

Trotsky's Book and its Bourgeois Critics

The Real Situation in Russia, by Leon Trotsky. Translated by Max Eastman. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 389 p. \$2.00 at bookstores or by mail postpaid from The Militant.

IN this book, written by Trotsky at the height of his powers as a revolutionary fighter and thinker, is to be found, for the first time in English, the authentic platform of the Russian Opposition led by him, and his annihilating reply to the five year campaign of calumny and falsification which has run unchecked and unanswered in the official Communist press of the world.

This reply, after a silence of five years, consists mostly of documentary proofs which completely shatter the edifice of lies and which cannot but make the Communist who has been fed exclusively on official misrepresentation rub his eyes in wonderment. The last letters of Lenin which show that he foresaw the coming struggles and relied on Trotsky to defend his views contain information hitherto unknown by our Party. This information is directly opposite to all we have been told.

The other principle section of the book is the Platform of the Russian Opposition prepared for the Fifteenth Party Congress. Contrary to all Party procedure established under Lenin's leadership, the Platform was outlawed and refused official publication. Oppositionists who attempted to print it illegally were thrown into prison. It has never been published to this day by the Communist International or by any of its affiliated parties.

It is true that our Party, which had never seen it, voted against it "unanimously" as did the other parties, but its validity remains unchanged by these machine-made votes. It is a document of Leninism from the first word to the last. It is the platform on the basis of which alone the Communist Party of the Soviet Union can solve its problems on the revolutionary path. The events themselves which have been transpiring since the outlawing of the platform and the expulsion and exile of its authors testify to this in louder and more insistent tones every day.

We have been told many times that the Platform of the Russian Opposition is "counter-revolutionary", "menshevik", "social-democratic", etc. But, strange to relate, none of these classes and elements, from the big bourgeoisie to its petty-bourgeois and philistine retainers, appreciate it as such. Of course, all enemies of our movement seek to exploit the controversies in our ranks, and the jailing and exiling of the Opposition supporters was no exception. Those who jailed and exiled them—and those whose occupation it is to defend this infamous crime—seek to prove thereby that Trotsky is identified with the imperialist enemies of Soviet Russia and their lackeys. But if we turn to the columns of the bourgeois press to read their sober estimate of *Trotsky's Platform* we find a different, and a highly instructive story.

The authentic organs of Big Capital put their thumbs down on this Platform. And that is not all. The little hangers-on—from the pale, sanitary *New Republic* to the scavenging Jewish *Daily Forward*, from the bourgeois liberal *Nation* to the sex liberal *Modern Quarterly*—all do the same.

The *New York Times*, the most authoritative spokesman of American imperialism, reiterating what it has already said in a score of editorials, says in an unsigned review of "The Real Situation in Russia" by Trotsky and "Leninism" by Stalin, on July 29, 1928:

"Back of Trotsky's political grievance against Stalin is his personal grievance....
"When we turn from Trotsky to Stalin we find instead of the feverish indignation of a disappointed man the calm and confident arguments of a practical executive who has had no difficulty in adjusting his theories to the daily emergencies of power....
"The publication of Trotsky's book will doubtless turn some American Communists from Stalinists into Trotskyans. But let us repeat, though it will not make Stalin a hero in the eyes of the sinful bourgeoisie it will probably cause them to rejoice that he and not Trotsky is exercising power in Moscow."

So bays the big dog of American imperialism. Let us now turn to the *New Republic* which contains a review of Trotsky's book in its issue of November 7 from the pen of the well-known J. B. S. Hardman (Salutsky), the literary henchman of the labor fakery who rule the Amalgamated Clothing Workers by black-jack and revolver—and expulsion of Communists. We were assured only the other day in the Statement of the C.E.C. that we would be able to rely on the full support of Salutsky in our fight for the platform of the Russian Opposition. But Salutsky seems to have different ideas. In fact, if you make allowances for the differences of style and

manner of expression common to literary people, you will see that his ideas are essentially the same as those of the *New York Times*. He says:

"Trotsky's criticism, obviously overemphasized, will not convince those who are outside the struggle. His repeated claims that he and not the Stalinists are true to the tenets of Leninism will seem queer to the non-orthodox. Indeed, why may not revolutionists occasionally run out of the footsteps of canonized authority? Nor will Stalin be destroyed by pointing to the fact that Lenin had little use for him."

Salutsky goes a step farther and deals a blow at this sentimental nonsense about the imprisonment and exiling of the Oppositionists. He has made editorial defense of the blackjacking of Communists in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers union too many times to have any squeamishness on this point. He writes:

"Trotsky resents the violence which the Stalin regime employs against the Opposition, but Stalin did not father the idea of a one-minded, strait-jacketed party, intolerant of even friendly criticism. Lenin did. Trotsky knows it, and he advanced the argument that 'violence can play an enormous role, but only under one condition—that it is subordinated to true class policy'. But is not Stalin ready to say that his is a true class policy?"

Let the apostles of violence against Communists study the writings of Salutsky. They can get some clever arguments from him. They will also find that this "ally" of Trotsky has a most unique way of "supporting" him:

"Trotsky wishes the party preserved in its revolutionary virginity. He wishes it to remain a party of no compromise, of no trading with capitalism, the enemy. Not so Stalin. He has his ear to the ground. He senses that the early revolutionary zeal is over. Not only the country is tired, the revolutionists themselves are. One may arouse their patriotism for self-defense, but it would be difficult to move them to a crusading march. Hence his theory of 'Socialism in one country'. The Soviet State is a reality. Stalin seeks to preserve it...."

Finally there is the review of Trotsky's book in the "liberal" *Nation* of November 14, 1928, by Albert Rhys Williams, which does nothing but expose Williams as a petty-bourgeois philistine of the grossest sort. For this mere journalist the world-shaking problems raised by the Opposition are resolved into four simple "truths": That the peasant is the real "hero" of the Russian revolution; that the struggle is one between individual leaders; that the documents presented in Trotsky's book have been printed before in the Party press and not suppressed; and that the exiling, imprisonment and disemployment of Opposition workers and leaders is a jocular business which even the Opposition takes in the spirit of good, healthy fun.

Williams declares that the documents printed in Trotsky's book were published and not outlawed or suppressed. This is a conscious, deliberate and typically American journalistic falsehood. The Platform of the Opposition was never, to this very day, printed in the Russian or international Party press. For proof of this turn to *Imprecator*, Vol. 7, No. 64, published Nov. 17, 1927. There in a report of Stalin's speech at the meeting which expelled Trotsky is a whole section which begins "Why did we not print the well known 'Platform of the Opposition'?", and ends "These were the reasons which compelled us to refuse the publication of the 'platform of the Opposition'".

The section of Trotsky's book dealing with the falsification of history by the official apparatus has not been, and is not now printed anywhere in the official Party press. The testament of Lenin, first denied as a forgery but now admitted to be genuine, was not printed anywhere in the Party press. In short, 99 per cent of the material contained in this book of Trotsky's has been either suppressed or outlawed by the machinery and press of the C.P.S.U., the Comintern and its national sections.

So much for Williams' attempt to convince the American Communists that they have already had adequate opportunity to study this material which has never been printed before. But it is in his treatment of the persecution and violence against the Opposition that he reaches the lowest depths of philistinism. According to this shallow "feature-writer" the whole thing was a comradely joke, accompanied by merriment on all sides. He recites that the comrades of one victimized Oppositionist gave him a party on the eve of his departure. For Williams this is proof that exile is a happy event. "A real old time Russian *vecherinka*," says this trifling dilettante. According to him the revolutionist who does not whine under punishment does not feel it. If he had utilized his literary conne-

ctions with our own American revolutionary movement in the days when scores and even hundreds were being sent to prison, he could easily have learned that the last nights of freedom for many of them going off to serve long sentences was made the occasion for parties in their honor at which there was no wailing by the victims, and with equal intelligence he could have passed off the whole affair as a good-natured jest. We might ask this complacent word-juggler, however, to explain the humor in the imprisonment of George Andreytchine and of scores of others who attempted to print the Platform of the Opposition which he says was printed legally. We might ask him for proof that the hundreds and even thousands of Communist workers who were expelled from the Party and simultaneously deprived of employment for supporting the Opposition had absolutely no hard feelings about the matter.

The philistine article of Williams is reprinted from the bourgeois liberal *Nation* by the *Daily Worker* with a eulogistic introduction in which the editor, Robert Minor refers to Trotsky's book as "counter-revolutionary." This, however, does not of itself make Trotsky's case hopeless. It will be remembered that Minor once wrote against Lenin, using for his medium of expression the capitalist press. Minor "changed his mind a little" about Lenin. Why should we not be optimists and trust that he will also learn better in the case of Trotsky? J. P. C.

Trotsky, Wolfe and The Forward

In that monstrous swindle which the Party for its own honor will yet repudiate, the booklet by Bertram D. Wolfe on "The Trotsky Opposition. Its Significance for American Workers," the author attempts to prove that among the international "allies" of the Russian Opposition is to be found the yellow socialist Jewish *Daily Forward*. Such an attempt would undoubtedly meet with failure at the hands of ordinary mortals, but for such an expert as Wolfe it seemed to meet with practically no difficulty. After all, we have here an intrepid warrior who once appropriated the Constitution of the United States, the United States Marine Corps, aye, the very battleships themselves, with one fell swoop of his best agit-prop pen....

It is, fortunately, not difficult to find out just where the *Forward* stands. That can be discovered, not by a perusal of Wolfe's romancings—to speak politely—but by clipping the *Forward* itself.

In its issue of Wednesday, November 21, 1928, page 8, it has a leading article by its feature writer, Zivion (Dr. B. Hoffman). Hoffman writes on the expulsion of Cannon, Abern and Shachtman from the Party and greets it gleefully (just as every enemy of the Party will hail the removal from the Party of its revolutionary fighters).

At the same time he is careful to disassociate himself from the political platform and proposals of the Russian Opposition. He writes, literally, as follows:

"And let no one be suspicious that the opinions of Trotsky and his Opposition appeal to me. I have on more than one occasion expressed the opinion that Trotsky's program would be the greatest calamity for Soviet Russia. Because Trotsky's program is a good deal more Communist than Stalin's; and if Soviet Russia is in such a bad condition with Stalin's reformed Communist program, then how much greater would be the troubles in Soviet Russia if Trotsky's consistent Communist program would be adopted?"

The position of the *Forward* is the position of the yellow social-democracy everywhere. It is true that they utilize, as they have done and will continue to do in every such situation, any and every difficulty and difference of opinion that may exist in the Workers State and the ranks of the Communist movement. But on the question of the political content of Trotsky's platform, the *Forward* has been and is following the lead of the *New York Times* and the other authentic organs of the big bourgeoisie who have nothing but condemnation and hatred for it.

Wolfe's attempt to identify the *Forward* with Trotsky is of a piece with his whole compendium of falsehood. Lying about Trotsky, an occupation safe enough when there were no opportunities for refutation, becomes highly dangerous now that the means for the latter are at hand. The sooner Wolfe, who is known for speed, runs away from this danger the better it will be for him.