

I. W. W., but he succeeds to avoid such attack for the time being only by means of a shrewdly-devised manoeuvre—by means of making a distinction, or even a contradiction (but which it is unnecessary to add, does not actually exist) between Communism and "BLUFF BOLSHEVISM," as he brands it. This gives him the opportunity in fact to slander Communist tactics in general, as such (which is equivalent to Communism), at the same time "preserving a 'decent' and an entirely 'innocent' semblance of attacking only the 'BLUFF BOLSHEVISM' of the Communist Party in general and the Russian Communist Federation in particular.

The reader will, of course, agree, that this manoeuvre is by no means a new one, but on the contrary, a very familiar and exasperatingly wearisome manoeuvre of all social-opportunists who praise Socialism but curse Bolshevism and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat—who praise Marx to the skies but condemn Marxian tactics—who enthuse over the Soviet system in Russia, but are terrified by the thought of its possibility in the United States... We are unjust however, in crediting the use of this manoeuvre only to social-opportunists—for it is equally common and peculiar to all opportunists in general—to bourgeois opportunists in the same measure as to social-opportunists. As an illustration, it will be sufficient to refer to the *after* imperialists, who, while prosecuting in every possible manner the Socialist Internationalists of their own country during the war, could not "rejoice" sufficiently over the stand of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in Germany!.. Of course, their "re-joining" rapidly disappeared as soon as the war was over. But that is another matter).

In order to prove that we are not committing an error by crediting our distinguished author with the above-described though far from creditable manoeuvre, we will cite a very characteristic question from his article. After devoting a whole paragraph to vituperative and abusive attacks upon the Communist Party and Bolshevism, the author, not without good reason,—like "a cat who knows whose meat it has stolen" remarks: "Of course, someone will answer: This (i. e., the mud thrown upon Bolshevism by the author) is what the Right Wingers said about us a year ago. If it is true now, why was it not true then?" And he immediately hastens to dispel all doubts and questions by categorically and emphatically answering:

"It is true now; it was true then. But the Right Wingers used this sarcasm to characterize a particular phase of the revolutionary Socialist movement in this country. They aimed their shafts at revolutionary Socialism itself." (Italics ours).

The meaning of this quotation is obvious: The fact that the Right Wingers had slandered revolutionary Socialists was not so bad in itself; that which in the course of their abuse they said—"was true" (!). The only thing with which our author reproaches the Right Wingers in a friendly manner is, that they had slandered revolutionary Socialists in general, whereas, they should have slandered the American Revolutionary Socialists!..

But the above-described trait—an inclination to apply two standards, to measure by two different yardsticks, one intended "for the home product," the other for "strange distant ones far away"—is not only a manoeuvre of opportunists but also a symptom of opportunism—an indication of a "reevaluation of values"... Having begun with slanders and attacks against the Revolutionary Socialists and Communists in their own country, the opportunists invariably—due to the internal logic of their position—sooner or later end by coming into open conflict with the bitterly-hated Communists in general.

Y. F.'s article presents, in our opinion, exactly such a symptom of "sliding over to the Right," of an irrevocable tendency towards opportunism, toward the final desertion of the Communist ranks, and that is why we entitle it "A Political Obituary" of its author as a Communist.

Anyone who cannot understand the import of article; who cannot read this tendency towards opportunism between the lines, wherever it may not be obvious from the lines,—is utterly unable to understand this article and the only meaning which it conveys, and for such a person the reading of his article is an absolutely waste of time.

2.

Let us pass over to a more detailed analysis of the article in question, which analysis this article undoubtedly deserves,—not because of its intrinsic qualities, of course, but because of the position recently occupied by its author in the

Communist Party, and even more than that—because the article represents the most complete sample of theoretical and philosophical "background" (if it is permitted to call it "theory" and "philosophy") of the position (or, more correctly, lack of position) of the "centrist elements" in the Party,—those unsettled, always wavering, indecisive elements, who, in September of last year,—due to the trend of circumstances but by no means through their own volition,—found themselves in the Communist Party. These "centrist elements" who, since that time have "grieved" because they could not find in it a comfortable place for themselves, longed for the old "freedom" where principle and discipline were not necessary qualifications, until finally, as a result of the "Korniloff coup d'etat" accomplished by their leaders, ruled themselves (in fact) out of the Party.⁹

The author of this article is a typical representative of these "centrist elements" and all the "unpleasantries" experienced by them, while in the Party.

To begin with the first Convention of the Party. The author naively confesses that his, and adherents' "initial impulse" was to leave that convention. Even by this time he cannot understand why he did not then follow that "impulse"; the only reason which he can possibly advance in explanation of this—certainly unfortunate both for himself and the Party—lack of determination, is that same terrible "BIG BLUFF OF BOLSHEVISM" again, which, for a while, completely hypnotized him and stripped him of any capability for "self-determination." We quote:

"Just why some of us did not carry out our initial impulses to leave this convention is a perplexity which can only be explained to-day, by the big bluff of Bolshevism."

The very convention, for which our author did not spare the most brilliant and alluring colors in the first issue of the Communist, September 27th, 1919, becomes for him an object of the most bitter attack in April 1920! (We quote:)

"There was an all-prevailing sense of realism about the work in hand, absolute candor in interchange of argument, impossibility of compromise as the solution of any item. Three distinct groups were marked out at the opening of the Convention, and the whole proceeding represented the balancing of these three groups against one another... Three delegates who did not quickly enough yield their impulsive individualism to the mass discipline (italics ours) of one or another of the three groups left the Convention. They found more congenial atmosphere in the Centrist Convention of the Communist Labor Party, where each was a law unto himself, and where the group as an entity was beyond the possibility of decisive action."

Thus, almost enthusiastically, wrote our author in September 1919. What a change! That which he then proudly called "mass discipline" in April 1920 he calls "hopeless arbitrariness"... We quote again:

"There are many other respects in which this Convention stands out from all other Socialist gatherings in America. For one thing, the fact that the Federation delegates were largely Slavic emphasized the close union between the organization of the Communist Party here and the parent organization which came into being at Moscow in March of this year—The Communist International. It was the Russian expression of Marxism which predominated this Convention, the Marxism of Lenin, and the party traditions of the Bolsheviks."

Leaving aside such utterly unscientific definitions—becoming rather to a professor of a bourgeois university rather than a Communist—as, "Russian expression of Marxism," "the Marxism of Lenin," etc.,—compare the above quoted paragraph, written in September 1919, with the following denunciation in our author's last article:

"The supreme high priests of this new revelation had seen the divine flame with their own eyes. THEY HAD BEEN IN RUSSIA. (Italics ours.) Many years ago perhaps, in a world of circumstances only dimly akin to those of 1919 in the

⁹ It should be stated, that we class in the category of "centrist elements" who, for a long time felt uncomfortable and dissatisfied with the too "too narrow" limits of consistency in principles and revolutionary discipline of the Communist Party,—not all, but rather a small "initiative minority" of those who now have formed the "minority group" led by former Executive Secretary Damon; the majority of this "minority group" found themselves in it by accident, as a result of misunderstanding or misinformation—and, we do not doubt—will soon sever with it and return to the Party—to the C. E. C.

United States, but—they had been...

They had witnessed the tablets (!) almost had they seen the writing of the new scriptures—they had been in Russia. And who dared to say them nay?"

Whatever will be the reply to the question—when was the author truthful to himself and to his readers, when was he expressing his real feelings and impressions of the Convention—in September 1919 or in April 1920—the above comparison of quotations enables us to draw quite a definite conclusion as to the sincerity and truthfulness of the author...

Not having been determined enough to carry out his "initial impulse" to leave the First Communist Convention in America,—it had left such a "bad taste" with our author, that he very wisely "resolved never to enter either the Communist or Left Wing conventions." (Whether or not this time he will carry out his decision, remains to be seen—in the future...)

Mark you,—in informing us of this "resolution," the author does not speak of a particular convention which he will not "enter" in the future; he speaks of the "Communist or the Left Wing conventions." Apparently, those testable qualities of the first Communist Convention, which left such a "bad taste" with him, and which bar him from attending future conventions, he considers as inseparable, permanent and organic defects of all Communist conventions—in other words—of Communism itself.

3.

Having remained in the Communist Party against his own determination, against his "initial impulse,"—it was only natural that our author should feel miserable, dissatisfied, a "stranger" in its ranks, hypnotized, as he had once put it, by "an all-prevailing sense of realism" and "impossibility" of compromise as the solution of any item; it was only natural that a doubt as to the "worthwhileness of the Party" (!) should arise to haunt him.

"Has it been worth while?"—i. e., the formation of the Communist Party—this very question, this pseudo-objective, majestically "judicial" attitude toward the revolutionary proletarian party exposes in the author a spineless petty-bourgeois intellectual, who never acts, never lives in the present and in the future, but always in the past, always pre-occupied with reflective, utterly useless "self-analysis"... "Has it been worth while?"—this very question, and the following "tests of the worthwhileness of a party," imply, an utterly non-Marxian, bourgeois-professorial attitude toward the Party. A party, according to the bourgeois conception of our author—like a suit of clothes, may be "ready-made" or "made to order." (No wonder that in another part of his article, extensively rich with similar "new ideas," he speaks of a "ready-made Bolshevism..."). Moreover, he says, a party "may be well made and it may be bungled." Which, of course, implies the equally profound idea that having been "bungled" a party may be "re-made," it even may be "ordered" to another "maker." Accordingly, being dissatisfied with an "imported from Russia" or "ready-made" Communist Party,—along the "Russian fashion" and "Russian traditions," and, consequently, utterly "unfit" for American conditions—our author decided to have this party "re-made"—to have it "made to order"—this time in some reputable "American firm."

(Due to lack of space this analysis will be continued in the next issue.)

TO ALL MEMBERS AND BRANCHES OF THE FEDERATIONS

Comrades:

We, the representatives of the Language Federations of the Communist Party of America—the Lettish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Russian Federations—demand that the Executive Secretary Comrade Damon and the members of the C. E. C. Kosbeck and Langley, return immediately to their respective posts and work until the next convention under the supervision of the C. E. C., duly elected by the Constituent Convention of the party. The convention, at which all the differences that have arisen in the party will be investigated and settled, shall be called not before June — and not later than July —

(Due to lack of space this appeal will be printed in full in the next issue.)