

Lovestone and the Russian Revolution

The attitude of the Lovestone group, as well as the Right wing in the International Communist movement, towards the present position of the Russian revolution is one of the most accurate tests of the distance they have put between themselves and Communism in a brief period of time.

Why is the Russian revolution still the best touchstone for the revolutionary movement? Its place in the history of the epoch makes it that.

The Bolshevik revolution in 1917 came at the end of three years of war and social democratic betrayal. It cut the first big breach in the hitherto solid walls of world imperialism. In one country, at least, the revolutionary movement had become the revolutionary state against which the rest of the world tore with venomous hatred. So far as the class conscious workers were concerned, its existence was a command to choose: either the side of the Soviet republic and world revolution, or the side of the national bourgeoisie and world imperialism. The years that followed the Bolshevik revolution sifted the ranks of the proletariat and its representatives into black and red. The intermediate color of Centrism was wiped out in the course of struggle. There remained as the two main streams in the working class: Communism, the fighters for Russia as the first fortress of the world revolution, and social democracy, the agency utilized by imperialism in the ranks of labor against the world revolution. These two main currents still exist and struggle.

The Revolution and the International

The command to choose between red and black was made additionally imperative by the foundation of the Third International. It may be said that it came out of the ruins of the Second International or the carnage of imperialist war. But without the Bolshevik revolution, which inaugurated a new era in world history, the formation of the Communist International would have been highly improbable, if not actually inconceivable. The proof of this can be found, inversely, if one will imagine the overthrow of the Soviet Union. The Communist International—at least in its present form—would be smashed, even as the First International after the fall of the Paris Commune. In brief, the broadest and most substantial foundation of the Communist International, which brought new life, hope and spirit of struggle into the ranks of labor, has been and remains the Soviet Union. Their fates are inextricably combined.

The main argument in 1919-21 of the social democratic leaders, particularly of the semi-Left type, against affiliation to the Comintern was based on the ingenious theory of the "separability" of the International and the Soviet republic. From Hillquit to Bauer they argued in this manner:

"We are and will be supporters of the Russian revolution. It is an event of tremendous historical import. But Marx said How they could quote Marx!) that the struggle of the proletariat is a national struggle, that is, it must deal with its national bourgeoisie first. The Bolsheviks are excellent fellows and the Mensheviks have undoubtedly made many blunders. But that is a Russian question. How can we in New York or Chicago—thousands of miles away—presume to take a final, decisive position on issues that have been moot problems for more than a decade in the Russian movement itself and about which we have so little information? Why should we become the tail to the kite of one of the factions in the Russian social democracy? Let the Russian comrades solve their own problems. We will solve ours. We will affiliate neither to the Third nor to the Second. In fact, to avoid being tied either to the Bolshevik or Menshevik faction, we may (and they did) form an intermediate International which will support (?) the Russian revolution and even endorse the Soviet form of government and the dictatorship of the proletariat."

"A Tail to a Russian Kite"

The refusal to "become tail to the kite of one of the factions in the Russian social democracy"—whatever the "good" reasons given—was in actuality, as later events demonstrated, a refusal to take the side of the Russian working class and its leaders, the Bolshevik Party, in order, in the end, to fall into the arms of the Mensheviks, who represented another class and another order of society.

The Russian revolution and the issues it raised so sharply in the movement were the knives that cut between the Hillquits, Bauers, MacDonalds, Longuets, Welses, and later the Frossards, Levis and Newbolds—on the one hand, and the Communists on the other. That knife has become a huge steel wall dividing them permanently.

Today, the test in which Hillquit and

Co. failed in 1917 and 1919, is applied, under changed circumstances, in the Communist movement itself. This time it is the International Right wing that is failing; it is Lovestone who is traversing the well-worn path of his social democratic predecessors.

That Lovestone protests a thousand times his praise for the Soviet Union and its socialist progress, that he announces a thousand times his opposition to imperialist intervention, does not mean very much in the case. Oswald Garrison Villard, the prince of liberals, says the same thing. He is also pleasantly astonished at the socialist progress of the Soviet Union; he also opposes intervention. That is not the essential test of the revolutionary.

The test appears in Lovestone's statement on the capitulation of Bucharin which is entirely in accord with the position of the Brandler and other Right wing groups in Europe: "Our struggle has never been nor can it be an appendix to any individual or group in the C. P. S. U., victorious or defeated. Indeed, the Russian questions never became issues in our struggle. Never at any time was any attempt made to provide trustworthy official information on the Russian question nor were the Parties ever requested to take a stand on these questions on the basis of actual information."

Lovestone Wants "Information"

It may be said, in passing, that this "lack of actual information" never worried Lovestone for the five years during which he was in the front ranks of those who heaped the mud of vileness and slander on the heads of Trotsky and the Russian Opposition. In the struggle against them, Lovestone was quite willing to be an appendix first to Zinoviev, then to Stalin and finally to Bucharin. The "Russian questions" were exceedingly important "issues" in Lovestone's struggle then! So important, in fact, that at the last Party convention he was able to turn from supporting Bucharin to introducing a motion to denounce him; then go to Moscow and acclaim him; then to turn back to the United States and, today, renounce him! But more on this some other time.

What is the significance of Lovestone's (and Brandler's) refusal to "be an appendix" to any group in the Russian Communist Party? It is a renunciation not only of the right, but of the fundamental duty of every Communist in every period. Why? Simply because the class struggle raging in the Soviet Union today is reflected and expressed through the con-

Friendly Advice to an Unfriendly Critic

We refer, of course, to this man Browder, who has become theoretician, practical and general master of ceremonies in the great ideological war against "Trotskyism" in the United States. And our friendly advice to him is to quite writing on a subject that requires stronger heads, and turn to fields that are less dangerous, require less falsification and less understanding. We hasten to assure Browder, lest he succumb to a baseless vanity at his own prowess which would be ignoble in such a leader, that his "heavy assaults" cause us no sleepless nights. Our advice is motivated only by an anxiety to preserve him and his reputation for the future.

If Browder will only reflect for a moment he will see that our advice is sound and free from all questionable motives. There have been Trotsky-killers galore in the past, veritable armies of them, and one by one they have disappeared from the scene or gone to that side of the barricades where they accused Trotsky of being. It is quite clear that a gruesome fate accompanies the path of all these anti-Trotsky heroes.

Remember Mr. Bessedovsky

Take Bessedovsky. He expelled Trotsky and Rakovsky from the Party. He took over some of the work Rakovsky had been doing as Soviet Ambassador to France. He denounced Trotsky as a counter-revolutionary and an ally of the "Wrangel officer." Then one dark night he slipped out of the window of the Soviet embassy into the hands of the Millukovs and Kerenskys.

Take Paul Marion, another great warrior against Trotskyism. He was head of the agitation and propaganda department of the French Communist Party. All the theses and denunciations against the Opposition emanated from his office. Even as Browder does today, he used to "prove" the "united front of the renegades." Then one bright day, he skipped out of Russia and joined the reformist enemies of the revolution as an "exposer" of Bolshevism and its "brutality and utopianism." ■

Or Tang Pin-San. He was the leader of the Chinese Communist Party and the

tending groups in the Bolshevik party, not quite as plainly as between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1917 but just as surely. The political monopoly of the Communist Party inevitably transfers the struggles of the classes in Russia (proletariat, peasantry, Nepmen, Kulak, etc.) into the Party itself. The groups that have been formed represent various class interests: The Leninist Opposition (Trotsky), the most conscious sections of the proletariat; the Right (Bucharin-Rykov), the interests of the Kulak and Thermidorian elements (capitalist restoration); and the Centre (Stalin) which flounders in between. When the Right wing washes its hands of this struggle by refusing to participate actively against the forces represented by the Bucharin faction, it is washing its hands of the fate of the Russian revolution. And that irrespective of all its good wishes.

But one does not wash one's hands of a Russian revolution so easily! It exists, it fights, it commands a choice. Lovestone, who formally repudiates "all" Russian factions, does so in order to be able more easily to build a national "Communist" movement like Stalin and Bucharin build socialism—in one country alone. But Lovestone's repudiation is one of convenience and formality only. Every line he writes on the Russian situation breathes the viewpoint of the Bucharin group "about which we have so little information."

The Choice Must Be Made

The international revolutionary movement has again been called upon by the Russian revolution to make its choice. To attempt to have a correct policy nationally without a correct international basis is the very essence of social-democracy and the antithesis of Communist internationalism. Wash your hands of the "Russian issues" upon which the fate of the revolution depends; and you wash your hands of the International Communist movement which would be smashed simultaneously with the collapse of victorious Bolshevism in Russia. That is Lovestone's path. We go the other way. The Stalinists have a foot walking in each direction.

Let the philistines and "national Bolsheviks" make the proud announcements of their liberation from the control of a "Russian faction", as Hillquit did not so many years ago. As for us, we are an inseparable part of an international faction, led by the Russian Opposition. In our support to this Opposition we express our struggle for the heritage of Bolshevism and the October Revolution.—M. S.

first "Communist" minister of agriculture in the Hankow government. At the Plenums of the Comintern he would proudly boast of how severely the first manifestations of Chinese Trotskyism had been defeated by him. One day he quit cold. The Trotsky-killer became the leader of a Kuo Min Tang Left wing, a foe of Communism. His fight against "Trotskyism" was a mask for his fight against the Chinese revolution.

Take Pepper. Was there a more ferocious or consistent "exposer" of Trotskyism than he? Do not all his old writings against the Opposition read word for word like Browder's? Of course they do. And where is this noble knight today? That gruesome fate overtook him too. He was sunk without a trace.

There were Jilek and Hais in Czechoslovakia. No more unyielding opponents of the Opposition could be found. Came a test. Now they are moving towards social democracy so fast you can't see them for dust.

And Lovestone. And Wolfe. They are a living lesson for Browder. Only a year ago, when they expelled us from the party with Browder's enthusiastic support, they freely predicted that we would travel with camp of the renegades, that we would soon "express train speed" to the international camp of the renegades. That we would be in one united front with Brandler and Co., etc. One year passed. We were not and are not with Brandler. But Lovestone, that wholesale consumer of Trotskyists, he is with Brandler!

Were space to permit, and if these were not already enough, additional instances could be adduced by the score.

Yes, Browder should quit writing on the subject, for who knows what tomorrow will bring? The same comrade who today rashly announces that we have a "united front" with Lovestone and Co., with the Right wing, may have to eat crow—a most unwholesome dish—a week from now. The

same Browder who, on orders from Stalin, belabored Bucharin most mercilessly, denounced him as a Right winger seeking a united front with the Trotskyists, must now maintain a discreet and humiliating silence on the subject. A bare 48 hours after he proclaimed the united front of Bucharin and Trotsky, Bucharin actually united with Stalin. The big struggle by Stalin and his chief lieutenant Browder against the Russian Right wing is now over. Bucharin is no longer a renegade.

How does Browder know that he will not get an order tomorrow to quit scolding Lovestone and Co.? To take them back into the party? Anything is possible under the swift tempo of the third period. All Stalin has to do is to make the decision, send the cable, and Browder will have to turn out an article justifying the new right-about-face. That will not be a very enjoyable task, even for so willing an artisan as Browder. The way for Browder to avoid the consequent humiliation is not to write his nonsense now in order to be able to write his nonsense later with less qualms of conscience.

Our advice is given without malice or enmity. It is, as we said, intended only to preserve Browder for the future. As to what earthily use a Browder can be in the future, there is a point, we'll admit. But it needn't be made an issue of now; that bridge can be crossed when we get to it.

Hail the Weekly Militant!

The first appearance of the Weekly Militant, after months of sacrifice, the canvass of hundreds of Left-wing and revolutionary workers, of scraping together and collecting our pennies, signally marks to us the triumph of a fearless, honest Leninist determination in face of the reactionary forces at present in American labor movement.

To us, the Weekly Militant is the living concrete, incontestable vindication of our unshaking confidence that here in the United States, the citadel of world imperialism, there can be founded and built a movement based on the revolutionary experience of history as taught by Marx and Lenin and at the same time sending its roots deep into the soil of the American class struggle.

After our expulsions from the Communist Party it seemed at first that the Stalin course would be completely victorious. The entire prestige and moral authority of the Comintern was wielded in a concentrated attack upon us. But in time, our analysis that Centrism has no consistent principle or policy, but staggers between Communism and reformism, became strikingly clear. Each new zig-zag brings forth more damage and shame to the cause of Communism. The most recent "new line" of the Party is towards the "Left". After the expulsion of the Left Communists, however, this maneuver does not deceive us. It is merely the preparation for a drift of the ruling faction back to the Right—and that in the near future.

By throwing overboard the precious teachings of Lenin and the Comintern on the united front, democratic centralism, the role of the party, etc., the present leadership flounders without landmarks, without a clear course, from one extreme policy to another, sinking still further into the bog of factionalism generated by this lack of principle. This is demonstrated in a multiplying host of abuses perpetrated by the party, from Cleveland and the needle trades scandals to the miners' union and the cooperatives on the Range. The present course, completely eliminated the party as a constructive factor, and, if persisted in, will call for merciless exposure and revolutionary struggle from the Bolshevik-Leninists.

The Daily Worker, once a promising spokesman of American Communism, has now degenerated into a faction paper of the Stalin clique. On the other hand, the straightforward, critical, revolutionary tone and content of the Militant appeals to our shopmates and is winning ever wider support. We must resolutely assume the tremendous task in spite of all difficulties, of winning over to the side of Communism the many millions of the American working class.

In the words of Trotsky: "We stand at the helm of Bolshevism. You will not tear us from the working class... We will not surrender the October revolution to the politics of Stalin... The proletariat thinks slowly, but it thinks strong. Our Platform will hasten this process."

And our Weekly Militant will hasten this process. It is a great step towards the victory of the revolutionary unity of our party and of the Communist International.

Minneapolis branch of the Communist League of America

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