

# The Revisionism of Sidney Hook

By EARL BROWDER (*Concluded*)

## II.

In the first part of this article, we refuted complaints of Sidney Hook that his views had been distorted and misrepresented. In the course of answering these questions, we already indicated the most essential features of a critical examination of Hook's system as a whole. Facilitating the further development of the argument, we have Hook's own formulation of what he considers the most essential features of his understanding of Marx, written as the second section of his reply to Comrade Jerome's article. Following out the method used in the first article, we are in the following paragraphs giving Hook's complete formulation:

### "II.

"Marxism is the theory and practice of social revolution. It distinguishes itself from all other theories of revolution in that its method is the method of dialectic. From the point of view of method it is the *dialectic method* of social revolution. What does this mean? On the basis of the objective tendencies of capitalist production, through the revolutionary *class action* of the proletariat, Socialism will be achieved. Marxism is a dialectical synthesis of the objective and subjective (class) moments of the historical process. Those who accept Marx' objective descriptions of the nature of capitalist production, the centralization and concentration of capital, the decline in the average rate of profit, the gradual disappearance of capital and the creation of an industrial reserve army, the existence of the class struggle—are not yet Marxists. A Marxist is one who on the basis of these facts espouses the cause of the working class and engages in a revolutionary struggle for a classless society which will be achieved through a period of proletarian dictatorship. The Marxist is therefore an activist who develops a program of activity steering himself by the objective development of society and his class goal. Consequently, he cannot rely upon the automatic processes at work in society to realize his class goal. Revolutions can only be accomplished by the *conscious will* of classes organized into power by political parties.

"If this be so, Marxism is not fatalism and Communism is not inevitable. If it were, there would be no need of revolutionary theory or struggle. On the very second page of the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx tells us that the class struggles of the past 'invariably ended either in a revolutionary change in the whole structure of society, or else in the common ruin of the contending classes.' That is as true today as in the past. There is no way out of the crisis of capitalism except by social revolution. But there is no guarantee that unless the class struggle is waged unceasingly, intelligently, forcefully,—it will eventuate in social revolution. This was expressed in the Party slogan some years back which figured conspicuously on the mastheads of its daily organ—'Either Communism or barbarism.' This was expressed by Marx in his letter to Kugelmann in 1870 in which he said: 'England possesses all the necessary material presuppositions for the social revolution. What it lacks is the spirit of generalization and of revolutionary passion.' This is expressed in every issue of *The Communist* in which the Party is criticized for lagging behind objective conditions.

"But this is a commonplace: the reader will exclaim. Quite right, but the consequences of this commonplace are far from commonplace. For they involve the abandonment of the theoretical heritage of the Second International—and of its strongest party, the German Social Democracy,—which taught that Marxism was an evolutionary *science* of social development, and that the social revolution was as inevitable as an eclipse. It therefore could surrender itself to reformist practices, for by its own assumption, nothing that it could do could further the social revolution. This astronomical theory of Socialism was reflected in America in the writings of Daniel De Leon, than whom none was more 'orthodox'. The inevitable effects of worsening economic conditions would lash the working class into class consciousness. The worse things became, the better. Therefore there was no sense in fighting for the immediate demands of the masses. The task of a political party was not to lead the working class in its every struggle but merely to draw up a platform which the objective pressure of the environment would compel the working class—willy-nilly—to accept. De Leon was not altogether consistent and at times he realized that it was rarely the case that the workers who were *worst* off were the *most* class conscious.

"It was Lenin who broke with the traditions of the Second International, restored Marxism to its original spirit and developed its doctrines in an analysis of the problems of revolutionary theory and practice in the era of finance capitalism. But not all of those

who profess themselves his followers have cast off the fatalistic ideological baggage of the Second International. As late as the Second Congress of the Third International Lenin reminded those who held that capitalism would automatically collapse that 'there do not exist any positions from which there is absolutely no way out.' Ideologically, Lenin had already broken with the Second International at the beginning of the century. His *What Is To Be Done?* shows this clearly. Ignorance of this work was responsible for errors I committed in discussing Lenin's views in some of my early articles, (especially the "Philosophy of Dialectic Materialism", *Journal of Philosophy*, 1928). To this day Lenin's book has remained a much neglected work in the Communist movement.

"Once it is realized that Marxism is the theory and practice of the social revolution, all of Marx' doctrines take on a characteristic emphasis as theoretical instruments in the class struggle. Historical materialism no longer appears as a mechanical system of sociology, as in the writings of Bukharin, or as a theory which explains all of *past* history, as in Kautsky, but as a guide to history in the making, calling attention to what must *now* be changed in order to achieve the classless society of the future. The theory of surplus-value is no longer a doctrine which proves that the working class must be completely pauperized before it can engage in revolutionary activity (Hilferding) but one which shows how the *present* struggle for a higher standard of living is itself a part of the revolutionary struggle. The class struggle becomes not an economic or political *Lehratz* but a struggle in behalf of the revolutionary purposes and values of the working class in *every* field of culture. The theory of Marxism is no longer an ideological reflex of the economic process but, when embraced by the working class, a powerful and *necessary* contributory factor in the social revolution. When the objective social conditions are present, a revolutionary situation at hand, and a well organized working class led by a political Party schooled in the teachings of Marx and Lenin in the vanguard of the struggle of all oppressed elements in society—then, and only then, does this complex of *necessary* conditions become the *sufficient* condition for a successful social revolution. All this I develop in well-documented detail in my book *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*.

"Now for what Menshevik idealists, in this country and in Germany, have called my deviations.

"1) If Marxism is a theory of social revolution, its principles must be guides to action. If they are guides to action, they cannot be *passive reflections* of the things they are to transform. Ideas, then, are not images, reflections (*Spiegelbilder* or *Abbilder*) or

carbon copies of things. They are instruments of actions which are true if they enable us to solve the problems out of which they arise. (Second gloss on Feuerbach). Experience and analysis teach us which ideas will probably be more effective than others. But this can only be tested in action. Because ideas enable us to solve problems, it does not follow that they must be a duplicatory image of what they solve any more than because a knife can cut bread it must be an image of bread. This does not mean that ideas come from nowhere or are heaven sent. Ideas are *outgrowths* of the interaction between objects and the brain. They are a specific kind of outgrowth. They are, *plans of action*. If they were not, what would be the use of having ideas or of propagating Marxism?

"I have just sketched a theory of perception which was indicated by Marx in his critical gloss on Feuerbach. (First gloss on Feuerbach). John Dewey, on independent psychological grounds, developed this theory into a complete doctrine. Dewey's theory of perception has nothing to do with his theory of class-collaboration any more than Pavlov's brain physiology and psychology of the conditioned reflex are connected with his reactionary politics. This theory of perception is part of the science of our day and no thinking dialectical materialist can reject it. Jerome argues that because Dewey developed the instrumental theory of perception and supported the war, etc., the two must be causally related. This is logically infantile. The reasoning is as stupid as the inference which Nazi critics draw that because Marx was Jewish and the author of the revolutionary theory of the working class, the two are logically connected. Elsewhere I have myself criticized Dewey's class-collaborative politics. I should like to be shown how Dewey's politics follow as a *logical consequence* from his theory of perception.

"2) I do not accept Morgan's scheme of social evolution according to which all societies *must* go through the same stages of social development, family relationships, political forms. Modern anthropologists have conclusively demonstrated that there is no unvarying, unilinear order of succession which social institutions obey. A variation of this argument was used by the Mensheviks to prove that the proletarian revolution could not take place in Russia because it violated the inevitable historical law of social evolution. An interesting criticism of Morgan's anthropology—which was accepted by Engels—will be found in Bernard J. Stern's *Lewis H. Morgan—Social Evolutionist*.

"3) If by dialectic we mean the laws of motion, polarity, and the transformation of quantity into quality—then dialectic is uni-

versal, applies to nature as well as to man—and I have never denied it. But the distinctively *Marxian* conception of dialectic is historical and social. The social historic dialectic necessarily involves the principle of class consciousness. If this element of consciousness is read back into nature, we get absolute idealism—a degenerate variety of Hegelian mysticism. This is the position which Jerome holds, but he is so innocent of philosophical knowledge that he does not realize it.

“This question has more than an academic importance. Plekhanov believed that there could only be sudden leaps in society (social revolution), if there were sudden leaps in nature. If this were so, all social life would be merely a chapter of physical life and explicable in physical terms. This runs counter to the spirit of the Marxian philosophy according to which man makes his own history (*dialectic*); but always under determinate social, historical and physical conditions (*materialism*).

“4) I do not believe that anyone has said the *final* word on anything. The teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin are the most valuable truths we have and fully warrant action along the lines laid out. But they themselves have urged that any movement which refuses to learn *new* things in *new* situations—to submit all principles to the test of experience and action—is doomed to sectarianism and futile failure. This is the lesson which the Russian Revolution and the building of Socialism in the Soviet Union has reinforced again and again. That is the meaning of creative Marxism.

SIDNEY HOOK.”

What is the outstanding feature of the above self-characterization of Hook's Marxism? In my opinion it is, on the one hand, the critical attitude towards and attempts to correct Marx, Engels and Lenin, accompanied by, on the other hand, the uncritical acceptance of the theories of John Dewey as the basis for a revised Marxism.

Already in the previous article, I indicated the significance of the absence from Hook's writings of any consistent or sustained polemics against the various schools of bourgeois philosophy. This in itself constitutes sufficient proof that Hook is a revisionist of Marxism. There still remains the question of who is correct. Is it Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin? Or has Hook, with the assistance of John Dewey, really discovered some profound truths which escaped the minds of the greatest revolutionary thinkers? It is this question that we will attempt to briefly answer in the present article.

What is the great contribution of John Dewey which Hook thinks has “improved” on Marx and Lenin? It is Dewey's theory

of cognition or "theory of perception". Just what this theory signifies may be seen from a few quotations directly from Dewey himself:

"It may well be admitted that there is a real sense in which knowledge (as distinct from thinking or inquiring with a guess attached) does not come into existence until thinking has permeated in the experimental act which fulfills the specifications set forth in thinking." (From the *Philosophy of John Dewey*, selected and edited by Joseph Ratner, published by George Allen & Unwin, p. 159.)

And further:

"The object has to be 'reached' eventually, in order to get clarification or invalidation, and when so reached, it is immediately present. . . . Short of verifiatory objects directly present, we have not knowledge, but inference whose content is *hypothetical*. The subject matter of inference is a candidate or claim to knowledge requiring to have its value tested." (p. 210.)

This is the theory which, according to Hook, "is part of the science of our day and no thinking dialectical materialist can reject it."

A classical application of the theory is contained in the hypothetical case of the man lost in the forest and seeking a way out. (I think this originated with James and was taken over by Dewey. I am sorry not to have had time to hunt up reference to text on this and am forced to quote from memory.) According to this example, the lost man beginning to think about his plight, projects various inferential ways out of the forest and then proceeds to act upon one or other of these inferences. When one of these has been acted upon successfully and has led him out of the forest, then and only then, in the process of realizing the truth of an inference, has the man gained knowledge. The knowledge gained in one experience is of value for other experiences only in enriching his stock of inferences from which to choose. The process of accumulation of knowledge is one of broadening the possible choice of various inferences. According to this, only the ignorant man can feel sure of anything before it happens and the more knowledge he acquires, the more he has to hesitate in face of his growing stock of inferences from which he must choose. The truth cannot be a matter of fore-knowledge because it is a product of the action of the subject, who has *created* the truth by successfully acting upon an inference.

It is in order to make room for this pragmatic theory that Hook rejects the basic postulate of dialectical materialism that an idea is "an image corresponding to the perception of the external phenomena", and that "sensation is nothing but a direct connection of the

mind with the external world; it is the transformation of energy, of external excitation into a mental state." (Volume 13, Lenin's *Collected Works*, p. 31.)

In order to more effectively attack this Marxian understanding (which is an essential feature of the thought of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin), Hook proceeds to make "images" into "carbon copies"; i. e., he makes the dialectical materialism of Marx synonymous with the mechanical materialism of the Encyclopedists. He tries to prove that correspondence between objective reality and mental processes results in fatalism and reliance upon the automatic processes; he declares that only when this is "corrected" according to Dewey, does Marxism really become an effective theory and practice of social revolution. He sums up this thought in his formulation that if "Marxism is not fatalism", then "Communism is not inevitable."

In support of his contention that Communism is not inevitable, Hook, in true revisionist manner, aims to bring forward Marx as his supporter. He cites the passage in the *Communist Manifesto* which, in referring to class struggles in past societies, says of the classes:

"They carried on perpetual warfare, sometimes masked, sometimes open and acknowledged; a warfare that invariably ended, either in a revolutionary change in the whole structure of society, or else in the common ruin of the contending classes."

Basing himself on this passage, Hook contends that he has Marx' sanction for the theory that Communism is not inevitable, that the struggle of proletariat against bourgeoisie may likewise end "in the common ruin of the contending classes".

In advancing this argument, Hook merely betrays his utter inability to apply dialectic materialism to history, shows his metaphysical concept of historic parallelism for all ages and all class societies, and incidentally, his ignorance of Marxism. For, in *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (pp. 43-44, Adoratsky Edition, Volktausgabe—German), Marx and Engels expressly state:

" It depends entirely on the extensiveness of commercial relations whether or not the attained productive forces, namely inventions, of a locality are lost for later progress. As long as there is no market extending beyond the immediate vicinity, each invention must be specially made in each locality, and mere accidents such as the invasions of barbarian peoples, even ordinary wars, are sufficient to bring a country with developed productive forces and wants to such a pass that it must start again from the beginning. In early history every invention had to be renewed practically daily and in each locality independently. How little assured developed productive forces are against complete decline, even those with a relatively very

extensive trade, is shown by the Phoenicians, whose inventions and discoveries were for the most part lost for a long time through the exclusion of this nation from trade, through the conquest by Alexander, resulting in its complete decay. Likewise the art of staining glass in the middle ages, for example. *Only when commercial intercourse has become world trade and has as its base large-scale industry, and all nations have been drawn into competitive struggle, only then is the duration of the attained productive forces assured.*" (*Die Deutsche Ideologie*, pp. 43-44. Italics mine.—E. B.

It is clear from these words of Marx and Engels that it was to past societies and not to capitalist society that the reference to "the common ruin of the contending classes" was made in the *Manifesto*. Let the authors of the *Manifesto* attest to this. The following passage from the *Communist Manifesto* certainly leaves no doubt as to the views of Marx and Engels on the inevitability of the fall of capitalism—not together with the proletariat, but attended by the rise of the proletariat as the ruling class:

"What the bourgeoisie therefore produces above all, is its own grave-diggers. *Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.*" (Italics mine.—E. B.)

We offer this instance of Hook's attempt to rest on Marx as typical of the manner in which the revisionists seek to hallow their revisionism with "quotations" from Marx.

What Hook is accomplishing by this revision, is to surrender dialectical materialism to idealism—to that specific brand of idealism which calls itself pragmatism, or instrumentalism. He promises us that through this exchange we will emerge from a condition of helpless puppets of blind forces, into a condition of masters of social processes,—that we will emerge from the kingdom of necessity to that of freedom. But his advertisements for his wares are highly exaggerated. It is one of the contradictions of all idealist philosophy that the more it promises, the less it delivers. This is excellently illustrated in the case of Hook.

In the course of a debate with Mr. George Soule, I have already had occasion to evaluate briefly the relation of pragmatism to the problems of the revolutionary working class. I repeat what I said then, because it applies fully at this point:

"This pragmatism that recognizes the truth only *a posteriori* (as the learned gentlemen say), only as something that has already arrived, cannot distinguish the face of the truth amidst falsehoods and illusions. It has an inherent inability to recognize the face of the truth, it proclaims that the only possible way to recognize the truth is when you see it from the rear, when you see its backside, when it has already passed into history. This is a convenient philos-



ophy for that bourgeoisie which is 'sitting on the top of the world,' the bourgeoisie in ascendancy. But when bourgeois society falls into a crisis, this philosophy of pragmatism falls into crisis also along with the whole capitalist system. Where in the period of 'Coolidge prosperity' it gave all the answers required to all of the problems of the bourgeoisie, today it begins to give the wrong answers to the bourgeoisie. Even if we judge the capitalist system today by that final criterion of the pragmatists, *Does it work?*, we have the answer, 'No, it does not work.' So capitalism stands condemned by the standards of the philosophy of the bourgeoisie itself. By the same standard if we ask about the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union, the new Socialist planned economy, and ask, *Does it work?* the answer is, 'Yes it does work. In the midst of a world that is going to pieces it works!' So pragmatism has failed its class creators in the crucial moment. It is unable to give capitalism any answer to the question, What way out? Because all the thinkers for capitalism are bound within the philosophical framework of pragmatism, they are unable to even formulate any proposals for a way out and are in the same position as the one who says, 'Maybe the revolutionists are right, maybe the reformists are right, who knows? Let us wait and see.

"But if pragmatism is of no use to the capitalist class to find a way out of the crisis, we must say it is of no use to the working class, either. The only effect of the influence of this ideological system upon the working class is a very poisonous one, to create hesitation, indecision, hesitation again, more indecision, wait and see, wait and see.

"The working class must have a different kind of philosophy, because the working class faces the future—not only faces the future, is already beginning to control the future. That is the essence of planning, *to control the future*. And you cannot control the future if your approach to the future is that it is impossible to know what is the truth until after the future has become the past. Those who are going to control the future must know what is the truth before the event, before it happens, and by knowing it, determine what is going to happen and see that it does happen. That is the revolutionary working class, the only power that is able to put into effect a planned economy, and the only class that is capable of developing the whole philosophy and the understanding of of society, which is necessary to put a plan into effect."

#### IV.

Before passing over to an examination of the consequences of Hook's revisionism, we will briefly examine the other three points of this statement.

Hook is quite delighted with the fact that Morgan's anthropology, which was accepted by Engels has been basically corrected on a certain point by modern research. He cites this, however, not from any interest in the questions involved, but because behind this he thinks he can smuggle in his whole system of separating Engels

from Marx, both of them from Lenin, and their system of thought from the working class and its revolutionary Party. The significance of this point in his reply above, is to be found not in the text, but in what he has written elsewhere. Just a few quotations will suffice to indicate this system.

“Certainly there is no justification for the easy assumption made by the self-styled orthodox, that there is a complete identity in the doctrines and standpoints of Marx and Engels.”

“It was Rosa Luxemburg, however, and not Lenin who delivered the classic attack against revisionism from the standpoint of dialectical Marxism.”

“There must have been aspects at least of Marx’s doctrines which lent themselves to these different interpretations.”

In these efforts at the disintegration of the Marxian system into an eclectic combination of more or less contradictory tendencies, we have at once both the rejection of Marxism as a science and also, an expression of the theory of inferences, of numberless possible ways out.

Behind these statements is the concerted effort of international revisionism to break the unity and continuity of Marxism in Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The effort expresses itself in various ways, but the central purpose of the revisionists is to show that Marxism was variously interpreted by its very founders, and at the same time to make Engels appear to sanction the opportunism and open treachery of the Second International. In this effort the revisionists stop at nothing, not even at forgery, as in the case of Bernstein’s proved forgery of Engels’ preface to Marx’s *Class Struggle in France*, wherein Bernstein sought to make Engels appear a supporter of opportunist parliamentarism. The attacks upon Engels by social-fascism today are particularly directed against his development of the Marxian theory of the State and the seizure of power by the proletariat, in his “Anti-Duering” and *The Origin of the Family*.

Following upon his distortion of the role of Engels in the development of Marxism, Hook turns his attention to Lenin. We repeat in this regard, the above mentioned quotation:

“It was Rosa Luxemburg, and not Lenin, who delivered the classic attack against revisionism from the standpoint of dialectic materialism.” (*Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*, p. 350.)

We dwell on this statement because in it is contained the essence of the semi-Trotskyist article by Slutzki: “The Bolsheviks and German Social Democracy in the Period of its Pre-War Crisis” which appeared in the *Proletarskaya Revolutzia* (No. 6, 1931), and against which Comrade Stalin launched his famous attack.

The position that Slutzki took in that article was that, in the period before the war, Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks failed to carry on a relentless struggle for a breach with the opportunists and the centrist conciliators of the German Social Democracy and the Second International, that Lenin and the Bolsheviks failed to give full support to the left wingers in the German Social Democracy (Parvus and Rosa Luxemburg), thus retarding the struggle against revisionism and opportunism.

Comrade Stalin lays bare the falsity of this contention by recalling the revolutionary, anti-opportunist role of the Russian Bolsheviks who, as far back as 1903-4, worked for a breach with the opportunists, not only in the Social-Democratic Labor Party of Russia, but in the Second International as a whole, and especially in the German Party. Comrade Stalin brings Bolshevik critical judgment to bear on the role of the German left wingers at that time—a role that was far from being Bolshevik, and which, prevented the influence of Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks from being exerted in the German Party against the opportunists and the centrists.

Comrade Stalin declares:

“And what point of view was adopted by the left social democrats in Western Europe? They developed a semi-Menshevik theory of imperialism, rejecting the principle of the right of self-determination of the nations according to the Marxist conception (including separation and the formation of independent States), repelled the thesis of the serious revolutionary significance of the liberation movement in the colonies and oppressed countries, the thesis of the possibility of the united front between the proletarian revolution and the national emancipation movement, and counterposed the whole of his semi-Menshevik hodge-podge, representing an entire underestimation of the national and colonial question, to the Marxist idea represented by the Bolsheviks. It will be remembered that later on Trotsky seized upon this semi-Menshevik mixture and employed it as a weapon in the fight against Leninism.

“These are the errors, known to all, of the left social democrats in Germany.

“Admittedly, the left-wingers in Germany did more than commit grave errors. Their record contains great and truly revolutionary deeds.”

It was against Lenin's criticism of the semi-Menshevism of the German left wing that Slutzki brings the charge of failure to support *without serious reservations* the left social democracy.

Comrade Stalin shows up this anti-Leninist “historianship” as the work of “a calumniator and falsifier”.

Sidney Hook advances the same charge against Lenin, when he states the Slutzkist thesis: “It was Rosa Luxemburg, however,

and not Lenin, who delivered the classic attack against revisionism from the standpoint of dialectical materialism”.

And what more correct characterization can be given to Sidney Hook's version of history than Comrade Stalin's characterization of Slutzki—“calumniator and falsifier”?

Of the same nature is Hook's placing one part of Marxian theory against another, of which we spoke in the previous article. He also invades the field of economics to declare that the fetishism of commodities is “the central doctrine of Marx' sociological economics” and considers “the theory of surplus value as an abstract and derivative expression.” (*Modern Quarterly*, Vol. V, No. 4, p. 435). This simply means he understands neither, and that he is substituting both. It is an old revisionist trick to try to fight Marx with Marx, but it has failed for some generations as it will for many more. The exposure of the fetishism of commodities is a part of the theory of surplus value, and the two can no more be placed in opposition than can the kidneys be cited against the lungs. Only a revisionist, one who denies Marxism as a system, can play at such a game. In insisting that the theory of surplus value is an “abstract and derivative expression” Hook robs Marxism of its very foundation in understanding the exploitation of labor and the class struggle. Not a metaphysical abstraction, not a secondary expression, but “The doctrine of surplus value is the essence of the economic theory of Marx.” (Lenin).

This basic tendency of Hook's thought is also expressed in his excluding of dialectics from the field of nature and confining it exclusively to the consciousness of man. Because consciousness is involved in the dialectical movement of society, Hook concludes that where there is no consciousness there can be no dialectics. Hook poses the question thus: either “social life is merely a chapter of physical life and explicable in physical terms”, or, if this is not so, Marxism must be “freed from its coquetry with Hegelian terminology and disassociated from the illegitimate attempts to extend it to natural phenomena in which human consciousness does not enter.” (*Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*, p. 363).

In the face of this very clear denial by Hook of dialectics in nature, one marvels at the sudden lapse of memory, to put the matter mildly, that causes him to protest in the statement he has just submitted—“and I have never denied it.” The fact that Hook's denial of the universality of dialectics is typical pragmatism, with its denial of the possibility of a unified body of knowledge, corresponding to a material universe, of which man and society is an expression and product.

Hook's final point in his reply above is also masked and not

open and frank. Under cover of the platitude that no man "has said the final word on anything", he is really affirming his own license to change at will the Marxian system and to reassemble its fragments under the hegemony of the pragmatist philosophy. The fact that he calls this disintegration of Marxism by the euphonic name of "creative Marxism" does not need to confuse us. This is only another example of what Lenin described in the following words:

"But after Marxism had dislodged all the diverse teachings hostile to it, the tendencies expressed in these teachings began to search for new outlets. The forms of, and the reasons for, the struggle have changed, but the struggle itself continues. The second half century of the existence of Marxism began with the struggle within Marxism against the tendencies inimical to it. . . . Pre-Marxian Socialism is smashed. It continues to struggle not on its own ground any longer, but on the general ground of Marxism, as revisionism."

The struggle against revisionism is a struggle against bourgeois philosophy. But this bourgeois philosophy does not appear openly in its own name, it comes forward as "Marxism", even as "creative Marxism," it proclaims itself as "dialectical materialist" with only the "little correction" of substituting Dewey's for Marx' theory of cognition. The revisionists "agree with the Party's political program in the main, but retain a few philosophical reservations." The example of Hook helps us to understand the feeling with which Lenin exclaimed:

"It is a shame to confess, yet it would be a sin to conceal, that this open enmity towards Marxism makes of Chernov a more principled literary opponent than are our comrades in politics and opponents in philosophy." (Vol. 13, p. 73.)

## V.

What are the practical consequences of Hook's pragmatism parading as Marxism? Hook's views have been eagerly seized upon by the reformists and renegades. This is not only because he furnishes them with philosophical justification for existence, as alternative inferences which are "candidates for truth." More important is his justification of all schools of revisionism by denying the existence of any body of established Marxian truth. What could be more sweeping in its contemptuous dismissal of the various Communist Parties and of the Communist International, than Hook's article in *Modern Quarterly*, Volume 5, No. 4? In that article it is made clear that Hook believes he alone truly understands Marx, that the Communist Parties are merely repeating with me-

chanical stupidity the formulae of Marx. Let us recall again Hook's description of Marxism as expressed practically in world mass movements.

"In Russia, it is a symbol of revolutionary theology; in Germany, of a vague social religion; in France, of social reform, and in England and America, of wrong-headed political tactics."

Modesty may require us to ignore Hook's cynical characterization of the Communist Party of the U. S. A. as an expression of "wrong-headed political tactics." We merely note in passing that in this judgement, he unites with the renegades and reformists of all brands. But what shall we say of a man, who professing to be a Marxian and a dialectical materialist, was able to dismiss the gigantic achievements of Marxism in the Soviet Union as "a symbol of revolutionary theology"! This is nothing but the sickly egotism of an idealist closet-philosopher, who thinks that the advances in human knowledge are being produced by his own brain, rather than by the mass action of the millions for whom Marxism is not an intellectual exercise, but a guide for transforming the world.

Hook puts forward his ideas in the name of Marxism. Those who are more open and frank bring forward the same ideas to explain their rejection of Marxism. For example, Max Eastman, who conducts a feverish crusade to destroy dialectical materialism, does so because he agrees with Hook that it is a symbol of revolutionary theology." A close kinship with this thought is also expressed by Mr. Norman Thomas, who wrote in the same issue of the *Modern Quarterly* with Sidney Hook, the following:

"I agree that the philosophy of dialectic materialism is 'disguised religion.' The psychological resemblance between Communism and religion are indeed so great as scarcely to be disguised. Which makes me wonder whether its prophet, Lenin's mind was essentially scientific, despite his genius for a ruthless realism and the large element in him of the creative will. These things are not uncommon in great leaders of religious movements."

This agreement between Hook, Eastman and Thomas is not an accidental one. No matter how varied may be the philosophical facade with which each one distinguishes himself from the others, the substantial foundation of each is identical; namely, pragmatism. It is true that in the national elections Hook supported not Thomas, but Foster. It is clear, however, that he was brought to this act not by the logic of his revisionism, which would lead straight to Thomas, but by something else. That other factor was the rise of a considerable mass movement of intellectuals toward the Communist Party, a movement which carried with it precisely that public to which Hook makes his most immediate and direct appeal. After

all, a vote for Foster and Ford, even though not entirely logical for a revisionist, is a small price to pay for the privilege of passing unchallenged as "the foremost Marxist in America"! But the Communist Party does not, and cannot participate in such business.

## VI.

We pointed out above that dialectical materialism, free from the pragmatic revisions of Hook, is necessary for the working class because the working class represents the future development of society. In the working class we have that complete correspondence between the objective and subjective factors of society, between the laws of economic and social development and the class needs of the workers, which for the first time makes possible the unity between the class needs and aspirations and the most coldly objective, scientific study and understanding of the society in which that class conducts its struggles. Precisely this is what Hook does not and cannot understand.

It cannot help the working class to perform its revolutionary tasks to teach it, as does Hook, that our program has no objective validity, except that we may by acting on it make it true to some extent. It is quite correct to emphasize the active character of the working class as the maker of the revolution, but to put this in Hook's form, means to demoralize and divide the working class into groups and sections each of which has its own separate program with equal claim to truth (objective validity), and each of which will actually be made true to the extent that workers believe in it and act upon it. This idealistic conception of Hook, while it puts on a brave revolutionary face as emphasizing action, more action, achieves the opposite result in reality by laying the foundation for confusion and disruption. The necessary precondition for effective action of the working class is its unification, not around any or all programs, but around that single program which alone corresponds to the laws of social development and the needs of the masses.

Only this understanding of the objective and scientific character of our program and our philosophy, gives us the capacity for carrying through the proletarian revolution. The revolution is not, as Hook falsely states, *merely* the struggle for power, it is the struggle for power in order to use that power for a definite, specific purpose; namely, the establishment of Socialism as the first stage of Communism. This is not some general abstract goal in the nature of a "social myth." This is a concrete program of action, directed

towards the development of a planned society, all the essential features of which are matters of fore-knowledge and plan.

Of course, while we reject the idealistic inflation of the role of consciousness given by Hook, we simultaneously reject unconditionally that understanding of the historical process as the product of those large impersonal forces, of which men are mere automatic reflexes. Communism is inevitable, but it is only inevitable because the working class will inevitably fight to overthrow capitalism and consciously establish Communism. The inevitability of Communism by no means belittles the active role of the working class, as Hook would have us believe, but on the contrary.

Hook and all revisionists by rejecting the scientific character of Marxism, contribute not to the development of the revolution, but to the building of obstacles against the revolution. In order to further intensify the confusion on this question, they assure the workers that to refuse to follow the Hooks, to insist instead upon mastering the science of Marxism, that this means in reality to fall into the swamps of religion. Such an argument may sound preposterous. And it is! But it is seriously made by Sidney Hook.

It is no longer possible for Sidney Hook to explain away our controversies with him on the basis of "distortions and misunderstandings." It is quite clear that we have two sharply opposed conceptions of Marxism, expressed by Hook and by the international Communist movement. Our first task was to prove that these two lines existed in conflict with one another. Our second and larger one, is to prove that all revisionist theories, such as those of Hook, are objectively false and subjectively dangerous to the working class. To fully carry out this second task is a long process of class struggle, political and ideological. We gain mastery of the science of dialectical materialism through the development of the struggle for control of society; and we win control of society only through our growing mastery of dialectical materialism.