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# Again Mr. Hillquit.

Unsigned lead article published in *The Communist* (New York: UCP), no. 11 (circa Dec. 1, 1920), pg. 1.

There certainly is no pleasure in dissecting writings or activities of people like Hillquit. But no matter — the Communists' mission is the struggle against capitalism. And no matter when and where capitalism appears on the field of battle, we must be ready to attack it. In this particular instance, capitalism sees fit to send into the arena a wolf clad in the sheepskin of a Socialist. Armed with the weapon of Marxian phrases, he attempts to lead the workers down a blind alley and thus prevent them from organizing and carrying out revolutionary action. And so, although a disagreeable duty, a duty it is nevertheless to tear the mast of Socialism off the face of Mr. Hillquit and to show the workers the genuine grimace of a defender of capitalism.

Mr. Hillquit speaks for the Socialist Party as one of the triumvirate of its present leadership. His activity is quite in accord with that of his colleagues. While Mr. Berger thunders against the proletarian dictatorship in the name of "democracy," and, in unguarded moments, calls the Soviet government of Russia a rule of the mob, and while Mr. [Seymour] Stedman denounces the Communists in capitalist courts as enemies of the existing order, Mr. Hillquit is doing his share as

the theoretician, proving that Mr. Berger's, as well as Mr. Stedman's, actions are quite in accord with Marx. Yes, Mr. Hillquit, Marx will turn in his grave at the thought of Walling and Slobodin, of Stokes and Russell.† But he will not rest there; he will continue to turn in his grave at the thought of Kautsky and Hillquit, of Noske and Berger, of Scheidemann and Stedman.‡

The workers who still follow the banner of the Socialist Party, believing it to be a revolutionary organization, must take into account *all* manifestations of life of that body to be able to judge it correctly. They must consider the pseudo-revolutionary phrasemongery of Engdahl in the light of the unconcealed contempt Mr. Berger displays for the "mob," etc., for all workers who insist that the proletarian struggle for emancipation is just a little more than voting for Mr. Berger for Congress. They must consider Mr. Hillquit's theoretical pettifoggeries together with Mr. Stedman's practical policies. And if all these things taken together represent the "Socialism" desired by them, then congratulations are in order on such perfect leadership that so well fits the army. If, however, it is Socialism they want, then it is high time that the Bergers and Engdahls, the Hillquits and Stedmans,

†- William English Walling, Henry Slobodin, J.G. Phelps Stokes, and Charles Edward Russell were prominent members of the Socialist Party Right who turned coat and went over to the side of the Wilson Administration and its intervention in the World War.

‡- Karl Kautsky was an early Marxist critic of the Bolshevik Revolution. Kautsky charged the Bolsheviks with violation of the norms of democracy and the installation by force of a ruling clique in the name of the working class in a economically backwards nation historically unready for socialism. See the pamphlets *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (1918) and *Terrorism and Communism* (1919) for Kautsky's explicit case. Gustav Noske and Phillip Scheidemann were Right Social Democrats who as leaders of the German government in the post-imperial period actively cooperated with reactionary elements in the military, leading to the political murder of the Left Socialists Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, among others. As the Centrist Kautsky was a close personal friend of Luxemburg's, the undifferentiated pairing of these three German "bogeys" was intellectually dishonest — not to mention the joining of the odious names of the Rights Noske and Scheidemann with those of consistent anti-militarist Centrists like Hillquit and Berger.

were sent back to the bourgeoisie that they defend, with the news that the time is past when the workers can be led by Noskes and Bergers, by Kautskys and Hillquits.†

“You must not quarrel with Noske and Scheidemann,” says Hillquit in an article in the *New York Call* of November 15 and 16 [1920], entitled “Again the Moscow International” — “You must try to understand.” This is paraphrasing Mme. de Staël’s bon mot: “To understand is to forgive.”

Yes, Mr. Hillquit, Marxism does try to *understand* — but it does *not forgive*. Least of all will it forgive those charlatans who, in spite of historic experiences, insist upon repeating the crime of Scheidemann and Noske.

Yes, it is an historical fact that in Germany, too, there were “small bands” of Communists, led by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, and others, who attempted to immediately establish a proletarian regime. It is also an historical fact, however, that such eminent “Socialists” as Noske, Scheidemann, and Ebert drowned the revolutionary aspirations of the workers of Germany in rivers of blood — in the name of “Socialism” — and with the help of the state machinery of the capitalist state. And those who try to cover this crime of the century with a mantle of pseudo-Marxian phrases are forever branded as accessories to the fact, who were only prevented by circumstances from being partners in the crime.

“I never contended for the absurdity that the proletariat *must* use the state machinery of the capitalist state,” says Hillquit. But that does not prevent him from stating, in the very next paragraph, the absurdity that the proletariat *can* use the state machinery of the capitalist state.

O Marx, what crimes are committed in thy name!

Surely — every government is wielded by the

class in power for the furtherance of its class interests. That is what the government is there for. Its forms and functions are strictly in conformity with the interests of the class in power. And no other class can ever hope to use that government in its interests. Before any other class ever gets into power, it must fight that government to destruction, because as long as it permits that government to exist it will not wield any power. When, in this struggle, the working class succeeds in conquering the capitalist government, it must build up an entirely new one, adapted to its class interests and subject to its powers. In fact, it creates this government even before it rises to undisputed power, because it must have an organ which shall direct and lead this struggle against existing state power.

It is too much to ask of Mr. Hillquit’s Marxism that it realize or acknowledge that the mission of the proletarian revolution is not the establishment of a working class government similar to the government of the capitalist class, but that its aim is to build an instrument for the fundamental change of society from capitalism to communism. In other words, this desired change from capitalism to communism does not lie in the accession to political power of the working class; it must be accomplished by the working class during the period of its revolutionary government. The working class government does not in itself represent Communism, but is only the instrument through which Communism may be established. This work can only be accomplished by a complete suppression of capitalism and the capitalist class. Therefore, the working class must, during this transitional period, exercise dictatorial powers through its own agencies, the workers’ councils.

But the, Mr. Hillquit says, it is conceivable that the proletariat may exercise these powers through a “modified democracy.” Is it, though?

†- The bitter denunciation of J. Louis Engdahl, editor of the Socialist Party’s official organ, is interesting. One year after publication of this article Engdahl would be a founding member of the Workers Party of America, remaining in the Communist Party for the rest of his life. He died in November 1932 while in Moscow on business for International Labor Defense, of which he was Secretary.

Yes, again answers Mr. Hillquit. Even the Bolsheviki believed that. Did they not call for a Constituent Assembly and only dissolve it after and because it turned out to be against them? Thus speaks Mr. Hillquit, and after his attention was called to the fact that the Bolsheviki had, from the beginning of the revolution, demanded ALL POWER TO THE WORKERS, he tries to cover up his falsehood by saying that they did not mean what they said. What they meant, says our "Marxist" Hillquit, was that the provisional government should be made up entirely of men appointed or selected by the soviets. Otherwise, Mr. Hillquit says, it would have been senseless to call for a Constituent Assembly. In this, Hillquit does not entirely succeed in hiding the donkey ears of a bourgeois politician behind the mast of a Socialist theoretician. He thinks that the Marxist Bolsheviki abandoned their ultimate aim for the catchwords of the immediate propaganda. He thinks that because the Socialist Party completely forgot Socialism in demanding cheaper milk, lower streetcar fares, or places of public convenience, it necessarily follows that a real revolutionary Marxist gives up the struggle for the instrument of the proletarian revolution by disturbing the peace of the bourgeoisie, by incessantly calling for the immediate convocation of the Constituent Assembly, while the tactic of the bourgeoisie is to stall for time.

Mr. Hillquit pretends to think that there was a time when Lenin and his comrades labored under the illusion that a Bolshevik ministry could function through the government machinery of the Tsar. He attributes his own beliefs to the leaders of the Communist Party of Russia. Without doubt, not wanting a fundamental change, he would be satisfied to leave the execution of the edicts and orders of a proletarian ministry to the old government machinery, just as Ebert and Scheidemann did. He would not mind having organs of the counterrevolution made organs of the revolution, in order to defeat the revolution. We do not expect to convince conscious represen-

tatives of the bourgeoisie like Hillquit, but we do hope to convince the workers who are still the dupes of the Hillquits that, with the establishment of the Workers' State, the revolution will not be accomplished. The Workers' State will only be the instrument with which the revolution can be led to its successful conclusion. To accomplish this, the working class must become the executive and the legislative power, to the exclusion of the capitalist class and its tools, the Hillquits and Scheidemanns. Upon the establishment of the power of the working class, all bourgeois "rights" cease to exist and only one right prevails, the right of the proletariat to subject everything to the task of the establishment of Communism. There is no other path that the real Socialist can pursue. One who wants Socialism (Communism) must also want the means by which alone the change can be effected. One who condemns the means stands convicted of being an impostor, in spite of his insistent assertions that he is a "Socialist."

In condemning the Moscow International, Mr. Hillquit writes: "They (the leaders of the Communist International) propose to supplant the historic organizations of Socialism and labor by a new, untried, and fanciful form..."

What are these *historic* organizations of Socialism and labor Mr. Hillquit speaks of? Is it the Social Democratic Party of Germany, under whose banners Noske murdered Luxemburg, Liebknecht, and thousands of revolutionary workers? Is it the Socialist Party of France, under whose wings Herve could print his orgies of chauvinism, ably assisted by Thomas Renaudel and others? Is it the Independent Labour Party of England, with its unspeakable MacDonalds? Is it the Menshevik Party of Russia, whose members today may be found in the antechambers of the ministers of the Entente, begging for military assistance in their struggle against the Workers' Republic in Russia and for the Russian bourgeoisie? Or is it the Socialist Party of America, which, though its members (Berger), advocates an imperialist war with Mexico or (Lon-

don) votes for military credits, used to supply the capitalist class with the necessary machine guns to shoot down the workers first in strikes and eventually in the revolution, or which, at the command of its capitalist masters, amends its constitutions and rewrites its programs? Really, Mr. Hillquit, to accuse the leaders of the Communist International of the “crime” of wanting to destroy these *historic* organizations alone brands you as the charlatan that you are, posing as a revolutionist, a “Socialist,” for the purpose of betraying the workers’ revolution to the capitalist class.

And what is the “new, untried, and fanciful form” that these leaders of the Communist International want to impose upon the revolutionary workers of the world? The centralized revolutionary organization, proceeding on the principle that the mission of a revolutionary party is to lead the struggle for the soviet power of the proletariat. This is the organization of the Bolsheviks, the Communist Party of Russia. This, incidentally, is the only revolutionary proletarian party which has led a victorious revolution and has succeeded in main-

taining itself against a world of enemies. To show your hatred against this form of organization so openly is bad policy, Mr. Hillquit. And your friends, the bourgeoisie, will thank you for the eagerness you display in this hatred, because through it you show too clearly your true colors and thus make yourself useless to the bourgeoisie as a misleader of the working class of America.

In the last paragraph of his article, Mr. Hillquit has the bad taste to pose as a martyr. “I do not shirk the unpopular task of combatting the Moscow methods,” says he. You are mistaken, Mr. Hillquit. There is nothing whatever unpleasant in your task. As for the revolutionary workers in America, you have no more reputation to lose. And as for the rest, your performance as a Knight St. George, killing the dragon of the Communist International, is quite agreeable. And if your friends, who think just as you do, have not as yet thought of a fit reward, then it surely is only because they still hope that you may be of greater service to them as the leader of the “Socialist” Party.

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