

FOSTER ON THE AMERICAS

WM. GALLACHER

I HAVE just read an amazing book—'Outline of Political History of the Americas' by William Z. Foster, Chairman of the Communist Party of the U.S.* It sketches the history of the Americas in outline, from the days of the earliest discoverers. It shows the ready friendship of the native Indians to the strangers who had landed on their shores, and the terrible price they paid in blood and tears for their simple trust. The Spaniards were merciless in their hunt for gold and precious stones. They massacred or enslaved the Indians and drove them with whip and gun to mine for gold and gems. It's a terrible story, the story of the Spaniards, in what is now called Latin America; but nothing so awful as what happened to the Indians in the Northern States, the States that comprised the U.S.A. Treaties were made with the Indians, only to be cynically broken. People in this country have recently expressed their horror at the language and the conduct of MacArthur and his successor, Ridgway, in Korea. 'Our job', they said, 'is to kill and go on killing'. But they were only following out what had already been applied to the original Americans. 'The only good Indian is a dead Indian', said Sherman, and that represented the key to the extermination policy pursued by men for whom humanity had no meaning. 'We want their land', so 'Kill, Kill! Kill!'

True, in many instances the Indians put up a tenacious and heroic resistance. But where they could not be defeated in open battle, agents were used to divide the tribes and even to get them to make war one against the other, and so facilitate the task of extermination. Now what's left of the Indians in North America, are penned up in 'Reservations', but they have never willingly submitted and with the many millions of Indians in Mexico and Latin America they will yet give a good account of themselves.

For Foster makes it clear, and this is a very important part of his book, that the Indians have time and again led revolts against their oppressors, and often outstanding Indian leaders like for instance Jaurez in Mexico, have played a tremendous part in the liberation of their country. As with the Indians, so with Negroes. Apologists for the slavery of the Negroes and the peonage of the Indians, have tried to justify this unspeakable affront to humanity

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by trying to persuade people to believe that the Negroes and Indians didn't object to such treatment. Nothing could be further from the truth. Foster gives all the necessary authorities to show that they did object and fought by every means at their disposal against the cruel, inhuman conditions imposed upon them. But, as he says, page 77, 'The basic explanation of why it was possible to enslave and transport such large numbers of Negroes from Africa was the existence of tribal disunity and internecine war among the Negroes in their homeland . . . Thus, in 1567, Sir John Hawkins, one of England's earliest Admiral-Pirate-Merchant-Slaver types, while searching for slaves made an open attack upon a Negro village in Sierra Leone. But he got nothing for his trouble but poison arrows and a serious defeat. Profiting by this harsh experience, Hawkins had better success in his next slave-hunting foray by lining up with one tribe that was fighting another. He had learned the fatal device of enslaving tribal war-prisoners, a practice which eventually became general'.

The tragedy of disunity has persisted, not only among Negroes, but to a greater degree amongst the exploited working class. When they learn the lesson that history teaches and unite their forces it will be a bad day for the exploiters.

A classic example of what unity could do is given in a section of the book dealing with 'The Haitian Revolution' (pages 134-5-6). It is a truly inspiring story. Half a million slaves in revolt against conditions that had become absolutely unbearable. 'The Revolt', says Foster, 'probably launched by the Maroons from the mountains, was led by Toussaint L'Overture, a brilliant Negro, whose name and fame quickly spread all over the world'. The French tried to suppress the revolt in blood. The Spaniards took a hand. Both were heavily defeated. Then the British had a try. 15,000 troops were assigned to the task and 'only 1,000 remained alive when Commander Maitland surrendered to the revolutionists on October 1, 1798'. Napoleon who was 'then riding high to glory and conquest' ordered General Leclare 'to subdue Haiti'.

'After conducting a futile military campaign, to gain his ends he committed one of the most outrageous betrayals in all American history. Pretending to desire peace, he invited Toussaint to a conference, seized him, put him in irons and shipped him off to France. There the great patriot and fighter died in prison, in 1803'. (This 'outrageous betrayal' was similar to the one carried out against Wat Tyler the leader of the English Peasants 500 years

earlier). It was a terrible blow to the Haitian revolutionaries, but they fought on with even greater courage until finally they forced the French to surrender. 'The Haitians, whose armies never numbered more than 20,000 armed men, had thus defeated the maximum efforts of Spain, England and France. Not even Napoleon, then at the height of his military power, could conquer them After the final defeat of the French in 1803, the Haitians once more proclaimed their national independence, the first in all Latin America to do this. Their Independence Proclamation, signed on November 9, 1803, proudly declared: 'The independence of St. Dominique is proclaimed. Restored to our primitive dignity, we have asserted our rights, we swear never to yield them to any power on earth. The frightful veil of prejudice is torn to pieces. Be it so forever! Woe be to them who would dare to put together its bloody tatters'.

What a lesson is there for the American workers, for the workers of Britain and Western Europe. 'We have asserted our rights; we swear never to yield them to any power on earth'. With a voice of thunder this was once more declared by the workers of the Soviet Union, then by the New Democracies, and with an especial shock to the exploiters, by the mighty forces of Liberated China, and now the Persian people, to the consternation of the imperialists, have 'asserted their rights'.

One day the workers of America and of all other lands will join in this great 'Freedom Chorus' and the new world of Socialism will replace the utterly corrupt and dying system of capitalism.

And Foster, in this great work of his, makes an exhaustive study of the various upsurges of Revolt in the different Latin American countries, and their failure to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution, by the expropriation of the big landowners. Between these latter and the part played by British and American investors, the economic development of the Latin American countries has been deliberately impeded. This has meant appalling suffering for the masses in the Latin American countries.

Poverty, in its most acute form, hunger, disease and early death, are their constant companions. The figures given are a terrible indictment of the ruling castes of those countries as well as of the British and American financiers. It has to be noted that the Catholic Church is one of the big Landowners and one of the most powerful forces of reaction.

On page 244, we read, 'Great Britain was the first country to

begin a modern imperialist financial penetration of Latin America'. Latin America became a really profitable 'milch-cow' for the British parasites. The United States came late into the Imperialist scramble. This arose from the fact that the North Americans following their successful revolt against Britain and the Declaration of Independence, were busy extending and consolidating their territory and their economy. A big obstacle in the way of expansion was the huge area of Louisiana held in the possession of the French.

On pages 206-7, we get the story of the Louisiana Purchase and the danger it created of a secession by the Northern States. However, this danger was overcome and the Louisiana Purchase was followed by the taking over of Florida and the annexation of Texas from Mexico. All the time the Indians were being tricked, swindled and massacred, and more and more of their land taken from them. But the more land that was acquired the sharper became the feeling between the representatives of the two conflicting economies in the United States. The Slave-owners of the South wanted the new territories as Slave States, the Northerners wanted them for 'free' labour. The defenders of Slavery made some awful disclosures of the conditions of the workers in the 'free' labour states, and argued that better care was taken of the Negro slaves than was shown towards the white 'free' labourers of the North.

But with the victory of the North there was a rapid consolidation of the Northern States and American Big Business found more time to give attention to investments in Latin America and to the enforcement of the 'Monroe Doctrine'—no interference on the part of European nations in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere.

Steadily the Wall Street gang have been pushing into the rest of the American continent. But British imperialism is fighting hard to hold its grip on the life of Latin America. It's a losing fight. 'Our American friends' are pushing Britain out wherever opportunity offers. And they have the ready service of the top leaders of the American Federation of Labour. These are amongst the most servile and unscrupulous agents of American imperialism. They are more capitalist than the capitalists. It was in protest against the refusal of the A.F. of L. to organise the masses of workers in the big industries that the C.I.O. (Congress of Industrial Organisations) was started and with a great unionising campaign built up a membership of 7 or 8 millions within a few years. Right in the forefront of this drive, as in all activities in the American Hemisphere, were the Communists. But with the passing of the Taft-Hartley Act, the

Communists have been driven out of all official positions and the C.I.O. has now become but an echo of the A.F. of L. Between them they forced a split in the World Federation of Trade Unions, using Deakin to make the break. But this was worked purely and solely in the interest of the big moguls of Wall Street.

Foster's examination of all these manœuvres is very revealing and demonstrates the despicable role of Social Democracy in its abject subjection to the capitalists and its vile and murderous attitude towards the Communist and progressive forces in the various American countries. They boost Truman, Marshall and all the other representatives of United States big business, and Morgan Phillips, like a cheap dollar parrot, repeats them in Britain and Western Europe. What miserable mendacious creatures. Truman and Marshall provide millions for munitions, while millions of men, women and children on the American continent are literally starving. Their condition of life is almost beyond belief. Read this 'Outline Political History' and it will shock you with its revelations of cruel exploitation that condemns millions to premature death. Fighting against this monstrous menace to humanity are the Communists and Left Trade Unions. A fine appreciation of these is given as is also the desperate and dirty efforts of the A.F. of L., and the Catholic leaders of the C.I.O., Murray and Cary, to disrupt the progressive forces in Latin America. All at the command of their Wall Street masters. But they won't succeed. History is against them. In the clearest manner, Foster presents the two worlds—the world of corrupt, decaying capitalism, and the great new world of advancing Socialism.

On page 610 he quotes Gene Dennis, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the United States. (He has just gone to serve a five years' gaol sentence.) Dennis says, 'We Communists are confident that the day will come when the majority of the Americans will decide by their own free choice, on the basis of their own experience, and in harmony with their fundamental interests, to march forward along the road of social progress towards Socialism—that is, to establish the common ownership of the national economy under a government of the people, led by the working class'.

And that working class will include the 15 million Negroes, American citizens who suffer such terrible indignities at the hands of the murderous thugs who divide the labour of attacking progressives with the leaders of the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. These,

with the leaders of the Crime Syndicates, represent the 'Storm Troopers' of Wall Street, which, as decay advances, turns more and more to an American form of Fascism, even more inhuman than anything devised by Hitler or Goebbels. But this great book ends on a justifiable note of high optimism—optimism which steadily rises as you read through the pages of the book. Bitter pain and almost unendurable suffering, but always the spirit of revolt that neither massacres nor gaolings, nor torture can kill. Now there has arisen a party of a new kind—the Communist Party. Light, leading and guidance has come for the long-suffering exploited masses, and so Foster can finish his mighty labour—a great task well and truly carried out—with the stirring words:

'Fifty years ago Capitalism was triumphant throughout the world and the Communists were but a small minority among the huge ranks of the masses; but today capitalism is visibly rotting and the Communists are leading 800 million people into Socialism. This is the way the world in general is going, and this is the route, too, of the peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

'The great historical process that has gone on in the Americas for more than four and a half centuries since Columbus landed in the West Indies does not lead to the fascist, Yankee-dominated world of Wall Street, but to the new, free world of Socialism'.

And all who read his book will agree on that with my good comrade William Z. Foster.

30th Anniversary Message of Greeting

From the Secretariat, Central Committee of the Communist Party of India.

We are all deeply indebted to the *Labour Monthly* for the magnificent rôle it has played in moulding our political outlook, in acquainting us with international developments, in teaching us how to approach live and concrete problems in a Marxist way. The Notes of the Month, a regular feature of the *Labour Monthly*, were eagerly awaited by us ever since we entered the Communist movement. The *Labour Monthly* has been a powerful force in forging the unity of the democratic movement in Britain and India and in establishing close bonds between our two parties.