

Infiltration: A Virulent Poison

By MICHAEL J. BERNSTEIN

When Marx wrote the Bible of Socialism he naively assumed that modern society was divided into two classes—capitalist and proletariat, and all groups not already included in either of these must eventually be absorbed into one or the other. As a matter of fact, unconsciously rationalizing his own social status, he constantly asserted that when the working-class succeeded in capturing political power, it would do so under the leadership of middle-class intellectuals, possessing all the educational and cultural training of the capitalists.

According to Marx, these intellectuals would have thrown in their lot with the workers because of their wish to liberate mankind from capitalist bondage. It never seems to have occurred to him that these people might choose the side of revolution and working-class organization because a socialized state would provide them with enormous opportunities for material advantage. And yet, this is precisely what has happened. The Bolsheviks in Russia were the first group of dispossessed intellectuals to seize political power and create an economy whose chief beneficiaries were themselves. Following in more or less swift succession came Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, both of whose bureaucracies are engaged in rapidly consolidating their gains and fashioning their systems on the model of Soviet Russia, whose achievements in this field are still considerably ahead of their own.

There are many roads to power. Socialism, fascism, gradual collectivism—the name and the slogans are immaterial. Behind them all lies the same objective—a nationalized, collectivist economy concentrating all power and privilege, political, social and economic, in the hands of the propertyless educated. We are all acquainted with the phenomenon in its more violent manifestations as exemplified in Russia, Italy and Germany. But most of us

are unaware of the real nature of this tendency as it develops gradually in those countries still retaining the democratic forms.

This process which may be called "Revolution by Infiltration" is going on today and at a tremendously accelerated rate. An enormous number of American college graduates find themselves each year tossed into a world which gives them neither work nor security. A governmental job, offering comparative permanence of tenure, a certain degree of authority, and opportunities for automatic advancement, seems the most desirable career possible. Many of the colleges, in response to the demand, have set up Schools of Public Administration or at least are giving courses in that field. Social Work has become a major profession, as training in it provides the graduating student with additional credit rating in civil service examinations, or even makes it possible for him to take such tests while others lacking that training are excluded. Civil Service schools, offering preparation for particular examinations, are mushrooming all over the country, even though the competition for every job may frequently be as high as a ratio of a thousand applicants for each.

Most of these young people find, to their surprise, that the radical organizations they had been taught to regard as somehow not respectable, are actually voicing their own demands and promising fulfillment of their own hopes. Widen relief, expand WPA, broaden Social Security, have the government take over certain industries—these are the planks in the current left-wing programs. Each one of them, if

achieved, means more governmental jobs, the creation of an increasingly larger class of bureaucrats whose incomes and privileges are completely independent of the fluctuations of the labor-market.

But many of our unemployed college graduates fail to attain this security of employment in the public service. They become the most ardent and vociferous advocates for the continuance and expansion of the white-collar, educational, and art projects of the WPA. It is from these projects that the unions of unemployed and WPA workers draw the greatest proportion of their strength. And it is with the membership of these projects that civil service workers find themselves in increasingly close alliance. Their interests are obviously similar—the preservation and strengthening of government participation in the economic life of society.

It is no accident that many of the individuals composing these two groups are either Communists or Communist sympathizers. For the primary function of the Communist Party today is the defense and advertisement of the Soviet Union. And the Soviet Union is the bureaucrat's paradise; it is the ideal society (from a purely material view) for the penniless intellectual. Any casual acquaintance with the economic life of Russia today demonstrates that the person of education who knows how to be discreet finds his services in great demand by the ruling régime which is itself made up of intellectuals. Actors, artists, engineers, accountants, doctors, teachers, lawyers, editors, professional agitators and propagandists, and just plain bureaucrats enjoy the highest standards of living. Obey the party line, keep your mouth shut, open it only when required, "and then widely," and a good job, plus the usual official privileges, are yours. "The Worker's Paradise" has become a qualified Heaven for the educated, but the great masses of



the people have still to experience the promised material salvation.

Not so long ago there was serious talk of transferring the WPA bodily to the Federal Civil Service. The notion of increasing the present governmental payrolls of four million employees to seven million was accepted in many quarters as a perfectly desirable goal. This talk became actualized in the movements to place the administrative officials of WPA on the Civil Service, and to create a Federal Art Bureau for the purpose of making permanent the WPA Art Projects. A tremendous amount of propaganda in favor of these measures was released from the left-wing groups. The educated "outs" were again simply manifesting what I have described as their primary impulse—governmental employment.

But it is impossible for the intellectuals to attain their goals unaided. To conquer political power they must ally themselves with the great masses of the unemployed, the unskilled, and the inadequately educated. They must and have become the advocates of measures apparently operating in the interests of the dispossessed, such as relief, old age pensions, public housing, unemployment insurance, etc. They accept as a fact that the poor must always be with us and direct their activities

towards remedies based on the implicit acceptance of that premise. For it is to their interest that the measures for alleviating poverty be such as to render their services indispensable. To them the actual disappearance of poverty would be as unwelcome as it must seem unthinkable to those whom they call reactionary.

Earlier in this article I used the phrase "Revolution by Infiltration." The days of street fighting and the barricades are over. Poorly armed insurrectionary groups have not the slightest chance of winning against the technically equipped military forces of the modern State. Even in Russia the Bolsheviks could seize power only because of the chaos engendered by the war and the collapse of both the Czarist and the Provisional governments. But our contemporary Marxists are not unaware of this. Infiltration into all branches of the government payrolls is a guarantee of being in the strategic spot should collapse take place. And it is an assurance as well, that even should the democratic régime remain intact, if somewhat battered, left-wing sentiment will be in a position to exert tremendous pressure on legislative bodies.

We are living at a time when a substantial section of educated opin-

ion has accepted to a growing extent the idea of increased State activity as the only solution for the social and economic problems of the modern world. Only in isolated quarters do we find the realization that the true path of civilized progress is away from statism, from directed cooperation, and toward a coordination of efforts which is the result of spontaneously undertaken individual activity. This is the true individualism, in contrast to the "ragged individualism" of the era from 1929 to 1932.

Today, men believe that there can be no freedom without economic security. But it is equally certain that there can be no security without freedom. For security involves, essentially, the ability to choose freely the kind, the place, and the time of one's occupation as well as the right to the full produce of one's labor and capital. If either of these two elements is lacking, men are neither free nor secure. An old slogan has it that "security without freedom is a six-foot cell." But paradoxically, occupancy of the cell is no guarantee of security. The warden, whether an individual or the State, having the power to punish, can always cut off rations. Human beings cannot exchange freedom for security—they can only surrender both.