT APTHEKER

The Watts Ghetto Uprising *

The Watts Ghetto Uprising of mid-August, 1965 is a turning point in history, just as the Nat Turner slave uprising of mid-August, 1831 was a turning point. The system of American Negro slavery never was the same after the fierce rebellion by people refusing to be treated like cattle; it tried greater brutality and it tried greater concessions but it never was the same—it was fearful and defensive and boastful but it could sense doom. Sensing doom it shouted the louder and acted the more defiant, but it *was* doomed and more and more the masters of that damned system knew it.

That made the martyrdom worth while.

And the Turner uprising awakened the country as a whole, too. It came eight months after Garrison had issued his *Liberator* manifesto from a Boston garret; it made the nation look at that sheet more carefully and it made Garrison look at slavery more carefully. After Turner the slave-masters are never the same as before; after Turner the movement to end slavery is never the same as before.

That made the martyrdom worth while, too.

The system of American jim crow will never be the same after Watts; all the Senators and scribes and smart men and cops and real estate brokers, all the Eastlands and Byrds and Lawrences and Buckleys and Hoovers and Parkers are talking big and writing big; are demanding sterner repression and more bullets but they are shaking in their boots and they can smell their doom. They're talking big but they're not sleeping well and they have cause enough to toss and turn. Again, clear as the burning day and the burning night, the American Negro people said we are people not dogs; we are men and women, not cattle; we are human, not sheep. We are "tired, tired, tired," said the Negro woman to the astonished white reporter with his pad and pencil; "go to hell, and take your slums with you," says Almena Lomax, publisher of the *Los Angeles Tribune*, to the lying and chauvinist *Time* editor; "I'm not going over to

* The second installment of this article will be published in the November issue.

IDEAS IN OUR TIME

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Vietnam to fight for the white man when I can stay here and die for my black baby," shouts a man to the white Minister; Walter Rugaber, who sends a "special to the New York Times," stops a man "with a grease-stained mechanic's suit with a rip down the back," and asks him: "What do you think of the rioting?" Said the mechanic with the ripped suit:

We have come to life. You get me a good job and pay me—we're satisfied. If you don't—well, we're not going back into slavery.

* * *

There is evidence that some in the higher echelons of power comprehend at least to a degree how fundamental is this so-called Negro question and Watts has helped them see it or, at any rate, has caused them to assert it. Tom Wicker, writing from Washington, in an article placed on the editorial page of *New York Times* (Aug. 17), says that what is at stake is "not just the fortunes of twenty million black Americans, or the protection of property, or the maintenance of some tenuous racial peace"; these are very important, he declares, but really at stake is "the ability of the American idea . . . to function." When the *Times* says "the American idea" it means, of course, the "free enterprise" system. Wicker, in fact, spells this out with an explicitness that reflects the degree of alarm; the concluding words in his article are: ". . . probably not since the bank holiday in 1933 has the established order in America been more drastically challenged; and now as then much of that order has to be changed *if we were to preserve the rest.*" I've added italics for it is news indeed when the *New York Times* confesses that the whole social order is at stake and is deeply challenged and that nothing but significant changes in that order will preserve its essence.

The next day, August 18, again on the editorial page, C. L. Sulzberger was writing from Athens—at that moment scene of the freshest challenge to the immensely battered American New Order—and what he was writing about from the capital of Greece was the so-called Negro question back in the United States. Mr. Sulzberger's dispatch also had a new quality of urgency to it. He refers to "disagreeable interracial experience"—he means the Watts ghetto uprising!—and calls for fuller "adjustment"—he means greater concessions (the man is a master at not saying what he means, and so is chief diplomatic correspondent for the *Times*)—but here is the central paragraph and for Sulzberger, the writing is astonishingly direct, which again, I think, connotes alarm:

The entire procedure of adjustment [explained above] must be speeded up. This will cost not only immense sums but also immense effort. And it is not only a moral need and a matter of internal U.S. policy. *It is also a matter of vital foreign policy.*

I've italicized because the *Times* man from abroad means that the world isn't what it was and that color and colored folks really count and that U.S. foreign policy is in trouble enough but that if things like Watts keep lighting up the U.S. portion of the globe then the boys running it not only will not conquer the globe, they'll lose that portion.

* * *

The ruling-class, commercial press in the United States is a corrupt and lying one. It lies about the poor; it lies about working people; it lies about working people in motion; it lies about mass struggle; it lies about revolutionary movements. When something is really consequential, the ruling-class press lies about it, and the more consequential, the more glaring the lies.

But if one may truly say that the ruling-class press in the United States regularly lies in all such matters, what shall one say about that press when it comes to the Negro people? Such a word as "lies" is inadequate. When it comes to the Negro people, the dominant press in the United States from the first newspaper over 50 years ago to tomorrow's newspaper, has consistently and maliciously distorted, prevaricated, omitted, falsified, exaggerated, provoked; it has been a central instrument in fostering and bulwarking the overwhelming racism that is consuming this country. But the height of its lying comes when the Negro people are so overwhelmingly in motion, in action, that even that press must say *something* about them; then, when ignoring will not do, when "joking" will not do, when the conventional distortion will not do—then one sees an outpouring of venom and fear and hatred in one conglomeration of lies such as can be found only in reading the nazi press on Jews, or the Right-wing press on communists.

The Watts ghetto uprising was reported by the dominant press in the United States the way, no doubt, the Hitler press reported the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Sub-humans, beasts on the loose, on the prowl, killing and destroying without reason and purpose and without mercy. Indeed, such is the reporting that even simple and basic facts—for example, exactly how many died?—cannot be ascertained with any confidence three weeks after the event.

It is fairly clear by now that somewhere between 30 and 35 people were killed as a result of the uprising and that about nine

hundred were injured; property damage is still highly uncertain but no doubt several and perhaps scores of millions of dollars worth were destroyed and/or damaged. Of those killed, at most three were white of whom two were policemen and one a fireman; of those injured practically all, again, were Negro men, women and children. And of the two policemen killed, the best evidence now seems to be that they were killed by police weapons, in one case involving a scuffle with a sheriff's shotgun; who held the weapon and who fired it is exceedingly dubious,* and in the other case the shooting of a policeman by another in a mistake.

It is certain that the order given by Chief of Police Parker was "shoot to kill" and that the order to the National Guard from Lt. Gov. Anderson was "shoot to kill"; it is certain, also, that at least 28 Negro people were shot dead and that many more—scores apparently, if not hundreds—were wounded. It is certain that volleys were indiscriminately fired into homes and—most notoriously—into the headquarters of the Moslems, in the latter case under the pretext that those headquarters were a veritable arsenal—though after the fusillade and well-publicized raid and summary arrest of scores of people the police confessed that neither pistol, revolver nor rifle was found.

It is certain also that almost five thousand men, women and children were arrested in operations that found all pretense of concern over law and due process thrown into discard. Among those arrested were five hundred juveniles and as of this writing—that is, about four weeks after the arrests began—four hundred of these youngsters were still in jail. These included children ranging in age from 10 through 17, with a large number below the age of 13**; and of

*The *Los Angeles Times*, a rabidly Right-wing and anti-Negro paper, nevertheless, in reporting the indictment of three Negroes for the killing of deputy sheriff Ludlow, stated that deputy sheriff Lauer—Ludlow's partner—"told the grand jury he approached the car [in which the accused were seated] carrying a shotgun and one of the occupants grabbed it. Ludlow rushed up, Lauer said, and was shot in the stomach when the shotgun discharged during a struggle for the weapon." (Cited paper, Sept. 1, 1965.) There is an excellent account of the press distortions by Sam Kushner in the *People's World*, Sept. 4; challenges and exposés also have appeared in several August issues of the *Afro-American* and *Los Angeles Tribune*.

**No human being will ever get over the wonder of the full-page photograph in *Life Magazine*, Aug. 27, showing a 9-year old and a 12-year old having their "mug shots" made before a sheriff's truck. It instantly reminded this viewer of the photograph of the marine frisking a little boy for weapons at the time of the Korean "police action."

the four thousand adults arrested, two thousand were still in jail four weeks after their arrests and almost none of them had yet faced a judge. The arbitrary and indiscriminate nature of the arrests is shown in the fact that even the Los Angeles district attorney refused to file complaints against 360 people arrested on felony charges and an additional 170 people were dismissed in preliminary hearings—although, of course, all 530 will appear in the files of the Los Angeles police—and of the FBI—as among Negroes arrested—thus helping to confirm what Parker calls “Negro criminality.” While the press, including the liberal press, has been filled with editorials and columns demanding “utmost severity” against the “rioters” I’ve yet to see any concern expressed for these thousands of “war prisoners.” If nothing else, perhaps the International Red Cross can be persuaded to investigate these concentration camps some of which—like Ravensbruck—seem to specialize in incarcerating women and children.

* * *

At once arises the questions: But surely you do not justify violence and looting, defiance of law, disruption of order? Let’s see.

Senator Robert F. Kennedy, in a speech that marks a high point for him,* said:

After all, we are very proud of the fact that we had a revolution and overthrew a government because we were taxed without representation. I think there is no doubt that if Washington or Jefferson or Adams were Negroes in a northern city today, they would be in the forefront of the effort to change the conditions under which Negroes live in our society.

This is fairly direct; remarkably direct for a United States Senator. This writer, however, is able to be more direct.

Washington, Jefferson and Adams were in the forefront of an *armed* effort to change conditions; had the King’s forces captured any of the three he would have had them hanged; indeed, his troops marched on Concord and Lexington with orders to hang John Adams. The motto of Jefferson was: *Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.*

As a matter of fact one has even more pertinent evidence in the

*Delivered before the N. Y. State Convention of Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Spring Valley, N. Y., August 18, 1965. The press reported only brief snatches; the entire text is in *The Congressional Record*, August 24, 1965, pp. 20692-94.

form of a private letter that Jefferson wrote to James Monroe in 1800. Jefferson was then Vice President and was soon to be elected President; Monroe was then Governor of Virginia. Thousands of slaves of Virginia—the docile, passive, contented slaves of ten thousand textbooks—had just plotted insurrection and Richmond, Virginia’s capital, had been saved from probable destruction only by an extraordinary storm and flood that prevented military undertakings. Scores of the docile ones were arrested and they were being sentenced to die by the dozen.

True, both Jefferson and Monroe owned slaves, but both had been revolutionists and one had written the Declaration of Independence and both still were advanced democrats for their time and region. And the slaves had adorned their banners with such slogans as “Liberty or Death” and though Patrick Henry had died in 1799 he had uttered strikingly similar words but a generation before and both Jefferson and Monroe had been stirred by them and had acted in accordance with their message.

So, Monroe as Governor—with the task of approving or disapproving the death sentences—at least was troubled and wrote to Jefferson for guidance. Jefferson replied—all this was strictly private, of course—urging upon Monroe mercy (some of the slaves actually were spared execution—and deported to the West Indies, a dubious improvement). In urging this course, Jefferson explained why: “The other states and the world at large,” Jefferson said, “cannot lose sight of the rights of the two parties, and the object of the unsuccessful one.”

Frederick Douglass, when he urged his Negro compatriots “To Arms” at the time of the Civil War, said the same thing and said it more directly: “. . . in a contest with oppression, the Almighty has no attribute which can take sides with oppressors.”

This Watts Ghetto Uprising was not a war between black and white; it was much more nearly a war between rich and poor and that means between oppressed and oppressor; it was, in fact, with crystal clarity, a war between right and wrong. It was an uprising of those who have been as wronged as a people can be and they were rising up to denounce that wrong.

Who has difficulty—outside of George Lincoln Rockwell—in deciding where right and wrong lay in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising? Did not the Jews fight? Did they not violate law and order? Must one be a Jew to revel in the memory of that event?

Must then one be a Negro to understand the glory of Watts? Why? Why is it “different”?

I remember when studying the Turner uprising in detail some thirty years ago being struck by how the Virginia press of 1831 was reporting the uprising of the Poles against the Czar and how the same press was reporting the uprising of slaves right there in Virginia. The Polish insurrectionists were heroes, were glorifying Mankind; poems in praise of them filled the Virginia newspapers. But the slaves there in Virginia? Banditti, rabble, animals, beasts; and they were put down as though that is what they were; indeed so indiscriminate was the awful slaughter that even the military commander pleaded for a stop.

Why this difference? Well, for one thing Poland was far away and it is not too uncomfortable to praise a rebellion—if it is remote. And Turner was not far away; he was right there. But there was more to it than that: the Poles were white and therefore human; Turner and the scores who marched with him were black and therefore not human.

Dr. Kenneth Clark emphasizes a most significant truth when he writes of "white resistance to the acceptance of the Negro as a human being."* I would myself say that this was particularly true among rich whites but so insidious and so long-lived has been this most filthy and deadly propaganda—not only of the inferiority of the Negro but of his non-humanity (a view, of course, consonant with his status as a slave, i.e., as property)—that it has permeated, to one degree or another, all classes of white society in the United States.

This is the point of the enraging quality of the Los Angeles Chief of Police, Parker, referring to the people of Watts, ". . . like monkeys in a zoo . . ." (*Newsweek*, August 30, 1965, p. 17). This makes explicable the specific American horror of lynching—in some, white mothers have pushed to the front so that they may show their children the burning victim. This is the point of the slang applied to Negro men and women—especially women. This is why *Time* will print such letters as those in its issue of September 13—and such letters it *will* print!—where people say of places like Watts: "They're third-class people . . . I think it's time for napalm . . . hoodlums and baboons . . . these primates . . ." etc.

This can destroy a people obsessed with it; it destroyed the German nation, for the people in the crematoria were not people but Slavs, Poles, Jews, Reds; in this way and with this rationale the

* In his book, *Dark Ghetto* (N. Y., 1965, Harper), p. 17.

crematoria became not unspeakable horrors but useful sewerage projects.

In this connection, I feel impelled to say a special word to Jews. There are five and a half million in the United States—almost half of what's left in this world. Relatively, Jews have not been backward in the struggle for social justice here in the United States including in the battle for Negro liberation; in that connection, none can forget that Schwerner and Goodman were Jews—and, by the way, with John Brown, too, in Kansas was a Jew, August Bondi. Still, as a group and through the leading Jewish organizations and in the leading Jewish newspapers, too little, far too little, has been said and, in particular, done. Have Jewish leaders, have Jewish organizations done enough to ask Negro leaders and Negro organizations how best they could participate?

The United States is a land of ghettos; and in them are incarcerated twenty million men and women and children. If a Jew cannot understand what a ghetto means, who can? Would the Jewish prophets have held their tongues? Would they have been able to rest—day or night—with such an abomination in their land? Rabbi Joachim Prinz joined in the 1963 March on Washington and that was splendid. Still, what did he emphasize on that occasion—and it is Negro leader, Whitney M. Young, Jr., who reminds us.* Rabbi Prinz recalled the days when he was a Rabbi in Berlin early in Hitler's reign and he said:

The most urgent, the most disgraceful, the most shameful and the most tragic problem is silence. A great people which had created a great civilization had become a nation of silent on-lookers. They remained silent in the face of hate, in the face of brutality and in the face of mass murder.

* * *

It is, then, not a question—certainly not a question for a radical—to "justify" resistance to tyranny; if Jefferson in the 18th century could understand the sacredness of such resistance it should be possible for one to understand this in the 20th century. The important question is: what resistance is most effective?

Slaves in Haiti could and did free themselves; it took them twenty years but they could do it and they did it. They could and they did because they constituted 90% of the island's population

* He quotes the Rabbi in his book, *To Be Equal* (N. Y., 1964, McGraw-Hill, p. 242).

and of the remaining 10%, half were colored. And they could and they did because their rebellion coincided with the revolution in France that tore apart the governing power.

Slaves in the United States could not and did not free themselves. That is not because they did not want freedom; they did. It is not because they did not seek freedom; they did. It is because they constituted not 90% of the population but 10%. That is a fact; there is no such thing as a reactionary fact!

But the slaves in the United States did not remain chattels forever. Their own struggles were decisive, but not enough. Without their own efforts they would never have been freed; but with those efforts *alone* they would never have been freed. This also is a fact.

Further, the Negro slave was freed in united effort of Negro and white and the unity came not because either loved the other; it came because each *needed* the other. The need remains in the United States for none of the great social questions facing this nation, none of the burning issues—either domestic or foreign—can be successfully faced, let alone resolved without a united Negro-white confrontation of those problems.* Hence, the liberation of the Negro people in the United States cannot be accomplished by them *alone*; and the liberation of the United States cannot be accomplished by whites *alone*. Each is intertwined and it is, in fact, that intertwining that not only guarantees the achievement of the unity but also the achievement of the victory.

Of course, then, *any blow* struck by Negroes themselves against their oppression must be hailed by all friends of human freedom; but the *strategy* of Negro liberation requires a deep political process of unity, development and alliance which can reshape the structure of United States society since basic to that structure today is the oppression of the Negro people. Tactics must be shaped in terms of this strategy.

In this sense, *both* John Brown and Frederick Douglass were correct. Brown with his glorious martyrdom and Douglass with his loving but firm rejection of Brown's plea that he join in that martyrdom. Douglass was the profounder, the deeper, the more influential; certainly, too, Douglass' choice was at least as difficult. Certainly, too, let it be added, each continued to respect—indeed, to love—

* I shall revert to this basic point later in this essay; a considerable part of my book, *Soul of the Republic: The Negro Today* (N. Y., 1964, Marzani & Munsell) seeks to demonstrate it.

each other. When Douglass finally had said "no" to Brown and they were to part, each was weeping and each kissed the other.*

* * *

We have referred to "the glory of Watts." Generally, and ominously, there has been among white workers very little understanding of, not to speak of agreement with, this kind of characterization. One would expect *Life* magazine (Aug. 27) to say of the Negroes slaughtered there, "that they have died to history for lack of a clear purpose and cause," and it is characteristic of the Luce touch that this remark is preceded by the santimonious phrase, "God pity them. . . ." But people like Max Lerner in the *New York Post* (Aug. 16) said the same thing, Lerner's column for that day being headed "Rioters Without A Cause." It contained such phrases as, "bent only on destruction," "nothingness-oriented violence," and other psychoanalytical jargon, including, "self-hate projected on the other," etc. William S. White in the *Washington Post* (Aug. 18) writes that the Watts rebels were "homicidal maniacs" and in what surely is a high-point for distortion via the printed word, goes on to equate them with the nazi vandals under Hitler and to declare that those who "sympathized" with those monsters are the same people as those who "sympathize" with the Negro martyrs! And these are columns in highly "civilized" and professional "liberal" papers—I have not troubled the reader with the filth in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* or Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi newspapers or the venom that poured from the throats of illegally elected Dixiecrat Representatives and Senators and filled column after column of the *Congressional Record*.

The view of the Negro masses is altogether different; it is the view of the oppressed and is therefore the view of justice and truth. Stanley Sanders, the All-American football star out of Whittier College in California, Rhodes Scholar and now a law student, is from Watts and was in Watts when the outbreak started. A writer for *Life*, Shana Alexander, who has followed his remarkable career, spoke with him of the outbreak and reminded him of the Day in his honor that had been held in Watts not too long ago; she asked him what he thought of that Day in light of this outbreak in Watts. Sanders replied: "I find the Day and the roots absolutely compatible.

* I have analyzed this relationship and the tactics and strategy involved in *Toward Negro Freedom* (N. Y., 1956), pp. 68ff.

A community takes pride in things it has achieved. Then it vents its hatred against the thing it despises." He concluded:*

For the first time people in Watts feel a real pride in being black. I remember, when I first went to Whittier, I worried that if I didn't make it there, if I was rejected, I wouldn't have a place to go back to. Now I can say: "I'm from Watts."

Said the Rev. Hardwick, whose Zion Baptist Church is in the heart of Watts: "There were fine, intelligent citizens in this riot, and I don't mind telling you that I saw some of my own members in it." In on-the-scene radio and television broadcasts, though obviously interviewers were seeking a different kind of answer, what they got in every case were people eager to be heard or seen and many insisting that they had themselves participated. The Rev. Malcolm Boyd, Field Representative of the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity—and Episcopal Chaplain-at-Large to University campuses throughout the nation, in one of the finest on-the-spot accounts of Watts I have seen**—emphasized the sense of elation and pride that permeated the residents of the battle area. One emphasized to Father Boyd: "We're involved in a real social revolution, not a riot." One young man, "immensely respected within the Negro community, yet important whites have never heard his name," said: "It was almost like an Emancipation Proclamation was being signed. Negroes were happy. We had a common thing there."

The *New Republic* (Sept. 4) quoted "a correspondent who has spent a good deal of time in Watts before and during the riots," as stating that the outbreak reflected "the authentic voice of the Negro's frustration and rage. It was nearly unanimous in the hard core of the ghetto, the Watts section, where people never had an identity before the uprising. They found their voice and their own angry pride in blood and flames." There were a few lines in the original report in *Newsweek* (Aug. 30) that conveyed the essence:

"Negroes are ready to die for respect," said a jobless man on Vermont Avenue. "That's right," nodded his companion, ". . . everybody till we get our respect."

*This appears in the issue of August 27. Somehow it is characteristic of even the finest-motivated writing, that Miss Alexander states that when young Sanders received the Rhodes Scholarship he and another young Negro man so honored were "America's first two Negro Rhodes scholars." As a matter of fact, Alain Locke had been a Rhodes Scholar back in 1907.

**This appears in *The Afro-American*, September 4; and in somewhat expanded form in *The Christian Century*, September 8.

Kenneth B. Clark, in the introduction to his *Dark Ghetto* emphasizes "the starvation for serious attention and respect which characterizes so many of the forgotten people of the ghetto," and further on (p. 16) in discussing the Harlem outbreak of 1964, he writes of its typical participant:

. . . his apparent lawlessness was a protest against lawlessness directed against *him*. His acts were a desperate assertion of his desire to be treated as a man. He was affirmative up to the point of inviting death; he insisted upon being visible and understood. If this was the only way to relate to society at large, he would die rather than be ignored.

Here, again, as always, Du Bois has put it just exactly. It is in his *Dusk of Dawn*, published twenty-five years ago; he is writing of the "entombed souls" in the ghettos who are explaining to those outside "how their loosening from prison would be a matter not simply of courtesy, sympathy, and help to them, but aid to the world."

One talks on evenly and logically in this way [continues Du Bois] but notices that the passing throng does not even turn its head, or if it does, glances curiously and walks on. It gradually penetrates the minds of the prisoners that the people passing do not hear; that some thick sheet of invisible but horribly tangible plate glass is between them and the world.

Intermittently the glass walls are smashed—or the iron cage bent or the white fog penetrated—to use the images of Richard Wright and of Theodore Ward—and those in charge of the prison feign astonishment and wonder "what caused this?" and what outsider is agitating "them" and have "they" no regard for law and order and property?

Oh, yes, that property. How the speeches in Congress this past August have rung out about its sanctity and how the columnists have emphasized the threat to all civilization involved in this destructiveness and looting! How quickly the *Los Angeles Times* has demanded full indemnity for the property owners and special guarantees in the future for the safety of their investments—the *Los Angeles Times* is quick to demand preferential treatment for property owners, meaning of course *additional* preferential treatment since the whole social order is geared towards preferential treatment towards property owners.

Langston Hughes in a beautiful column entitled "Hello, L. A." (*N. Y. Post*, Aug. 20) has the respectable straight man say to his marvelous Simple, "I wouldn't have thought you would have in your family the kind of relatives who loot and rob stores." Says Simple:

Looting and robbing is not the same thing. When you loot a credit store you are just taking back some of the interest they been charging you for years on them high-priced instalment things they sell you on time—\$10 down and \$2 a week for 900 weeks, plus interest. . . .

Of course all this is strictly true and everyone knows it. Everyone knows—and there have been numerous studies to demonstrate what everyone knows—that interest rates are extortionate for Negro communities, that rents are highest, that food and clothing are poorest. It really is the height of the ironic for the ruling class to express alarm and disdain over the looting in Watts; of course, an elementary truth about the history of the Negro people in the United States—and going back to before there was a United States—is that they have been looted and looted and looted systematically and without mercy for three hundred years.

One may add, that the reasoning offered by Simple in 1965 is exactly the reasoning offered by slaves back in the 19th century. The masters lamented that their slaves were perpetually "stealing"—this, in fact, is the source of one element in the chauvinist stereotype—but the slaves felt and said that stealing meant taking from another slave; but taking from the master, they said, was no stealing, it was taking, for the master had stolen everything, not only their labor, but themselves *and their children!*

This whole approach to property is basic to one's outlook on society altogether of course; it also is basic particularly to this struggle for Negro freedom, this battle for full civil rights. Just as during slavery, the fundamental defense by the slaveowners and their apologists for their system was their right of property; they owned the slaves and owned them legally—indeed, constitutionally—and as they said time after time, be that property what it may be, be it Molly, Polly and Bill, it was property and their property and they would not give it up and nobody had better try to make them give it up. Quite literally in the struggle against slavery the fundamental question was *property rights versus human rights*. In the American social order today this, also, is true, only less nakedly than when slavery prevailed here; in the present Negro struggle, it most cer-

tainly is a basic aspect and while under slavery the matter was stark naked, under jim crow there is little more than the barest fig-leaf.

The same considerations prevail vis-a-vis the horrified denunciation of violence. Again, Hughes puts it magnificently. This time he speaks through Simple's cousin, Ermalou, who is speaking from the middle of Watts:

Ermalou said as many black homes and churches and schools as white folks have burnt down in the South, how come they are making such a fuss because Negroes is burning down some white places in stinking little old Watts?

Again, the irony of the ruling class' denunciations of the Watts violence—especially since it was the police and the Guardsmen who killed and who wounded—is simply monumental in face of the fact that violence by the white masters and property possessors is characteristic of American Negro history, from yesterday's slave ship to today's armed cruising police car in any of a hundred ghettos. This is so obvious that one would think it requires no argument, but then nothing escapes notice like the obvious, especially if racism blinds the vision. What else could explain the President of the United States equating a K.K.K. lyncher with the Watts rebels? Is this not exactly like equating the Buchenwald concentration camp rebels who succeeded in killing their guards with those nazi hounds who had been slaughtering men, women and children by the tens of thousands? Cannot even the President of the United States see *any* difference?

U.S. Labor and Peace

The "official" position of the labor movement on the rapidly escalating war in Vietnam and towards the peace movement sweeping the country is as much a paradox as it is a widespread concern. Most unions or their leaders are silent, while George Meany and several associates in the AFL-CIO top leadership proclaim full support for the Johnson policy in Vietnam, in the name of *all* labor. True, a larger number of unions and leaders than ever before have moved away from the "official" policy; they have voiced opposition to the Johnson program of bombings and escalation and have called for a negotiated peace. But the outstanding fact still remains, that in the eyes of the general public, the AFL-CIO is seen in the image of its president, George Meany, as fully aligned with the war hawks.

This is not an unusual position for the heads of the AFL-CIO to take. They supported the cold war when it was launched by Truman and Churchill. They supported the Korean war and all other aggressive acts of U.S. imperialism since then. In fact, this controlling group in the AFL-CIO often has been critical of both Democratic and Republican administrations for insufficient aggressiveness in the cold war and opposed all steps to reduce international tensions, such as the Geneva Accord of 1955 and the test-ban treaty of 1963. But, while in earlier years, especially during the Korean war, they were able to whip up an hysteria for their position, presenting a united front (excluding those on the Left) with the leading personalities among the liberals, the churches, the Negro organizations and others, a different situation exists today.

Today influential personalities, in the colleges, sciences, arts and professions, in the churches of all denominations and in the civil rights movement, have been among the most outspoken opponents of the escalation of the war in Vietnam. The peace movement has swept the campuses, involving broad sections of the students; it has expanded among the women and in the neighborhoods of many cities.

Another significant change has taken place in the ranks of the Catholics, strongly stimulated, no doubt, by the *Pacem in Terris* encyclical of Pope John XXIII. The International Convocation on the *Pacem in Terris* theme, held last February by the Center for the Study

of Democratic Institutions, involved Catholic churchmen and laymen, including many closely associated with the trade unions. While no top labor leaders were in evidence there, even though many are Catholics, the influence of this conference and the favorable publicity it received in the Catholic press, is bound to have a profound effect on the trade union membership.*

The changes in the civil rights movement have also been striking. Many Negro leaders, as exemplified by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., see no real war against poverty while additional billions are demanded for war, and recognize an identity of interest between the struggle for equality at home with the struggle for self-determination of the oppressed peoples.

People, in and out of our country, are baffled by the strange contradiction: How can the organizations of the working people support an aggressive war conducted by the very reactionaries against whom they must struggle to attain even the most minimum domestic social gains? Why should unions break with their natural allies who are now taking the path towards peace? Does George Meany, or his closest associate David Dubinsky (head of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union), or Jay Lovestone, the operating director of the International Affairs Department of the AFL-CIO, really speak for the entire leadership and membership of labor? Does the Meany-Dubinsky-Lovestone group have the approval of the labor movement for its collaboration with the Central Intelligence Agency, providing it with a labor front to cover its nefarious imperialist plots?***

Background of Economism

It is not within the scope of this article to deal fully with the background and reasons for this strange "labor" position on foreign affairs. But, to summarize briefly, it can be said:

Historically, the leadership of the unions in the United States showed little active interest in foreign affairs until World War I, except, perhaps, on specific matters that had a direct bearing on labor standards here. Since World War I the labor leadership has tailed the State Department, adopting the "practical" outlook that thereby

* *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, for example, has been critical of the Johnson policy in Vietnam.

** *The Nation*, July 5, 1964, exposed this collaboration with the CIA in an article by Sidney Lens, "American Labor Abroad—Lovestone Diplomacy."

they could gain some advantages for the unions on matters "closer home." This relationship of some top labor leaders, who represented themselves as spokesman for "all labor," and the State Department (except for the years of the anti-fascist alliance prior to and during World War II) has been based on the policy of anti-Communism. This anti-Communism in foreign relations coincided with the program of the conservative top labor bureaucracy to outlaw socialist thought and Communist activities in the trade unions.

Since 1933, the enactment of a series of laws affecting labor rights and relations, subject to government administration and judicial review, has also made the unions increasingly dependent on the influence of the government and the courts in collective bargaining, strikes, content of agreements, internal life of unions, even on who can or cannot run for union office. While the unions welcome those provisions which guarantee certain rights of labor, the administration of these laws can be manipulated to induce unions into line politically, compelling support for reactionary foreign policies or, at the least, inaction in foreign affairs. Even the most advanced unions place matters outside the sphere of wages and working conditions in a secondary category.

Another factor has been the close relationship of the trade unions to the Democratic Party, particularly since Roosevelt's days, because of its general acceptance of much of labor's socio-economic program. While for a period under the Roosevelt Administration, and briefly under Kennedy, this close relation with the Democrats on domestic affairs coincided with a positive stand on foreign affairs—the anti-Hitler alliance and the test-ban treaty—under Truman and Johnson that relationship has served to make more "palatable" to the unions the cold-war policies and hot-war ventures in Korea, Vietnam, the Congo, the Dominican Republic and elsewhere.

But it is well to remember, that even during the short periods when a positive foreign policy and the domestic program coincided, the late William Green, Meany, Dubinsky and their camp followers, kept alive their rabid anti-Sovietism.

When, during the Eisenhower Administration, the Geneva Accord was signed, they denounced it. Unable to duck approval of Kennedy's agreement to the test ban, they smothered their "approval" with assurances that it really won't mean anything. In the 1964 campaign, with labor's endorsement of Johnson who was literally pouring out peace promises, this group had difficulty to talk so much like Goldwater in matters of foreign policy.

Important as it is to review the background for labor's position on

foreign policy, it is even more important to see the change that has taken place by comparison to the days of the Korean war and the heyday of McCarthyism.

The Differentiation on Foreign Policy

As noted earlier, the peace movement involving liberal, professional and religious groups, including such organizations as Americans for Democratic Action and Sane Nuclear Policy Committee, traditionally close to the Right-wing labor leaders, is having a strong influence on the rank and file of labor and even on a section of the leadership. It was apparently recognition of this that prompted George Meany in a speech before the American Legion in Portland, Oregon, in August, to launch his attack on the "liberals" and "pacifists," on the teach-ins and student peace movement, and on the signers of the full-page advertisements.

It is a fact also, that the critical position towards the Johnson policy by such newspapers as the *New York Times*, the *New York Post*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and other dailies, has also served to undermine the influence of the Meany group in the ranks of labor.

The relaxation of international tensions in much of the period between the Korean war and the heightening of the war in Vietnam, has both weakened the position of the Meany forces and encouraged the re-emergence of differences on international affairs that had existed between the AFL and CIO in the earlier stages of the latter's rise. Time may have caused many to forget that the rise of the CIO represented more than a revolt against the old AFL's conservative outlook on economic and social problems and on forms of union organization. The CIO movement also expressed a significant departure from the old-guard conservatism on international affairs. The CIO, especially under Philip Murray's presidency, was much closer to the position of Franklin Delano Roosevelt than was the AFL. The CIO favored recognition of the USSR; rejected the position of those who preferred U.S. friendship with Hitler Germany during the thirties (among whom, incidentally was John L. Lewis and a number of top AFL leaders); and the CIO was an enthusiastic supporter of the U.S.-Soviet alliance in World War II and the building of a United Nations on the principle of peaceful coexistence of nations.

In contrast to the position of the AFL leaders, the CIO entered into a fraternal relationship with the Soviet trade unions and was one of the initiating organizations, together with the Soviet and British unions, in the formation of the World Federation of Trade Unions twenty years ago. The late Sidney Hillman headed the U.S. dele-

gation. The first official U.S. trade union delegation to the USSR was composed of CIO leaders who brought back and published a very friendly report that Murray commended highly in a foreword. On invitation of the CIO, a Soviet trade union delegation returned the visit. Until 1947, CIO convention resolutions stressed the urgency of U.S.-Soviet friendship as the basis for peace in the world.

But all this came to an end with the launching of the cold war, the combined pressure on the organization by AFL leaders, the State Department, the Catholic Church and the assortment of witchhunt bodies, such as the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and by the government's use of the anti-Communist provision of the Taft-Hartley Act against unions that did not get in line. This forced a split in CIO ranks and led to the eventual expulsion of unions with a million members that resisted the shift in policy.

Notwithstanding the AFL-CIO merger in December, 1955, brought on by a desire to end jurisdictional strife, the thaw in the cold war that was then beginning also changed the atmosphere in the unions. Former CIO leaders began to reassert their previous views on international affairs, sharply enough to get under the skins of the old AFL hierarchy. For example, a few days after the merger, George Meany, addressing a liberal-labor audience, denounced those who admired Nehru because he is "pro-Communist." Reuther, addressing the same audience, followed with praise for Nehru.

The differentiation on foreign policy did not come suddenly, or progress evenly, in all former CIO unions. But in time, the views of some unions became quite distinct from "official" AFL-CIO policy. This also became evident in the conventions of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO in which all the former CIO unions were included.

There were other important factors which influenced former CIO officials to drift away from the "official" Meany-Dubinsky-Lovestone position. There was the growing tension between Europe's union leaders and socialists and the Meany-type of labor leader in the United States; the steady loss of U.S. prestige abroad; the strengthening of the socialist sector of the world and rise in its prestige; the growing positive role of the developing countries in world affairs. It is known that the relations between the Meany group and the leaders of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, not warm from the start, has continued to deteriorate. Matters have reached the point where Meany, at a press conference last spring, heaped insults upon the leaders of the ICFTU, charging them with ineffectiveness in the fight against "Communism."

Peace Trend Growing

For some years now, the United Automobile Workers, Amalgamated Clothing Workers, International Union of Electrical Workers, the Textile Workers Union of America, the United Packinghouse Workers, the Retail and Department Store Workers Union and others, have in a general way distinguished their position from the rabid sabre-rattling statements coming out of the AFL-CIO's Washington office. Walter Reuther and Emil Mazey of the UAW, Frank Rosenblum, secretary-treasurer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, James B. Carey, former president of the IUE, are among those who have given voice to the view that capitalism and socialism should compete within the framework of peaceful coexistence; that steps towards banning nuclear arms and for disarmament be taken. The heads of the National Maritime Union clashed openly with Meany when they went as an official delegation in response to an invitation of the USSR's union of seamen.

Not all former CIO unions followed the same course. The United Steel Workers under David McDonald took a position closer to Meany than to Reuther. The Utility Workers Union's leaders have an extreme Right-wing position on foreign affairs. On the other hand, there are a number of former AFL unions and leaders, whose position is similar to that of Reuther, Mazey and Rosenblum. Among them are the leaders of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen around Patrick Gorman; leaders of the United Federation of Teachers, including its president Charles Cogen; many regional and local leaders of former AFL unions. The St. Louis regional council of the Brotherhood of Teamsters, headed by Harold Gibbons, is critical of Johnson's policy in Vietnam. In addition, there are the independent former CIO unions whose pro-peace position is even more pronounced.

Taken together, the leaders and unions that have gone some distance towards a peace position make up a sizable section of the labor movement, representing millions of workers. However, most of the unions and leaders in this sector of labor have not completely departed from a cold-war course and their distance from the "official" AFL-CIO line varies. Nevertheless, if given vigorous leadership and more encouragement than just an occasional peace expression by a leader, this sector of labor can become a powerful force for peace. Aside from the fact that most spokesmen for this more advanced trend in labor's ranks still have one foot in the policy of "containing Communism," they are torn by the contradiction of adhering to the

Johnson Administration for his socio-economic program while critical of his policy in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic.

Johnson Tries; Meany Helps

The Johnson Administration and its backers within the unions count on these contradictions to bring "unity" in labor ranks in support of the present war ventures. It seems that some people in the "Reuther camp" have become somewhat weak-kneed as international tensions increase. That may explain Reuther's personal silence on Vietnam (up to this writing) notwithstanding the resolution of his union's executive board. Thus, in his Labor Day broadcast, while dwelling on the urgency of peace in general, he neither mentioned Vietnam nor the Dominican situation, while giving high praise to Johnson's domestic program.

The Administration and its backers in labor's leadership are obviously concerned with the fact that there is little warmth and, instead, significant opposition to the present policy. As the escalation heightened, Meany sought to silence all debate and any opposition. In a statement issued May 3, 1965, he declared:

It is my position and it is, I am confident, the position of every patriotic American worker, that we will support the President in international affairs without reservation. None of the rest of us—no union officer, no cabinet member, no Senator or Congressman, no university professor, no editorial writer or commentator—none of us know all the facts about every dangerous spot. Only the President knows. Therefore only the President knows what path America must follow. I say to you and I say to the President "we are behind the President of the United States. He must lead and we must follow."

Parallel with Meany's efforts inside union ranks, the Johnson Administration concentrated its pressure on the steel negotiations, to build up towards a dramatic display of employer-labor unity behind U.S. intervention in Vietnam. When the settlement was reached, Mr. Johnson arranged for a TV appearance flanked by I. W. Abel, the steel union's president and R. Conrad Cooper, the negotiator for the companies, hailing the agreement as a "patriotic" contribution to the cause of "freedom" in Vietnam. The arrangement was clearly an artificial effort, but the intent really aimed to dramatize the Administration's notice to all unions, that the government under present conditions will hold a club over negotiations.

Actually, the steel negotiations really proved the contrary. After eight months of negotiations, under government pressure, the negotia-

tors were forced into a room near the White House and, in effect, told by the President to remain there until they agree. Abel did not rush to confirm the President's claim that the union agreed to terms "for Vietnam." The steel union's president resented the government's "persuasion" and told newsmen, "I wouldn't want this as a way of life." Here there was no "free" collective bargaining. But the union pressed a hard bargain, winning a package that was only a degree below its limited objective and above the government's "guidepost."

Some Labor Voices for Peace

Despite the Administration's efforts, and those of the Meany group, to revive the wartime patterns of the past, the most significant fact today is the growing resistance to the war. Many union leaders do speak up and even talk back to Meany.

Several days after last April's AFL-CIO executive council meeting, that approved a statement supporting the war in Vietnam, the executive board of the federation's largest union, the UAW, held a meeting and approved a statement critical of the Johnson policy in Southeast Asia and the Dominican Republic. The UAW warned against escalation and called for peace negotiations through the UN. In effect, the UAW set forth an alternative position for unions to that offered in Meany's "official" policy.

Emil Mazey, the secretary-treasurer, taking his union's resolution seriously, followed with active efforts for its implementation. He sharply criticized both Meany and Johnson in public speeches. An example, is his address before the convention of the American Newspaper Guild in Detroit, as reported in the *Guild Reporter* (July 30):

President Johnson has repeatedly asserted that we are in Vietnam . . . to defend freedom and liberty. I disagree.

There is no freedom in South Vietnam. There is no liberty in South Vietnam. There is no democracy in South Vietnam. There is no free trade union movement in South Vietnam. . . . South Vietnam is ruled by a military dictatorship. We have the coups, and . . . our government immediately recognizes one group of dictators that has replaced another group of dictators. We recognize them without condition.

Mazey noted that President Johnson talks of "unconditional negotiations" but refuses to talk to the Viet Cong. He cited press reports that the Viet Cong (National Liberation Front) controls 90 per cent of South Vietnam, and continued:

It is ridiculous and asinine and unrealistic to say that we are prepared for unconditional negotiations but yet are unwilling to negotiate with the people who control the country.

Mazey was also critical of U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic on the same ground, and then stated:

I don't agree with George Meany when he says we have to support the President because the President has information that is not available to the rest of us. I think that is one poor way of making a decision as to whether a policy is right or wrong. . . .

Can we have confidence, can we have blind faith, should we blindly follow without asking any questions, an administration that doesn't understand and doesn't know what is taking place in Vietnam?

In another statement, Mazey said:

I believe that the President of the United States is making a serious mistake in escalating the war in South Vietnam. This policy is really the Goldwater policy and has the full support of the leadership of the Republican Party.

Frank Rosenblum, secretary-treasurer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, in a statement on both Vietnam and the Dominican situation, in *Labor Today* (April-May, 1965) said:

There is an obvious contradiction between what our administration says and what it does in the area of foreign policy. We cannot talk peace and expand the war. What can a call for "unconditional discussions" for peace in Vietnam mean when it is accompanied with intensified bombings? We are judged by our actions and not our words, and our actions have outraged even our friends. . . . The climate necessary for peace is poisoned by acts of war. A cease-fire in Vietnam would have been more effective than continued bombings. . . .

Time and again because of our obsessive fear of Communism, we have aligned ourselves with the most reactionary forces and have interfered with the right of the peoples of those nations to self-determination.

Patrick E. Gorman, secretary-treasurer of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen wrote in the union's journal, *The Butcher Workman* (March, 1965):

To think of anything except negotiations at a time like this is senseless. All-powerful Russia pledges to send more planes to Vietnam. Our own all-powerful United States pledges to send more

planes to South Vietnam. China's millions stand by. If the two most powerful nations on earth, Russia and the United States, cannot find a way to settle the Vietnam question through peaceful solution of whatever problem may exist, then we must conclude that the whole game of warfare is one for which there is no solution only because the search for solution is not intensive enough.

Among the labor leaders who associated themselves with other prominent personalities in the various newspaper advertisements were also A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Sol Stetin, vice-president of the Textile Workers Union of America; Martin Gerber, eastern regional director of the United Automobile Workers; David Livingston, president of the big New York District 65, Retail and Department Store Union; Joel Jacobson, president of the New Jersey Industrial Union Council.

Even more widespread have been the peace appeals at the regional and local level. Horace Sheffield, director of organization of the Trade Union Leadership Council, uniting Detroit's active Negro unionists, writing in Detroit's *Chronicle* last May, said he had high admiration for Johnson, but added:

I confess, however, to harboring a deep feeling of opposition to his conduct of the war in Vietnam. It's just that I too feel that the continued bombing of North Vietnam will ultimately escalate the war and place world peace in grave peril.

"Must it end in an American Dien Bien Phu?" asked David Livingston, president of District 65 and his eleven associate officers in a letter they signed jointly to the President. "Why not a United Nations Peace for Vietnam? We believe, Mr. President, that the advice of Senators Morse, Church, Gruening and others should be considered. We urge the road to peace not war in Vietnam. The course of peace will not only preserve American lives, it will preserve for America the respect and goodwill of the people of all countries."

"The pronouncements being made by President Johnson and the actions being taken on his behalf seem more like the acts of Goldwater," declared a statement by Leon Davis, president of the Drug and Hospital Employees, Local 1199, who jointly with his fellow officers also addressed a letter to the President. "What happened to the apostle of peace whom we voted for in the last general election? One wonders who actually won that election."

So ran many statements from other local and regional labor leaders, such as that of Gus Scholle, president of the Michigan AFL-CIO,

and those expressed in such state labor publications as the *Kentucky Labor News* and the *Colorado Labor Advocate*.

The Members Never Consulted

Efforts to whip up a war fever in trade union ranks have not materialized. There is no evidence of labor's willingness to cut demands or postpone social and economic legislative objectives because of the talk of an additional expenditure of \$10 billion annually for the Southeast Asia campaign. Not even Meany has so far dared to suggest a relaxation of labor's pressure for its objectives.

But the threat of an all-out war in Southeast Asia is fraught with grave dangers for the American working class as it is for all of mankind. It raises the question: Who has given Meany and his associates the right to voice their rabid sabre-rattling on behalf of "all American labor?" The fact is that in all of U.S. labor's history there has never been a referendum of either members or affiliated unions, or an organized discussion democratically conducted, to determine how the millions of members stand on any foreign policy question. Until comparatively recently hardly any unions considered foreign affairs as within their province. To this day, unions with a majority of the organized workers, do not even adopt formal resolutions on foreign relations at their conventions. This includes the United Mine Workers, Brotherhood of Teamsters, and most building trades unions.

Conventions of the AFL-CIO, since and before the merger, are not based on a popular vote, or on elected delegates. The executive boards of the respective affiliates name the delegates, usually from their own ranks. Fewer than ten executive boards can name a majority of the voting strength of these conventions. Some unions conduct referendums or take votes at membership meetings, but on such matters as dues, constitutional changes, assessments, etc., never on foreign policy. The practice has developed over the years to regard the foreign affairs resolution of biennial AFL-CIO conventions, approved by a formal "aye" without discussion, as "labor's policy." These resolutions are prepared by the AFL-CIO's international affairs department, today headed by Jay Lovestone, widely known as "the CIA man" in labor.

Unfortunately, many well-meaning, progressively-inclined people have cooled to unions, even have become antagonistic to them, because they see the unions only in the image of George Meany. You hear strange theoretical twisting to the effect that labor is a base for conservatism. Certain self-styled "lefts" urge ignoring the labor movement, claiming that more progress can be made without them. But

such talk can come from people who know the labor movement only from the outside, or from what they read in the daily press. They do not look into labor's insides; nor do they examine the differentiation among its leaders or how labor's "democracy" works. George Meany has no more consent from the millions of union members to beat the Vietnam war-drums than Johnson has from the American people. Experience shows, and the polls confirm it, that trade unionists reflect the same sentiments on the issue of war or peace as other Americans. If reached by the peace movement, they will respond to a peace rally, to a petition, or a neighborhood peace organization, as others do, and perhaps even more readily.

Peace Forces Must Work With Unions

The inattention to the trade unions by the peace movement and the rationale by some that the unions can be bypassed, is unfortunate. Forgotten is the lesson confirmed in numerous struggles that without the trade unions there is no firm base for advanced action in any field.

It must be made clear to the peace advocates that within the trade unions there is a growing realization, spurred by the civil rights movement, that the war against poverty, the fight for civil rights, for economic security and for peace are indivisible. This realization is becoming the strongest gravitational force drawing together those sectors of the population that made up the loose coalition against Goldwaterism and the rising ultra-Right. Johnson received his major support from the labor movement, the Negro people, the family farmers, the professionals and middle classes of the cities and the impoverished people generally, because of his promises to maintain peace, to create a "Great Society" and to advance civil rights.

It is this very coalition that is unfolding in opposition to Johnson's war aims, reaching a level of struggle for peace that is far beyond anything that has taken place in our country before. The Johnson Administration is finding out that it cannot turn off peace and turn on war as simply as one switches between hot and cold water-faucets. Nor can small steps in a social-economic program serve as a sop to the people or make an appreciable impression on the vast unmet needs of America. The Watts events have exposed the magnitude of these unmet needs; many billions are needed to just begin wiping out slums, meet the deficits in education, health, social insurance, etc., etc.

The question then follows: how secure are the people's social-economic legislative gains; what chance is there for more advanced

programs to meet domestic needs, if additional billions are shot away in Vietnam? It didn't take long after the President's "this is war" speech for the next inevitable step. He ordered all budget-planning agencies to knock off at least \$9 billion from the non-military expenditures of the next budget. That means not more for war on poverty and the implementation of social legislation passed, but considerably less. And this, in face of the labor movement's insistence that the Administration's non-military expenditures are far short of what is required to make the "Great Society" promises meaningful.

Finally is the question: what future for labor's political and legislative objectives if they are hitched to the Johnson policy of expanding war? What can be the outlook for 1966 and 1968? In countless situations the trade unions have learned, or should have learned, that they alone can almost never make major political progress. It always took a coalition of the workers in the unions, the Negro people, the family farmers, professionals and other middle class groups. In recent years the consciousness of this coalition has become more pronounced with peace, civil rights, trade union rights and the war on poverty serving to bind these forces together.

A very sad aspect of the situation is that the men around Meany, with their false claim to speak for "all" labor, are encouraging President Johnson to believe that he has labor's votes in his pocket and can get the same turnout in 1966 and 1968 for a war policy that he received in 1964 when he campaigned for peace and a war on poverty. Thereby they are encouraging Johnson to escalate the war and the consequent de-escalation of programs for domestic social progress. If this policy of the dominant AFL-CIO leadership is not challenged, the consequences can prove much more costly than the price paid by the people in the earlier stages of the cold war. The price can be disaster.

Puerto Rico's Economic Bondage

Behind the changing face of Puerto Rico lies the unchanged fact that the island is a colony of the United States, one of the diminishing number of old-style colonies in an era of disintegrating empires. Efforts to make it appear that either the industrialization of Puerto Rico, or the changes in its political arrangements, have ended or decreased its dependency, are futile in the face of evidence that the Caribbean nation remains subject in every essential way to its conqueror of 67 years ago.

It is this fact which makes Puerto Rico a unique case among the 21 Latin American countries. The whole of Latin America suffers political and economic domination by the United States, with the sole escape so far of Cuba. But the domination is exercised in a semi-colonial relationship, with nominal political independence and economic penetration alongside the political framework. (Actually the degree of political independence varies widely, from near zero in Central America to fairly high levels in Chile and Mexico.)

In Puerto Rico alone is economic mastery wielded under U.S. law subject to U.S. veto. The "associated free state," created as a sop to UN concern over non-self-governing territories, and as a partial concession to Puerto Rican demands, gives some appearances of home rule, but little of the substance.

The appearances are cultivated with care. "The Commonwealth arrangement has been applauded as one of the great political inventions of our times," exclaims one observer. "This is one reason why the island is visited so frequently by people from the colonial, semi-colonial, or recently liberated areas of the world. The transition from dependence to democracy was accomplished without damage to the economic or social patterns."*

Visitors from colonial countries not wishing to remain colonial would, in fact, benefit from seeing Puerto Rico, but the benefit would come from noting most of the pitfalls they need to avoid. As for the economic and social patterns, they are indeed "undamaged," remaining as they were before the patterns of an exploited captive people.

* Clarence Senior, *The Puerto Ricans*, Chicago, 1961.

The Outpost of Empire

In geography Puerto Rico is the hinge of the Caribbean, standing where the big islands end their eastward procession and the small ones begin dropping towards the Equator. This pivot situation is much in the minds of the imperialist geo-politicians. Cuba is lost to them and their position in Santo Domingo hangs by the skin of their paratroops. Their base in Puerto Rico seems vital, and they have with good reason, from their point of view, taken 13 per cent of the island's arable land for military use.

Puerto Rico is geographically pivotal in another sense. It has been called a "show window to the South," meaning that if the life of Puerto Ricans under colonial rule can be made to look attractive, the desire for independence of the peoples below the Caribbean can be correspondingly weakened.

Vice President Hubert Humphrey declares: "This island has made such steady growth and progress that it is known as 'the miracle of the Caribbean.'" The same line of thought is expressed by another imperialist apologist who entitles his work "Puerto Rico—the Best Answer to Castro."* Since Castro is only dangerous to the imperialists insofar as his government meets needs which all the Latin American peoples share, this writer invites the question: Are such needs being better met amid the sprouting superhighways and burgeoning factories of Puerto Rico? It is this question with which the present article attempts to deal.

The Coming of the Factories

The most prominent fact of economic life in Puerto Rico today is the rapid industrialization which has been going on since shortly after World War II. During the first three and a half decades of U.S. occupation, the Puerto Rican economy was kept agricultural, and in fact, nearly monocultural, sugar being the leading product by far, with coffee and tobacco poor seconds. Sugar production was, of course, controlled by U.S. concerns, whose interest in the basic producer was to keep him barefooted and in hock to the company store. This kind of economy led Puerto Rico to the depths that Rexford Tugwell, the last North American governor, described in his book *The Stricken Land*.

In Tugwell's time the atmosphere began to change somewhat, although as one Puerto Rican writer has commented, "Under the Good Neighbor policy, we were good and they were neighbors."

* Douglass Cater, *Reporter* magazine, January 19, 1961.

The first elected governor, Munoz Marin, was in office from 1948 until last year. The Munoz government made it their business to attract industry to the island at all costs, and they succeeded to the extent that by the mid-1950's, manufacturing replaced agriculture as the major share of the island's output. Every kind of agriculture is now in decline, except cattle raising.

Despite the rapid growth of manufacturing unemployment in Puerto Rico remains chronic. The government admits to a rate of 10.5 per cent in the latest return for July, 1965, which is double the U.S. rate. The proportion of underemployed (less than 35 hours a week) was 24 per cent. This is explained partly by the decline in agriculture (only 12 of the former 20 sugar *centrales* remain in operation) and also by the types of production represented by many of the new plants, which feature a high degree of automation and hence relatively few jobs.

The propaganda of the official development agency (Fomento) addressed to U.S. manufacturers urges them to consider Puerto Rico for new plant locations because Puerto Rican workers, the agency claims, surpass those of the United States in quantity of production per unit of time. If the propaganda is taken at face value, it means that U.S. factories can be spared the trouble of speeding up their workers by moving to Puerto Rico and hiring those already speeded.

Higher production, lower wages and the tax forgiveness offered by the Puerto Rican government, all combine to make inviting conditions for the manufacturers. Many remain, however, only for the duration of their tax exemptions, and hundreds of factories opened under the development program have already closed. Others give every appearance of permanence, and their owners include 20 of the 100 largest manufacturing corporations of the U.S. The advertising of Fomento in the United States promises an average profit of 30 per cent on investment.

Typically, industrial production in Puerto Rico is limited to receiving material from the United States, performing certain operations on it, and returning it for marketing to the land from whence it came. The classic case was that of the leather gloves which used to be cut in Gloversville, N. Y., then shipped to Puerto Rico for the addition of certain seams by home workers, then returned still unfinished to Gloversville. Puerto Rico's new industries have passed this stage, but the principle remains that island industry functions as an appendage to that of the U.S.

It has been said often that Puerto Rican workers produce what

they do not consume, and consume what they do not produce—obvious signs of a totally dependent economy.

The Chamber of Commerce of Puerto Rico, in extolling the benefits of the tourist trade, points out that 74 cents of every dollar spent on tourism remains in the island, while of every dollar generated by manufacturing in Puerto Rico, the island retains but 32 cents. The balance, the Chamber explains helpfully, “goes mostly to pay for raw material obtained elsewhere.”

Bargains for Manufacturers

As an example of one of the larger industries figuring in the island's new economy one may take Commonwealth Oil Refining, which processes Venezuelan crude oil for resale to oil companies in the United States, and which is now constructing a large petrochemical plant at Guayanilla. A broker's report on Commonwealth stock,* issued in December 1964, says:

Under the Puerto Rican Industrial Incentives Act, the earnings of this refiner are fully exempt from income, property, and municipal taxes for 10 years through 1966, while approximately two-thirds of such income will remain tax-free until December 31, 1969. Tending to further postpone the payment of any income taxes are Puerto Rico's liberal, flexible depreciation rules, under which a qualifying concern is permitted wide latitude in determining the amount of its depreciation charge-offs . . . A recently instituted 12-year tax exemption for new industry in the Ponce area is expected to apply not only to Commonwealth's most recent round of oil refinery expansion, but also to the petrochemicals complex now under construction.

After making due allowance for the polite language of the broker's trade. It is clear that “qualifying” U.S. concerns can practically write their own tickets for paying taxes to Puerto Rico. The taxes they avoid fall instead, of course, on the citizens and the remaining economy of the island.

The widely-heralded concessions to attract new industries to Puerto Rico turn out in practice to be concessions to U.S. industries only. No relaxation of the (United States) immigration laws, for example, encourages a European auto manufacturer to locate a plant in Puerto Rico. One such concern (Fiat) which produces small, cheap cars, particularly suitable for Puerto Rican traffic and pocket-books, has in recent years opened branch factories in Mexico and

* Hirsch & Co., New York.

Argentina. (The car-rental agencies of San Juan use this car for most of their business.) To buy the car in question, the island motorist must pay the U.S. price for it, plus the extra transportation from the U.S. to Puerto Rico, plus the profit of an extra handler. Meanwhile Puerto Rican industry is held firmly in the role of a processor of U.S. goods for U.S. distribution.

This is Independence?

“Perhaps the most challenging problem for Puerto Rico is the high degree of dependency which characterizes the economy,” Prof. Carlos A. Frankenhoff, S. J., of the economics faculty of the University of Puerto Rico, writes in the University's *Review of Social Sciences* (June, 1964). “A careful analysis of import-export trends could suggest new possibilities for the development of Puerto Rican industry. It could well happen that it would be wise to strengthen certain export industries and that a specific program is necessary to develop import substitutes in the industrial as well as in the farming sector.” (Note that this Jesuit teacher is advocating at least a partial economic plan for the country, and management of the economy in the interest of the country as a whole, in place of the acquiescence in profit-raiding which is now the stance of the Puerto Rican government.)

“We must be conscious of the inherent dangers of an economy exclusively dependent on industrial operations which are branches of the United States,” says Ramon F. Calderon, executive director of the Puerto Rican Manufacturers' Association, speaking in late 1963. He continues, “Of the total of 1,225 factories promoted by Fomento and which reached the point of beginning operations, 408 have discontinued operations here, or 33 per cent of the total. Of those which have discontinued operations, 90 per cent were branches of parent industries in the United States. . . . Of the 817 factories promoted by Fomento which remain open and operating, 623 are branches of industries in the United States, that is a proportion of 76 per cent of the total.”*

The mineral resources of Puerto Rico, which once were considered to be probably negligible, are now the object of intense investigation by United States mining concerns, whose explorations have yielded considerable evidence of valuable deposits of copper and perhaps other ores. These national riches the U.S. producers are preparing to take over as soon as they come to light. Within the past year the

* *El Mundo*, San Juan, October 4, 1963.

MPI (Movement for Independence) has had to wage a campaign to dissuade rural landholders from selling or optioning their land to the mining companies in ignorance of their rights to a share of the proceeds, should mineral production materialize.

According to the MPI, the mining company agents have used every kind of pressure on the farmers, including in one case the cooperation of a local Puerto Rican official, to induce them to sign away their rights for a fraction of what the value would be in event of ore discovery. The organization is waging a hard struggle against this move to bind Puerto Rico to the United States by yet another economic chain.

One copper deposit in Adjuntas, worth \$550 million according to the concessionaire, has already been conceded to the Ponce Mining Co., a subsidiary of the Kennecott Copper Co., for royalties of 2 per cent to the government and the land-holders and with tax exemption privileges. Another deposit, in Lares, is being negotiated with American Metal-Climax on practically the same terms.

The Shipping Gouge

The monopoly of U.S. shipping in the Puerto Rican trade, begun when there was no pretense that the island was anything but a U.S. possession, remains today in full legal effect. This means that to the prices of everything Puerto Rico imports from the United States—which is most of the necessities of life—are added the freight rates of ship lines with no foreign competition to curb their appetite for profits.

The same law which reserves the trade to U.S. ships exempts the lines, in fixing their rates, from the penalties of the anti-trust laws, so that they may connive at will in the rapid rise of freight costs. Between 1956 and 1959 alone these were increased by 27 per cent on many consumer items imported to Puerto Rico, with the natural effect upon the prices paid for these necessities by the Puerto Rican public.*

In 1964, Puerto Rican consumers paid \$86 million in freight rates to the U.S. ship lines, according to the MPI. This was an excess of \$50 million over what the cost would have been in world competitive shipping, and is one of the main reasons for the *escasez de la mesa*—the scarcity of food on the table in Puerto Rico.

The Lot of the Workers

"By 1963," says a U.S. observer, "Puerto Rico had surpassed every

* Gordon K. Lewis, *Puerto Rico*, New York, 1963.

Latin American country except oil-rich Venezuela in per capita income."* There is so much wrong with this statement that it is hard to know where to begin. In the first place, "oil-rich Venezuela" is a country where a large part of the population is always literally starving. Getting back to Puerto Rico, the \$740 per capita income there is significant, as it is anywhere else, only in relation to living costs, which are higher in that country than in the United States.

To appreciate the Puerto Rican-U.S. wage differential, it suffices to glance at figures from a recent minimum-wage ruling issued by the island labor department. The highest minimum is \$1.25 per hour, applying to a variety of occupations, including the teaching personnel of universities. From this eminence, the hourly minimums range downward to 50 cents for cattle-herders, with a mean of between 80 and 85 cents. Bearing in mind that to live in urban Puerto Rico costs 25 per cent more than living on a comparable scale in the United States, one begins to perceive the plight of the Puerto Rican wage-earner.

The industrialization has brought with it a steep price inflation, made worse by the activities of the military. Real estate prices and the costs of building materials have been among the lines most affected. Ordinary family dwellings now are priced in the \$15,000 range, placing them far out of reach of the average worker.

In housing, the government admits to 88,000 families, 400,000 people, or nearly one-sixth of the population, living in the infamous slum settlements around the population centers. Many with homes outside these districts are not much better off. Of the 450,000 houses checked in the last census (in urban areas only), 188,000 were found sub-standard, lacking water, electricity, or adequate sanitation. Though there has been considerable expansion of public housing projects, it has only scratched the real need.

The same census of 1960 found that median income for 529,000 Puerto Rican families was \$1,082 annually, but that one-third of the family incomes were less than \$500 a year or \$41.66 a month. The median included the incomes of 50,000 North Americans working in the island, and of other well-paid skilled and supervisory personnel.

The One that Got Away

The events of the last six years in Cuba have had a noticeable impact on the economic life of Puerto Rico. United States commerce with Cuba has been destroyed to spite Castro, as previously we

* Senior, *op. cit.*

destroyed our commerce with China to prove our love for Chiang Kai-shek. The anti-Cuban Cubans, who formerly served in their own country as the stooges of imperialism and battered on the misery of their fellow countrymen, have migrated to Puerto Rico in large numbers. (The migration is of course encouraged and subsidized by the United States government.) They have brought some "legitimate" business, such as real estate development, displacing Puerto Rican entrepreneurs and their employees to a corresponding extent, and also such dubious blessings as clip-joints and brothels.

The former U.S. participants in the wrecked Cuban trade have likewise had to find some other place to turn, which has increased the pressure for still more economic penetration of Puerto Rico. The recent proliferation of giant resort hotels in the Condado district adjoining San Juan, where \$100-a-day luxury is flaunted at the nearby slums, probably would have been less spectacular if the Cuban outlets for gambling and night life were still available.

Puerto Ricans now have an opportunity to witness how socialist Cuba has developed valuable commercial relations with fascist Spain. This rapidly growing commerce, certainly not stimulated by any political sympathy, none the less interests all the Spanish-speaking countries of the hemisphere, which share an attachment for Spain based on their heritage of language and culture.

The Role of Organized Labor

The Puerto Rican labor movement began to take organized form during the final decade of the last century. What later became the Free Federation of Puerto Rican Workers was founded in 1898, under Spanish rule.

In the course of militant struggle the working class has won many gains and reforms through legislation as well as through collective bargaining. The right to organize, to strike and to picket; accident insurance; protection of women and children in industry; sanitary conditions in factories and shops and many other gains have been won by trade union struggle.

The Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin Acts, extended to Puerto Rico without the consent of the Puerto Rican people, have restricted many of the rights which had been achieved.

At present there are 28 North American international unions in Puerto Rico, 8 indigenous trade union centers and 6 independent groupings.

The Puerto Rican labor force is calculated at 670,000 workers. Of these, around 151,255 are organized. More than 101,255 (or two-

thirds) of the organized labor force belong to the North American internationals. The remaining third, or 50,000 belong to Puerto Rican trade union centers and independent unions.

The unions controlled by the internationals do not enjoy any autonomy. Their principal leaders are North Americans sent from the United States who are unable even to speak Spanish to communicate with the workers. Puerto Rican leaders are only used in positions of lesser importance to serve as intermediaries between the leadership and the workers. Contracts are drawn up in English and discussed, approved and signed in the United States without the participation of the workers. Dues go to the internationals in the United States and the Puerto Rican worker receives very little for his money.

In the last ten years, the Puerto Rican government's so-called "industrialization" program has resulted in a marked exodus of industries from the United States to Puerto Rico. This has accelerated the growth of the internationals, as most of the factories being brought to Puerto Rico are merely branches of U.S. plants already organized.

International unions not only divide the Puerto Rican labor movement, but corrupt weak leaders and waste huge sums of money in raids on industries already organized. They also serve as weapons of imperialism against the Puerto Rican fight for liberation.

Three Puerto Rican bodies: the Insular Union of Workers, the Industrial Workers Union of Puerto Rico and the General Confederation of Workers (Authentic) have declared open war against these U.S. unions, charging that their manner of organizing and their administrative procedures seriously damage the interest of the Puerto Rican working class. They also charge that North American union leaders live like rich men in good hotels and residences, while the workers live in the worst slums in the most miserable conditions.

Conclusion

The Puerto Rican sense of nationhood survives, but the struggle still goes on against absorption into the economy and the culture of the dominant power. In the creation, finally, of a significant Puerto Rican proletariat, there lies the most historically advanced section of the Puerto Rican people to achieve independence.

None of the questions raised in the above brief discussion can be adequately dealt with except by extending the discussion into the political field, including the subject of the Puerto Rican independence movement. Such a continuation will be the subject of a later article.

Sartre: Existentialism and Marxism

I

Existentialism took shape as a philosophical movement in the 1920's and early 1930's with the work of two German philosophers, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger. They were followed by a number of other writers, notably two Frenchmen: Jean-Paul Sartre, whose weighty existentialist treatise, *Being and Nothingness*, was published in French in 1943 and in English translation in 1948, and Albert Camus. Both Sartre and Camus were also gifted and eloquent playwrights and novelists, and it was mainly through the attention they aroused that existentialism developed as a philosophical and literary movement in the United States after the Second World War. However, since existentialists acknowledge as their ancestral figures Friedrich Nietzsche, in the late 19th century, and preceding him, Soren Kierkegaard, existentialism can be said to have arisen in the second quarter of the 19th century. This period saw also the first crises of a triumphant capitalism, and the rise of Marxism.

The starting point of existentialist thought is the "predicament" of the solitary individual looking at the world about him and asking, how did I get to be here? This question, existentialism says, cannot be answered. But because the essence of human life is the individual's consciousness of his existence, then death, or the dissolution of this individual consciousness into "nothingness," is the overwhelming catastrophe of existence, making the world "absurd," a place of "tragic anguish." The central problem is how to counter this fundamental "absurdity" and "tragedy"; how to find one's "freedom" from it.

To clear the way for the solution of this problem, existentialism proceeds to renounce, and attack as delusive and harmful, all socially inherited knowledge of what the world is like, including science, and it embarks upon a furious attack upon all compulsion laid upon the individual by society.

Marxist philosophy, or dialectical and historical materialism, puts science at its center. A succinct description of its approach is given by Engels in *Feuerbach*: "One leaves alone 'absolute truths' . . . instead one pursues attainable relative truths along the path of the positive sciences, and the summation of their results by means of dia-

lectical thinking." Marxism furthermore develops a science of society. It sees that bourgeois society has replaced the exploitation in feudal society with a new, capitalist form of exploitation. But at the same time, it sees bourgeois society as a great step above feudal and monarchic society. In the contradictions and inevitable crises of bourgeois society, it sees the forces developing that must eventually end not only capitalist exploitation but all exploitation of one class by another.

And so Marxism views existentialism quite differently from the way existentialists view themselves. The existentialist says: because life is tragic and absurd, the only solution to this predicament is one that must come from within myself, and to face up to it I must free myself from any traps that will draw me away, like science, knowledge and social demands. The Marxist says that the existentialist death-hauntedness, with its view of the individual alone in a world of anguish, is only a reflection of the alienation born out of the competitive dog-eat-dog life of bourgeois society. In this perpetual warfare, dominated by avarice, each human unit is at the same time bound to every other in the social organism. Since the bourgeois cannot free himself physically from this network of rivalry, he is torn internally. Each tends to see every other individual in terms of enmity, incomprehension and estrangement. Alienation is the inner, psychological product of social relationships drained of their humanity. The existentialist is the bourgeois rebel who attacks the society that oppresses him but sees it only in bourgeois terms.

And indeed, while existentialist writing is full of attacks upon the surrounding society, intensifying its expressions of horror with the coming of the wars and crises of 20th century imperialism, it never sees this society as "bourgeois" or "capitalist." This society, to it, is the configuration of all society. And so it attacks the "enlightenment," reason and science, because they delude people with false views that there can be progress in society. It also attacks democracy, the working class, the masses of people, because they, to existentialism, are an inextricable part of bourgeois society, which typifies the hatefulness of all society. The existentialist sees himself as a lonely, courageous prophet, one of the few who see "truth," far in advance of and vilified by the surrounding mass of philistines. Levelling its sharpest attacks against attempts to improve or change society, existentialism soon regarded Marxism and socialism as its main opponent.

Thus Kierkegaard denounced any attention to the material world as "worldliness," lumping together in this the marketplace rivalry, sci-

entific advances and social reform. He called for "faith" as the highest truth, recognizing that this was "absurd" but claiming that all life was "absurd." Science, he said, was an evil, destructive force. Nietzsche, in books like *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Genealogy of Morals*, sprayed venom on democracy, the common people, socialism, the Jews, humanist social morality and any attention of one person to the plight of another. Belief in human kinship and social progress, he said, was the despicable "slave morality" of the "herd." Life was tragic, and this could only be countered by the life force, which showed itself as the "will to power" and exploitation. Science, to him, was a false life-denying use of logic which offered people panaceas and optimistic delusions of human progress.

Edmund Husserl, whose phenomenology is not existentialism, but who influenced Heidegger and Sartre, said that science was irrelevant to the "real problem," namely that of human consciousness and how it could even begin to know anything "true" about the world. Martin Heidegger carried Nietzsche's views further, into an open support of fascism. He declared in 1935 that through Hitlerism, Germany would lead Europe to freedom from the evil technological society and standardization of man that existed in America and Russia. He saw, of course, no technology in the Krupp works or standardization of man in Hitler's brown shirts. Karl Jaspers, who had a more humanist outlook than Heidegger, did not accept fascism. He saw fascism, however, and all the evils of modern society, as brought about through the domination of "the masses," and science had to him the frightening aspect of assisting at a masses-run society in which the individual was drowned.

To Camus, the very discovery by science of laws of nature, which human beings presumably had to respect so that they could put them to use, was an infringement placed upon human freedom. This infringement appeared even more infuriating to him when it took the form of the Marxist development of a science of society, namely the discovery of the economic laws evolved in society, of the formation of social classes, of the forms of exploitation of one class by another, and of the role of social classes in the movement of history. In his book, *The Rebel*, Camus cried that this Marxist social science was an even greater compulsion placed upon human beings. It demanded "conformity." It made man a "slave to history." It robbed man of the freedom to make decisions that would be wholly his own.

Sartre's new step, in which he was partly and hesitatingly joined for a while by Camus, was to add to existentialism a sense of social responsibility. His existentialist starting point was an introspective

examination of the individual consciousness. His *Being and Nothingness* is an immensely long and tightly written analysis of consciousness, attempting to show how it brings into the mind the assurance of the existence of a surrounding world and of "others." To evade the charge that this was simply introspective psychologizing, he included little or nothing of his personal life, and instead generalized about all consciousness in a highly precise, seemingly scientific terminology. He denied that he was dealing with his own lone consciousness. "Others" exist in the world, with the same consciousness. But for everyone, it is "absurd" that we live, it is "absurd" that we die.

Sartre's philosophy in this early book, typical of all existentialist philosophy, starts from "scratch"; there is no hint in his treatise that the human consciousness has been or could be enriched, in its view of the world, by the heritage of thousands of years of labor, discovery, social and historical experience, science, art, and thought. And the criticism can still be made that for all his assumption of an impersonal "objectivity," he is still trapped by introspection, still making a universal generalization out of, not "consciousness," but a special state of consciousness born out of special historical and social conditions. In other words, what he is charting is not all consciousness, but the alienated frame of mind characteristic of bourgeois society. Thus he writes: "Every act performed against the Other can on principle be for the Other an instrument which will serve him against me." And nowhere in the treatise is there any hint that the "I" can learn from the "Others," can begin to see itself as kin to the others, working with them and so growing through them. The world of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* is made up of the "I" and "Others" in which each of the "Others" is an "I" surrounded by "Others," and each "I" feels alone and estranged.

And this view also shapes Sartre's assertion of freedom and social responsibility. We are each of us, he says, responsible for the world we are in. We must act, and so we make our decisions. But freedom lies in making decisions that are wholly our own. Whatever we choose, even if it leads to disaster for us, is freedom, so long as we make our own choice. There must be no outer pressure or compulsion, no "necessity." "We shall never apprehend ourselves except as a choice in the making. But freedom is simply the fact that this choice is always unconditioned. . . . I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without anything or anyone being able to lighten it."

There is an important kernel of truth in Sartre's view of freedom. There is no virtue in blind obedience to a cause, however good. Even a person who accepts the most rigid discipline for the sake of unity

with others must do so as a free choice. But the drastic limitation of his view, differing from that of Marxism, is that to Sartre freedom is wholly contained in the act of a free choice. It doesn't matter what this leads to. To Marxism, a person making a decision, however independently, who is ignorant of the problem he is dealing with, who does not grasp its conditions and "laws," is really not free. He is controlled, as Engels says, by the very forces he wants to control. Sartre, however, does not include in his thinking, at this point, any agreement that there is an outer necessity, of laws of nature and society, which people must understand, grasp and socially use, to take a step to freedom. To him, people can never have a glimmer of the results of their actions.

Sartre reveals the limitation of his view in the deliberately ironic statement in an essay on the Resistance: "We were never more free than under the German Occupation." He is referring of course to the Frenchmen who said "No." In joining the Resistance, he says, "the question of freedom was posed, and we were brought to the edge of the deepest knowledge a man can have of himself. For the secret of a man is not his Oedipus complex or his inferiority complex, it is the limit of his freedom, his ability to resist torture and death." But for all the insight here, this remains the application to a historical situation of the existentialist general theory of freedom as the individual scorn or defiance of an implacably hostile, absurd or meaningless world. Yet surely in the mind of many who said "No" there was also a confidence in their fellow human beings, a conviction that the German fascists and their French collaborators could be defeated, that France could again be free of the boot heel.

As a social-minded existentialist, Sartre engaged himself in society, instead of passing philosophical judgment on it, and he was willing to look critically at his ideas if real life taught him otherwise. In 1939 Sartre had written in his notebook: "I am now cured of socialism, if I needed to be cured of it." But in the Resistance, he worked alongside of Communists. Then came the war's end, and the changed face of America, in which he and his friends had felt such confidence. The dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima seemed to be a "revolting massacre." Sartre and his friends had believed that with the defeat of Hitler, the two last pro-Hitler fascist dictators in Europe would be overthrown: Franco in Spain and Salazar in Portugal. Then the United States, along with England, rushed to their rescue, condemning another generation of Spanish and Portuguese people to unspeakable poverty and misery. During Sartre's visit to the United States in 1945, "Ford's director of public relations

had cheerfully referred to the coming war with the U.S.S.R." (Simone de Beauvoir, in *Force of Circumstance*). Sartre played a heroic role in the fight for peace, for a free Indochina, for Algerian freedom. It became evident that in a social engagement, there was some worth in discovering social laws. And so Sartre found increasing illumination in Marxism. Finally, in *Search for a Method*, the prefatory volume of *Critique de la raison dialectique*, he wrote that what Descartes and Locke had been for the 17th century, and Kant and Hegel had been for the 18th and early 19th, Marx was for today:

These three philosophies become, each in its turn, the humus of every particular thought and the horizon of all culture; there is no going beyond them so long as man has not gone beyond the historical moment which they express. . . . A so-called "going beyond" Marxism will be at worst only a return to pre-Marxism; at best, only the rediscovery of a thought already contained in the philosophy which one believes he has gone beyond. . . . And since I am to speak of existentialism, let it be understood that I take it to be an "ideology." It is a parasitical system living on the margin of Knowledge, which at first it opposed but into which today it seeks to be integrated.

Sartre clearly does not give up his existentialism. Yet he has taken a decisive step, which causes the rest of the existentialist movement either bitterly to see him as a traitor or hopefully to regard him as one suffering temporary delusions. But this step cannot be revoked, for it is a step to intellectual freedom. He is now on the level on which he can see his own thought historically.

Existentialism to him is no longer a universal truth of the mind. Its frame of mind or psychology is a product of bourgeois society.

II

The spread of existentialism in American intellectual life came in the period of the cold war. As a philosophy it had immense attractions. In its disassociation from and scorn for present-day society, it could appear to be recognizing certain ugly realities, and be a philosophy of rebellion. Among many writers and artists, aghast at the power of reaction and "disillusioned" by the apparent quiescence of the working class, it could inspire the derisive but despairing "revolt" against the moral pretenses of society, in the literature and theatre "of the absurd." At the same time, with its attack upon

Marxism, and upon any possibility of social and scientific knowledge that could lead to human progress, it could be a very safe rebellion. And so we can understand the dismay in the American academic circles that had accepted Sartre, at his turn to Marxism. This dismay is expressed in three recent books dealing with Sartre, existentialism and Marxism. These scholars are not consciously implementing the cold war. But having more or less accepted Sartre's "pure existentialism," they regard his implied criticism of himself as a criticism of them.

Robert Denoon Cummings, formerly Chairman of the Philosophy Department of Columbia University, offers in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre** extensive selections from Sartre's philosophical writings. There are about 300 extremely well chosen pages from *Being and Nothingness*; five pages from *Search for a Method*; and only about 60 pages from *Critique de la raison dialectique* which, published in France in 1960, is as long a book as *Being and Nothingness* and includes Sartre's acceptance of Marxism. In his introduction, Professor Cummings expresses the belief that just as some "fellow travelers" like John Dos Passos in the 1920's "rediscovered America and the beneficence of capitalism," so Sartre is likely to follow their path. Wilfrid Desan, who teaches philosophy at Georgetown, presents in *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre*** a critical paraphrase and summary of *Critique de la raison dialectique*. Calling this book a "flirtation with communism," Desan expresses throughout his analysis the hope that this affair will be broken off and that Sartre will again become an opponent of Marxism. Walter Odajnyk, a graduate student at Columbia University, originally wrote *Marxism and Existentialism**** as a Master of Arts thesis in political science at Berkeley. The form of the book is a kind of imagined debate, with the earlier writings of Sartre used mainly for the presentation of existentialism. Under a series of headings such as Materialism, the Dialectic, Revolution, Freedom, Ethics, and so on, Odajnyk presents what he sees as the Marxist critique of existentialism and the existentialist critique of Marxism. Odajnyk's manner is almost that of a referee at a boxing

* Robert Denoon Cummings, ed., *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, Random House, New York, 1965. \$7.95.

** Wilfrid Desan, *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre*, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N. Y., 1965. \$4.95.

*** Walter Odajnyk, *Marxism and Existentialism*, Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N. Y., 1965. \$.95 (paper bound).

match. In some rounds, Marxism gets a couple of points. In other rounds, existentialism is awarded a couple of points. Then, giving the impression that each has punched holes in the other, and that the match is a sort of draw, Odajnyk settles everything by coming up with his own philosophy. This is a pragmatism so close to existentialism that it explodes his own pretense of an aloof, uncommitted impartiality. He writes that we really don't know anything about the world, we have no sure guideposts; "the tragedy of man's life is that he walks in darkness."

The rock on which these critics of Marxism founder is their refusal to master dialectical thinking. They repeat phrases like "thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis," or "affirmation, negation, negation of the negation," and think that they understand dialectics. But they regard it as a queer kind of thought which can be applied here and disregarded there. To Marxism, however, the great discoveries of science prove that all life has to be understood dialectically, in terms of its interconnections, and the interrelation of opposite forces that generates its continual movement and change. Therefore all the great problems arising out of human life and growth, like freedom and necessity, the individual and society, personal and social morality, ideas and material realities, have to be regarded dialectically, for only thus can they be solved. One side of the duality cannot be chosen over the other—as the metaphysical philosopher pretends to do, but only in words—because each side gives meaning to the other.

But both Desan and Odajnyk conclude that since Marxism upholds materialism, it does not concern itself with "things of the spirit." To Marxism, however, human hopes, visions, emotions, ethical beliefs, imaginative creations, are a real and valid part of life. Marx, in *Capital*, shows how through the labor process of changing nature to fit human needs, man discovers unsuspected powers and potentialities in himself, and develops his imagination. And central to Marxist social science is the view of the urge to freedom as the driving force in progress. How could history be seen in terms of class struggles if there were not the unquenchable urge of the exploited to free themselves from exploitation?

When Marxism sees the material as primary to the spiritual, this is not to denigrate the "things of the spirit" but the other way round. If the spirit is seen as primary, then there is no possible way to satisfy people's spiritual needs except hope, prayer and belief in miracles. But if freedom, the moral life, the ability to develop humane and fruitful personal relationships, the widespread development among people of creative esthetic powers, are seen as resting basically

on the material conditions of the way people live, conditions that can be changed, then the way—if by no means an easy one—lies open to attain them. So with morality, Marxism recognizes the urge to moral standards that has existed from the beginning of society. It also points to the fact that in exploitive class society, a ruling class has always demanded that people kill, cheat and lie in order to serve its interests, and has made the paramount sin that of defying the ruling class. One could write a history of humanity in terms of the developing concepts of the preciousness of human life and the breadth of human kinship, achieved in successive struggles against the ruling classes.

In our own country today, the two great struggles, for civil rights and against the predatory war in South Vietnam, are demanding that a new level of morality be established throughout American life. However, the very fact that Marxism, following what history itself shows, insists that morality rests not only on what is preached but on what is socially practiced, and that this is developmental—this fact itself induces Desan to say, “Marx himself had no direct interest in the search for an ethical norm.” To the present writer, Marxist tenets have made a profound contribution to morality. These are, that labor is the condition for human development; that labor is social and that an individual grows only through his social relations; that the worker finds successive steps to freedom not in rivalry with but in cooperation with his fellow workers; that no section of the working class can have interests opposed to the working class as a whole; that the working class, in freeing itself from exploitation, must also free all society from exploitation. Profoundly ethical is the Marxist condemnation of the brutal competitiveness of bourgeois society, pitting merchant against merchant, manufacturer against manufacturer, worker against worker. Engels calls it “the immorality of self-alienation.”

So with the “individual and society,” Marx and Marxism never raised society “above” the individual. What they point out is that society is not simply a conglomeration of individuals; that because of the complex economic forces and divisions of labor, it has its own life, which the individual must understand and grasp. There are social conditions that stifle individual growth; there are social conditions that enhance and make possible an individual’s free development. The presence of a socially created theatre and active audience avid for ideas enabled Shakespeare to rise from an obscure small-town school teacher to an admired and famous playwright. Can we imagine Franklin, Washington, Jefferson, Paine, feeling that by taking part in a great social movement for an independent nation they were

stifling their individuality? One can remove oneself from society, not in actual life, but only in mind, or attitude, and this removal creates the individual impoverishment of alienation. So Marx writes that “the senses of social men are different from those of unsocial men,” and Engels writes with admiration of the great men of the Renaissance precisely because they were socially alive, many-sided individuals. The humanism through which their art flowered asserted individual rights and social responsibility as twins.

Desan, however, when criticizing Sartre’s turn to Marxism, writes that in envisioning a “Self” that is free, powerful and creative, “Sartre has in fact created an entity *too isolated in a hostile world* to be ever successfully committed to a group or to anything.” (Emphasis Desan’s.) But this means only that Desan is himself too committed to Sartre’s earlier existentialist views, which saw all society eternally in terms of the bourgeois crisis, to be able to view Marxism understandingly. Odajnyk uses Marxism to criticize Sartre’s “emphasis on the individual,” and then turns around to reiterate that Marx sees “only the social” and that “by seeing only society Marx lost the individual.” Since there is nothing in Marx to confirm this, it expresses only Odajnyk’s pragmatist bias, which is a revulsion against the role that Marx sees the working class occupying in society. For pragmatism violently rejects Marx’s science of society and especially the view of class struggle. To many bourgeois theorists, the very term “working class” brings up a nightmare vision of a faceless horde, a “society” stifling the individual.

The aspect of Marxist thought which evokes the most violent incomprehension and expressions of disdain from Desan and Odajnyk is the dialectical relationship between ideas and the material conditions of society. Odajnyk quotes Marx’s famous lines: “The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their social existence, but, on the contrary their social existence that determines their consciousness.” At this view, both Desan and Odajnyk fling epithets like “determinism” and “fatalism.” Desan writes: “For modern Marxism, as we very well know, human reality is nothing more than an inert and passive entity, pushed around by the forces of production.” This, he says, makes “man a mere robot.” Odajnyk asks: “If all men and ideas are a direct product of their social environment, how is it possible for them to divorce themselves from their environment and act upon it, and more importantly, against it? . . . Why was it that a slave reared and educated in a society in which slavery was an approved social feature,

and which relied upon slaves as an economic necessity should revolt against his environment?"

But in the very essay from which Odajnyk quotes, as well as in innumerable other passages, Marx and Engels have shown how consciousness in turn reacts upon reality. It is not simply the dominant ideology of the age that stocks men's minds. There is also the perception of the actual realities of life and their change, and whatever level has been reached of scientifically established knowledge. Of the slave revolts in the ancient Greek and Roman empires, all Marxism says is that they could not possibly have been carried out under such banners as the Declaration of Independence of 1776 or modern socialism. Similarly, Engels points out that in the European Middle Ages, the great peasant and weaver revolts had to be carried on with religious slogans, like a "poor man's" interpretation of the Bible.

Marxism sees society in continual change, and so tries to chart the laws of this change. The forces of production change. One dam leads to another, one tool to another, one invention to another. Obviously the people who carry this out are by no means robots. But what Marxism also says is that what individuals do, links up into forces that they have neither planned nor can control. Who willed the Roman Empire into being? Who willed its inner crisis and destruction? Who willed feudal society into being? Who willed capitalism into being? When one capitalist after another increases production to make more profit, and as a result of all their activity, production outruns the market and a crisis follows, who willed the crisis? That is why, in the passage Odajnyk quotes, Marx stresses social existence, and it has taken a long time for human beings to approximate a social consciousness corresponding to their social existence; one that tells them what they are collectively doing and have done.

Desan writes derisively of "an inconsistency in Marxism, which claims that every ideology is merely an expression of an economic situation but that its own position is independent of and can explain History." The fact is, however, that Marxism, or dialectical and historical materialism, is radically different in character from all ideologies of the past, and class ideologies of the present; in fact, Marx and Engels do not refer to Marxism as an ideology. Such ideologies do not see themselves as reflections of social conditions. They translate existing conditions and institutions into "eternal truths," and see them as a product of pure logic, or divine revelation. They cannot embrace change. In contrast to this, the development by Marxism of social science, its discovery of the laws governing economic life,

represents a breakthrough for all society, in its ability to understand what it has itself created, including its change. The Marxist revelation of the relation of ideologies to the social-economic base furthermore enables people—and in every social class—to analyze critically the origins of their own ideas, and so frees them to approach reality. Most cogent of all is the fact that dialectical and historical materialism is not a "closed system," but a philosophy reflecting a world of change which consciously includes in this its own change, absorbing all further developments of science and the lessons drawn from continued social experience. Of course, Marxists, being human beings with every variety of frailty, have made gross errors in appraising changing realities, and have also become dogmatists, or ideologists in the old sense, fixed in their ideas. But here too we come upon a new aspect of Marxist philosophy. It is not, like other philosophies, the possession of one philosopher, or of a philosophical elite. It is increasingly becoming the conscious possession of masses of people, who prize its relation to and clarification of their lives. And so in the operation of real life itself, and its dialectic appraisal, errors are in the long run corrected and dogmatisms exposed.

III

It is to this "open" aspect of Marxism that Sartre has addressed himself, in his turn to Marxism. Always an independent mind who raises challenges, he sets out to rewrite certain aspects of Marxism. In *Search for a Method* he lays down the direction in which he will work, one in which he thinks that Marxism has been dogmatic or "lazy." It is that of individual psychology, or the "interior" life. He writes: "The individual person's distress takes on its true meaning when one recalls that it expresses concretely the alienation of man. Existentialism, aided by psychoanalysis, can study today only situations in which man has been lost since childhood, for there are no others in a society founded on exploitation."

There is no desire here to minimize the importance of Sartre's exploration of the complex forces—other than the economic situation—which affect an individual's stand and decisions, and which Sartre carries forward in *Critique de la raison dialectique*. But in the passage quoted, Sartre seems to be missing an important side of Marx's discussion of alienation, in his *Philosophical and Economic Manuscripts of 1844*. Marx discusses a counterforce to alienation that could be called "the humanization of life," the "creation of human senses" corresponding to the actual richness of life. He shows this concretely;

how when workers come together to organize, they may start with a purely practical aim, but soon they discover warm and human relations among one another, seeing each other with different eyes and with basic kinship. What Sartre seems to be saying, namely that everyone in capitalist society is alienated, is by no means true. When Marxism projects the end of alienation in the end of exploitive society, it also says that this will come about through people—and particularly, because of its conditions of struggle, the working class—who are themselves, because of mutual cooperation, not alienated people.

Again, in *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Sartre appears to be projecting "scarcity" as the driving force in history. Scarcity, he says, "is the foundation of the possibility of human history . . . there is not enough for everyone . . . man is the historical product of scarcity . . . we are united by the fact that we all inhabit a world defined by scarcity." This does not mean that Sartre discards Marx's concept of a conflict between the developing forces of production and the class and social relations of production. Perhaps Sartre sees "scarcity" as the concrete way in which the play of these forces appears to the individual mind. And yet, to this writer, he seems to be projecting on to all history a view of life that was really true of animal life, or primitive tribal society, where the hunt for food was perpetual. Perhaps Sartre is moved to this view by the jungle life of capitalist society. And yet we can ask of Sartre: was it "scarcity" that impelled him to join with others in the Resistance? Of course, there will never be a society where people will not have to work, and in this sense, there will always be a "need." But labor (not under conditions of exploitation, of course) is a source of growth, happiness, the joy of creativity, and the development of the senses. And the fact that labor is social, that from primitive times people have addressed themselves to their needs socially, would seem to negate Sartre's argument that scarcity causes each man to see "others" as a "threat to his life."

However, as for Sartre's use of existentialism to develop certain aspects of Marxism, the decision about the value of this will not be made by any one man. It will be made in the long run by the many to whom Marxism is a way of life and thought, and who will test every idea by the contribution it makes to human progress.

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