

## BOOKS - FOR - WORKERS

### Biography and Revolutionary Struggle

The struggle of the factions in the Comintern is in the last analysis a struggle of the classes. Once more the revolutionary Marxists are a persecuted and calumniated minority in the International they founded and Bolshevism an upstream current in the revolution it created. This turn of events can only deter those who fail to understand the dialectic process. History obstinately refuses to flow in the smooth and unruddled channels marked out for it by Fabian doctrinaires of "gradualism". Only in the brain of a Bucharin is it possible to "abstract" the Soviet Union from the development of world economy and the correlation of class forces.

#### Two Phases of the October Revolution

The October Revolution falls into two phases separated by the death of Lenin. The first was the stage of the conquest of political power and the military and economic consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship through the instrumentality of the conscious Communist vanguard. The second phase is marked by the growth of the elements of dual power, the economic advances of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie the subjection of the Party to the bureaucracy, the replacement of the line of Communism by Centrism.

To screen their back-sliding the Party bureaucrats had resort to the invention and campaign against "Trotskyism". Lenin who was safely embalmed in a mausoleum could be disregarded by the bureaucrats but Trotsky remained as the living symbol of the heroic phase of October. To destroy his immense revolutionary authority therefore became the bureaucrats' prime concern. To this end history and biography were monstrously perverted. An English critic's definition of history as a "Mississippi of falsehoods" was never more fully merited than by the conscienceless fabrications of the school of Stalin.

The powerful sweep of L. D. Trotsky's Autobiography leaves the whole tissue of fraud and misrepresentations woven by the official theoreticians in shreds and tatters. In the light of this memorable work how pitiful even to his own faction must appear the scurrilities with which a Yaroslavsky like the Fat Boy in Dickens, seeks to make our flesh creep. The motley careers of those who sat in judgement on the Opposition, wearing the saintly aureole of the "Old Guard" are here passed in merciless review. Concurrently the organizer of the Red Army sets out the course of the development which led to his complete fusion of goal and method with Lenin in the supreme crisis of October. The biographical test, Trotsky once declared to an Opposition-baiting plenum is not decisive. Bernstein who was the literary executor of Engels wound up as a rabid revisionist. Franz Mehring who approached Marx in a critical spirit ended in the camp of Spartacus. But if biography is indeed to be treated as the criterion, then let us have exact biography not of Trotsky alone but of all concerned.

The owl of Minerva, that bird of wisdom, takes flight when the dusk gathers, runs a familiar saying of Hegel. The temporary cloud on the October Revolution is the last thing any of us desired but the facts being what they are, the theoretical and political contributions of Trotsky since his struggle with the epigones began, are of inestimable service in the education of a whole generation of younger Marxists. Historical Materialism is no philosophy of blind impersonal forces. In reply to the criticism of the Gotha program, the older Liebknecht declared that Marx stood high in his esteem but "the party stands higher". This is the veriest fetishism, creating an entirely false antithesis between party and principle, between organization and leadership. The choice of leaders is as inescapable today as when it had to be made between Marx and Bakunin, between Lenin and Plachanov, between Rosa Luxemburg and Kautsky. The Autobiography before us perfectly fulfills the requirements of Lassalle's dictum that the beginning and end of all great political action lies in the statement of that which is. Trotsky is

the heir to the revolutionary legacy of Marx and Lenin.

Bolshevism did not spring fully grown and accoutred like Pallas Athene from the head of Jove in the Greek fable. "Russia," wrote Lenin, "has attained Marxism... by dint of fifty years travail and sacrifice... Thanks to the emigration forced by the Czar, revolutionary Russia in the second half of the 19th century came into possession of rich international connections, of the grasp of superlative forms and theories of the revolutionary movements abroad as no other country had..." "The road of Bolshevism runs through the struggle with the populist Narodniki, syndicalist "economism", ultra-Left "otsovism", and Menshevik and "conciliatory" opportunism". But not the least of the obstacles it had to clear cut of its path was the conservatism of the "old Bolsheviks" who more than once, declared Lenin, have played a melancholy role in the history of our Party by repeating senseless and obsolete formulae.

These preliminary struggles of Bolshevism have significance only as they serve to prepare the Party for the conquest of political power. Not one of the epigones who called themselves the "Old Guard" measured up to the demands of the great October ordeal. Not one had advanced beyond the position of a Left democrat prior to the arrival of Lenin and his April Theses. The slogan of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry as Lenin conceived it bore two aspects, one that looked to the past and the other to the future. The epigones only saw the part of this slogan. They were prepared for no more than bourgeois revolution, that is Russia a free market, no repudiation of foreign debts, no assistance to the international proletarian revolution, no nationalization of the means of production.

If according to Lenin the role of Zinoviev and Kamenev was no accident, neither could it be an accident that from the distance of New York, Trotsky reached the same conclusions regarding the revolutionary motive forces as Lenin in Switzerland. On March 19, 1917 Trotsky wrote from America: "In this struggle the proletariat

ought to unite about itself the rising masses of the people with one aim in view—to seize governmental power." And three days later: "If the first Russian Revolution in 1905 brought about the revolutions in Asia, in Persia, Turkey, China, the second Russian revolution will be the beginning of powerful revolutionary struggle in Europe..." Trotsky found himself in absolute accord with the April theses. He had remained outside the Bolshevik faction because he feared a tendency would develop within it to limit the revolution to democratic objectives. Fortunately the line of Lenin and the clamor of the masses proved stronger than the democratic Right wing which did indeed crystallize. History fused the theory which is anathema to all bureaucrats—the permanent revolution—with the fundamental strategy of Leninism.

#### The Usurpation by the Bureaucrat

The crisis in the International begins with the usurpation of power by the bureaucrats. The struggle to put an end to the alternative zig-zags of opportunism and adventurism is inextricably linked up with the struggle for a correct Party regime. The base of the leadership in the Soviet Union has become more dangerously narrowed. When Marx characterized Bakunin he anticipated Lenin's characterization of Stalin. Marx wrote: "Theoretically he is a cipher but as a schemer he is in his element." To leave a disloyal figure like Stalin at the helm is, as experiences amply demonstrate, to court disaster for the revolution. The Party regimes in the various sections of the Comintern have been made over in his image—a bureaucracy tempered only by fear of the Opposition.

If the policy of the Comintern officialdom in the period of the British General Strike and the Chinese Revolution was a tragedy, that of the so-called "Third Period" has the elements of a tragic farce. What must be done? We recall that there was another "third period" away back in 1902, when Lenin was fighting one who is a present theoretician of Stalinism, namely Martynov. To the question, what must we do, Lenin wrote: "We must give the brief reply: 'LIQUIDATE THE THIRD PERIOD' (N. Lenin, 1902—"Que Faire"—Paris 1925). And we must add, liquidate the ascendancy of the epigones, purge the program of the Comintern of national Socialism, and restore the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition to its rightful position in the Party. —MAURICE SPECTOR

## T. U. U. L.

### «Mass Work» in Philly

The present state of the newly created North Philadelphia branch of the T.U.U.L., the membership of which has fallen away to ten within a few weeks, is another small but instructive instance of the havoc being wrought in all Party organizations through stupid bureaucratic control.

This branch takes in the proletarian Kensington area and was started on the initiative of a few enthusiastic workers, of whom only one was a Party member. By dint of hard campaigning, and without the least help from the crackpot T. U. U. L. "organizer", Murdock, or the other Stalinist job-holders, they built up a membership of thirty native-born workers and were in a fair way to make things hum around here when the bureaucrats stepped in.

#### The Party Strait-Jacket

They laced the branch in a strait-jacket: programs and policies worked out behind closed doors at the Party headquarters were literally jammed down its throat; anything not contained in them was taboo. Democratic election of functionaries and committee, free discussion from the floor, suggestions for real organizational work, objections to the brazen company union procedure were squelched at once. Seeing that in the eyes of the bureaucrats they were not self-reliant workers but sucking babes, the disgusted members began dropping out by squads.

As was pointed out recently in the Militant, the Kensington area is panting for organization. The workers there are savagely exploited textile slaves of Irish-American and German-American stock with a proud and militant history. But neither during the reign of the Trotsky-phobic Benjamin, nor since, with the Trimmer Gardos on the throne, have the Party officials raised an eyebrow in its direction. The only part played by them in the heroic Aberle mill strike was that of war correspondents behind the firing line, sending preposterous bulletins to the Daily Worker about their wholly fictitious "leadership" of the strikers. And when through the efforts of rank and filers who took the "recruitment campaign" of the T. U. U. L. seriously organization in Kensington was actually begun, they promptly crushed it to death. —J. ARCHIBENKO

## Proposes Fight for Jobless in Chicago Labor Body

### CHICAGO—

The Chicago Federation of Labor now typical of central bodies of the A. F. of L. and quite oblivious of its past militant tradition, has shown a decided fear of venturing into as much as a discussion of the present unemployment crisis. Nevertheless at its meeting, held May 4, a discussion did take place, initiated by comrade Arne Swaback, who has been a delegate from the painters' union for a number of years.

At the early part of this meeting a committee previously appointed made a report on prospects for the establishment of a daily labor paper, to be published by the federation, recommending that as a necessary condition for a daily the present weekly publication be first extended in circulation. In the discussion ensuing several of the delegates who spoke emphasized the need of reviving the militant spirit of the past and voiced some criticism of the present trade union officialdom in general.

It was upon the conclusion of this debate that a letter was read proposing that the Chicago Federation of Labor join in the efforts now being made unitedly by the social charities, the Illinois State Federation of Labor and various civic bodies, including the Chamber of Commerce, to conduct an investigation of the free employment agencies. Upon a question being asked the president, Fitzpatrick, explained that what we are after is not so much to investigate the free employment agencies but rather the "fee" employment agencies which are completely interlocked with the superintendents and managers of the big corporations in getting a rakeoff from the workers when placing anybody in employment.

At this point comrade Swaback se-

cured the floor and turned the attention towards the real problem—the unemployment crisis. He said: "If the connections of the 'fee' employment agencies are as stated by president Fitzpatrick, which I believe to be a correct statement, I cannot see what the Chicago Federation of Labor can expect to accomplish in an investigation to be conducted jointly with the Chamber of Commerce, as the main object of this body will naturally be to protect such institutions and to clamp the lid down on any exposure of this form of racketeering. It would be much more appropriate for the federation to conduct an investigation of its own. Not only that but to look up the unemployment situation in general.

"It is about time for the Chicago Federation of Labor and for the trade union movement as a whole to concern itself with this question. It has done nothing so far to endeavor to protect the workers' interests in this situation or even to begin to fight for the measures which could to an extent become alleviating and which have become a pressing need. The American Federation of Labor leadership has done absolutely nothing in a concrete way. It has even proceeded, true to its reactionary position, to oppose any form of direct unemployment insurance.

"I can think of three important measures which the Chicago Federation of Labor can take up a fight for in order to bring some relief to the unemployment situation. First, to take up the fight for unemployment insurance. Those who have done the productive work but cannot now find jobs are entitled to it. Secondly, to take up the demand everywhere for the shorter workday. I do not mean merely the five day week, but the seven hour day,

or the six hour day, whatever is necessary to bring the relief needed. Thirdly, the Soviet Union, which is now engaged in building up industry for its workers is in need of large scale credit to enable it to buy machinery and material and you know the Soviet Union is the only country which has insisted upon union made products. This country has enormous funds available in the control of Wall Street which could be used for such a purpose. It would be a worthy cause for American labor to take up this demand and bring its mass pressure to bear upon Wall Street to grant such credits with which machinery and material can be bought in America produced by the American workers and thus not only strengthen the bonds between the workers of these two countries but also be a great factor in helping to relieve unemployment here."

The motion was put, and carried. The debate was closed when president Fitzpatrick, using the "privilege" of making a statement from the chair, got up and administered one of his notorious backhanded slaps. He tried to accuse comrade Swaback of not being sincere, of being an obstructionist and a destructionist who had done everything in his power to destroy the American Federation of Labor. Some ardent claquers immediately began pounding the palms of their hands, but when the general audience failed to follow it died quickly as a fizzle.

When comrade Swaback left the hall several rank and file delegates came to him to shake hands as a token of their agreement. One remarked: "A dirty slam is no answer and the correctness of your arguments could not be contradicted."