

From Hillquit to Lovestone

Pointed Parallel between Two Generations of National Socialism

The heaviest blows we have dealt the Right wing have been our attacks upon its fundamental position: national socialism, the theory from which most of its current anti-Communist conceptions are drawn. It has not been difficult to point out that the banner under which the united forces of Stalin and Bucharin led the reactionary crusade against the Left Opposition ("Trotskyites")—the banner of socialism in one country—inevitably led to the splitting of this united bloc and the departure of its Right flank from the ranks of Communism. Giving Lovestone, Brandler, Jilek and Co. their due, we have pointed out also that it is they and not the Stalinists who are correct, insofar as it is a matter between the two of them, in the question of "exceptionalism". That is, Lovestone contends that if Stalin may erect an "exceptionalist" theory for Russia ("we will complete a socialist society by ourselves"), then Lovestone is permitted to erect an "exceptionalist" theory for America. From the point of view of the theory of socialism in one country Lovestone and not Stalin is correct; but from the point of view of elementary Marxism, of revolutionary internationalism, they are both wrong.

The Impotence of Centrism

The reason why the official Party (the Stalinists) arguments against Lovestone have always limped and halted is that they have been unable to show the workers who went with the Right wing what was fundamentally wrong with the latter: to do that would have meant the exposure of the anti-Marxist roots of Centrism itself! The Centrists have thus enabled the Right wingers to shift the whole content of this historical struggle on to the secondary and tertiary questions, where in many instances the Right wing adopts a position which, in appearance, is more correct than the fabulous idiocies of the Party chieftains. Only by re-establishing the basis of the dispute upon the questions of principle, and proceeding from these questions to those that flow from them, can the bankruptcy of the international Right wing be demonstrated. But such a fight leaves the Centrist helpless, for he is only a person who has not developed to the logical conclusions of the Right winger; his only weapon, therefore, is organizational manipulation and terror. The burden of the fight against the Right wing continues to rest upon the Left Opposition.

It is when the Right wing attempts to answer our unanswerable argumentation that it shows how well the Left wing has acquitted itself in this struggle. It flounders, it evades, it swindles, it is demagogic, and above all, in its profound hatred for the genuine Left it exposes its own petty bourgeois philistine character. As good an example as any is furnished by the *Revolutionary Age* and its latest article, "Whither Trotskyism?" by Will Herberg (No. 12). We will pass over the amusing fact that this same question was answered by the same Herberg only a few months ago when he "proved" that we had quite thoroughly "disintegrated" and that there should therefore be no reason to waste space in slaying a dead dog. We will rather take up the washed trivialities that pass for Marxism in the Right wing camp and properly identify them as a political tendency.

According to Herberg, "Eager sectarianism is the very essence of Trotskyism... Trotsky himself welcomes the sectarianism that is the essence of his system. 'To be a sectarian' today," he declares, "is an honor for every real revolutionary!" This would be a somewhat "damaging" quotation if not for three facts which are as well known to Herberg as they are to us.

1. The sentence is taken from its context, and refers not to a political party (the Communist Party), but to a faction within that Party.

2. The word sectarian is put within quotation marks, as a scornful comment upon the term by which we are designated

by the Right wing groups which, as everyone surely knows, are mass organizations embracing millions of workers....

3. The sentence quoted by Herberg from Trotsky read in the original (see the *Militant*, October 1, 1929): "To be at present a 'sectarian' of revolutionary Marxism in the eyes of philistines, of snivellers, of shallow minds, is the greatest honor for a real revolutionary." One need not have gone through a college course in psychology to perceive why Herberg so diligently omitted quoting the whole sentence. He knows but too well, our friend Herberg, who is meant by Trotsky when he says "philistines, snivellers and shallow minds." Literary forgeries of this type are considered good form in the Right wing camp, where for years charlatany bluff and swindle were the principal weapons in the campaign against "Trotskyism". Naive people that we are, we still think these methods contemptible, no matter what "period" they are practiced in.

The Real Sectarrians

But since we are speaking of sectarianism, let us establish again who practices it: It is the Right wing in every country, for they have cut themselves off from the international revolutionary movement and turned their backs upon the Russian revolution. By these steps they have doomed themselves to the life of national sects. They are following in the footsteps, not of the Hillquits and Oneals of today who are open Right wing socialists, but of the Hillquits and Oneals of yesterday who still employed "revolutionary" phrases about Russia and internationalism, and even the dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to retain the Left wing workers in the Socialist Party.

Here are four documents: Herberg's article. A statement "On the Situation in the C. P. S. U. (*Revolutionary Age*, Number 11). From Marx to Lenin by Morris Hillquit (1921). A debate between James Oneal and Robert Minor (1921). Space unfortunately prevents us from making comparisons at length but sufficient parallels can be drawn between the Hillquits and Oneals of yesterday and the Lovestones of today to show how close is the ideological rapprochement. And, unlike Herberg, we will quote literally. Emphasis everywhere is our own, done to indicate significant similarities between the old and the...new.

"First I want to say that I am unreservedly in support of the revolutionary government established by the workers and peasants of Russia, and that I believe that those who call themselves Socialists and don't give that support, who in any way approve of the intervention on the part of the international imperialists, automatically takes himself out of the socialist classification, and no one has spoken more frequently than I have in behalf of the Russian workers and peasants to work out their own problems and to establish their own regime without interference on the part of anyone throughout the world... I want to say however that support of a social revolution in Russia, or in the Argentine, or in China or Japan, or anywhere else in the world, does not necessarily carry with it the support of a particular international organization, of which the Russian workers and Communists are merely one section. I want to make that distinction clear." (Oneal).

"The Soviet workers do not want war. They want peace in order to be able to carry through the gigantic plans of Socialist construction... We American workers and the workers of the whole world, must close our ranks and stand by the U. S. S. R. and defend it against the blows of world imperialism!... But (Oneal's "but") precisely because of this gap the crisis is not manifested in the same form in the C. P. S. U. as in the capitalist countries: neither the political issues nor the fractional groupings are the same, in no sense is the international opposition (i. e., Right opposition) movement based

upon the issues or groupings in the C.P.S.U. nor does it find its counterpart in any of these groupings." (Lovestone).

"Now, what is the character of the so-called Communist movement in the United States? It is solely and almost exclusively a movement that lives by reflection from Russia." (Oneal).

"An international tendency of Communism that makes its basis of concentration not the general living issues of international (and national) class struggle but issues—many of them outlived—of differences in the Soviet Party is condemned to ultimate sectarianism. This is just what Trotskyism does. The concentration of Trotskyist forces on a world scale takes place primarily on the issues of Soviet policy in which Trotsky differed sharply with the leadership of the C. P. S. U." (Herberg)

A Couple of Exceptionalists

"I don't believe that an international organization of the working class calling itself socialist, claiming to represent the best of Marxian thought, can direct the policies and methods of the workers in all countries of the world, regardless of the particular historical conditions that prevail in each and everyone of these countries. The development of human institutions and thought is by no means a uniform thing." (Oneal the exceptionalist!)

"Trotsky, like Stalin, proceeds along the line of mobilization of the international movement for the program of a fraction of the C.P.S.U.—this is his 'internationalism'! Trotsky, like Stalin, cares not a whit about the specific conditions in the various countries and brands as 'opportunism' the attempt to apply and adapt the general line to these conditions" (Herberg).

"All Socialists who fail to subscribe to every article of the neo-Communist creed are branded as 'traitors' and 'agents of the capitalist class' and parties desiring to affiliate with the Communist International are warned of the necessity of a 'complete and absolute rupture with reformism, and the policy of the 'centrists' and of advocating such a rupture among the widest circles of the Party membership." (Hillquit).

"These question form a closed system of dogma without any regard to their actuality or to their present relation to the vital questions of the revolutionary movement... Trotsky, like Stalin, issues his Open Letters to serve as a basis for the separation of the sheep from the goats, the 'loyalites' from the 'renegades.'" (Herberg). "We are not phrase-mongers nor obedient rubber-stamps." (Lovestone).

A startling and significant similarity! Both sets of quotations exude the same overpowering odor of national fever and contempt of anything but the most harmless and least obligatory internationalism. Both of them wallow in their provincial independence. In 1921, Hillquit and Oneal were proud of the fact that they were not a tail of any "faction" of the Russian Socialists (Mensheviks or Bolsheviks); in actuality, as everyone knows, they were for the Mensheviks who represented the class interests of the counter-revolution. In 1930 Lovestone and Brandler are equally proud not to be the "tail" to any "faction" of the Russian "Communists"; in actuality, to the extent that the Russian revolution interests them, they share the political viewpoint of the Right wing (Bucharin) which represents the class interests of the Thermidorian counter-revolution.

More than 12 years after the Bolshevik uprising, Lovestone dares to express his official, formal viewpoint of Russia thus: "On the various questions at issue—question of tempo or methods—we cannot, as a group, express a definitive opinion because we have not the material upon which such an opinion can be based!" Under cover of "refusing to be a tail to a Russian 'faction'" and a pretended ignorance of what is going on in Russia (twelve years after the October!) Lovestone has turned his back on the Russian revolution.

Nationalism and Internationalism

Hillquit and Oneal tried to separate the estimate of the class forces in the Russian revolution from an estimate of the world revolutionary situation and from the tactics and strategy to be pursued by the socialist movement—not only internationally, but also nationally. Lovestone does

Ross Arrested in Minneapolis

MINNEAPOLIS—Joe Ross, member of the local branch of the Communist League and active in the Laundry Driver's union was arrested here and fined for disorderly conduct by the court for the crime of distributing leaflets issued by the League on unemployment. The leaflets were being distributed in front of the City Auditorium at a huge unemployment meeting called by the local trade union leaders and attended by some 14,000 workers. The fact that they had no program of fight to offer the assembled workers, and that the League leaflet proposed such a program and urged its adoption at the meeting, did not suit the labor bureaucrats. One of them Robert Cramer, erstwhile "progressive", had the cops chase the workers who were distributing the circulars and arrest Ross. Nevertheless, more than 7,000 leaflets were handed out.

The Minneapolis League has called a May Day meeting for Wednesday, April 30, but we go to press too early for a report. The leaflet also urged the workers to join in the May Day demonstration at Bridge Square the next day.

Billings' Release «Postponed»

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—The same legal point that formed the Lowell committee's excuse for confirming the martyrdom of Sacco and Vanzetti may condemn Warren Billings to perpetual imprisonment. Chief Justice Waste of the California supreme court has announced that the investigation of Billings' appeal for pardon is being held up because the court is able only to study the court records of the case and has no power to subpoena witnesses who have knowledge of the frame-up.

"The petition for pardon," says Justice Waste, "is based largely on affidavits obtained since Billings' conviction and repudiating the testimony of a number of prosecution witnesses. There is no machinery provided for investigating angles of a case that happen subsequent to conviction." This is the same ground on which Mooney was refused a new trial when Trial Judge Griffin requested it. Waste also pointed out that the petition is simply before the individual members, who have no executive or judicial power. Even so, he believes it will be "some time" before any decision is reached.



HUNTINGDON, Pa.—"On the surface it might seem that the Soviet is within its rights in setting up an anti-religious government," says Bishop H. S. Longley, Episcopal, of Iowa, in a widely published syndicated statement. "But it is impossible," he continues, "to have in existence a government of this sort without its effect being felt in Christian nations throughout the world. I certainly believe that a diplomatic protest should be made by the nations of the world even though it lead to bloody conflict."

..... the same thing, and that is where the analogy fits.

The Left Opposition is "a tail" to a "Russian faction"; it is an advocate of the revolutionary principles which formed the foundation of the Russian revolution and are now embodied in the Russian Bolshevik Opposition. Lovestone separates the "Russian question" and the theory of "socialism in one country" from the estimate of the world situation and the course the American Marxists must follow in the United States. For us, all these questions are inextricably combined. Trotsky proceeds from an estimate of international economy and politics to an estimate of the national (Russian, let us say) situation. Stalin does precisely the opposite. We outline our course in the United States on the basis of its place in the world revolutionary movement. Lovestone starts the other way around. We remain revolutionary internationalists. The Right wing is slipping back to a sort of Left wing Hillquitism of the 1921 style. —MARSH