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THE LESSON OF SPAIN

By LEON TROTSKY

NOTE: The revolting calumnies most recently spread by the Stalinists against the author of the following article do not in the least diminish the esteem in which he is held by militant Socialists or lessen the attention which the latter will pay to the penetrating observations on the significance of the Spanish events which are contained in Trotsky's article. The APPEAL is proud to receive an article from the pen of this great revolutionary thinker. We wish to assure the readers of the APPEAL that articles by Trotsky will appear frequently in its pages. On page ten of this issue there appear important statements on the dastardly attempt of the Stalinist clique to put Trotsky in the class of terrorists and Fascists.

The Officers' Corps—The Role of the People's Front—The Workers' Revolution

EUROPE has become a harsh and terrible school for the proletariat. In one country after another events have unfolded, which exacting great and bloody sacrifices from the workers, have up to the present moment ended in victory for the enemies of the proletariat (Italy, Germany, Austria). The policy of the old labor parties clearly shows how **impossible** it is for them to lead the proletariat, how **incapable** they are of preparing for victory.

At the present time, while this is being written, the civil war in Spain has not yet terminated. The workers of the entire world feverishly await the news of the victory of the Spanish proletariat. If this victory, as we firmly hope, is won it will be necessary to say: the workers have triumphed this time in spite of the fact that their leadership did everything to bring about their defeat. All the greater honor and glory to the Spanish working class!

In Spain the Socialists and Communists belong to the People's Front which already betrayed the revolution once, but which, thanks to the workers and peasants, once again attained victory and in February created a "Republican" government. Six months afterwards the "Republican" army took the field against the people. Thus it became clear that the People's Front government had maintained the military caste with the people's money, furnished them with authority, power and arms, gave them command over young workers and peasants, thereby facilitating the preparations for a crushing attack on the workers and peasants.

People's Front Curbs Social Revolution

More than that: even now, in the midst of civil war, the People's Front government does everything in its power to make victory doubly difficult. A civil war is

waged, as everybody knows, not only with military but also with political weapons. From a purely military point of view, the Spanish revolution is much weaker than its enemy. Its strength lies in its ability to rouse the great masses to action. It can even take the army away from its reactionary officers. To accomplish this it is only necessary seriously and courageously to advance the program of the socialist revolution.

It is necessary to proclaim that, from now on, the land, the factories and shops will pass from the capitalists into the hands of the people. It is necessary to move at once toward the realization of this program in those provinces where the workers are in power. The Fascist army could not resist the influence of such a program for twenty-four hours; the soldiers would tie their officers hand and foot and hand them over to the nearest headquarters of the workers' militia. But the bourgeois ministers cannot accept such a program. Curbing the social revolution, they compel the workers and peasants to spill ten times as much of their own blood in the civil war. And to crown everything, these gentlemen expect to disarm the workers again after the victory and to force them to respect the sacred laws of private property. Such is the true essence of the policy of the People's Front. Everything else is pure humbug, phrases and lies!

Many supporters of the People's Front now shake their heads reproachfully at the rulers of Madrid! Why didn't they foresee all this? Why didn't they purge the army in time? Why didn't they take the necessary measures?" More than anywhere else, these criticisms are being voiced in France, where, however, the policy of the leaders of the People's Front is in no way to be distinguished from the policy of their Spanish colleagues. In spite of the harsh lesson of Spain, one can say in advance that the Léon Blum government will accomplish no serious purge of the army. Why? Because the workers' organizations remain in a coalition with the Radicals and consequently are the prisoners of the bourgeoisie.

People's Militia Must Replace Officers' Corps

It is naive to complain that the Spanish republicans or the socialists or the communists foresaw nothing, let something slip. It is not at all a question of the perspicacity of this or that minister or leader, but of the general direction of the policy. The workers' party which enters into a political alliance with the radical bourgeoisie, by that fact alone renounces the struggle against capitalist militarism. Bourgeois domination, that is to say, the maintenance of private property of the means of production, is inconceivable without the support of the exploiters by the armed forces. The officers' corps repres-

ents the guard of capital. Without this guard the bourgeoisie could not maintain itself for a single day. The selection of the individuals, their education and training make the officers as a distinctive group uncompromising enemies of socialism. Isolated exceptions change nothing. That is how things stand in all bourgeois countries. The danger lies not in the military braggarts and demagogues who openly appear as fascist; incomparably more menacing is the fact that at the approach of the proletarian revolution the officers' corps becomes the executioner of the proletariat. To eliminate four or five hundred reactionary agitators from the army means to leave everything basically as it was before. The officers' corps in which is concentrated the centuries-old tradition of enslaving the people must be dissolved, broken, crushed in its entirety, root and branch. It is necessary to replace the troops in the barracks commanded by the officers' caste with the **people's militia**, that is, with the democratic organization of the armed workers and peasants. There is no other solution. But such an army is incompatible with the domination of exploiters big and small. Can the republicans agree to such a measure? Not at all. The People's Front government, that is to say, the government of the coalition of the workers with the bourgeoisie, is in its very essence a government of capitulation to the bureaucracy and the officers. Such is the great lesson of the events in Spain, now being paid for with thousands of human lives.

Defense of Republic is Defense of Capitalism

The political alliance of the working class leaders with the bourgeoisie is disguised as the defense of the "republic." The experience of Spain shows what this defense is in actuality. The word "republican," like the word "democrat," is a deliberate charlatanism which serves to cover up class contradictions. The bourgeois is a republican so long as the Republic protects private property. And the workers utilize the Republic to overthrow private property. In other words: the Republic loses all its value to the bourgeois the moment it assumes value for the workers. The radical cannot enter into a bloc with workers' parties without the assurance of support in the officers' corps. It is no accident that Daladier is at the head of the Ministry of War in France. The French bourgeoisie has entrusted this post to him more than once and he has never betrayed them. Only people of the type of Maurice Paz or Marceau Pivert can believe that Daladier is capable of purging the army of reactionaries and Fascists, in other words, of dissolving the officers' corps. But no one takes such people seriously.

But here we are interrupted by the exclamation. "How can one dissolve the officers' corps? Doesn't this mean destroying the army and leaving the country disarmed in the face of Fascism? Hitler and Mussolini are only waiting for that!" All these arguments are old and familiar. That's how the Cadets, the S-Rs and the Russian Mensheviks reasoned in 1917, and that's how the leaders of the Spanish People's Front reasoned. The Spanish workers half-believed these ratiocinations until they were convinced by experience that the nearest Fascist enemy was to be found in the Spanish Fascist army. Not for nothing did our old friend Karl Liebknecht teach: "The main enemy is in our own country!"

Purging Army of Fascists An Illusion

L'Humanité tearfully begs that the army be purged of Fascists. But what is this plea worth? When you vote credits for the maintenance of the officers' corps, when you enter into an alliance with Daladier and through him with finance capital, confide the army to Daladier—and at the same time demand that this entirely capitalist army serve the "people" and not capital—then

you have either become a complete idiot or else you are consciously deceiving the working masses.

"But we've got to have an army," repeat the socialist and communist leaders, "because we must defend our democracy and with it the Soviet Union against Hitler!" After the lesson of Spain it is not difficult to foresee the consequences of this policy for democracy as well as for the Soviet Union. Once they have found a favorable moment, the officers' corps, hand in hand with the dissolved Fascist leagues, will assume the offensive against the working masses, and, if victorious, will crush the miserable remnants of bourgeois democracy and extend their hands to Hitler for a common struggle against the U.S.S.R.

The articles appearing in **Populaire** and **L'Humanité** on the events in Spain fill one with rage and disgust. These people learn nothing. They do not want to learn. They consciously shut their eyes to the facts. The principal lesson for them is that it is necessary at all costs to maintain the "unity" of the People's Front, that is to say, unity with the bourgeoisie and friendship with Daladier.

Daladier and the Generals

Unquestionably Daladier is a great "democrat." But can one doubt for a moment that side by side with the official work in Blum's ministry, he is working unofficially in the general staff of the officers' corps? There one finds serious people who look facts in the face, who do not get drunk on hollow rhetoric the way Blum does. These people are prepared for every eventuality. No doubt Daladier and the military leaders are coming to an understanding with respect to the necessary measures to take in case the workers take the road toward revolution. To be sure the generals are of their own accord far ahead of Daladier. And among themselves the generals say: "Let's support Daladier until we are through with the workers and then we will put a stronger man in his place." At the same time the socialist and communist leaders repeat from day to day: "Our friend Daladier." The worker ought to reply to them: "Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are." People who entrust the army to that old agent of capital, Daladier, are unworthy of the workers' confidence.

Certainly, the Spanish proletariat like the French proletariat, does not want to remain disarmed before Mussolini and Hitler. But to defend themselves against these enemies it is first necessary to crush the enemy in one's own country. It is impossible to overthrow the bourgeoisie without crushing the officers' corps. It is impossible to crush the officers' corps without overthrowing the bourgeoisie. In every victorious counter-revolution, the officers have played the decisive role. Every victorious revolution, that had a profound social character destroyed the old officers' corps. This was the case in the Great French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, and this was the case in the October Revolution in 1917. To decide on such a measure one must stop crawling on one's knees before the Radical bourgeoisie. A genuine alliance of workers and peasants must be created against the bourgeoisie, including the Radicals. One must have confidence in the strength, initiative and courage of the proletariat and the proletariat will know how to bring the soldier over to its side. This will be a genuine and not a fake alliance of workers, peasants and soldiers. This very alliance is being created and tempered right now in the fire of civil war in Spain. The victory of the people means the end of the People's Front and the beginning of Soviet Spain. The victorious social revolution in Spain will inevitably spread out over the rest of Europe. For the Fascist hangmen of Italy and Germany it will be incomparably more terrible than all the diplomatic pacts and all the military alliances.

July 30, 1936

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN SPAIN

BY B. M. F.

I. THE DUAL POWER

THE counter-revolution broke out on July 18th. In the early morning hours between that day and the next, the substance of power passed into the hands of the armed proletariat. It passed to the proletariat because the republican government was unable and unwilling to wield it, except to make peace with the counter-revolution. But that "solution" was barred by the workers' militia.

Though for weeks the labor and republican press had been filled with warnings and proof that the reactionaries were about to attempt a coup, the actual outbreak produced a complete collapse of morale in the republican politicians. They could think only of making a compromise with the fascist generals. President Azaña had Quiroga's cabinet—formed principally of Azaña's Left Republicans—resign, and called in Barrios, chief of the Republican Union party which embraces the basic sections of the middle-class businessmen and shopkeepers. Azaña and Barrios formed a cabinet of Republican Union men and Right Wing Republicans outside of the Popular Front, a respectable government which would negotiate for peace with the fascist-monarchist armies.

But while the republican ministers huddled together in despair in the ancient and cavernous palace in Madrid, the proletariat was already mobilizing. In Madrid itself the Socialist militia was distributing arms from secret caches; was throwing up barricades on key streets and around the army barricades; was organizing its patrols for house to house seizures of reactionaries. In Barcelona the militia of the anarcho-syndicalist C.N.T.* and the P.O.U.M.** was in the center of the city, surrounding the troops in an iron ring, commandeering the great hotels for barracks, arming the eager workers not only from their own caches but with supplies from department stores and government quarters. Before the ministerial crisis was well over, the Asturian miners had outfitted a column of six thousand for a march on Madrid. Without so much as a by your leave to the ministers, the workers had begun a war to the death against the reaction. Whereupon the republican ministers "agreed" to arm the workers. The Azaña-Barrios scheme for a compromise (naturally, at the expense of the workers!) collapsed because the workers had punctured it. And for no other reason.

Independence of Proletariat

Thanks to the utter distrust of the republican ministry, a distrust which had grown progressively in the five months of its rule, the masses looked only to themselves for leadership. Every day since has served to strengthen this independence of the proletariat, and only that independence has enabled the workers' forces to fight back against the skilled military power of the general.

Thus, side by side with the form of power still held by the government, there has arisen the unofficial but far more substantial power of the proletariat.

The dual power exists most clearly in Barcelona, center of the chief industrial region of Spain. The Military Anti-Fascist Committee of fifteen (three from the C. N.T., two from the Anarchist Federation, two from the U.G.T.*** one each from the Socialist, Communist and P.O.U.M. organizations, one from the peasants' federation, and four from the left bourgeois parties) wields the real power. It is in charge of organizing and directing

the workers' militia; has authorized seizure of factories, hotels, restaurants, supplies, etc., required for the struggle; has ordered workers committees to control production in all enterprises; supervises all banking and financial transactions; has confiscated property of church and big bourgeoisie and converted it into childrens' homes, sanatoria, workers' clubs, union and party quarters; has decreed wage raises in certain categories, controls the workers who have taken over all public utilities. Pierre Van Paassen reports to Federal Press, quite simply, that "the Workers' Revolutionary Committee rules Catalonia." Maxwell S. Stewart cables **The Nation** an account of the dual power in Catalonia which is all the more significant because of his previous leaning toward the Communist party.

The P.O.U.M., the C.N.T. and the Anarchist Federation, which dominate the committee of fifteen, have in addition called upon the peasants and landworkers to seize the large estates and divide them under the direction of the peasants' organizations, and division has actually begun in the Catalonian provinces.

Independence from Popular Front Gives Strength

The course in Catalonia is identical with the program of "partial demands" raised by the Bolsheviks in the midst of the struggle against Kornilov in August, 1917: Workers' control of production, to arouse the highest pitch of initiative and enthusiasm of the proletariat. Independent mobilization of the armed masses for revolutionary war against the reaction. No renunciation even for a moment of basic criticism of the republican government, and vigilance against any attempt at betrayal by it. And the drawing into the struggle of the peasantry on the side of the workers by the only slogan which can vitalize the starving and backward peasantry: Land to those who till it!

The decision with which the Catalonian proletariat acted in every sphere enabled it not only to smash the counter-revolution locally, but within a few days the Military Committee was able to dispatch column after column of well-equipped militia westward to aid the forces from Madrid and eastward to Mallorca. Far from weakening its capacities for struggle, as the proponents of the Popular Front had been declaring, the freedom of the Catalonian proletariat from the Popular Front pact (the C.P. and S.P. are comparatively weak in these provinces) has enabled them more quickly than elsewhere to adopt revolutionary methods, and thereby to make Catalonia the most impregnable fortress of the Spanish revolution. Herein lies a profound lesson for the believers in the Popular Front!

The Catalan government made a "clever" attempt to recoup the power which had slipped from its fingers. President Companys announced the reorganization of the cabinet to make it more "representative"; three Socialists from the U.G.T. were inveigled into entering the cabinet. But this manouever fell through in five days; the Socialists withdrew from the cabinet under the insistence of the Military Committee.

* National Confederation of Labor (Anarchist).

** Workers' Party of Marxist Unity (Revolutionary Marxist).

*** General Workers Union (Socialist).

Workers' Power in Madrid

In the national capital the dual power exists too; not so clearly developed, not so consciously organized, nevertheless it grows in power daily. Shall the flower of the workingclass youth march to their death in the mountains, while the young bloods of the upper classes hide within the city waiting for the opportunity to murder the workers from behind? No! Premier Giral has threatened dire penalties against workers who search houses and arrest citizens. But let the Premier try to enforce his edict! The workers' militia patrols the streets, stops cars, searches houses, seizes thousands upon thousands of monarchists, fascists and right-wing republicans, executes the most dangerous and confines the rest. By that token, the police power, foundation of the state, has largely passed over into the hands of the workers.

Shall our brave men and women die in the mountains because the capitalists, who secretly hope the reaction will win, do not run the factories properly, do not transport food and supplies efficiently, demand their full payment for what we need? No! The government issues an edict prohibiting the "seizure of property not absolutely necessary to the defense of the regime." But everything is necessary to the defense of the workingclass! The Right-Wing Socialist daily, "El Socialista," editorializes: "We believe in the government's order prohibiting the seizure of property not absolutely necessary to the defense of the regime." But what authority does "El Socialista" now command, with its philistine prudence, so ludicrous in the midst of civil war? Nor do the Communist party's exhortations to the workers to respect private property carry more weight. These "leaders" can delay, they cannot prevent, the inexorable development of the workers' power. Workers' committees take over control of all the public utilities; they seize the oil, tobacco, shipping and other industries; the government declares them "state enterprises" but must leave them in the control of the workers' committees which are already in charge. The government itself is compelled to forbid buying or transfer of securities or real estate, seeking to prevent capital from getting into the hands of the rebels. But who can carry out this ban—in every bank and financial house, indeed in every enterprise where the owner may seek to buy fascist-owned securities cheaply, in the municipalities where real estate purchases are recorded, etc. etc.—who but the omnipresent workers? As in Barcelona, so in Madrid although more slowly, the power is passing over into the hands of the workers and their organizations.

Reports from the rest of the country are even more fragmentary than those from the two capitals. But, removed from the "tops" of the government and the conservative labor leaders, the workers and radical peasantry are establishing "revolutionary committees" and extirpating their enemies; so much is clear. A glimpse into the heart of the movement: Portbou, a little village near the Catalan-French border, presided over by a Communist mayor. "This is a battle between communism and fascism. Communism must win. There is no other result possible." In those few words the village mayor cuts through all the sophistries of the reformists. Socialism, communism, libertarian communism—the workers have various terms for it; but it's either **that** or fascism.

Role of Communist Party

Ostensibly in order to retain the support of the republicans, the Communist party is even promising not to make the proletarian revolution **after** the present struggle is won: "It is absolutely false that the present workers' movement has for its object the establishment of a

proletarian dictatorship after the revolution has terminated. It cannot be said we have a social motive for our participation in the war. We Communists are the first to repudiate this supposition. We are motivated exclusively by a desire to defend the democratic republic." (Hernandez, director of "Mundo Obrero," in N. Y. Times, August 10th). To see how alien to Leninism is such craven balderdash, one has only to contrast this with Lenin's injunctions, in the midst of the struggle against Kornilov, against any political support to the government.

The reformist policies of the Right Wing Socialists and Communists slow up the struggle. This is proved by the fact that there are so few desertions from the ranks of the army regiments in the hands of the fascist generals. Who are these rank and file soldiers? They are mainly sons of peasants, serving their two-year period in the army. They can be won over or at least induced to desert, by winning their families to the side of the workers. How? "Land to those who till it!" But outside Catalonia this slogan is hardly raised, so far as one can tell. That slogan should have been raised six months ago, immediately after the February 16th victory; the failure to do so is the explanation of the fact that the southern provinces, Andalusia and Seville (the latter a stronghold of the C.P.) can be in the hands of the fascists. "What did the Republic give you to eat?" This popular retort of the peasants has bitten deep; and the Marxist parties did not call them to take the land. The result is much passivity among the peasants. Within the territories held by them the workers must aid the peasants in seizing and distributing the large estates. By ten thousand channels that fact, transforming the peasants' world, will be carried into the provinces held by the fascists and anti-fascist peasants will spring out of the ground.

Confiscation of Land Essential

Naturally, the republicans will have none of this! For confiscation of the land, in a country where land has been bought and sold for hundreds of years and hence mortgaged and debt-ridden, means confiscation of bank capital, means to smash at the very foundations of Spanish capitalism. And the reformists who cling to the republicans in the Popular Front, and who echo their every fear for private property, will also fight against the slogan of confiscation of the land. Nevertheless, this slogan cannot long remain confined within the boundaries of Catalonia. As inexorably as workers' control of production, it is dictated by the necessities of the struggle against the armies; and like workers' control, will find its way to the lips of every worker. Spain is still primarily a peasant country, with two thirds of the land held in large estates. The agrarian question is the key to the Spanish revolution; but it is also the key to the successful struggle against the counter-revolution.

The Spanish workingclass failed, too, to raise the slogan of freedom for the Spanish colonies. At the hands of Moorish soldiery it is now paying the price for that failure. Even the Left Wing Socialists and the anarcho-syndicalists never understood the colonial question. The Communist party once did, and raised that question correctly in 1931-1933. But for the sake of the Popular Front it buried the colonial question, in Spain as in France. Even now a bold campaign of propaganda in Morocco could wreak havoc with the fascist plans.

The Spanish workingmen and women have no lack of courage. And what lack of political understanding they have is fast being dissipated. For they have put their feet on the road, the only road, the road of the independent struggle of the workingclass. On that road everything will become clear.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST PARTY

An Answer to Gus Tyler's Article
"For a Labor Party"

By JAMES BURNHAM

COMRADE Tyler, in the conclusion to his article, states that he has tried merely "to outline the **approach** of revolutionary Marxism" to the problem of the Labor party. This is as it should be: until the approach is clear and understood, there is small likelihood of answering correctly the practical and secondary questions. I shall, therefore, also confine my discussion to the approach; and there is the more reason for this in the fact that Comrade Tyler's approach is consistently and thoroughly wrong.

How do revolutionary Marxists solve such a problem as that of the Labor party—or, for that matter any other important problem? The solution is twofold: we must, first, start with and clarify the fundamental issues of political theory which are involved—theory itself being conceived of by Marxists as simply the generalized experience of the revolutionary movement. Following this, we must apply our theory to the concrete, specific circumstances which confront us.

Tyler employs another method. It is sufficiently clear from his article that he has started, not with basic theory and principle, but from certain immediate "experiences" in the unions; from a wish to find a magic shortcut to the revolutionary party; and especially from a fear that socialists in the unions will be "isolated" and left behind unless they jump on the Labor party band-wagon. This is evidenced by such sentences as the following: ". . . if we openly oppose a Labor party, our orientation cannot be to work with or within it once it is formed. Our hostile attitude in the period when it is being formed will close all doors to us." His "theory," as a result, is nothing more than the loose rationalization of his fears and wishes. How else can we understand the absurd analogy. "It (the Labor party) bears the same relationship to the revolutionary party on the **electoral** field as do the trade unions on the industrial field"; or the fantastic picture of his ideal Labor party, free from class collaboration and Peoples' Frontism, immune from "bribery with a few reforms," and imbued with "the basic philosophy. . . of the class struggle"? No such Labor party ever did, does, or could exist. Tyler is dreaming of the leopard changing its spots.

Tyler Ignores Existing Labor Parties

This first aspect of Tyler's method of approaching the problem is a mark of opportunism—which always takes what looks like the easier and winning way, and proceeds to justify it by rationalization into a respectable theory. But, in Tyler's case, this is combined with what would at first glance seem to be its opposite: a complete removal from concrete reality. Not once, not a single time, in the article does Tyler make any reference whatever to concrete fact. He does not mention real Labor parties which have existed or do exist—for him the British Labour Party is evidently in another world. He does not refer to the present historical stage of capitalism—the stage of its decline as a whole, of wars and mass unemployment and fascism and revolutions: this can hardly be thought irrelevant to political theory and strategy. He does not review the experience in this country with Labor parties and near or would-be Labor parties, nor the present position of the Socialist party itself. He sees no reason to estimate the concrete perspectives for American capitalism in the coming period,

the relationship of forces in this country, and its place in the world system of decadent capitalism. What amazing, and revealing omissions! And omissions of this kind constitute a divorce from reality, which lead to the wish-world of either Utopianism, on the one hand, or sectarianism on the other. However right his theory in the abstract—and it is far from right—it would remain uselessly in his head, with actuality so vigorously left out of reckoning.

Basic Considerations

Let us begin, then, at the beginning:

From the point of view of fundamental theory, there are two basic considerations which must guide us in approaching the problem of the Labor party: first, the nature of the state; and, second, the role and function of the revolutionary party. Marxism teaches that the state, its apparatus as a whole, is the executive committee of the dominant class in society, the task of which is to maintain existing social relations, and thereby to ensure the rule of the class whose state it is. This applies to the bourgeois state, whose task is to maintain capitalism and the rule of the bourgeoisie; and equally to the workers' state, whose task is to enforce the domination of the proletariat, eliminate the bourgeoisie as a class, and guide the transition to a socialist, classless society. The political aim of the revolutionary movement, consequently, is not to "reform" capitalism, not to "take over" the capitalist state—whether by parliamentary means or by force—but to smash the bourgeois state and to build in its place a workers' state. In this process, the role of the revolutionary party itself is to act as the conscious, independent, autonomous leader and vanguard of the working class in accomplishing the conquest of power, the overthrow of the bourgeois state, the establishment of the new workers' state, and the transition to socialism.

Does Tyler dispute this? I do not think so. If he does, there is little use discussing with him the problem of a Labor party; we should first have to come to clear and full agreement on these two points—the nature of the state and the role of the revolutionary party—**before** we could even argue profitably over the Labor party. The answer one gives to the problem of the Labor party **depends on** and **follows from** the answer to these two fundamental issues.

These two issues are, in fact, the decisive dividing line between revolutionary Marxism and reformism. **All** reformist parties—no matter how grandiose their verbal allegiance to "socialism" and socialist ideals—conceive of their political aims as lying within the framework of the capitalist state: as winning reforms from capitalism, winning a majority in the capitalist government, or even as "transforming" the capitalist government into a "socialist government" (i.e., requesting the capitalist state to commit suicide). And, conversely, all political parties which conceive of their political aims as lying within the framework of the capitalist state are (when not directly bourgeois parties) reformist.

Labor Party Necessarily Reformist

Applying this test, we can readily enough conclude that a Labor party—any Labor party—is a **reformist party**. This, also, I imagine, Tyler will not dispute—though, significantly, it is not mentioned in his article. This—

reformism—is the basic, determining, decisive characteristic of a Labor party: its political **genus**, we might say. But, as Tyler remarks, “a Labor party is a particular **type** of party.” True enough, it is a reformist party which is based on the organized trade union movement, includes the bulk of the trade unions in its membership, and is dominated in direction by the trade-union leadership: this is its particular **species** in the general **genus** of reformist parties.

Now, the fundamental position of Marxists toward a Labor party is determined in the light of its basic, defining nature—by the fact that it is a reformist party. The specific tactics of Marxists toward the Labor party, however, take into account also its special characteristics—namely, that it comprises the bulk of the trade unions. Tyler wants a “bona-fide” Labor party, by which he seems to mean one with a “good” “class struggle” **program** and fighting trade-union candidates. From this follows, in practise, the sectarianism to which his position leads: he will not be “satisfied” with existing Labor parties or those which will come into existence, since they all have and will have “bad,” class collaborationist programs, and bureaucratic rascals as candidates. Marxists, on the contrary, base their interest in Labor parties on the presence of organized labor within them, and are not particularly worried over the exact shade of reformism which their programs represent. From this follows the far greater flexibility of the Marxist tactics with respect to any actual Labor party, which permit critical support, affiliation, or head-on opposition, depending on the concrete circumstances and the given relationship of forces.

Reformist Parties Protect Capitalism

A Labor party is, then, a reformist party. What does this mean in practise? The lessons of theory and history teach us. It means that it, like all reformist parties—Labor or not—acts in all crucial situations as an agent of the bourgeoisie within the working class. This is indeed what reformism, in its social roots, is: an agency of the bourgeoisie within the working class. In war-time, reformist parties support imperialism. Does Tyler deny this to be the case? And is it not equally true of the British Labour Party and the German Social-Democracy? In revolutionary situations, reformist parties do not merely fail to aid but actively **suppress** the revolution. Did not the German Social-Democracy smash the German revolution, and hand back Germany to the bourgeoisie (and thus to Hitler) through the Weimar Constitution? Did not the British Labour Party break the British General Strike? Has it not today declared its devotion to the defense of the British Empire? Or perhaps Tyler does not think the British Labour Party a “bona-fide” Labor party?

A reformist party is powerless to defeat either war or fascism. Does Tyler deny this? I do not think so. The reason is sufficiently obvious: a reformist party will not overthrow capitalism, since it functions within the framework of capitalism; and consequently it cannot stop war or fascism, both of which follow necessarily from the continuance of capitalism.

And since these things are so, we must say them—in the trade unions as elsewhere. Not for any mere devotion to truth in the abstract, but because if we do not, the workers will in time find out for themselves—from that bitter and inescapable teacher, experience—and will not believe us so readily on the next point.

Labor Party in Period of Capitalist Decline

The sole positive argument that has been, with some show of truth, advanced in favor of a Labor party is that such a party can win certain “immediate demands” for the workers. On this question, two considerations will

suffice: In the past, during the advance of capitalism, this was undoubtedly so, and is possibly so to a slight extent today. But Tyler correctly characterizes such reforms as “bribes”; they are granted by the bourgeoisie to the Labor party in return for the Labor party’s service in concentrating the eyes of the masses on “reforms” and turning them aside from revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. They are a small price to pay for such a service. But, second, capitalist society has now reached on an international scale the stage of its **decline**. Capitalism can endure only by a continual and increasing relative sabotage of the productive forces, only by mass unemployment, hunger, lowering of real wages, war, and fascist tyranny. Now, in the decline of capitalism, reforms of any dimensions, immediate demands, can be won if at all only as the “by-products of revolutionary struggle,” (to use Lenin’s phrase), only by the sharpest collision against the forces of the class enemy. The incontrovertible facts of capitalist decay remove the last remaining prop in the theoretic underpinnings of reformism.

To sum up: A Labor party, then, like any other reformist party, is not merely non-revolutionary, but **anti-revolutionary**. It is a device for preserving capitalism, not a means for its overthrow. It is a mighty obstacle in the path of the revolutionary movement, not a boost forward. Under such circumstances, to ask whether it is a “rival” to the revolutionary party, whether revolutionists should “oppose” it, is childish. Of course it is a rival; of course revolutionists must oppose it. But it is, naturally, a different kind of rival from say bourgeois parties proper, and requires different tactics of opposition.

Purpose of Labor Party

These considerations are unusually obvious in this country. For what possible reasons will a Labor party be started here? The history to date of Labor’s Non-Partisan League and the American Labor party tells us the answer. It will be—or, rather, it has been—started precisely to stave off the growth of revolutionary class consciousness, to keep the allegiance of the masses for capitalism when the two old party machines are wearing out their facility in doing so. Is this not true of the American Labor Party, launched by the trade union bureaucrats in collaboration with Waldman, and blessed by Browder, to make up for the loss of prestige of the Democratic Party before the masses? And who else but these same persons, combined no doubt with Olson and Populists of the LaFollette variety, can launch a Labor party in this country, whether or not the American Labor Party itself (as it very probably will) evolves into a full-fledged Labor party? And its purpose, both in the minds of its leaders and in its objective social effects, cannot be anything else than to try to stave off the development of revolutionary class consciousness. If a “bona-fide” Labor party must include and be led by the trade unions, together with certain farm and other middle-class organizations, then clearly it must include and be led by the reformist bureaucrats whom these unions and organizations follow. Or will the Labor party be an electoral “united front from below”?

There can be no question of the basic attitude of Marxists toward a Labor party. Doubts can flow only from a misunderstanding or abandonment of fundamental principles; or from a resolute avoidance of historical reality.

Socialists Not to Work for Labor Party

From the basic attitude, the answers to more specific questions follow. For example, it is argued, should socialists initiate or aid in initiating a Labor party where one does not exist? In the first place, it should be

noticed that this is a hopelessly abstract question when applied to the United States. The Socialist Party is not within many hundreds of percent of being a powerful enough force—especially in the unions—to even pretend to “initiate” a Labor party. The C. I. O. perhaps can; we obviously cannot, nor even play a significant part in its initiation. But—if arguments in the abstract are useful—suppose the Socialist Party **were** a powerful mass force capable of initiating a “bona-fide” Labor party. What a fantastic proposal that would be! To initiate or aid in initiating an organization which would drill the masses in reformism, when we would be in a position to win them on a mass scale directly to revolutionary socialism; to give them deliberately a disease in order to prove what good doctors we were in curing it. The dilemma is complete: in neither alternative is it the business of socialists to initiate or take the lead in advocating a Labor party. While there is as yet no fully developed Labor party, it is the task of socialists to build and strengthen the Socialist Party if possible to such a point that it can head off and prevent the growth of a Labor party—that is, of one more obstacle in the revolutionary path.

Our Attitude to Existing Labor Parties

But where there is a Labor party already in existence, or one clearly in the process of formation on a genuine mass scale? In such cases, tactics cannot be decided beforehand in the abstract. They must be adjusted to the concrete circumstances. They will depend on many factors: for example, on the cohesiveness and size of the revolutionary Socialist party. If the Socialist party is not sufficiently cohesive, it will be swallowed up in the Labor party, as the Socialist Party in Minnesota was formerly swallowed up in the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party. This year, however, with a still small but a growing, strong, militant and revolutionary membership, the Socialist Party in Minnesota can correctly give “critical support” to the Farmer-Labor Party candidates, with no risk of losses and many prospects of gain from such a tactic. However, if the revolutionary party is sufficiently cohesive and also sufficiently large, it would not need to give any kind of support to the Labor party, but could combat it openly and directly in the organizational as well as the political plane.

But, to take another example: in England, revolutionists clearly should not merely support but be in the British Labour Party—not because the British Labour Party is any “better” in ideology or function than other reformist labor parties, but because the overwhelming majority of the British working class is within it. Naturally, however, revolutionists in the B. L. P. will not be there to work for the program of Citrine; but to work **against** that program, and to show the workers by participating directly in their own living experience that Citrine’s program is fatally wrong, that they must accept and fight for a revolutionary program, and must be part of a revolutionary organization embodying that program.

Or again: In the elections this year in this country, circumstances dictate imperiously a direct open revolutionary campaign through the organization and for the candidates of the Socialist Party, in spite of the fact that the American Labor Party has entered the field. But the reason for this is not at all that the American Labor Party is not a “bona-fide” Labor party—which in New York at any rate it certainly is. It is simply that, under the given conditions—the undeveloped stage of the Labor party, the lack of preparation of the Socialist Party itself for complex and dangerous maneuvers, the opportunity to expose the methods of reformism by showing how (in this case openly) it works for the preservation of capitalism, etc.—under these conditions the S. P. stands to

gain more, and risks losing less (not, of course, in votes, but in the extension of its ideas and the winning of workers to socialism) by a direct independent campaign. The case may well be different in 1940 or 1938; but the tactics for those years will be worked out when the time comes. The basic strategy—strengthening and building a revolutionary Socialist party—remains the same.

Basis for Participation in Labor Party

The reason why, in the case of a Labor party, tactics such as “critical support” or even affiliation are not excluded and sometimes necessary, is not that a Labor party is “a great step forward” or a “good” kind of party, or an auxiliary rather than a rival to the revolutionary party. It is simply because a genuine Labor party comprises the bulk of the organized workers, and marks a stage through which the working class in many countries tends—though not at all inevitably—to go. Under certain circumstances, it is necessary for revolutionists to go through this experience along with the workers, in order to aid them in having done with it, to speed the process of breaking down (not by any means to reinforce) the reformist ideology to which the Labor party gives expression, to keep away from a sterile isolation, to gain the confidence of the masses in action. But this means that the revolutionists participate in a Labor party not to “support” it and its ideas—which are both anti-revolutionary—but to build through it, when it is part of the historical reality which is given, the revolutionary party.

Comrade Tyler is afraid that such an approach (which he wholly fails to understand in the first place) must bring isolation, must “make us hated by our allies . . . and impotent before our enemies.” He does not see how we can have anything to do with a Labor party unless we are “for it”; and since he wants—justifiably—to have something to do with it, he goes to the length of corrupting Marxist principles, inventing fantastic theories, and obscuring the nature and role of the revolutionary party and its relation to reformist parties, in order to satisfy his conscience.

Marxist Approach to Labor Party

But in this approach which I have outlined there is nothing unique or unusual. It is the constant approach of Marxists to many problems, distinguishing Marxists on the one hand from sectarians, on the other from opportunists. Marxists work, for example, in craft unions. They do so loyally, not to destroy but to build working-class strength. Within these unions, however, they do not hide their trade-union policy: they work to give conscious and progressive direction to the unions, which in the end means to change them entirely. Or take the case of an ill-timed strike. Marxists explain openly why the strike is incorrect under the circumstances. They do not flatter the prejudices and feelings of the workers. But, once the strike starts, they stand with the workers as a whole, and are in the forefront of the strike struggle. It fails, let us say, in spite of all efforts for its success. Are the Marxists then isolated and discredited? Quite the contrary: their leadership and prestige are doubly reinforced, because they have shown the workers **in action** both that their estimate of the situation is correct and also that they stand with the working class whether or not that estimate is heeded. Or again: in July, 1917, the Bolsheviks warned the workers of Petrograd that a demonstration would lead to a serious defeat. They repeated their warning even after the demonstration had begun. But the workers persisted. In the face of this, the Bolsheviks neither changed their opinion nor retired like Achilles to their tents. They took their places in the leadership of the demonstration. The demonstration **was** defeated. But because of the attitude of the Bolsheviks that very defeat marked the turning point in

the revolution: from then on the tide swung ever more strongly to the side of the Bolsheviks and the victory of October.

In an analogous way, in the case of a Labor party, we say to the workers: "A Labor party is a reformist party. It will not answer your class needs. It will not stop war or unemployment or fascism. It will lead you into false paths. Your problems can be solved only by overthrowing capitalism and setting up your own state. You can do this only through a revolutionary party." But we may also have to add: "You do not agree. You still insist that what you need is a Labor party. Very well. We will go through this experiment with you, and you will learn from your own harsh experience that our view is correct." What else can revolutionists say? How else can they gain or deserve, in the end and in the decisive hours, the confidence of the workers? If revolutionists **begin** by hiding the role of the Labor party, by fostering illusions with respect to it, they will themselves **share** in the inevitable betrayal which every reformist party carries out in every crisis; and the masses will understand this and draw the conclusions. Thus, far from overcoming isolation, isolation at the crucial time will only be guaranteed.

Socialist Program for Labor Party

Tyler and others who agree with him make much of the danger of isolation. They complain that if we do not "take the lead in the formation of a Labor party"—which is impossible to begin with—we won't have the kind of Labor party that "we want." But none of them has ever clarified to himself or to any of the rest of us what this can possibly mean—what kind of Labor party we can possibly "want"; and of course they never ask whether we could get it even if we knew what we wanted. Tyler is not satisfied with a Labor party merely because it comprises and is chiefly influenced by the bulk of organized labor (which is the only actual test of a "genuine" Labor party). He must, then, refer to its **program**. But there is only **one** program toward which revolutionary socialists have any allegiance whatever: the program of revolutionary socialism. A program three-quarter revolutionary is not at all necessarily better than one which is one-half revolutionary: the former may well be more difficult to expose, may look much more like the real thing and therefore constitute a greater obstacle to revolutionary development. If by chance socialists were participating in a programmatic convention of a Labor party, their only duty would be to put forward the full program of revolutionary socialism; and if this were rejected, their task so far as program went

would be over.

But, Tyler argues, there is no reason to be "frightfully worried" because "we shall have to take responsibility for an organization with whose policies we do not agree"—and he points to the case of support of the A. F. of L. as precedent. The precedent is badly chosen. We do not take "responsibility" for the A. F. of L.; and under no circumstances could we take responsibility for policies with which we disagree. We work in the A. F. of L. to give it, so far as possible, class-struggle direction, and to make revolutionists from its members. We support its actions and its specific demands when these correspond with the needs of the working class; but we fight **against** all of its policies which are counter to these needs and in opposition to the policies of revolutionary socialism. Similarly, if we are in the future put in the position of supporting electorally a Labor party and its candidates, we shall not in the least "take responsibility" for its policies, but rather utilize the campaign to undermine its policies, to spread the ideas of revolutionary socialism, and to win individual Labor party members as revolutionists—which tasks are, in any case, the reasons why revolutionists participate in election campaigns. Tyler would like us to believe that a Labor party can be the "electioneering machine" of the revolutionary party. What extraordinary nonsense! It is the electioneering machine of a reformist party and a reformist program, i.e., an anti-revolutionary electioneering machine. When revolutionists utilize it they do so not because it is the machine of a revolutionary party, but because it gives them under certain circumstances the best working-class forum for pro-revolutionary and anti-reformist agitation.

Revolutionists Cannot Be Isolated

The whole argument from isolation—the motivating force of almost all left-wing pro-Labor party sentiment—is a perversion. Revolutionists can avoid isolation only through their real strength, the depth of the influence of their ideas, their actual penetration of the mass organizations. There is no magic formula for gaining this strength and influence and penetration. They can result only from the uncompromising clarity of ideas and principles, and the militant direct participation in the class struggle. To the extent that they have been gained, no device of any bureaucrat can bring about isolation; to the extent that they are lacking, all shortcuts are mere illusion. It is toward this end, and this end alone—the deepening of the influence of the idea of revolutionary socialism and the building of its party—that the energies of every Marxist must be intransigently directed.

The United Youth League

By HAROLD DRAPER

THE WORLD Congress of the Comintern is followed by a little caricature of itself—the Congress of the Young Communist International—where the young people, after observing the latest line on managing the affairs of the international proletariat and remedying its ills, go off to play "house" and "doctor" on their own account. So the 7th Congress of the C. I. was followed by the 6th Congress of the Y.C.I. So also both were confronted with models in whose image they were to re-create themselves.

At the Congress of the adults the Comintern leadership held up before the delegates the model of the French C. P., with its People's Front and pro-war policy. At the Congress of the youth, the model was none other than "our own" American Y.C.L., with its young people's

front, the American Youth Congress.

And after the Congress, our Y.C.L., feeling the leadership of the international movement resting importantly on its shoulders, pushed ahead along the same path. As soon as National Secretary Gil Green got off the boat, he announced the impending important changes which showed how much his travels had broadened his mind. The Y.C.L. was to be transformed into, **be replaced by**, "a non-Party mass organization which while clearly supporting a socialist goal will not take a position on how socialism is to be concretely accomplished, thus opening the way for organic unity with the YPSL in all countries"

Now, for about the last two years, the Y.C.L. leaders, having suddenly discovered the existence of sectarianism

in their midst, had been discussing what was wrong with the Y.C.L. The answer which they have now come to is simplicity itself and shows the thoroughness with which they do things:—the trouble with the Y.C.L. is . . . the Y.C.L.; and so it is necessary to liquidate it in favor of a "united youth league" which will **not** be Communist **not** connected with the Party, **not** based on the fundamental revolutionary principles, and **not** emphasizing political questions as much as heretofore (de-politicalized). And this reincarnation-thru-suicide is decided upon at the Moscow séance and communicated to the believers, by Gil Green as medium, with the total lack of democracy characteristic of all groups that depend upon revelation rather than revolution.

The United Youth League raises three problems for us on the theoretical field: (1) Criticism of the policy; (2) Understanding of the reasons in back of the YCL's policy; (3) Our attitude to the U.Y.L. when it is formed. Here we shall attempt to make some contributions to the second of these.

Bases of the YCL Policy

The U.Y.L. policy flows from the whole new line of the Communists thru at least two channels. The first has already been greatly emphasized (perhaps even over-emphasized) in YPSL literature: the question of the independence of the youth as an organizational entity while politically subordinate to the Party.

The experience of the last War showed that the Young Socialist organizations in many cases played an important part in the fight against the social-patriotic policies of the adult parties, that the youth tended to be a revolutionizing leftward-pushing factor. The reasons for this, which are easily seen (perhaps the most important being a relative lack of any institutional basis for bureaucratic control in the youth) are such as to make this a general tendency. In the World War period, the answer of the Social-Democratic parties to this trend was to attack the organizational independence of the youth, so that dissent could find no official channels thru which to express itself. When the Y.C.L. was founded, it based many of its concepts on this experience.

Similarly, at the 1928 Congress, when the C.I. was likewise changing its line, the **Right wing** of the Congress proposed a transformation of the youth leagues practically identical with the present plan. It was decisively rejected by the leaders for the same reason it was put forth: as the Y.C.L. spokesman ingenuously stated, there was **no necessity** for such a step, since the Y.C.L.'s had shown that they supported the ultra-left policies of the "third period" and also the attack against Trotskyism.

Whether this was the prime moving force behind the U.Y.L. policy or not, two things are certain:—(1) This policy is an insurance against effective dissent in Young Communist ranks—provided that the dissent now directed against the U.Y.L. policy itself is not successful; (2) the Communist leaders are perfectly well aware of this significance of their policy, and the historical role it has played up to now.

Note further: when we speak of this policy as a means of hamstringing dissent among the youth, it is not merely a question of the threat involved to the official leadership of the C.P. It goes beyond that. It cannot be emphasized too clearly that in a very real way, the main significance of Communist activity is that it is taking place geared to a developing war situation; that the main **actual** business of the Communists is at the present time **preparation for war**. The negative side of this preparation is the elimination of any potential centers of opposition, which the youth organization has shown itself to be in the past. It will be helpful when the following situation obtains:—the Youth Bureau of the C.P. (in charge of Communist work in the U.Y.L.) will be Com-

munist but not independent; the U.Y.L. will be independent but not Communist.

The second channel is in our opinion the primary one. Revolutionary Marxists have long understood the close connection between theoretical program and organizational policies. The C.I.'s new line has already brought about corresponding changes in its organizational set-up: the sharp let-up on standards for membership by the C.P.; the abandonment by the Y.C.L. of its division into district and the adoption of State organizations; etc.

Dissolving the Vanguard

But the chief way in which the new line has affected Communist organization is in the tendency toward **the dissolution of the vanguard into the mass**. Lenin's **What is to be done?** is an examination of precisely this tendency in the Mensheviks—a trend he called "khvostism" or "tailism," since it means that the Socialists act not as the vanguard of the workers but rather drag at their tail.

Time after time, one meets this theory advanced by the Y.C.L., in one form or another, to justify the U.Y.L.: "Up to now we talked about the dictatorship of the proletariat and the youth thought we were crazy. We must not isolate ourselves from the masses in this way. We must always be with the masses; we cannot run ahead of them."

Stated more plainly, the conception is:—The masses of youth are not yet ready to accept our program; therefore let us shelve it and adopt a program satisfactory to the more backward. The masses are not yet ready for a strong disciplined organization; therefore let us adopt an organizational form which reflects their confusion. Instead of hammering out a revolutionary line in theory and practice and working among the backward masses to win them to **this program**, let us disguise ourselves as backward workers, so that the masses will not feel uneasy in our presence. Instead of being a vanguard to pull the masses up to our political level, we must go no further than the masses are at any time.—But, in fact, when the "backward masses" are set in rapid motion, such people find themselves bringing up the rear. It was Plekhanov who referred to them as "looking with awe upon the posteriors of the working class." This is "tailism."

This tearing down of the vanguard to the level of the mass is the prime characteristic of CP organizational practice at the present time. On the Party field, it has so far taken the form of lowered standards of activity and discipline, and of the C. P. concept of the Labor Party; it is also probably behind the C.P.'s anxiety for organic unity. On the youth field, it naturally takes the form of the dissolution of the vanguard organization (the disciplined Y.C.L.) into the mass (the U.Y.L. being a step in this direction with the American Youth Congress perhaps in the distance).

What is behind this neo-Communist "tailism"? It would be well-nigh incomprehensible if the C.P. believed that by this means they could really hasten the revolutionization of the American workers. But the C.P. does not believe so, nor is this their guiding purpose. Their primary aim is to get next to the masses **at all costs**, including the sacrifice of revolutionary principle and practice, in order to influence as large a mass as possible in a general pro-Soviet direction, in particular in the direction of the Soviet foreign policy and the military policies that follow. Their aim is such broad sympathy for these limited ends; they are ready to swap revolutionary consciousness for it. In practice, this leads to the same policies which reformists deduce from their national reformism.

In opposition to this, it is the job of the YPSL to develop the vanguard type of organization. Fortunately this is a path along which the YPSL has already started.

LET US KNOW THE FACTS

STATEMENT BY LEON TROTSKY IN REPLY TO THE CHARGES MADE AGAINST HIM
BY THE TASS BUREAU

At the moment when I am preparing this statement, I have not had available the original text of the sensational TASS report. I am familiar with it only through a secondary source. But the main features of it, which have been transmitted to me, are sufficient to brand this report immediately as **one of the greatest falsifications in the history of politics.**

The TASS agency speaks of a conspiracy of the so-called Trotsky-Zinoviev group. The ruling bureaucracy calls every criticism directed against it a conspiracy. I assume that criticism is spreading to wider and wider circles in the Soviet Union. **This phenomenon I can only greet with joy.** It is quite possible that many, and quite diverse, elements who represent this critical feeling have referred to my name—i.e., to my ideas and my writings. But the TASS report also declares that the charges concern a terroristic plot against the leaders of the regime, and that this conspiracy is directed by me from Norway.

I herewith declare that this contention does not contain an iota of truth. To everyone who is acquainted with recent political history, it is indubitable that the report circulated by TASS stands in sharpest contradiction to my ideas and to the whole of my activities, which at the present time are devoted exclusively to writing.

Ever since my entry into the revolutionary movement in 1897, I have been, as have all Russian Marxists, an uncompromising opponent of individual terror as a method of struggle, a method which in the final analysis can only serve the interests of absolutism and Bonapartism.

I emphatically assert that since I have been in Norway I have had no connections with the Soviet Union—nor have I received a single letter from the Soviet Union, neither have I written a single letter to anybody there either directly or through other persons.

My sole activity in connection with the Soviet Union has been restricted to the writing of articles which were published in the world press and to a book which will be published in the near future in several countries. My wife and I have not been able even once to exchange a single line with our son, who has been employed in the Soviet Union in a scientific capacity and who has had no political connections whatsoever.

Because I am a man without a country and am now utilizing the right of asylum in Norway, I believe that the accuracy of the contention that has been advanced that I have directed a terroristic conspiracy from Norway can be best determined by the appointment of a competent government commission which would investigate the charges contained in the documents. On my part, I am prepared to furnish such a commission a full accounting of my activities in Norway—day by day, and hour by hour. It is also my opinion that this measure could be made more complete by the nomination of an impartial international commission by the labor organizations of the entire world, or better still of its international leaders, to investigate the charges made in the Soviet Union. This commission could make a public report of their investigation. I maintain that their report would expose the charges in all their falsity. I am also prepared to accept any other method of investigation that would give public opinion a better explanation of the principal motives which have prompted the charges against the others and myself. In this matter I have nothing to fear and nothing to hide. As for myself, I am only concerned with establishing the truth.

— Signed, LEON TROTSKY.

Kristiansand, August 15, 1936.

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

“THE MOST colossal fabrication in the history of world politics.” So Trotsky has characterized the latest attempt of the Stalin régime to implicate him as well as Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other Old Bolsheviks in a terrorist plot against the Soviet leaders.

The trumped-up character of the charges is obvious to the naked eye. The entire careers of these associates of Lenin prove that they are irreconcilably opposed, in theory and in practice, to individual terrorism as a method of political struggle.

The trial with its nonchalant “confessions” by the defendants and, for that matter, the nature of these obviously extorted avowals do not alter the real situation for a moment. We are being asked to believe that virtually every prominent leader of the Russian Revolution who is still alive, was involved in one way or another in the fairy-tale “assassination plot”—including Radek, Bukharin, Tomsy and Rykov, all of whom were up to yesterday the most vociferous advocates of the régime.

Such “confessions” have absolutely no value for an intelligent person. They remind one of similar “confessions” in the past: especially the one made during the Menshevik trial a few years ago concerning the partici-

pation of Abramovitch in a clandestine conference in the Soviet Union at a time when he was in quite another country; and the other during the trial of the technical specialists who stated that they had conspired with individuals who, it was later proved, had long ago been dead.

The very elaborateness and fantastic nature of the “confessions,” the alternating eagerness and indifference with which the defendants vied with one another for the distinction of being labelled the most heinous criminal, even arouse the feeling that some, at least, of the accused had resolved to answer the sinister frame-up with a mocking satire of the whole affair such as was common in the “legal literature” issued by revolutionists under the reign of the Tsar.

It is a shameful spectacle to see the first workers’ government resorting to a political frameup reminiscent of the method used by the Nazis in the case of the Reichstag fire.

What lies back of this action? The answer is to be found first of all in the growing dissatisfaction with the new turn in the Comintern policies following the Seventh Congress. In line with the foreign policy of the Soviet Government, the Communist International is striving desperately to preserve the world’s **status quo** at the same

time that events in Spain and France are rising to revolutionary crises and the new imperialist war looms on the immediate horizon. Within the Soviet Union the government is bringing about an ever greater stratification among the workers, and basing its rule more and more clearly on the privileged and highly paid sections. Incipient opposition to these policies, growing among the advanced workers everywhere, including the sections of the Comintern and the Soviet Union itself, endanger the possibility of carrying them through; and Stalin is meeting the danger—ironic comment on the new “democratic” Constitution!—by persecution, police terror, and frame-up.

At the very time that the communist press accuses Trotsky of “being in league with the Fascists,” Norwegian Fascists raid Trotsky’s home, and demand his expulsion from Norway on account of his revolutionary activities.

The terrific haste with which the Stalinist bureaucracy conducted the “trial” and carried out the executions is in itself evidence that the proof, even as against those who “confessed,” was worthless. No time was allowed to organize an international commission of labor representatives to be sent to the Soviet Union to be present at the trial and act as a jury for world labor. Such a

precedent was set at the trial of the Social Revolutionaries in 1922, when under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, the Soviet Government was willing to produce the evidence before the whole world.

Trotsky has indicated his willingness to appear before any impartial commission and testify to the utter falseness of the charges levelled against him. We can be perfectly sure that the Stalinist clique will never consent to come before an impartial tribunal. The frame-up would be too quickly exposed.

All correspondents agree that the trial had only one purpose: to discredit Trotsky and the revolutionary ideas for which he stands. Not only to discredit Trotsky but actually to incite fanatical Stalinists to make an attempt on his life.

A few Old Bolsheviks made miserable and demoralized by terror and suffering were murdered. The ideas which made possible the November Revolution cannot be executed by Stalin’s firing squad. And in those ideas, the most authoritative spokesman of which is Leon Trotsky, lies the hope of the international proletariat.

(The next issue of the Socialist Appeal will carry a more detailed analysis of the significance and the outcome of the trial of Moscow.—Editors.)

A Campaign for Socialism

BY ALBERT GOLDMAN

IT IS AN open secret that influential members of our party, members who consider themselves and who are considered to be left wingers (of a sort) were skeptical about the advisability of the party’s running Norman Thomas as its presidential candidate in the 1936 campaign. Rumor had it that some of these members were convinced that the Socialist party should run no presidential candidate altogether.

Two main reasons were advanced to justify such a position. One was that organized labor in the persons of its progressive leaders such as Lewis and Hillman were anxious to re-elect Roosevelt and any vigorous campaign on our part which would tend to draw votes away from Roosevelt would be frowned upon by these “progressive” labor leaders. And since it is the duty of the party to keep close to organized labor, especially its progressive wing, it would be a mistake to antagonize those of the labor leaders who were moving in the direction of a labor party.

Another reason given was that the chances for Thomas to poll a large vote as presidential candidate, as large even as during the last campaign, were very small. As a matter of fact, so ran the argument, Thomas would obtain a very small vote and this would injure the prestige of both Thomas and the party. Interesting is it to mention that some of the protagonists of such a viewpoint are very close to Lewis and his Committee for Industrial Organization. Nor is it out of the way to take notice of the fact that quite a number of prominent Socialists who are active with the C.I.O. are not in the least active in the Socialist campaign.

That the proponents of abstention from the campaign, or of conducting a nominal campaign, did not dare to come out into the open with their ideas speaks volumes for the active membership of the party. It is a sure indication that the vast majority of the membership would have decisively voted down any such proposal. The healthy attitude of the majority of delegates to the Cleveland

convention and of the vast majority of the active members of the party is easily recognized in the decision to conduct a vigorous campaign with Norman Thomas as the party candidate.

Useless to Compete with Reformism

Clear as it is that the active membership of the party was determined to conduct an independent Socialist campaign, it is not so clear that there is a correct understanding as to the exact nature of a Socialist campaign and as to the methods of carrying on such a campaign. All circumstances point to the fact that once having decided on an independent campaign it would be folly and utterly useless to conduct any kind of a campaign other than a revolutionary Socialist one. And that means a campaign the fundamental purpose of which is to teach the necessity of the destruction of the capitalist system and the substitution therefor of a socialist society. Failing that there is no conceivable justification for the participation of our party in this campaign.

To go out amongst the masses and try to get them to vote for our candidates merely because we promise them some immediate reforms is to enter into competition with Roosevelt, with the Farmer-Laborites, with the Union party and with the Communist party on their own ground and there is no earthly reason why the workers should prefer our brand of reforms to those of the others. We can offer the masses no more and no better reforms than can any other party and the workers would be entirely correct if, on the basis of an appeal for reforms, they would turn their backs to us and vote for the more “practical” parties. To distinguish ourselves fundamentally from all reformist groups by carrying on a campaign for revolutionary Socialism is not only theoretically correct but in this case also coincides with the demands of “common sense.”

This is not to claim that if we do conduct a campaign on revolutionary socialist lines our vote will be a huge one. It must be clearly recognized that if we don’t conduct such a campaign there is no use having one at all.

Purpose of Immediate Demands

Nor does conducting a revolutionary socialist campaign signify a campaign where all immediate demands are disregarded and emphasis placed only on the ultimate goal of the destruction of the capitalist system, in the manner of the Socialist Labor party or of the Proletarian party. Both reformists and sectarians see a contradiction in advocating immediate demands and at the same time stressing the necessity for socialism. The reformists solve that "contradiction" by concentrating exclusively on the immediate demands as a bait for getting votes; the impossibilists refuse to have anything to do with immediate demands. The task of revolutionary Socialists is to utilize immediate demands such as social security, the reduction of the number of working hours, etc. for the purpose of attempting to mobilize the workers for an extra-parliamentary struggle during the election campaign and to teach the workers that the capitalist system is responsible for their miserable conditions and that the destruction of that system is essential for the solution of all their problems.

There is no contradiction in presenting a revolutionary socialist platform which points out the necessity for a struggle to achieve socialism and at the same time including in the platform those immediate demands which are most likely to rally the masses in a struggle against the capitalist class.

A revolutionary socialist platform might not differ in the least from a reformist one in the character of the immediate demands. Social security and reduction in the number of hours are demands included in both platforms. A revolutionary platform distinguishes itself from a reformist one in that the former gives the workers an idea of the whole nature of the capitalist system and the necessity for its destruction. And what is more important by far, is, that a reformist party simply asks that its candidates be elected on the promise to fulfill the immediate demands while a revolutionary party asks that the workers organize and struggle for the immediate demands. A revolutionary party resolves whatever contradiction there is between immediate demands and ultimate goal in the actual conduct of its campaign.

Election and Political Work

To many comrades political work is confined exclusively to and is synonymous with election activities. Very frequently some party member asserts with great conviction that we either must or must not be a political machine, thereby meaning that we must or must not transform the party into a vote-catching machine. For a revolutionary Socialist political work is every kind of party activity which sharpens and deepens the consciousness of the working class. A demonstration for some vital demand of the workers during a period when there is no campaign is political work and may be far more important than election activities.

An election campaign is only one part of our work and is not and can no-wise be a substitute for any other activities. It is true that during a campaign our party must, in addition to all other activities, carry on work which is peculiar to election campaigns, such as getting signatures for petitions, guarding polling booths etc. But it would be disastrous for our whole work if we were to consider our campaign in that light. The issues around which our activities must center in non-election periods are the issues which form the basis of our activities during an election campaign and it is only necessary to connect them up closely with the campaign.

A functioning revolutionary Socialist party should be active on behalf of the unemployed at all times, election or no election. Part of our campaign should be to or-

ganize demonstrations on behalf of the unemployed. Should strikes occur in any industries during a campaign period our "election" work should consist of involving our members on behalf of the strikers. In this way the election does not become a simple vote-catching proposition but a means of teaching and mobilizing the workers.

At the present moment one of the great opportunities for Socialist propaganda during a campaign is being almost completely ignored by our party. One would think that the tremendously important struggle in Spain is not part of our election campaign. It is true that our platform says nothing about it but that does not mean that for the moment we should not make it the center of our whole propaganda. Every local, every branch should be busy with meetings and discussions about the life and death struggle between the workers and fascists; our press should be full of news and interpretive comments on the heroic struggles of the Spanish workers and peasants. Would our "election" work suffer? Ridiculous! It would strengthen the party and its influence tremendously.

Were we to conduct an active campaign thousands of workers would be convinced that our party is not simply a party which offers a program for the workers but is part of the working class and is active in all its struggles.

Criticism of Other Parties

Of necessity our campaign involves a criticism of every other party asking for the support of the working class. No Socialist would for a moment question the necessity of attacking the Republican party as a party representing the interests of the capitalist class. It is really astonishing that at the present time the Socialist Party must even attempt a justification for its implacable hostility to Roosevelt and the Democratic party. The activities both of the Communists who emphasize the reactionary character of the Republican crowd as against the liberalism of Roosevelt "who only yields to the reactionaries" and of the labor leaders anxious to gather in votes for the "humanitarian" Roosevelt, have created a situation where it is necessary to concentrate our attacks on Roosevelt and the Democratic party.

And in doing so we must of necessity criticize sharply the attitude of the Communists and the labor leaders of the Non Partisan Labor League. Will we antagonize these labor leaders? Will we cause a decrease in the number of our votes? What of it? It is necessary to tell the truth about every group and party misleading the working class.

No one can deny that there is a tendency in our party to soft-pedal on the Communists, the Farmer-Laborites and the leaders of the unions involved in the Non-Partisan Labor League and the American Labor party. It is scandalous that our party campaign platform, amongst other serious weaknesses, has omitted a criticism of the Communists, the Farmer-Laborites and the labor leaders supporting Roosevelt.

If our campaign is to be a campaign for what our party represents, a campaign of education for socialism, then it follows that we must show why every other party is wrong and cannot solve the problems of the working class. We must distinguish ourselves from those parties that claim to represent the interests of the working class as well as those parties that are openly against the idea of socialism. Especially in those sections where the Communist or Farmer-Labor parties have any influence is it incumbent upon us to criticize their position on every problem. And that is also true of the labor leaders who are trying to deliver the workers into the hands of the New Deal.

Amending Constitution Not Central Issue

A tendency is already manifest which would concentrate our campaign around an amendment to the constitution, "to make democracy constitutional." Should our campaign center merely on that issue and especially in the manner it is treated by most party members, it would fall flat and would not serve the interests of socialism.

It is true that revolutionary Socialists are not indifferent to the nature of the capitalist state and must struggle constantly to democratize that state. We too are against the power of the Supreme Court to declare laws unconstitutional; but we are decidedly against the idea that the Supreme Court is something separate and apart from the capitalist apparatus; that the Supreme Court is bad and that Congress is good. This idea is expressed in such asinine phrases as "judicial Hitlerism" or the "dictatorship of the nine old men." In advocating the immediate demand for a constitutional amendment to permit Congress to pass laws for the benefit of the working class and to prohibit the Supreme Court from interfering with the legislation of Congress it is essential that we create no illusions in the minds of the workers. It is necessary to give the workers an idea as to the actual purpose of the constitution as expressed by such founding fathers as Madison; that a constitution created by people who were interested in protecting wealth and chattel slavery is not the kind of a constitution that can be of any benefit to the working class. It is essential to show that in spite of the constitution millions of workers are disfranchised, especially the Negroes of the south and that should the capitalist class be threatened it will have recourse to all the violence at its disposal. To demand an amendment to the constitution should not mean, by any means, an endorsement of the constitution; on the contrary, the real character of capitalist democracy should be laid bare.

Campaign to Increase Party Membership

The election campaign affords us an opportunity to teach thousands and tens of thousands of workers the meaning of socialism. Our success will be measured only partly by the number of votes cast for our candidate. In this present election there is no doubt that a great many workers will be deceived by the argument of Lewis, Hillman and the other devotees of Roosevelt that the latter is a friend of the workers. A great many will be deceived by the argument of the Communists that the Liberty League and the Republican party are the greatest fascist menace. In the present campaign our appeal will be listened to by the more advanced workers and because of that we must make a serious attempt to strengthen our party by utilizing the campaign for the purpose of increasing our membership.

Our party membership has decreased by virtue of the departure of the old guard from our ranks. We can confidently expect that those sympathizers of the old guard

who are still in the party will take their leave in the not too distant future. Possibly they will use a decrease in the number of our votes to claim that the Socialist party has been rejected by the American workers. There is absolutely no need for alarm. A party of five thousand revolutionary Socialists can do a hundred times more effective work than a party of fifty thousand members of the old guard variety. Nevertheless we cannot be satisfied with a small party. Our aim is to become a mass party both in the sense of mass influence and mass membership. And to increase our membership during the campaign two and three fold is more valuable in the long run than getting the same number of votes as we obtained in the last election. It is because of this that our branches can best judge the effectiveness of their campaign work by the number of new members they succeeded in enlisting. All our campaign meetings must be membership drive meetings. The party will have waged a successful campaign if it can show a substantial increase in its membership at the end of the campaign.

Revolutionary Socialists Handicapped

Not that revolutionary Socialists are to be indifferent to the number of votes cast for our candidates. That is exceedingly important and we should do our utmost to convince voters to vote for socialism. We should make every effort to get local candidates elected to office. A revolutionary Socialist in Congress or in a State legislature would be tremendously valuable to our work of propaganda and education. But it must be remembered that a huge vote can be piled up by a reformist party more easily than by a revolutionary party under non-revolutionary conditions. And to be disappointed or disheartened by a comparatively small vote is not to understand the nature of a revolutionary Socialist campaign.

Votes obtained by a campaign conducted on revolutionary lines mean that those persons who voted can be counted on in a revolutionary crisis; votes obtained by offering all kinds of promises, if Socialists are elected, are votes of those who will vote Socialist to-day and shift to some other party the next election.

It would be folly to ignore the fact the left wing Socialists are handicapped by many factors. In the first place the platform adopted by the convention is a document of a reformist nature, no different than any document that Waldman and Oneal would have drawn up had they been permitted to do so. Then the appointment of Hoan as chairman of the national campaign committee does not augur well for the type of literature that will be issued by the campaign committee. But in spite of handicaps revolutionary Socialists are in a position to conduct a revolutionary Socialist campaign and thereby increase the prestige and membership of the party.

The revolutionary activities in the Socialist party must see in this campaign a glorious opportunity to increase their numbers and influence.

The New Soviet Constitution

By S. J. WEAVER

THE NEW Constitution of the Soviet Union places a historic signature on the work of the gradual weakening, undermining and final abolition of the Soviets by the policies of Stalin. All the sly cunning of words cannot hide the plain facts; the attempt to pervert the meaning of Soviet by applying it to the new territorial (the old bourgeois) system of voting, instead of to voting by factories, can deceive only the most ignorant. Created by the masses under the leadership of the proletariat as the instrumental expression of the dictatorship of the

proletariat, the Soviets became the means by which, for the first time in history, the oppressed and exploited class had the opportunity to participate actively in the free construction of a new society. The function of the Soviets was to get the "whole" population, the vast majority of toilers as against the small minority that had previously ruled, to share in the management of social life, to help solve the big problems of production and consumption, to take part in state affairs.

Thus the Soviets were the most democratic organs ever

known. The old Soviet Constitution recognized the fact that the proletariat is the only class in modern society that can carry to completion the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a new socialist society. Hence the workers were given the preponderance of political strength; and since Russia was a backward country with the vast majority still peasants, the workers in the cities received a larger proportionate representation in the new organs of power than any other section of the population. The new Constitution abolishes, along with the Soviets based on factories, the electoral inequalities that gave the leadership to the proletariat, and sets up instead the bourgeois method of territorial representation with the equal, universal, secret ballot.

Constitution and "Socialism in One Country"

The new Constitution "decrees" the correctness of Stalin's theory of "Socialism in One Country." The bureaucracy explains the new Constitution by vague references to the achieving of socialism, to the abolition of all classes, to the fact that the dictatorship can therefore be "softened." The right to work is "ensured" by the socialist organization of national economy, the steady growth of the productive forces of Soviet society, the absence of economic crises, and the abolition of unemployment: in short, by the freedom of the Soviet Union from the laws governing world economy. Of the original leaders of the Soviets, the class-conscious vanguard led by Lenin and Trotsky, not one believed that the Soviets in one single country, particularly backward Russia, could march straight forward to the full realization of the socialist society. For this it was necessary that the proletariat of one or more of the advanced Western countries should come to the aid of Russia. It was only when this aid failed to materialize and when the Soviet Union was faced with overwhelming internal economic contradictions due to the advanced political régime and the backward economic basis for this régime, that it became possible for the Stalinist bureaucracy to arise. The success of that bureaucracy, concurrently with the defeats suffered by the world proletariat, is itself proof of the correctness of the contention of Lenin and Trotsky that the October Revolution would be endangered unless the proletariat of the western countries came to its aid. Like a malignant cancer the bureaucracy, interested only in the preservation of its own power and privileges rather than in advancing the cause of the world proletariat, spread, sapping the strength over a period of years of both the Bolshevik party and the Soviets led by this party. Today, when only the empty shell remains, Stalin can, with a stroke of the pen, put the quietus on the Soviets.

Bureaucracy Mediates Between Groups

Russia remains today, despite the tremendous achievements of industrialization and the gains in production, a backward country. With not enough consumers' goods as yet to go around, want still exists. Under existing conditions theft becomes a menace to socialized production. The bureaucracy wields a tremendous power in its control of the distribution of consumption goods to the various strata of the Soviet Union's population. Its decisions on wage categories, on rights and privileges, on taxes, determine the apportionment of the national income to town and country, to factory worker and collective farmer, to hand and brain worker. The pressure of these various groups and classes for more goods, representing under the given conditions antagonistic interests, throws on the bureaucracy the task of mediating among the various sections of the people, more particularly between the town workers and the peasants. In this mediation the Stalin régime has consistently

given way to the pressure, not of the workers, but of the peasants, particularly the middle peasants.

The apparatus was careful, in this process, to suppress any opposing forces, particularly among the Old Bolsheviks and the rising Soviet Youth. Thus the Society of Old Bolsheviks was done away with, at the same time that the YCL was "reorganized"; that is, non-politicalized. But the more the bureaucracy succeeded in getting rid of any possible organized opposition, the more the Communist Party and the Soviets became emasculated, the more the apparatus lost touch with the masses and the more it felt itself isolated at the summits of power. This weakness of social basis the Stalinists proceeded to correct, in order to bolster up the régime, following the precepts of the early American bourgeois ideologists, Hamilton, Madison, Jay. These Federalists saw the need of enlisting support for their new state and its bureaucracy from those strata who could be shown the benefits to be derived from the new régime. Similarly the Stalinists, feeling the need of "authentic" support, proceeded to create this support bureaucratically in their own image.

The apparatus utilized its economic power to build up a new privileged layer in Soviet society, dependent entirely on the bureaucracy for its new position, and therefore ready to support it through thick and thin. Stakhanovism is an important manifestation of this process of creating the new labor aristocracy with special privileges. A tremendous gulf is growing between the élite and the ordinary worker. The average salary of the privileged is from six to eight times as much as that received by the Russian worker in 1913, whereas the ordinary worker gets today only seventy percent of the wages paid in 1913. Which means that the average Soviet worker gets now (with the "attainment" of Socialism!) only half as much as the Czechoslovak worker, the worst paid in Europe! To make matters worse, those special privileges that made the lot of the ordinary worker endurable, have been withdrawn one by one: the special workers' distribution centers, the special cards granting to proletarians prior and cheaper rights to enter sanatoria and "places of rest," special reduced rate tickets to places of amusement—these have all gone by the board. Instead of workers organized to take care of their own interests—factory committees are non-existent and the trade unions are mere bureaucratic rubber stamps—we now have "ladies of leisure," the wives of highly paid functionaries, taking over such functions in the form of "social service."

Inequalities Incorporated in the Constitution

These striking inequalities are justified in the new Constitution by the crass misquotation of the Marxist dictum: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his WORK (instead of NEEDS)." In this way, according to Stalin, the principle of Socialism (which is distinguished from Communism for this purpose) is being realized. Compare this piece of philistinism with Lenin's characterization of the necessity of paying high salaries even to bourgeois specialists as a step backward. In the SOVIETS AT WORK Lenin remarks: "It is clear that such a measure is a compromise, that it is a defection from the principles of the Paris Commune and of any proletarian rule, which demand the reduction of salaries to the standard of remuneration of the average worker—principles which demand that career hunting be fought by deeds, not by words."—The corrupting influence of high salaries is beyond dispute.

By incorporating the new inequalities in the Constitution, the contradiction between the socialized means of production and the bourgeois methods of distribution, made necessary both by a backward economy and the needs of a long transition period, is built permanently into the social system.

Stalinism resorts not only to economic measures to create a budding aristocracy for its support, but also uses titles and honors which bear a not-too-distant resemblance to the old nobility. Thus army chiefs are given the batons of "Marshals," and an officer class is set up in the Red Army at the same time that the Red Army Soviets are abolished. The further flowering of Bonapartism is revealed just in such details. The new aristocracy also includes the upper strata in the kolkhozes and collectives, which are already somewhat honey-combed with a superimposed system of private trade for individual enrichment. Thus, behind the new Constitution, Stalinism looms as a greater and greater menace to the system of the collectivized ownership of the means of production, and for the restoration of the system of private property.

The bureaucracy takes another leaf from the notebook of bourgeois democracy in the creation of a bicameral system of lawmaking. The American capitalists adopted the two-house system in their time as part of the scheme of checks and balances: that is, a method of baffling and preventing majority rule. In every bourgeois country one of the first demands made by the workers in order to challenge the bourgeoisie to take a step towards real and not fictitious democracy, is for the abolition of two houses of parliament and the establishing of a single chamber combining both legislative and executive functions. Stalin's motives are clear on the surface, the same motives that appealed to the bourgeoisie in their day. Despite all the precautions to ensure bureaucratic control, Stalin wishes to take no chances that, even with the city proletariat weakened electorally and with the more easily managed scattered majority of peasants, the territorial elections should nevertheless bring about real opposition to the Bonapartist régime. The second house, like a house of lords or a senate, is based on the functionaries in the various Republics, forming an integral part of the bureaucratic apparatus. Here bureaucratic control is assured, and hence "legal" dissolution of the chambers could be engineered if necessary by the disagreements provided for in the Constitution.

Constitution a Safety Valve

Internally and externally, from the press releases emanating from the Kremlin, it is clear that the Constitution is a sham performing the same "democratic" function as in capitalist countries: to permit steam to be let off without bringing about explosions; to act as a safety valve in preserving the regime against its own excesses. The new "parliament" is intended to perform the same functions as the Hitler counterpart, to permit a "public" expression of confidence in the great leader. The elections are not to be based on political issues which would necessitate the formation of different political parties, but on persons and cliques. The most hated bureaucrats may thus be eliminated, to the benefit of the bureaucracy as a whole. There will still be only one political party, the degenerated Communist party, with all its controlled cultural, social, trade union organizations. Under the heading "Government Can't Lose Under Soviet Elections," the NEW YORK TIMES gives this authentic account: "A promise by Joseph Stalin that the Soviet Union will avoid an electoral system under which one party could defeat the government and take its place was quoted today by Ordjonikidze, Commissar of Heavy Industry." How much even criticism will be ALLOWED is revealed in a further quotation: "Any criticism of our failings must come from ourselves," says Stalin.

What meaning is thus given to the excellent "Bill of Rights" appended to the "new" Constitution? Freedom of speech, press, assembly, even freedom to demonstrate and use the streets—but don't dare to criticize! In this naked manner is revealed the entire mockery of the

"democracy" handed down by the régime; the plebiscitary—"for the leader"—nature of the elections to be granted. The American Constitution, foisted on America by a different class, also contains a Bill of Rights granting full freedom of speech, assembly, press. But under the administration of the capitalist class, these rights are honored in the breach so far as the proletariat is concerned. Under the ministrations of the present Soviet apparatus, we are promised in advance that the freedom "granted" in the Constitution will extend only up to the point where the régime will not be challenged or endangered. Opposition will not be brooked, democracy or no democracy. And the real opposition today in Russia comes from the left, from the Trotskyists, who are periodically purged from the CP. At the same time that the apparatus sets up a new aristocracy of privilege, it crushes the Left Opposition with an iron hand and sends these real revolutionists into the concentration camps to suffer worse tortures than ever under the Czarist régime. We are guaranteed in advance that the "counter-revolutionary Trotskyist scoundrels" will be the recipients of the same treatment after the adoption of the Constitution as before. In fact, from the point of view of the bureaucracy, the "elections" may help to reveal any hidden opposition not yet ferreted out by the GPU, to be dealt with in true "democratic" fashion.

Constitution Evidence of Opposition

However the very fact that the bureaucracy has been forced to go through the motions of granting the Constitution, reveals its fears and at the same time the recognition of oppositional forces that must be given some kind of vent if they are not to take the form of individual terror. Evidently the younger generation is expressing in one way or another its dissatisfaction.

This is also revealed in the new school regulations. One of the achievements of the October Revolution was the abolition of student uniforms and of special surveillance by the police. The student body always formed a rich soil for revolutionary propaganda. It must be that a similar phenomenon is now afoot, or how explain the actions of the bureaucracy in 1935-6 in reestablishing severe discipline and "politeness" with respect to adults, in requiring uniforms once more, in bringing back the system of special surveillance both in and out of school, forming the YCL into a spy organization for this very purpose? This meaning of the new Constitution must not be lost. The bureaucracy is coming into increasing conflict with the new generation. In the struggles to come for the regeneration of the Soviet system, even the small loopholes of freedom permitted by the new Constitution will be utilized by the revolutionary Marxists to organize the new forces for the defense of the Soviet Union against its present bureaucracy.

RESOLUTION PASSED AT THE INDIANA STATE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST INSTITUTE INDIANAPOLIS, AUG. 22-23

1) We consider the SOCIALIST APPEAL an exceedingly valuable asset of the left wing movement of the Socialist party. It has consistently championed the fundamental principles of revolutionary socialism and their application to all the problems confronting the party.

2) We urge that the APPEAL be broadened out to include on its Editorial Board left wing Socialists of different parts of the country. We strongly recommend that left wing Socialists give full-hearted moral and financial support to the APPEAL.

3) This does not mean that we oppose the launching of any other left wing organ. We pledge our support to all left wing organs that will aid in educating the party membership in the principles and tactics of revolutionary socialism.

HAIM KANTOROVITCH 1890-1936

The death of Haim Kantorovitch on Aug. 17, is all the more a blow to the movement because of the developments in our party since the Cleveland Convention. A serious and able theoretician of socialism, his help to the left wing movement in the coming period would have been invaluable. From him came the first critical analysis of the role of the left wing at the Cleveland Convention.

Socialism has lost an able and serious theoretician. The Appeal has lost a co-worker in the struggle for revolutionary socialism. In the following letter to the Appeal—one of the last products of his pen—he indicated his desire to co-operate with us and to carry forward the fight for revolutionary socialism, “beyond Cleveland.”

August 12, 1936

Dear Comrade Goldman:

Your letter arrived just at the time when I felt worse than ever. It is therefore out of the question for me to do any writing for some time to come. I really am sorry because I would like to write for the Appeal if only to express my appreciation of the work you are trying to do.

I can't refrain, however, from at least telling you how much I liked the last issue of the Appeal.* The analysis of the Cleveland Convention, the article on the Labor Party, even though I hold a somewhat different opinion on the Labor Party, are excellent. Erber's first article “For a United Nation—Wide Left Wing” I hope will be the beginning of a fruitful discussion of the fundamental principles of the Left Wing within the party. An open and frank discussion of the present situation in the Party, and the problems confronting the Left Wing, is the most pressing task confronting us. I wish I could do something to help along.

Sincerely,

HAIM KANTOROVITCH.

* This refers to the July issue.

FROM OUR READERS

Since the Cleveland Convention the Socialist Appeal has made amazing progress. From an organ which was read by several hundred members of the party it has developed into a paper coming out regularly every month with a circulation numbering in the thousands. We can say definitely: the Appeal is playing an important role in educating the most advanced workers in the principles and tactics of revolutionary socialism. The Appeal is being read by the best elements of the party and is supported by them.

There are of course the inevitable financial difficulties. There is also the difficulty of having too much material. Comrades, it is necessary to develop the Appeal into a semi-monthly. But that is something for the future. At present we need finances to guarantee its regular appearance as a monthly. **Subscribe and contribute funds. Get others to subscribe and contribute.**

We have room only for the following letter, out of many dozens, giving an idea what comrades think of the Appeal... We shall be more than glad to print letters of criticism and advice.

Dear Comrades of the Socialist Appeal:

It is with a great deal of satisfaction that I've noted the recent increased size and broadened scope of the Appeal. From its first number it has always been very much worth while and now, in its new dress and increased size, it provides us with a left wing organ that ought to be studied and actively supported by every member who even makes a pretense of believing in revolutionary socialism.

Personally I would feel almost lost without the regular visit of the Appeal. In the present welter of confused thinking (or lack of thinking) within the entire radical movement, in the Socialist party and even within the left wing of the party, the Appeal stands head and shoulders above other theoretical organs with its clear-cut, uncompromising revolutionary philosophy, and its clarity in analysing and pointing out both the current errors and basic needs of the revolutionary movement and especially of the Socialist party.

There are plenty of things in the movement that tend to discourage Marxian Socialists who are striving to build an organization that can actually serve as the instrument of the workers in their fight for power. By no means the least of these is the theoretical confusion within the party. In this situation there comes to us the “**Socialist Appeal**,” making us aware that the spirit and philosophy of revolutionary socialism is not dead after all, that it has not allowed itself to be compromised out of existence or lured from the path of theoretical clarity by the plumbs of political office or the overwhelming desire of so many Socialists to appear “respectable” in the eyes of a capitalist world. And those of us who have become discouraged and disgusted at the openly chauvinistic and opportunist “line” of the C.P., who almost despair of the S.P. itself sometimes because of its refusal to face facts and its tendency to compromise away its revolutionary principles, again take heart and continue to carry on the fight with renewed faith in the ultimate victory of the cause.

The Appeal should be read (more it should be studied) by every left-wing member of the party. It fills a vital need in the Socialist movement that is not and cannot be filled by the regular party press as the party is at present constituted, and that cannot be filled by any theoretical organ that is tied to the apron strings of either the centrist elements in the party or the “beloved leader” philosophy of Stalinism.

Certainly I wish the greatest degree of success to the Appeal in its struggle for genuine revolutionary socialism. And it is my sincere hope that, instead of remaining largely “a voice crying in the wilderness” as it is to-day, it will quickly gain the wide-spread circulation and support within the Socialist party that it deserves. In my opinion the success of the Socialist party in its struggle to become an effective revolutionary instrument for the emancipation of labor is largely bound up with the success of the Appeal in reaching the largest possible number of party members and having its basic philosophy adopted by them and by the movement as a whole.

Fraternally,
GEO. M. WHITESIDE
State Sec'y of S. P. of Kansas

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