



Short Reviews

The Rise and Fall of American Communism by Philip J. Jaffee
Horizon Press, 1975, New York.

Jaffee is described by Bertram Wolfe in the introduction to his book as a "super fellow-traveler" of the American Communist Party (CPUSA). He was National Secretary of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, as well as editor of two magazines which were close to the party, *China Today* and *Amerasia*. But Philip Jaffee is not a Marxist. And his book, *The Rise and Fall of American Communism*, is not a Marxist work. He does have some inside information on Browder and the CPUSA due to his close friendship with Browder, but he relates the history of the CPUSA, and the history of Browder's life, from the perspective of personalities, not from the perspective of the class struggle. Browder, Foster, Stalin, and Varga are a few of these personalities with whom Jaffee deals, these personalities who "created" history.

The first section of the book parallels the history of the CPUSA with a mini-biography of Browder's life in the period from 1930 to 1945, when Browder was the head of the CPUSA. He shows how Browder's position was maintained by actively supporting the line which the Comintern was putting forward, a line which Jaffee characterized as being Stalin's wishes. During World War II, Browder had a wireless with a full-time operator on duty to receive coded instructions from Stalin on what line to take in the U.S. These instructions, two of which were received in this manner and which are reproduced in this section, were not known about by the rest of the CPUSA leadership, much less by the rank-and-file membership. The leadership and the majority of the membership, without knowing the reasoning behind these Moscow directives, followed them blindly. This is witnessed by the complete reversal in party line following the Nazi invasion of the USSR, from being pacifist to a position of supporting U.S. involvement in the war on the side of the Allies.

On the period after 1945, when Browder was expelled due to factional politics within the CPUSA, Jaffee parallels the history of the CPUSA with the history of the CPSU. He very correctly portrays the CPUSA's tailism with regard to the CPSU, but, perhaps because of his lack of a Marxist perspective, does not go into the reasons for this tailism. A Marxist analysis of this period points out the reasons for the tailism very clearly as being 1) a lack of the ability and the tradition to develop theory, the reliance on importing theory ready-made from abroad, and 2) the fear of loss of prestige if the party diverged from the line of the one party which had achieved revolution (the CPSU). These problems are still with us to such a great extent (as evidence, our movement's almost exclusive reliance on China and, more

recently, on Albania, to produce theory for our movement) that it is important to see some of their root causes and to try to overcome them. Jaffee could have contributed to this analysis to a much greater extent, but he did provide some raw empirical data to be used for an analysis, even if he did not do the analysis himself.

After dealing with the CPSU, Jaffee returns to Browder's life as an out-cast from the CPUSA. He talks about how Browder was still somewhat accepted in Moscow as a friend and how he got a job as the "American Representative of OGIZ (State Publishing House of the Council of Ministers of the USSR), in matters of publication of Soviet Books in the U.S.," through one of these friendships, his friendship with Molotov. (1) It wasn't until the 1950's that Browder became disillusioned with the CPSU, and until 1956 that he became critical of Stalin, mostly as a result of Khrushchev's secret speech in which he criticized Stalin and, in the manner of the "cult of the personality," blamed all of the USSR's ills on him.

The rest of this book deals with the standard anti-communist analysis of the cold war. Jaffee puts forward the thesis that it was Stalin who started the cold war, although Truman supposedly didn't do much to stop it. In dealing with the Marshal Plan and the Soviet Bloc's refusal to accept it, Jaffee says "the East European countries have suffered infinitely more from being economic colonies of the Soviet Union than they would have if they had been free to accept the Marshal plan aid." (2) He also blames the USSR completely for the Sino-Soviet problems. "There is nothing new in the fact that the Soviet Union has always considered itself the center of the world socialist system. It explains why the Soviet Union has carried on a cold war against China and, until recently, Yugoslavia, because the two countries refused to be amenable to control by Moscow." (3) This entire section is best skipped over.

All in all, this book is a good chronicle of Browder's life and the CPUSA from 1930 to 1945; it even provides some raw data that could possibly be used in making a Marxist analysis of the era, but the limited analysis that Jaffee does do is strictly bourgeois, and should be read with a critical eye.

Della Embers

ENDNOTES

1. Philip J. Jaffee, *The Rise and Fall of American Communism*, p. 142.
2. *Ibid*, p. 220.
3. *Ibid*, p. 127.

Daniel Berman's book, *Death on the Job*, is an important contribution toward raising the awareness of workers, trade-unionists, and leftists in regard to occupational safety and health. In it, the illusion of a "progressive" capitalism which has somehow outgrown the brutal contradictions marking its birth is exposed, and the social costs endemic to this system are seen.

Berman begins by placing health and safety issues in an historical framework which aids in defining the state of this movement today, and the character of the conditions over which this movement has had to struggle.

He explains that, as worker control of production became minimized by capital intensive techniques and with the union-busting of the late nineteenth century, industrial accidents rose to such an appalling extent that action of some type was required. To avoid possible government intervention and increased worker militancy, business-sponsored organizations began taking the lead in initiating compensation-safety programs. These programs generally emphasized compensation over prevention and safety over health. It was deemed more appropriate by these organizations to pay for injuries incurred than to prevent them, and to shift the blame for their occurrence from faulty design, speed-ups, and long hours to "careless workers." Occupational diseases, characteristic of long-term exposure to dangerous fumes and substances, were never considered. Even the compensation aspects of these programs were inadequate, as one would expect. Workers who intended to bring suit against their employers found themselves excluded from these "compensation" programs, rebuked for not following safety regulations, or unfairly compensated to the extreme minimum when allowed to participate. These business-sponsored organizations are referred to as the "compensation-safety apparatus" by Berman, as he traces their activities into the present doing a convincing job of charting the unity between past and present practices.

This apparatus consists of organizations such as the National Safety Council; the insurance companies; large segments of certain professions such as doctors working for industrial concerns; and safety engineers and industrial hygienists who share similar employers. This apparatus has historically acted to block moves tightening regulations concerning worker protection from hazards, providing for free access to company medical files, and an unending array of progressive actions which might have alleviated a vast degree of unnecessary human suffering.

Using extensive documentational references, Berman shows how the continuing existence of private control over compensation has led to repeated abuses of criteria for assessing the number of accidents and deaths, their origin, and the degree to which lost earnings are truly compensated. He also demonstrates how the compensation-safety apparatus pays back only one-half of all the money that goes into the premiums it sells while retaining the remaining 40-50% as profit. A state-run program such as the one in Ohio, on the other hand, is able to use only four cents out of every dollar for operating expenses while returning the rest in compensatory payments.

In his discussion of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Berman explains how it came into being, in December 1970, due to conjunctural circumstances which included a tight labor market, worker dissatisfaction, a new environmental consciousness, and the aid of progressive professionals - all within a general climate of social unrest. He also outlines some of the activities of this organization and the contradictory practices it manifests. OSHA, as he shows, has promised much more than it has ever delivered, continues to rely on statistics derived through the inconsistencies and often misleading techniques of the compensation-safety apparatus, and has been generally under-staffed and unprepared for its supposed function. At the same time, its existence has placed "the issue of the work environment on the agenda for workers, unions, health specialists, and the general public."

Grassroots health and safety coalitions such as the Chicago Area Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (CACOSH), which the author helped found, are examined, especially in relation to their work in the unions and the style of work they have exhibited. The unions themselves are also extensively examined in terms of their influence in this important aspect of the class struggle. The uneven development of concern for safety within the unions themselves, and between different unions, is explored while both the possibilities and limits for union action are outlined.

The conditions within which this struggle occurs are shown to be typical of capitalism, where production for profit is key and the workers have lost whatever control they previously had over the flow of the production process. Berman claims that "a healthy work environment is incompatible with the survival of monopoly capitalism," and that it is the struggle to gain control over the production process that will finally be the key to the occupational health and safety struggles of the working class.

While it is the final abolition of monopoly capitalism that will truly provide the material basis for ending the abuses to worker health and safety, Berman provides suggestions for future tasks of a more immediate nature of which his activity in the safety movement and studies have convinced him. Some of these are union-controlled Safety and Health Committees in plants whose activities and training would be funded by the company. The United Auto Workers and the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers are presented as examples of this idea in action, which gives workers a more independent voice in regard to these points of production issues. Banding together union locals in the formation of regional committees on safety and health groups (COSH groups), fighting "ghettoized" company medicine programs which cover up for the company, setting international standards of health and safety, and the demand for a role in investment are but some of them. Such strategies are admitted as being "hardly revolutionary" but it is stated that, if successful, they could lead to the "formation of a vigorous health and safety lobby of unionized workers, constant pressure to remedy dangerous conditions in unionized shops, a tripling in the total of workers' compensation benefits, and, in some industries, to a very substantial reduction in injuries and occupational diseases."

In short, this book has brought together a wide variety of materials of an historical, immediate, and long-range nature. It makes the beginning of communist intervention in these struggles, however ill-equipped and underdeveloped we are, more precise, in that it provides a great deal of information concerning the state of health and safety in the United States, the state of the movement which is struggling against these conditions, and some of the possible reforms within the system which might be initiated. It does not, however, make explicit how the intervention of communists or socialists might be conducted, or how that movement might prepare itself for engaging in these struggles. That, of course, is out of the scope of this book and Berman, quite frankly, makes few explicit references as to the practices characteristic of communists, aside from alluding to sectarian squabbling within some of the COSH groups, and elusive references to the work of "progressives." This book, he surely reasoned, was to be of a more broad nature so as to introduce as wide an audience as possible to the abuses under which workers suffer in one of the most advanced capitalist countries in the world. The solution to communist intervention in these struggles is up to the communist movement itself, and advances in theoretical practice which will help arrange the framework within which we will decide on strategy and tactics.

Bert Lewis

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