Cody James Inglis

ETBIN KRISTAN: Un-American Socialism

Author: Etbin Kristan
Title: Un-American Socialism
Originally published: "Neamerikanski socializem," *Majski glas* 14 (1934): 11–14.
Language: Slovenian

About the author

Etbin Kristan (1867, Ljubljana–1953, Ljubljana) was a writer, dramatist, politician, political theorist, and publicist.[1] In 1896, Kristan co-founded the

1 Unfortunately, I do not deal with Kristan's literary or dramatic work here. This political-biographic sketch was derived from the following published sources: Stanislaus Florjančič, "Das politische Werk des Etbin Kristan bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges. Eine evolutionistisch-revolutionäre Konzeption zur Lösung der sozialen Frage," Magister thesis, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria, 1988. Dušan Kermavner, "Kristan, Etbin," in *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, vol. 5, *Jugos–Mak* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ, 1962), 396–97. Matjaž Klemenčič, "Politično delo Etbina Kristana," *Migracijske teme* 4, no. 1–2 (1988): 103–09. France Koblar and Avgust Pirjevec, "Kristan, Etbin," in *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 4, *Kocen–Lužar*, ed. Franc Ksaver Lukman et al. (Ljubljana: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1932), accessible online at http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi305141/, last accessed December 12, 2024. Majda Kodrič, "Etbin Kristan in socialistično gibanje jugoslovanskih izseljencev v ZDA v letih 1914–1920," *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja* 23, no. 1–2 (1983): 63–87. Franc Rozman, "Etbin Kristan und seine Idee der Personalautonomie," in *Arbeiterbewegung und nationale Frage in den Nachfolgestaaten der Habsburgermonarchie*, ed. Helmut Konrad (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1993), 97–109.

Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (*Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka*, JSDS), becoming its leading personality and main theorist on the national question before 1914. From 1914 to 1951, Kristan lived in the United States, where he was active in the South Slavic branch of the Socialist Party USA, the Yugoslav Socialist Federation (*Jugoslovanska socialistična zveza*, JSZ). The JSZ was particularly active in Chicago and the Midwest, but with branches in nearly all US states. He became a Marxist in the 1890s, but that peculiar kind endemic to East Central Europe, with his political vision refracted through the heterogeneous Austro-Marxist and South Slavic social democratic traditions. During his time in the US, he became deeply indebted to the progressive renditions of American federal and republican thought as well. To add another twist, as historian Dušan Kermavner wrote, "he did not deepen the theory of scientific socialism; although at first he defended the fundamentals of Marxism, utopian-socialist doctrines remained closer to him."[2]

Kristan first encountered socialism as political theory through the decentralized, intra-imperial labor movement at some point during his secondary school studies in Ljubljana and Zagreb (1876–1884), his officer training at the Infantry Cadet School in Karlovac (1884–1887), and subsequent service as a lieutenant (1887–1890). From 1887 to 1895, Kristan also worked as a journalist for the *Agramer Tagblatt*, the main German-language daily paper in Zagreb. From 1895, he was a correspondent for the German- and Slovenian-language workers' papers *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, *Delavec*, and *Der Eisenbahner*, moving between Vienna and Trieste. In 1896, when he was 29, Kristan co-founded the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party with Josip (Jože) Zavertnik (1869–1929), France Železnikar (1843–1903), Melhijor Čobal (1864–1943), and others. Kristan became the editor-in-chief of the party's numerous organs (including *Delavec–Rdeči prapor*, *Rdeči prapor*, and *Zarja*) from 1896 to 1914. During this period, he argued for a strictly non-territorial "federalism of nations" rather than the territorialized cultural autonomies which the leaders of Austrian social democracy advocated.[3]

See also relevant archival collections at the Manuscript Collection of the National and University Library in Ljubljana: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, NUK Ms 1962, IV. Dela, Folder 8, O političnem liku Etbina Kristana (1953), and NUK Ms 1979 Kristan Etbin; as well as relevant collections at the Immigration History Research Center Archives at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis: IHRC1149 Yugoslav Socialist Federation Records, IHRC1616 Ivan Molek Papers, IHRC2879 Yugoslav Republican Alliance Records, and IHRC2999 Etbin Kristan Papers.

2 Kermavner, "Kristan, Etbin," in *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, 396.

3 See, e.g., Kristan's "Nationalismus und Sozialismus in Österreich," *Akademie: Orgán socialistické mládeže–Organ der socialistischen Jugend* 2, no. 11, August 1898, 485–91, as well as his polemic with Karl Renner (Rudolf Springer) in the subsequent issues. Recently, Kristan received some further attention, as in Börris Kuzmany, *Vom Umgang mit nationaler Vielfalt: Eine Geschichte der nicht-territorialen Autonomie in Europa* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024), particularly 54–59 and 61–63, though not dealing with Kristan's work in any detail beyond the turn of the twentieth century. Urban Makorič has recently dealt in much more detail with Kristan's political thought between 1896 and his death

This became particularly clear in his interventions at the 1899 Brno Congress, when the *Gesamtpartei* resolution on the national question was passed.[4] Notably, his intellectual circles in Trieste and Ljubljana before 1914 included, among many others, Ivan Cankar (1876–1918), **Zofka Kveder** (1878–1926), **Albin Prepeluh** (1880–1937), Alojzija Štebi (1883–1956), Rudolf Golouh (1887–1982), Marica Bartol Nadlišek (1867–1940), and Anton Dermota (1876–1914).

In 1912, Kristan arrived in the United States for the first time, invited by the main Yugoslav Socialist Federation (JSZ) branch in Chicago to give a lecture tour among working-class South Slavic immigrants. The original JSZ branch had been founded in 1905 in Chicago through a merger of independent left-wing Slovenian, Serbian, and Croatian political groups which had organized predominantly among immigrant South Slav industrial workers, farm laborers, and working intellectuals. In January 1911, the JSZ became a formal branch organization of the Socialist Party USA, by then comprising thirty local branches, mainly in the Midwest, totaling 635 members.[5] From that point on, the JSZ had hoped to receive much more institutional, financial, and organizational support from the national party, but in fact became rather a source of financial support for the main party.[6] Still, with the JSZ's backing, Kristan was still able to travel to and then tour and lecture across the United States.

During the first part of his trip in Chicago, Kristan reunited with former JSDS comrade Jože Zavertnik, who had emigrated in the meantime, and met Ivan Molek (1882–1962), by then already the main figure in the socialist stream within the Slovenian National Benefit Society (*Slovenska narodna podporna jednota*, SNPJ). Just before the opening shots of the World War, Kristan left for the United States once again. He returned to Chicago, where he worked with Zavertnik and Molek in the JSZ and was given the editorship of the JSZ organ, *Proletarec* (1906–1952), soon after his arrival. He would edit the paper until 1920.

---

in 1953: Urban Makorič, "Etbin Kristan in ideja socializma," MA thesis (University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, 2024).

4 See Kuzmany and Makorič, cited above, and situated in a broader Austro-Hungarian context in Cody James Inglis, "Socialism and Decentralization: The Marxist Ambiguity toward Federalism in the Late Habsburg Empire, 1899–1914," in *From Empire to Federation in Eurasia: Ideas and Practices of Diversity Management*, ed. Ivan Sablin and Egas Moniz Bandeira (London: Routledge, forthcoming 2026).

5 "Report of the South Slavic Federation," in *Socialist Party Meeting, National Committee: Reports on Foreign Federations* (Chicago: Socialist Party of America, May 1915), 11, held in IHRC1149, Folder 10: Socialist Party Materials, 1912–1940.

6 See Joseph Stipanovich, "'In Unity is Strength': Immigrant Workers and Immigrant Intellectuals in Progressive America: A History of the South Slav Social Democratic Movement, 1900–1918," doctoral dissertation (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1978), 138–68. Joseph Stipanovich, Introduction to *An Inventory of the Papers of Jugoslovanska socialistična zveza (Jugoslav Socialist Federation)* (Minneapolis: Immigration History Research Center–University of Minnesota, 1976), 1–2. Matjaž Klemenčič, "American Slovenes and the Leftist Movements in the United States in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 15, no. 3 (1996): 22–43.

After the February Revolution in Russia, and the entry of the United States into the World War, Kristan and other South Slavic socialists in Chicago began to see the conflict not only as a war among capitalist empires, but also as a war of national liberation and unification for the South Slavs. At this point, the JSZ broke off from the Socialist Party USA, owing to the latter's strict anti-war stance.[7] Against the pro-Habsburg South Slavic monarchists in Vienna and the pro-Karađorđević South Slavic monarchists on Corfu,[8] Kristan and the Yugoslav Socialist Federation in Chicago rather argued for the establishment of a federal Yugoslav republic as a postwar aim. They published the "Chicago Declaration" in July 1917 in *Proletarec*, outlining their republican socialist vision for the postwar South Slavic state.[9] The following month, in August, Kristan and his cohort created the Slovenian Republican Alliance (*Slovensko republičansko združenje*, SRZ) out of the JSZ to engage in the propagation of those ideas.[10] In spring 1919, after their Serbian and Croatian comrades joined, the Alliance was renamed the Yugoslav Republican Alliance (*Jugoslovansko republičansko združenje*, JRZ).[11] Kristan was the lead theorist of the movement, his texts regularly appearing as the main articles in the English-language SRZ/JRZ journals, *The Slovenian Review* (1918–1919) and *The Jugo-Slav Review* (1919).[12] Likewise, Kristan led the JRZ delegation that appeared before the US Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs on September 4, 1919, to discuss the new South Slav state and its future boundaries with Italy.[13]

---

7 Ivan Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History, 1900–1950: Autobiographical Sketches*, trans. and ed. Mary Molek (Dover, 1979), 191–93. For more on the Socialist Party's anti-war policy and its context, see Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Press–University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 146–215, albeit with no mention of the South Slavic socialists in the book.

8 Here, I refer to the authors of the May Declaration and the Corfu Declaration. On the May Declaration, see Janko Pleterski, *Prva odločitev Slovencev za Jugoslavijo* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1971). Vlasta Stavbar, *Majniška deklaracija in deklaracijsko gibanje* (Maribor: Pivec, 2020). On the Corfu Declaration, see Dragoslav Janković, *Jugoslovensko pitanje i Krfska deklaracija 1917. godine* (Belgrade: Savremena administracija, 1967). For shorter English-language overviews of the period, see Ivo Banac, "The Unification," in *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 115–40. Dejan Djokić, "Death and Union," in *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 12–39. Marie-Janine Calic, "The Three Balkan Wars," in *A History of Yugoslavia*, trans. Dona Geyer (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2019), particularly 57–70.

9 Etbin Kristan et al., "Slovencem v Ameriki," *Proletarec* 12, no. 513, July 10, 1917, 3. Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History*, 193–97.

10 See "Slovensko republičansko združenje," *Proletarec* 12, no. 518, August 14, 1917, 3, 8; no. 519, August 21, 1917, 3, 8.

11 "J.R.Z.," *Proletarec* 14, no. 606, April 24, 1919, 21–22. On the contacts between the JRZ and the Yugoslav Republican Party in Belgrade, see Aleksandar Lukić, "Osnivanje Jugoslovenske republikanske stranke 1920. i odnosi u jugoslovenskoj republikanskoj emigraciji u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama (Čikagu)," *Tokovi istorije* 20, no. 3 (2012): 343–60.

12 With some Slovenian-language copies published too.

13 Testimony of Etbin Kristan and the Jugo-Slav Republican Alliance, September 4, 1919, in *Treaty of Peace with Germany: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate*, 66th Cong. (1919) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 1091–108.

The following year, Kristan returned to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes to propagate the idea of a federal Yugoslav republic in advance of the country's Constituent Assembly. Elections were held for the Assembly in November 1920; Kristan headed the social democratic list in the Maribor–Celje and Ljubljana–Novo mesto electoral districts and was elected alongside eight other social democratic deputies (mainly from the Maribor–Celje and Sombor–Baranja electoral districts).[14] During the proceedings, he allied with one of the representatives of the Yugoslav Republican Party, the Montenegrin federalist Jovan Đonović (1883–1963), to give a "separate opinion" on the draft constitution, declaring its articles undemocratic and reiterating the necessity of completely reformatting the state on republican lines.[15] Ultimately, the monarchist Vidovdan Constitution was passed on June 28, 1921. Soon after, Kristan returned to the United States. He moved to New York City with Frances Kristan (née Cech, 1894–1984), his Ljubljana-born American wife, where he had been appointed as an immigration officer for the Yugoslav consulate at least through 1925. Ivan Molek, in his memoirs, recalled that Kristan may have retained the position until 1929.[16] What is certain is that Kristan retreated from politics upon his return from Yugoslavia, seemingly breaking off contact with his interlocutors in the JSZ as well. After their time in New York City, Etbin and Frances moved to Grand Haven, Michigan, where Frances had grown up and where her family still lived; they opened a small diner together, The Well Café, where they both worked through the mid-1930s.[17]

By this point, Kristan slowly re-entered the political life of Slovenian and Slovenian-American socialists in the Midwest. It is not entirely clear why this was the case, though we can judge by the years of his reactivation that the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the American presidency in 1932 and the appointment of Adolf Hitler as chancellor in Germany in 1933 set an important background. The article "Un-American Socialism" from 1934, reprinted below, demonstrates clearly the dedication Kristan maintained to socialist ideas over decades of historical change, personal mobility, and a retreat from public political life.

Kristan continued to work intensively in the years following. In 1937, Kristan was given the editorship of the progressive, antifascist *Cankarjev glasnik* ([Ivan] Cankar's Herald), based in Cleveland, Ohio. Kristan, now entering his 70s, began

14 *Statistički pregled izbora narodnih poslanika za Ustavotvornu skupštinu Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (Belgrade: Ustavotvorna skupština, 1921), 829.

15 Etbin Kristan and Jovan Đonović, *Odvojena mišljenja g.g. Etbina Kristana i Jovana Đonovića, narodnih poslanika i članova Ustavnog odbora* (Belgrade, 1921).

16 Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History*, 200–01.

17 *Grand Haven City Directory* (Grand Haven, MI: R. L. Polk & Co., 1936), 88.

to travel around the upper Midwest much more frequently, as demonstrated by his correspondence with Frances.[18] He relayed all of his recurring issues with organizing among South Slavic immigrants at the grassroots level: keeping individuals on membership rosters for political and cultural organizations; the printing and distribution of leaflets, newspapers, and journals; giving talks and holding fora for discussion; and the exhaustion of constant back-and-forth travel between different towns and cities.

By 1941, the war in Europe had been on for nearly two years. But it was the Nazi-led Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in April that year which dramatically altered the landscape of South Slavic immigrant politics in the United States. In contrast to the leftist criticism from abroad of particular policy choices in monarchist Yugoslavia, or trying to gain international support for persecuted workers or intellectuals in the country, the wartime occupation of Yugoslavia prompted (once again) new reflections on the problem of state form among the Slovenian-American Left. The question hadn't been resolved in 1918 or 1921. In 1942, Kristan argued at a meeting of the wartime Yugoslav Relief Committee of the SNPJ that "our minimum political demand must be that, following the war, Yugoslavia should get a form of government similar to that of the United States, a democratic republic."[19] Kristan remained convinced that true democracy could only be realized politically in a republic and economically in socialism, a position he had held consistently for roughly three decades. The same year, in December 1942, Kristan was elected president of the Slovenian American National Council (*Slovenski ameriški narodni svet*, SANS), an umbrella coordinating committee organized to guide the wartime activities of the numerous Slovenian political, philanthropic, and social organizations in the United States. He retained the position until 1947.

During the Second World War, Kristan and many others from Slovenian-American socialist and progressive circles began to support the Yugoslav Partisans, particularly after the establishment of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije, AVNOJ) in Bihać, Bosnia, in 1942. Likely through the Slovenian-American writer Louis Adamič/Adamic (1898–1951), Kristan and SANS made contact with Edvard Kardelj (1910–1979) and other Yugoslav communists and Partisans during the war. These connections pushed many South Slavic socialists in the US to favor and then materially support the Partisan movement. Kristan's work bore fruit after the war: in November 1949, he was invited to hold a consultation with

18 See NUK Ms 1979 Kristan Etbin, Pisma, Frances Kristan. The collection contains 313 items, dated between 1918 and 1953, though with most from the mid-to-late 1930s, including a sizable collection of small postcards written serially to convey longer messages.

19 Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History*, 262.

Kardelj and the Yugoslav mission to the UN in New York City, likely over the character of the South Slavic political community in the United States and their relation to the fallout from the *Informbiro* crisis and the Tito–Stalin Split from the year previous.[20]

After nearly 40 years, Kristan departed the United States for Yugoslavia in 1951. Upon crossing the border, it was reported that Kristan exclaimed "Greetings to my socialist homeland!"[21] Frances made a number of trips to visit him, though never moved there permanently, and the couple was even received personally by Tito in 1951 or '52.[22] Etbin Kristan spent what would be his last years in Ljubljana. Aside from some trips around the countryside, and periodically attending events or giving invited talks, he led a quiet, private life after his return. During Frances's 1953 trip to Ljubljana, Kristan contracted pneumonia and passed on November 22 of that year. He was 86.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: "Nationalismus und Sozialismus in Österreich," *Akademie: Orgán socialistické mládeže–Organ der socialistischen Jugend* 2, no. 11 (August 1898): 485–91; *Kapitalizem in proletarijat* (Ljubljana, 1901); *Nevarni socializem* (Ljubljana, 1908); *Narodno vprašanje in Slovenci* (Ljubljana, 1908); *V dobi klerikalizma* (Ljubljana, 1908); The Chicago Declaration / Chikaška izjava, published as "Slovencem v Ameriki," *Proletarec* 12, no. 513 (July 10, 1917): 3; *Krfska deklaracija in demokracija* (Chicago, ca. 1917–18); *Svetovna vojna in odgovornost socializma* (Chicago, ca. 1918); "Ustava in socialisti," published serially in *Naši zapiski* 13, no. 8 (1921): 163–66, vol. 14, nos. 1–2, 3–4, and 7 (1922): 1–4, 25–28, 73–75; "Neamerikanski socializem," *Majski glas* 14 (1934): 11–14; "Zedinjene države evropske," *Cankarjev glasnik* 2, no. 12 (1938 [July 1939]): 315–22; *Povesti in* črtice (Chicago, 1945); *Izbrano delo* (Ljubljana, 1950).

Context

Etbin Kristan wrote "Un-American Socialism" (*Neamerikanski socializem*) for the May 1934 edition of *Majski glas*, the May Day special edition of *Proletarec*, the daily newspaper and organ of the JSZ in Chicago. In a way, the text is a call-to-arms in favor of the Socialist Party USA and the JSZ. But Kristan only states this at the end; what is rather more interesting are the political ideas he develops beforehand. At its core, Kristan uses the text to break down the discourse that socialism is anti-national and unpatriotic, particularly in the United States. The underlying

20 NUK Ms 1979 Kristan Etbin, Pisma, Frances Kristan, November 4, 1949.

21 Molek, *Slovene Immigrant History*, 306–8.

22 See newspaper clipping "Local Woman Is Dinner Guest of Tito at His Villa in Belgrade, Yugoslavia," in IHRC2999. The clipping is a Xerox copy which does not include the date (nor which newspaper).

structural crises (and crisis discourses) of the interwar period had pushed forward a set of new problems, namely direct state intervention into the economy and society, the rise of authoritarian governance and state administration, as well as the retreat into exclusivist nationalism and racism as (false) solutions to the crisis.[23] The average worker or even the petit bourgeois sought ways to retain a sense of meaning and identity in such times of fundamental economic, social, and political dissolution. A plethora of solutions were placed before them; Kristan offered a combined vision of socialism and American republicanism as an answer.

While the economic crisis in the United States began in autumn 1929, it was only in 1933 that the domestic unemployment rate hit a high of 25%. Over 12 million people were out of work. The year previous, the former Governor of New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, won the 1932 Presidential election, ousting Herbert Hoover. The passage of the Emergency Banking Act of 1933—pushed through Congress within the first week of Roosevelt's presidency—partially restored the American public's confidence in the banking system but by itself was not enough to arrest the momentum of the economic collapse which beset the country. Enter the New Deal. New federal programs and agencies like the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the National Recovery Administration, the Civil Works Administration, and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration—as well as massive infrastructural projects like the Tennessee Valley Authority—began to tackle unemployment and raise the country's economic output through the unprecedented intervention of the American federal state into the country's socio-economic matrix. A great deal of optimism greeted Roosevelt and his reforms from below, and it seemed that such intervention would solve the inadequate hands-off, *laissez-faire* approach which had defined the Hoover administration.

However, for many American socialists, the New Deal did not address the structural deficiencies of capitalism; rather, it buttressed the private accumulation of capital through institutional safeguards and regulatory guarantees. New Deal programs like the Works Progress Administration may have kept many workers and intellectuals employed, but it also maintained a system of salaried exploitation and dependency. From the Left, the New Deal was critiqued for not going to its radical ends (e.g., the expropriation of private capital and its redistribution, failing to include Black workers fully into the recovery programs) while from the Right it was seen as being far too extremist in its intervention, orientation, and goals.[24]

23 For an analysis of crisis discourses in interwar East Central Europe, see Trencsényi et al., eds., *East Central European Crisis Discourses in the Twentieth Century* as well as Trencsényi, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Politics*.

24 For an overview, see e.g. Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995); or Colin Gordon: *New Deals: Business, Labor, and Politics in*

The momentum toward authoritarian rule—and toward unprecedented state intervention into public and private life, even in liberal democracies—was the immediate context in which Etbin Kristan wrote his "Un-American Socialism." The 1930s were years marked by political experimentation between previously (that is, seemingly) incompatible strains of political thought. This had come as a result of the widespread disillusion with liberal democratic principles following the World War and the onset of the global Great Depression. The traditional poles of Left and Right underwent quite serious contestation from Third Way positions. In general, these discourses generated strange political mixtures. The sovereignty of the individual began to be couched in totalitarian visions; anti-modernist political rhetoric used modernist vocabulary. In Europe, groups ranging from the French *non-conformistes* to the Romanian 1927 Generation to the Strasserists in Germany to the Hungarian *népi* writers took up these tropes, all trying to find a way out of the capitalist–socialist/communist counter-positions. While Kristan was largely incubated from experiencing these European changes first-hand, he nevertheless followed European developments closely, which is quite apparent in "Un-American Socialism."

European developments since the First World War acted both as a foil for Kristan's discussion of socialism in the American context as well as an opportunity to demonstrate the long-term consistency in his own thought. One is hard-pressed to find serious divergences from his ideas already expressed in the 1890s. In "Un-American Socialism," Kristan argues clearly that anti-socialist sentiments are typically taken up by those who claim they are "patriots," but who are in fact nothing more than national chauvinists, authoritarians, or fascists. According to National Socialist Adolf Hitler, socialism is "un-German"; according to Austro-Fascist Engelbert Dollfuß, socialism is "un-Austrian"; the Italian fascist *Duce* Benito Mussolini claims the same in reference to Italian national values; for the authoritarian regent Miklós Horthy, socialism has no place in Hungary. For Kristan, however, socialism is "anti-national" precisely because it agitates against the leaders of the nation and the state, those figures who are everywhere and always embedded in the defense and preservation of the capitalist system within and between modern nation-states.

Turning back to the United States, however, Kristan asks whether capitalist values are in fact core American values. A cursory overview of the (not too distant) past of the United States demonstrates that the origins of the British (and French) colonies in North America were established under still-existent feudal economic systems. After the original thirteen colonies declared their independence from the British Empire, they were still feudal constructions, but it was only

America, 1920–1935 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

with the development of capitalism that the seemingly core American institutions of representative governance, territorial federalism, and state administration took on their modern forms. (Not to mention the country's westward expansion, including its colonization and genocide of indigenous populations.) To that extent, capitalism and American values became synonymous. Kristan points to an obvious but under-acknowledged fact: capitalism and the creation of modern bureaucratic state systems may have originally gone hand-in-hand, but placing that process in a larger historical (and historical materialist) framing allows one to perceive its reification and so its contingency. While contemporaries perceive this state of affairs as natural it is, in fact, still an object of historical change, not divine permanence.

And yet, the World War and the Great Depression had destroyed the liberal promise of progress rooted in capitalist expansion, the modernization of economies, and consolidated state systems. Instead, the international state system had collapsed under the weight of inter-state capitalist competition set in imperial(ist) continental and global dynamics. After the war, the state system globally and in Europe in particular began to be reorganized according to the principle of national self-determination, bringing with it the further proliferation of small, homogenizing nation-states. By breaking down the large economic units of continental and global empires into smaller, often protectionist nation-states in a capitalist system, a harsh set of new problems arose: post-war mass national(ist) hysteria, the breakdown of cross-regional economic ties built up over centuries, a global *increase* in expansion-driven capitalist competition among smaller units fighting for scarcer resources, and the concentration of financial capital into fewer and fewer hands, all justified by national liberation or national independence.

Once this Gordian knot of problems had been tied, the consequences were inevitable: complete economic breakdown on a global scale. After failed attempts to let the global economy reset on its own, which inevitably exacerbated existent structural problems, the (nation-)state finally had to step in and intervene directly into the economy. But this also led to a marked increase in authoritarian governance across Europe, particularly in those countries formerly part of the continental and dynastic Hohenzollern, Habsburg, Romanov, and Ottoman empires. With the rise in authoritarianism (from royal dictatorships to national fascisms), state intervention often took on the form of corporatism, which preserved national capitalist interests at the expense of the independence of labor.

Drawing an intellectual line back to Kristan's pre-war work, a republican "federalism of nations" would be the only path to international socialism precisely because it would break from the authoritarianism inherent in the nation-state and in the global capitalist system. "[A]s Engels said," Kristan notes in the text

which follows, "the republic is the very form of state in which socialism is most easily established." Kristan then moves for socialists to realize that they too stand for republican values, that they should remember Austrian and German socialists who fought and died to save their interwar republics, and so sought to reclaim the radical potential in the very etymology of the word 'republic'. "Socialism demands the republic," Kristan writes, "and it wants to perfect it, so that it is truly what its name indicates: *Res publica*, a public thing, the property of all."

In the 1930s, Kristan largely escaped from the ongoing flirtation between the radical Left and extreme Right on anti-modernist foundations by choosing to reiterate his long-incubated republican socialist vision in a modernist language. To be sure, Kristan did briefly argue in the text that corporatist state intervention into the economy—and the economy's reorganization—did foreshadow the realization one of the foundational goals of socialism: "[New forces and new machines] are not only paving the way for socialism, but they also demonstrate—through vast organizations that are no longer confined to individual industries but instead bring them together into organic units—how it is possible to do precisely what socialism wants: to organize systematically all production and distribution for the benefit of the entire nation." But he did not match this with pithy overtures to the "masses" or grotesque ideas of "control" over society. Instead, Kristan's vision was one of a responsive, responsible socialist economic mechanism matched with the most responsive, responsible form of state: the republic. This was a much more democratic vision than anything the Third Way in the United States or Europe could offer. Consistent in his ideas from the 1890s to the 1930s, Kristan viewed socialism as simply the modern fulfillment of the latent radical potential within the republican idea from the Romans onward. Against the authoritarianism of the nation-state, and against the destructive tendencies of capitalism, socialism means a *res publica* for all, not only for the patricians.

ETBIN KRISTAN
"Un-American Socialism."

Socialism is un-American…

How often have you heard this phrase, which the defenders of the current social "order" use in an attempt to eliminate any possibility of socialist reorganization in one fell swoop? If a jingo quotes it, you shrug and smile; it comes as no surprise from a chauvinist. However, it is more unpleasant when

otherwise sensible, intelligent, and relatively progressive people speak and think like this. Among the latter is, for example, Jay Franklin, who used this phrase in a widely circulated "magazine" while defending Roosevelt against the accusation of becoming a socialist.[25] As if such a defense were necessary! While President Roosevelt is a rather likeable man, he is as far from socialism as the moon is from the sun. Therefore, his "Americanness" must be absolutely unquestionable.

However, how original is this "patriotic" phrase about socialism?

Ask Hitler. Socialism is un-German, and yet the "Grand" Chancellor of the Third Reich calls his party National *Socialist*. Now, of course, he no longer emphasizes the second half of the name; *Nazi* is sufficient. However, there used to be a time when the socialist attribute was attractive, and Hitler simply used it, just as Lueger had done before him when he founded his Christian "Social" Party in Vienna.

Listen to Dollfuß. Socialism is so un-Austrian that the socialist workers' homes in Vienna, organized in an exemplary manner, had to be destroyed with cannons, killing many victims; the "insurgents," wounded in a fair fight, were dragged from the hospital to be executed!

Mussolini will also assure you that socialism is un-Italian. Of course, the man used to be a socialist himself, but that was only because he wanted to "transform the socialists into Italians." All Italianism is now completely fascist, and one wonders where it had been hiding for all those long years before Mussolini's march on Rome.

You can travel the entire world and find the same result everywhere. For Horthy, socialism is un-Hungarian; for the samurais, it is un-Japanese; for the shah, it is un-Persian; for the rajahs and maharajahs, it is un-Indian; etc.

In a sense, they are all correct, of course. Socialism has no specific national color. It is international, universal, and global. For black people, it is the same as for white or yellow people; its goals are the same in China as in England, Spain, Paraguay, or Algeria. Its aspirations embrace all humanity, and its ideals are the same for all tribes and peoples. There is no national socialism, no religious socialism, no provincial socialism.

However, this universality of socialism does not entail what the chauvinists would like to imply. It does not oppose the character of any nation or country; it is as much Slavic as it is Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Mongolian, or

25 Jay Franklin, "Is Roosevelt Going Socialist?" *Liberty* 11, no. 10, March 10, 1934, 5–7. John "Jay" Franklin Carter (1897–1967) was an American writer who chronicled the New Deal era and the early postwar period in his column "We the People" (1936–1948) for *Liberty*, a weekly variety magazine (1924–1950). From 1931, the magazine was a supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

mulatto. And it is consistently *American*. It does, however, oppose something that is just as global, just as universal, and, in fact, a hundred times more anti-national than socialism; *it opposes the capitalist system*.

...

American institutions! Oh, yes, that is what anti-socialists are defending. They must be preserved to prevent a crash and cosmic chaos. Socialism would crush these institutions, which are dear and sacred to the nation.

Every institution, as it is established, becomes "sacred." To oppose it constitutes "a sin." However, to oppose the institution that existed before this one was also "a sin," yet the present one would never have been founded without that sin.

But—no offence—what are the specifically American institutions that we must believe should be preserved at all costs? If we are not mistaken, several such "sacred" institutions that were untouchable have existed but have nevertheless disappeared. For example, black slavery, lynching laws in the West, the deprivation of women's political rights, Prohibition, long swimsuits, etc.

Well, jokes aside: America is a republic. That is definitely something that must be preserved. By the way: the republic is not an American invention; the Romans had it long before Columbus was born. Republics outnumber monarchies in the world today, so this institution is not exclusively American. Either way, socialism certainly does not tear down the republic because, as Engels said, the republic is the very form of state in which socialism is most easily established. Of course, there are also differences between republics. Many existed that did not even deserve the name, as the only difference between them and monarchies was that the latter had a single ruler—an emperor, a tsar, a king, or a sultan—while medieval "republics" were ruled by a few families. Socialism demands a republic, and it wants to perfect it so that it is truly what its name indicates: *Res publica*, a public thing, the property of all.

That this is not an empty phrase was proven by the socialists in Germany and Austria, who were the only ones defending the republic—not only with words and political action but with their bodies and lives.

If the republic is considered an American institution, it is absurd to label socialism as un-American because it supports the republic more than any other political theory.

...

Just like any others, our institutions are not untouchable, while the economic system that prevails in this country, as in most of the world—that is,

the capitalist system—has little regard for those institutions' traditionality, nationality, and sanctity. Economic conditions are the strongest forces influencing all institutions; as long as the world is capitalist, everything—legislative and executive power, industry and commerce, education and justice, private and public life—must remain under its influence. Institutions that resist it must capitulate or be crushed. Mussolini, Hitler, Dollfuß, and other such potentates are possible because capitalism tolerates them, knowing it can use them. Dictators may overturn justice and parade as masters; as long as they do not hurt capitalism, they are allowed to. They are allowed to mock parliamentarism as long as they advance the interests of capitalism. They can order women to their rightful place "at home and in the kitchen"; this does not hurt capitalism so severely that it would be worth resisting. However, by digging a little deeper, it is possible to realize that these dictators are all creatures of capitalism, while their suppression of not only socialism but also any independent labor movement provides the best answer to the question of whom they serve.

...

Capitalism is capitalism, regardless of whether the Republicans, the Democrats, or some new progressives have the majority in the Congress. Profiteering and competition, which drive each other, cannot be eliminated from the capitalist system. The human spirit, always coming up with new discoveries and inventions, cannot be stopped. Even the most liberal working hours have already become too long to provide regular employment for all those looking for work. New forces and new machines bring the same problems they have always brought and the same consequences. How can these problems be solved by private entrepreneurs, who must be speculators by the nature of capitalism?

These are the forces that are paving the way for socialism rather than royal traditions and universal military service. They are not only paving the way for socialism, but they also demonstrate—through vast organizations that are no longer confined to individual industries but instead bring them together into organic units—how it is possible to do precisely what socialism wants: to organize systematically all production and distribution for the benefit of the entire nation.

The Socialist Party, if it achieves a majority, is the only force that could accomplish this goal without revolutionary horrors. Socialism has no interest in bloodshed; if such a thing were to happen, mostly proletarian blood would be shed. To obstruct and repress the development of socialism is nothing

other than to provoke catastrophes, the scale of which can never be predicted. Socialism wants to spare America and every other nation from such disasters.

And that is why it is un-American!

Socialism creates equal rights.

Socialism implements democracy.

Socialism eliminates economic misery.

Socialism shortens working hours and thus extends freedom.

Socialism gives every worthwhile ambition a chance to be fulfilled.

Socialism creates the basis on which culture will be accessible to everyone.

Socialism is the beginning of a new civilization in which world peace becomes possible.

If there is anything un-American about this, then socialism is un-American.

But if democracy, equality, and freedom are not just hypocritical phrases of newspaper moguls and speculative politicians, *then the Socialist Party is the most American of all the parties in the country*.

.....