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FEDERALISM AND THE THIRD CAMP

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The movement for world-federal government has undergone a number of significant changes in its relative short history since the end of World War II. That particular group which commonly calls itself WORLD (after its initials) for some time has been the object of sympathetic interest by independent socialists who found that they were frequently able to work together with its college chapters on behalf of such causes as civil liberties and the defense of the colonial independence movements.

WORLD, in turn, has come a considerable distance from the days when, as one of its leaders writes, "federalists felt that the only obstacles to achieving world government were the people who had not heard about it." The causes for this development have been, on the one hand, the failures of federalists to seriously influence in any way the actual development of international relations in a period of cold-war hostilities, and on the other, the willingness of some of them to undertake an examination of "orthodox" federalist principles in the light of this failure.

WORLD, because it represented youthful elements among American federalists who saw in world government the means for achieving the broader goals of social reform and political democracy, ultimately arrived at the view that the possibilities for achieving world government "depend to a great degree upon practical measures of economic and social reform which can be undertaken now both at home and abroad." It was this linkage of the aims of world government with concrete social and political goals that brought the WORLD group, while it was still the Student Division of the United World Federalists, into conflict with the parent organization (with its completely "non-political" approach, which served as cover for the basically conservative social views of a large proportion of its adherents) and finally drove it to attempt an independent existence.

Numerous difficulties and disappointments since WORLD'S founding convention last fall [see our Oct. 22 and Nov. 5 issues] have served to puncture some of its leaders' illusions that they could proceed to build a large and vigorous movement with little more than enthusiasm and "dynamic leadership." The loss of expected financial support, together with failure of local chapters to stabilize themselves or even continue activity on the level of previous years, has produced a climate favorable to serious discussion of some of the programmatic aspects of the world-government idea in an attempt to build a better ideological basis for the organization.

This is the purpose of its National Policy Institute—to be held in Chicago this coming week—which will serve as an arena for the discussion of the basic policy differences which have arisen or found expression in WORLD.

Three Tendencies

In order to appreciate the point of view from which independent socialists discuss the separate tendencies, it is first desirable to point out that not only is the basic idea of world federation quite compatible with socialist principles, but in one form or another, it has long been a part of the socialist program. What socialists have criticized in the federalist approach have been: (1) its tendency to see in world government a universal panacea for all social problems, a condition for social progress rather than its product and a substitute for a broad program for economic and social change; (2) the political view frequently found among federalists that world government can and should be established on the basis of the co-existence of the presently existing national states including capitalist America and Stalinist Russia. (For a discussion of the implications of this idea see LABOR ACTION for June 6, 1949.)

By adopting what it would call a "functionalist" approach (which means a program of demands for social reforms, democratic rights and national self-determination), WORLD abandoned the notion that the achievement of world government was possible without any further effort than to convince the worlds' leaders that it was to their best interests to form a world federal government. What WORLD has failed to do, however, is to clarify its ideas with respect to how federalism should relate itself to those forces in international politics which are today dominant, specifically with regard to the power struggle which is going on between Russia and America.

There are actually three different tendencies in WORLD with respect to this vital problem. All three are a product of the attempt to solve the problem of how it is possible to conceive of world government coming into existence when the major powers (America, Russia) are both seen to be opposed to all attempts to limit their freedom of action on the international field.

The "universalist," who defends the traditional federalist view, maintains that a world government can have any meaning in terms of its ability to preserve peace only if it encompasses all powers, or at least all of the major military powers, in the world. For as long as any great power remains outside of the control of the hypothetical world government, it must necessarily remain a threat to peace. Thus, the argument runs, a genuine world government must be a total affair engulfing all

countries of the world irrespective of their character.

The political consequences of such an approach are obvious. Inasmuch as it proclaims the necessity of universal world government, and this without prior change in the character of (say) totalitarian Russia, it leads either to the conclusion that some way must be found to "bring Russia and America together" to agree on at least the one principle of world federation, or failing that, that nothing else is really possible.

The major critics of "universalism," the "partialists," find it easy to point out that empirical evidence (Russia's evident unwillingness to "collaborate" or even peaceably "co-exist" with "the West" for any length of time and the fact that Russia's leaders are not subject to the control of "public opinion") makes it necessary to proceed without Russia as far as actually adopting any kind of immediate perspective for establishing an international authority. The way to get world government, the "partialists" argue, is to establish limited federation, composed of all countries exclusive of the Stalinist-dominated regimes. This would, presumably, eventually result in "breaking down Russia's resistance." This would be accomplished either through the establishment by such a non-Stalinist world government of a preponderance of military power—which would consequently convince Russia's leaders of the advantage of entering such a federation—or through its ability to "defeat Communism ideologically" by solving the problems of hunger, disease, etc. This is the kind of idea which is found throughout the writings of federalists, who in turn have picked it up from liberal opponents of current American foreign policy.

Yet basically, the "partialist" approach is at once a repudiation of federalist principles and a move in the direction of supporting America's foreign policy. Within UWF it takes the form of support of the Atlantic Pact and similar measures of American diplomacy. Within WORLD it leads to accepting the "necessity for interim defenses against aggression," which concretely means support of American-sponsored and American-controlled agencies of international power.

Arguments Cancel

Within the framework of federalist opinion, the "universalists" point out, and rightly so, any combination of non-Stalinist nations which includes the United States must necessarily become an instrument of American power politics in its struggles against Stalinist imperialism. Any federation of (say) the United States and Cuba must place the former in the position of the dominant power which could utilize its dominance for the purpose of furthering its own national interests. And any federation of nations in which the United States participates under present conditions of international conflict would necessarily tend to become a coalition of nations directed solely against Russia.

The "universalist" critics of partial federation without Russia point out that any such federation could be neither democratic nor conducive to peace. One of its main functions would have to be military preparations against Russia, and given America's participation the leaders would include "its 'preventive war' advocates, its professional anti-Bolshevists, its 'American Century' backers, and its Senator Pat 'War Is Inevitable' McCarrans." (*Federalist Opinion*, February 1952, page 6.) Furthermore, as the same author points out, "socialist countries and others which insist on planning . . . their own economies would be unlikely to join." (*Ibid.*, p. 7.)

As we have seen, neither the partialists nor universalists have proposals for successfully overcoming the impasse which federalism faces in connection with the present power conflict. One proves that world government is impossible with Russia, and the other proves it impossible without her. And the fact is that the arguments on both sides are correct. It is undoubtedly this which has led to the development of what, broadly speaking, can be called a "Third Camp" approach, which is the name its own exponents use.

Beginning with the idea that genuine world government can not be an instrument for either Russian or American aggrandizement, and recognizing that both these powers pursue reactionary policies in the field of foreign policy, the Third Camp tendency espouses the idea of immediate limited federation of countries capable of opposing both totalitarianism and imperialism. It is thus "partialist" in terms of immediate goals, but like other partialists, universalist in ultimate ambitions. The decisive difference, however, lies in its estimate of the role which America can play in any partial federation (the Third Camp elements would, by implication, exclude present-day America from membership) and the forces which are to be relied upon for its construction. The colonial countries, and particularly India, are viewed as potential reservoirs of Third Camp strength.

Unfamiliar and confusing as federalist terminology may be, and unclearly formulated as many of its ideas are, it is possible for socialists to see a number of points of agreement with this kind of Third Camp approach. More importantly, with the kind of concrete demands which WORLD as a whole puts forward, they will see the basis for the continued development of WORLD in the direction of a consistent democratic program on both domestic and foreign policy.

Thus WORLD today is one of the few groups in America

which unequivocally and unconditionally opposes the present attacks on civil liberties, and calls for support to "the peoples of the colonial areas in their endeavor to win political self-determination. . . ." And finally, it calls for "enlarged programs of social and technical assistance and world economic development, under international control whenever possible."

Unexceptionable as this last demand may appear, a great deal of confusion surrounds its use, confusion which must be dispelled as a condition for real progress. To some, influenced by the federalist tradition of "personal involvement" which produced a Garry Davis, the idea of "aid to backward areas" is interpreted in personal terms as a need for federalists to go to Afghanistan and teach school or dig canals. Worthy as such actions may be, they are obviously no substitute for a political platform.

Social Change the Key

More generally, this concept is linked up with the idea that "the West" (by which is usually meant the United States) must "provide a better alternative to the worlds' peoples than that offered by Communism." And the way in which this is to be accomplished is by such measures as will abolish poverty by raising the standard of living of backward peoples, promoting industrial development, abolishing racial prejudice and, as one federalist put it, "perhaps even more fundamental reforms."

As a general statement of the conditions which will provide a progressive alternative to Stalinism, in colonial and semi-colonial lands, these proposals are quite correct. It is an entirely different matter when, as is frequently the case, these are posed as the tasks of the American government, as part of its struggle against Stalinism. This distinction may not appear to be of too great importance (which is undoubtedly why the two things are so frequently confused) until it is asked: What kind of policies are compatible with America's over-all aims in the cold war?

Since the atom-bomb droppers and the "War Is Inevitable" people occupy powerful positions in the government, and most important of all, since American policy is decisively influenced by the socially conservative elements who find it "convenient" to support reaction rather than rebellion, doesn't this mean that America is committed by the very nature of its social structure to play a role on the world scene which is the direct opposite of what liberals propose for it? The example of Point Four serves to emphasize the limitations on American policy. Not only has actual Point Four aid been infinitesimal, but it has been applied almost exclusively to projects which were of some immediate or direct importance to America's war effort.

For America to be able to implement the kind of democratic foreign policy which is demanded (and quite rightly so), internal social transformation would be necessary. That is why the very promulgation of such ideas as support to national independence movements, technical aid to backward countries, etc., implies a corresponding program of social change for America also. World's programmatic demand for the defense of civil liberties and the extension of civil rights already recognizes this interdependence of foreign and domestic policies. Yet it still appears apologetic whenever it is forced to mention that a large proportion of those forces on which it would have to rely to build a genuine international movement are already committed to some other form of social system than free-enterprise capitalism. It has not yet come to recognize that espousal of anti-imperialist policies in foreign policy implies a concomitant struggle against the forces and interests which would seek to defend the status quo within our own society.

Democratic anti-imperialist forces exist in large numbers throughout the entire world today. Their weaknesses stem from their lack of organization and mutual support. It is for the purpose of helping them to achieve a position of real independence that independent socialists advocate their mobilization through independent federations of nations, specifically in Western European union and an independent federation of Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern countries.

Such partial federations, because they would be organized independently from and in opposition to the dominant power blocs in the world, would be able to accomplish the democratic and social tasks which lie before them. And by so doing they would provide that progressive "alternative to communism" which could lead to the overthrow of Stalinism as well as be the stimulus for far-reaching social changes in America. With this perspective it is possible to look forward with some hope to the time when all countries including a new Russia and America, could join in brotherhood and freedom in a genuinely democratic world federation of nations.

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