Talking It Over:

Curse of Anti-Semitism

By Bertram D. Wolfe

NOT since the dying years of the late Middle Ages has anti-Semitism been so widespread or Jews subjected to such persecutions and tortures as prevail today. With Nazi Germany as its cultural fountainhead, the shame of anti-Semitism spreads slowly thru the "civilized" world.

How did the land which but yesterday seemed the very source of culture become the center of this monstrous relic of barbarism? What aims are pursued by the Fuehrer? What does it all mean and whither does it lead?

It is customary to call anti-Semitism "medieval," but this is a slander on the Middle Ages. There was an earlier time in the Middle Ages in which the Jew was relatively well treated, when he even occupied a privileged position. It was only when the medieval world was in decay that this blight became universal. It was during the long and brutal centuries when the feudal order was dying and the capitalist order was still powerless to be born, that the Jews were pillaged, tortured, murdered, accused of false crimes, held for collective ransom, and exiled and driven from land to land. One of the first steps in each bourgeois revolution was to abolish the distinctions of caste, remove the disabilities, break down the ghetto walls, emancipate the Jew. But now, to use the words of Lenin, "the decaying bourgeoisie supports everything that is backward, dying and medieval." Fascism is the overripe fruit of capitalism in decay, and the poison spreads, because monopoly capitalism has within itself the seeds of the infection. The recrudescence of anti-Semitism, like the other forms of resurgent barbarism in the treatment of man by man, is the sign that we have come once more to the point where a social order is dying. The old order is a rotting corpse; the grave-diggers have not yet proved capable of burrying it; and corruption spreads thru the world.

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IN 1920-30, power was within the grasp of the German working class, but social-democratic treason and communist sectarian stupidity (the Comintern treason came later) gave the forces of reaction their chance. Finding the whole people anti-capitalist as the result of its experiences with war and inflation, Hitler attempted to deflect this anti-capitalism into anti-"Jewish capitalism." Killing two birds with one stone, he sought to make socialism and communism appear "Semitic" too. That was the original social meaning of the Nazi revival of anti-Semitism: the Jew was to be made the goat.

The crazed middle class, having turned in vain to the workers for a way out of the madhouse, now turned to a personal savior, and anti-Semitism served a second purpose: to dispossess Jewish merchants, professional men, government employees, and to reward some of the Nazi followers and enrich their leaders by the dispossession. That was the secondary function of anti-Semitism. Those wealthy Jews who helped finance Hitler believing that his anti-socialism was worth supporting and his anti-Semitism was a mere demagogic device to be abandoned as soon as he reached power, have learned to their sorrow that their calculations were mistaken. Let the lesson be learned by their brethren here: YOU CANNOT FIGHT THE WORKING CLASS AND SOCIALISM TODAY WITHOUT FOSTERING ANTI-SEMITISM!

The agents and beneficiaries of the old and dying social order are ready to hold on at all costs, tho the cost be to limit production, to fetter science, to suppress culture, to prevent thought, to stop discussion, to brutalize the backward, to foment national hatred and race prejudice, to jail, torture, murder the vanguard of progress, to crush the human spirit. (Anti-Semitism is but a small part of this complex of reaction.) Rather than give up its stranglehold upon human progress, the dying order is ready to drag the entire race along with it, into the grave. Let those who are simultaneously "against fascism and socialism," let those who support totalitarianism so long as it is not anti-Semitic, let those who support decaying capitalism with its monopolies, its imperialist iron heel, its augmenting depressions, its million-headed armies of unemployed, its mounting accumulation of instruments of destruction, its dying convulsions in ever bigger and more destructive

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wars—let those who support the dying order ponder this well. . . .

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Those of us who perceive the relation between anti-Semitism and capitalist decay, however, cannot limit ourselves to the struggle for socialism. We must take those measures as well which will lighten the lot of the victim and beat back the blows of the persecutor. We must first of all enormously increase our efforts for direct relief. Second, we must stop merely bewailing the fate of the victims and do something to force open the gates of America to their free entrance. Exclusion of the immigrant is itself a form of persecution, itself a sign of social decay. Third, we must bring overwhelming diplomatic and economic pressure to bear upon the monstrous perpetrators of this crime: the withdrawal of diplomatic representatives, the stopping of loans, the severing of commercial relations. There are dangers in this. Often such measures lead to war. But despite all Roosevelt-Browder ballyhoo to the contrary, there is no real danger of a German-American war at this moment, any more than there was with Czarist Russia when an earlier Roosevelt withdrew an ambassador. A more serious danger is that the mass of the German people may suffer from these acts. Our only remedy is to increase enormously our aid to underground Germany, so that while these measures weaken the Hitler regime, our aid strengthens the organs of socialist revolution, which alone can put an end to the infamy.

Well-to-do-Jews must be made to understand that, if they are not willing to help the underground movement against Hitler, then the moves to boycott Germany may even help to consolidate his support. And it is not amiss to say a word against the danger of becoming mere war-mongers. Those who are so unthinkingly advocating war today should know by now that they cannot depend upon the ruling class of this country to wage a progressive war, that capitalist war automatically brings dictatorship and reaction at home, that fascism is a product of the last war, that the next—if without proletarian victory—would bring many more such regimes and hasten enormously capitalist decay. And the betrayed masses might perhaps be led to vent their hatred on the war-mongers after the fashion that Hitler has set in Germany towards the "Jewish-Marxist" signers of the Versailles Peace.

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A word about Palestine. Here Zionist error and British imperialist intrigue are accumulating fresh dynamite. The duty of the Palestinian Jews and their supporters is clear. Will they have the courage to follow it? They must cut loose from British imperialism. They must guarantee the Arab that they will not try to drive him out or enforce upon him a status of subordination. They must talk less of "control" and of a Jewish state, and more of a Jewish refuge and home. So long as the Arab fears that he will be bought out, crowded out economically, driven out or subjected, he will oppose the opening of the gates. Only if the sponsors of Jewish migration moderate their demands as to control— nay, abandon them—and augment their demands as to freedom of immigration, is there any hope of stopping the Arab-Jewish war and forcing the hand of Great Britain by a common front of the Arab and Jewish poor. Here too one must take the decisive step forward towards socialism or one is forced to take the step backward towards fascism. Is there not even a Jewish fascism as well?

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And here at home? Our first job is to set our own house in order. How can we fight "racism" in Germany while in our own South, and North too, there exists a very similar method of discrimination against the Negro? And what folly is perpetrated by those Southern (and not only Southern) Jews who play the race-prejudice jim-crow game! Jew or non-Jew, those who play with race prejudice, with the outlawing of unions, with the fomenting of war, with measures of "thought-control," with government control of unions, with plans for war-time dictatorship, with anti-picketing ordinances, are playing with fire. It is time for us to ask why anti-Semitism, so long latent and declining, has flared up afresh? Why fascism has appeared in the twentieth century? It is time to perceive the relationship between these symptoms of social decay and the sickness of a dying social order. It is time to line up on the side of progress, to support, to join, to strengthen the champions here and there, in Germany and at home, of the new social order, the victory of which can alone stop the galloping decay. If you are not willing to do that, there is nothing left but prayer and lamentations and cursing and wringing of hands, and contribution, by inaction or false action, to the spread of universal decay.

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(Readers of this paper are invited to express their views on the subjects raised in this article.—Editor.)

World Labor Unity Against War Danger

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that war will be prevented.

The I.W.F. appeals to workers in all sections of the working-class movement to unite, before it is too late, in support of this policy. It invites them to create an international movement, clear in ideas and strong in action, which will be capable of the historic task of this period—the defeat of war, fascism and imperialism by the overthrow of capitalism and the achievement of workers power and socialism.