

WAR ECONOMY AND SOCIALISM

By FRITZ NONNENBRUCH

WAR economy is something essentially different from the idea National-Socialism has of a peace-time economy based on each citizen's right to work. To the National-Socialist, peace-time economy has two sides to it: on the one hand it is the nation's apparatus of production; on the other, it employs living people to whose lives their work must give a meaning. In an economy based on the right to work, the demand for better and better work is derived not from the necessity of increased production but from the fact that a man's work forms the purport of his life. The constant improvement of his work is to provide man with possibilities for employing his creative energies.

War economy has a different appearance. The right to work has turned into full employment. The economy has, above all, to serve the war. War economy is earmarked by the breathless pursuit of the product. And from the demand for the greatest possible increase in production are derived the forms found for the organization of production as well as the demands for mechanization.

The great difference between the National-Socialist idea of economy and the capitalist one consisted in the fact that in capitalist economy the product was placed above man, while in the National-Socialist economy man is to be placed above the product. But war economy and capitalist economy have one criterion in common: all emphasis is placed on the product, not on man.

For the very reason that we National-Socialists have our own ideas of economy and wish to make man and not the product the center of economy, war economy is to us nothing but a war-time

measure. We recognize its necessity in time of war, but we look forward to the time when the accent will be shifted from the product to creative man. When will it come?

Not immediately after the end of this war. For some time, the pressure for more production will remain. In the first place, there are the internal war debts to be worked off. As long as this is not done, money, in the form of war debts, is the master, not the tool, of economics. Hence no other path remains open than to remove the problem of war debts as quickly as possible by an increase of production. Furthermore, one cannot yet foresee how great the damage will be that is being caused by air raids. The removal and replacement of these damages place additional demands on production. To this must be added the people's requirements, pent up during the war, for consumers' goods. At any rate, we shall be faced for some time by tremendous demands on our productive power. Until the problem of war debts has been surmounted, the bombing damages have been repaired, and the urgent requirements of the nation filled, the product must remain in the focal point of our economic efforts.

It is very important to see quite clearly in this point. There is a vast difference whether an increase of production takes place as the result of material pressure or by the free will of man in his desire to afford scope for his creative powers.

It is true that peace affords economic policy more scope than war does; in other words, the pressure for increasing production can be tempered. But such alleviations do not blind us to the fact that the increase in production is still

forced upon us by circumstances and not brought about by our free will; that the accent is on the product and not on man; and that this economy does not serve the nation in the same way as the economy envisaged by National-Socialism.

The vision of the future thus appears rather gloomy. Have we exaggerated? Hardly. But there is a very important change, which has taken place mainly in the war economy, and which we have disregarded so far. It has affected both organization and mechanization.

War has brought considerable advances in the field of organization. Every form of organization is bound up with a certain level of production. Capitalism was one form of economic organization which was maintained even when it no longer permitted a further increase in production. The surplus of productive power was blown off in economic crises like surplus steam from an engine. War economy differs fundamentally from capitalist economy with regard to its attitude toward the forms of organization. In capitalism the increase of production depended on whether the form of national economic organization permitted it, while in war economy the forms of organization are subject to the necessity of increasing production. The forms of organization have become elastic. They are employed as the means to an end and have ceased being an end in themselves.

Now let us turn to mechanization. There can be no question that without the war it would not have progressed at such a speed and to such an extent.

At one time, during the period of rationalization in the late twenties, mechanization was to replace men by machines. In the present war economy, mechanization has undergone a visible change; for it is pointing more and more toward the creative idea, i.e., to man.

Since the forms of organization are no longer bound up with any definite level of production, and since they have become elastic for the sake of increased production, the organizations have ceased to be bureaucratic apparatuses. Instead, they are collective groups of active and creative men. Man and his idea have become more important than the government office and the apparatus. Thus here, again, we find exactly the same process as in the case of mechanization, where man with his ideas has risen above the machine. For the main characteristic of this new mechanization is that it is not the existing machine which counts but the improved one that does not exist yet, in other words, the man who is yet to invent it. This fact opens up vast future possibilities for the worker: mechanization no longer means that an existing order of the work process stands supreme, an order to which man must subordinate himself, but that an improved work process is to be found, which shifts the accent of value on the man who succeeds in discovering this improvement.

Thus even during the fulfillment of those postwar production tasks which are forced upon us by circumstances man will be given scope to extend his creative gifts.

Not Like F. D. R.

A reporter was interviewing President Calvin Coolidge. "Do you wish to say anything about Prohibition?" was the first question.

"No."

"About the farm bloc?"

"No."

"About the World Court?"

"No."

The reporter turned to go.

"By the way," said Coolidge, "don't quote me."