

No Rights for Lynchers

TO THE Social Democrats and liberals of Germany the Weimar Constitution was the embodiment of bourgeois democracy: it was the weapon with which Fascism was to be overcome. This, however, is not purely a German attitude. Sanction of the present series of lynchings by Gov. Rolph and the consequent windy storm of liberal protest draws attention to analogies in the American scene. It appears that the Bill of Rights, Weimar's model, is to serve also as the standard for the American shadow-boxers against Fascism.

Westbrook Pegler, another sports writer elevated to the Olympian dignity of a liberal ideologue, wrote within the sacrosanct confines of his column a frank defense of lynching. Gov. Rolph, he said, had taken a courageous stand, and the machinery of regularly constituted justice, with its delays and loopholes, was altogether too clumsy for speedy administration. From the standpoint of formal bourgeois democracy this was a frontal attack upon its fundamental precepts. Furthermore, the column appeared in the New York World-Telegram, one of the outstanding purveyors of philistinism. A telegram appeared in the paper signed by members of the Writers Committee Against Lynching, deploring the expression of such views in its columns. Then the significant happened: the World-Telegram declared editorially that it disagreed with Pegler's views, but that to deny him or any columnist full freedom of expression was a subversion of the very principles of democracy to which the newspaper was dedicated.

The editorial created confusion in the ranks of the writers committee, whose secretary sped into print to make it clear that the protest telegram simply criticized the views expressed by Pegler but did not at all mean to imply he should be denied the right of expressing them. Many of the members of the committee went into special pains to clear themselves of any suspicion of complicity in a plot against the literary life of Pegler. Similar incidents there are portending a role for American liberalism and social-democracy as inglorious as that of the German brand. We need only recall the offer of the American Civil Liberties Union, that quintessence of liberalism, to defend the right of Hitler's agents to a free platform in this country. As is to

be expected from our own and the German experience, the American Socialist leaders find themselves in accord with this viewpoint.

Bourgeois democracy, about which the writers committee is so harassed, is no abstract formal principle, but a weapon in the class struggle. It is an instrument used by both sides for the attainment of their ends. The logic of the Pegler incident, if the mountainous dimensions of the German fact has obscured its essence, should in itself reveal the absurdity of adherence to formal conceptions of democracy.

The workers and their supporters want the right of free speech in order to organize, with a minimum of obstacle, against capitalism and Fascism. The Fascists, under the cover of bourgeois-democratic institutions, prepare the counter-revolutionary forces, prepare the complete denial of these very institutions. The workers will seek to broaden their democratic rights with an eye to

increasing their means of preparation for liberation struggle. And here lies the fundamental difference between a revolutionary Communist conception of democratic rights, and the mere formal pratings of liberals and Socialists. No retreat to bourgeois democracy in the face of utter Fascist reaction, but a defense and utilization of already existing democratic rights and a struggle for new ones to be utilized for the overthrow of bourgeois democracy, Fascism's parent.

To permit lynchers and Nazi agents full freedom of expression under the pretence of keeping intact at any price the formal principles of democracy amounts to outright aid to fascism. We would deny democratic rights to Fascists, to lynchers, to all those who wish to use them as a means of winning mass support for reaction. We will defend democratic rights, seek to broaden them when used as a means of organizing the forces for the overthrow of capitalism. This is the only logical position not only for a revolutionist, but for any honest liberal, any real democrat, any real anti-Fascist.

Roosevelt Tries Silver

LAST WEEK Roosevelt authorized the coinage of newly-mined silver in the United States. He is utilizing the Thomas inflation amendment as a springboard towards new inflationary measures. The government mints are to buy all silver mined in this country at 64.5 an ounce, more than 21 cents above the current market value of silver. Roosevelt's plan calls for payments to mine owners through the coinage of half their silver. The other half will be collected by the government as a seignorage fee and be kept in bullion form by the treasury. The program is scheduled to run 4 years. It will cost about \$15,500,000 the first year, since American silver production in 1932 amounted to about 24 million ounces.

Roosevelt reached into his medicine kit of monetary tricks and pulled out his silver prophylactic. It is designed "to assist in increasing and stabilizing domestic prices, to augment the purchasing power of peoples in silver using countries (and) to protect our foreign commerce against the adverse effect of depreciated currencies." In plainer language, Roosevelt hopes to use the silver

plan for the double purpose of inflating prices, and as another weapon in the fight for Far Eastern markets.

If we take up the advantage claimed for the silver plan one by one, we shall see that the proposal is mostly bluff, and is primarily meant to be a tactical instrument for use against internal pressure for soft money, and against rival imperialist powers in the international battle of monies.

(1) There will be no world stabilization of the price of silver at 64.5 cents or thereabouts. The United States produces only about one-seventh of the world's output of silver, and the outstanding silver stores of the world are estimated to be around a billion ounces. The purchase of 24 million ounces—or even twice that amount if production is stepped up—will not seriously affect the world price of silver.

(2) There will be no large increase in American foreign trade through an automatic increase in the purchasing power of India and China. The Brookings Institute has published a study which shows that during the crisis, and for many years before, India has been