

A Review and Criticism

The Communists in the South

By HUGO OEHLER

(Continued from Last Issue)

Success or failure of any struggle depends on how wide your first break is, and how fast you follow this up with additional attacks before the bosses can mobilize a counter attack. This is true in every stage of the development of the struggle. For example in Passaic, the first attack of the workers was followed up with not one but several victories before the bosses could begin an important counter-attack.

If our first attack is not broadened before the bosses answer, we are not so able to withstand these blows but if we make big inroads and then the bosses attack, it is not felt so easily and we can not only better withstand their blows but answer them much faster before the bosses can follow up.

Such was not our fortune in Gastonia. Our mass picketing was very good, but did not enable us to follow up this first point with anything of consequence. The bosses answered the first blow with the Loray Committee of 100, organized from overseers, thugs and superintendants, led by Major Bulwinkle of Loray Mill. To this was added wholesale arrests by the local police and the cavalry terror, the church and the local press. April 10th the cavalry was removed and 35 deputized American Legion men replaced them. In the meantime the National Textile Workers Union was doing its best to push ahead. Several hundred struck in Bessemer City several miles from Gastonia. The small force of organizers who had strike experience were pressed to handle this mass of determined but inexperienced workers.

The Strike in Full Swing

By April the 15th the strike was in full swing with the W.I.R., the I.L.D., and Communist youth handling the work. The use of police, militia, gunmen and press could be expected.

We did not have long to wait. On April 18, a bosses' mob, under police and deputy protection wrecked the union office in a well-planned fashion. The demolishing of the W.I.R. supplies and the continual wholesale evictions, arrests and intimidations of strikers through the rest of April and in May showed us that the bosses were gaining in the counter attack.

In this whole period from the strike to the mob terror the spirit of the strike rose and repulsed each attack with sacrifice and determination but without effective counter-offense, entirely confined to counter-defense. In this period of attack on the workers we could have answered in a more positive way, if our leading force had been handled right.

Half the time Beal and the other leading comrades were sent back and forth from Elizabethton to Lexington, etc. hundreds of miles with most of those in the Gastonia area handicapped and those in New York ordering these drives as though they were sending some one from New York City to Passaic. Such a broadening out activity and especially in relation to A.F.L. activity must be carried on but not at the expense of our base and Southern center and that only further played into the hands of a powerful enemy attacking us on all sides in the Gastonia area.

Added to this improper draining of the field center was the sending of comrades such as Crouch and Pershing, etc., who may be able to function some places under proper leadership but who only "messed things up" in the strike area with bombastic disconnected "radicalism".

This first mob action and police attacks were answered by rebuilding and continuing the work. Broken picket lines were reformed. Throughout the country the issue was raised for Gastonia and funds started to flow in to help. Mass meetings were held daily at the Union headquarters in Gastonia and workers for many miles around came in and asked for organizers for their mill towns. Hundreds were signed up into the Union from all parts of the area. The "unorganizable" were starting to organize.

The rebuilding and recruiting inspired the hope and the stubborn picket lines reformed firm ranks. The union planned to follow up this drive with a new drive on July 1 to close the mill. This belated attack was known to the Committee of 100

before it materialized and the terror of the thugs increased with a plan of ending it all before the new drive would start.

The Company's plan, like the union's fell short with the murderous raid of Chief Aderholt and his death through the workers' self defense on June 7. The planned drive of the union was transformed into a counter attack of the law with the Committee of 100 to follow up and clean them out. The first part of this counter attack of the bosses' legal troops was transformed into their defeat by the heroic action of the striking textile workers. The bosses force followed up the June 7th raid with terror for a week, wholesale arrest, intimidation, searching of homes, beatings, attempted lynching of Beal and others who were jailed.

With the entire force of active strikers and leaders arrested, held without right of bail, the police closed the destroyed tent colony and union headquarters and reaction and terror rode the country.

In this atmosphere came the national representatives of the W.I.R. and I.L.D. and although at first arrested and intimidated the W.I.R. took the lead and opened a new tent colony with the I.L.D. preparing for legal aid. This force brought new hope to the shattered and scattered forces of

The Sources of Manuilsky and Co.

Manuilsky is now drooling about the "Bonapartist" tendencies of Trotsky. The cheap Bohemia of the New Masses and other publication of the same type have also seized on this theme. For these people, Bonapartism is an individual feature of character and not a regime flowing from class relations, from the policy of veering between classes. Where must one's eyes be to discover at present Bonapartism in the Opposition when all the preparations for the Sixteenth Congress represent a repetition, a rehearsal of Bonapartism on the Party proscenium!

But we do not wish to raise here general questions, but to contribute some historical data on the source of the spiritual inspiration of Manuilsky and his American and other pupils.

In 1923 a book by Oskar Blum appeared in Germany giving the personal characteristics of the leaders of the revolution. This book was first to discover in Trotsky signs of the "new Corsican". Before we give a characterization of the book, however, it is necessary to say a few words about the author.

In the period of the first revolution, Oskar Blum was considered a social democrat and a Marxist, a partisan of Plekhanov. In the years of reaction he was suspected of connections with the gendarmerie. Arriving from Riga to Vienna, he addressed himself to Trotsky with a request to help him re-establish his revolutionary honor. On the basis of his own tales, Trotsky came to the conclusion that Blum could not be tolerated in the revolutionary ranks. After the revolution of 1917, documents were found which proved conclusively that Blum was in the employ of the gendarmerie of Riga. Blum was arrested and afterwards, through someone's thoughtlessness, he was freed from jail after which he fled abroad where he published the book about the leaders of the revolution. The general character of the book can be sufficiently determined by the character of its author: it is scurrilous libel.

A Plagiary from Oskar Blum

A review of Blum's book was printed in the organ of the Bureau of Party History, *Proletarian Revolution*, in November, 1923, when the campaign of the epigones against Trotsky was already being widely diffused. Nevertheless, in that period, the brains of the Party and the Comintern were not yet piled up with the tons of gossip and slander and generally with all kinds of refuse, and the official publications had not yet gotten out of the habit of using the language they were writing in Lenin's time. The author of the article in the *Proletarian Revolution*, not knowing that Blum had sufficient personal reasons to be dissatisfied with Trotsky observed in bewilderment the particular viciousness of Blum with

blacklisted, arrested, evicted and terrorized textile workers.

One of the outstanding weaknesses of our work brought to the surface by this period of reaction following June 7th was that all members recruited in the union were admitted through the Gastonia central office AND IN THIS WHOLE PERIOD NO MILL LOCALS HAD BEEN SET UP, yet we had plenty of material and time to do so. If a few mill locals had been set up the union would have been able to weather this storm in a far greater stable fashion and chaos would not have reigned. And instead of the auxiliary organizations reorganizing and laying a base they would have acted in a helpful secondary fashion and on the whole we would have been able to answer this with greater success.

The mill bosses through the control of Gaston County and the City of Gastonia government as well as the state government, lost no time and indicted 23 for murder—16 for first degree murder.

The fact that the union did not answer this attack and indictment and replace Beal at once, lost our forces valuable time that as far as the Loray strike was concerned could not be made up.

The new force sent in over a month after this terror, July 12th, inherited the strike of Loray and Bessemer that weeks before had been settled as far as life and immediate demands were concerned but a strike that was still officially on. On top of this they inherited the bombastic action of the fly by night organizers sent in, and add to this, the loss of records and chaotic conditions of the union forces after this month period.

regards to Trotsky.

"Therefore", it says in the review, "he let loose at Trotsky. Here the author puts into motion his whole baggage of the most impossible lies, slanders and charlatanism. In the face, the beard, the lips—in everything he anxiously looks for confirmation for his calumnious words. First of all—power. 'He (Trotsky) wanted the revolution,' it says there, 'because he wanted himself. Others spoke about the seizure of power because they considered the historical moment ripe for the transfer of power to the last powerless class. He spoke about the seizure of power because he considered himself ready to fake possession of the power.' (Page 83.) In the building of 'Trotsky's ministry' exemplary order and cleanliness prevail. Aha! This is the secret of Trotsky's personal power. In Trotsky's military orders, military style is felt—Aha! There are the signs of the new Corsican. And the palace guard, and the body guard—true, not in gilded livery, but—in the orderly uniform of the Red Guard!... The pamphlet ends with a transparent insinuation: 'Material power is in his hands. What next?' (*Proletarian Revolution*, November 23, 1923, pages 247-248).

Now take Manuilsky's article on Trotsky's "Autobiography". Take the review of the *New Masses* and the rest of the reptile press: In what do they differ from Oskar Blum? In nothing. What have they added to his revelations? Nothing. Their writings are a direct plagiary from the stipendiary of the Riga gendarmerie. Is it not because these gentlemen themselves have the psychology of stipendiaries, which is irreconcilable with the psychology of revolutionists?

Lenin on the Libellers of Trotsky

At any rate, the source of Manuilsky's inspiration is revealed very accurately. This, however, is not the only incident. There is a more important one which, by the way, has already been quoted by the *Opposition*, but we will bring it to mind once more because it has incomparable conviction. It is known that the whole campaign against "Trotskyism" began with the question of the peasantry: Contrary to Lenin, Trotsky is supposed to have underestimated the peasantry in general and the middle peasant in particular. The epigones have forgotten the source of this legend. Nevertheless it is rooted in the agitation carried on by the White Guards among the peasants during the Civil War. Lenin, in his day, took advantage of the first suitable occasion in order to dispose of this legend. These are his own words:

"In the *Izvestia* of February 7th, there appeared a letter from the peasant G. Gulov, who asks about the relation of our Workers and Peasants gov-

The Lying Campaign

Some of our Jewish comrades may have read the account of the India demonstration given in the *Freiheit*. In the midst of overwhelming paragraphs describing the heroism of the workers in defending their demonstration, was a short reference to the part played by the Communist League of America (Opposition).

The *Freiheit* reported that we appeared, surrounded by a bodyguard of detectives. According to the reporter, our only purpose in attending the meeting was to advertise our organ, the *Militant*. Probably the reporter was too exhausted by his struggles to read the whole of the placard displayed by the Communist League of America (Opposition). Or perhaps it is more convenient to forget that our banner, as well as those of the Party, supported the Indian Revolution.

The comrades made short work of us "counter-revolutionaries" prevented our breaking up of the meeting, and destroyed our papers and leaflets, says the article. In spite of the confident report of the *Freiheit*, however, many of our members remarked the sympathy of the surrounding Party comrades. Most them objected to, rather than helped in, the work of dispersing us. This in itself is a significant fact. It seems that they are beginning to realize that in a matter, such as the Indian demonstration, in which we are at one with the Party, to divide forces and fight among ourselves is the stupidest folly, and the best inducement to police intervention.

Having dubbed us "renegades", the program. In spite of the persistent lies, Party cannot reconcile this supposed character of the Left Opposition with our continued support of the correct part of its however, Party members are becoming more and more sympathetically inclined towards the Left Opposition.

—LILLIAN BORD

ernment to the middle peasantry, and speaks of rumors to the effect that Lenin and Trotsky are not in harmony, that there are big disagreements between them, and especially upon this subject of the middle peasant.

Comrade Trotsky has already given his answer in *Izvestia* for February 7. Comrade Trotsky says that the rumors of disagreement between him and me are a monstrous lie, propagated by the landlords and capitalists or their conscious or unconscious servitors. I, upon my part, fully confirm this statement of comrade Trotsky. There are no disagreements between him and me, and in regard to the middle peasants there are no disagreements not only between Trotsky and me, but in general in the Communist Party of which we are both members.

Comrade Trotsky in his letter explained clearly and in detail why the Party of the Communists and the present workers and peasants government elected by the Soviets and members of that Party do not consider the middle peasants their enemies. I subscribe with both hands to everything Trotsky wrote." (*Lenin* Vol. XIV, pp. 28-29, *Pravda*, No. 35, February, 1919).

This is the way the epigones and their office-holders, among them also the so-called Friends of the Soviet Union, simply repeat for a number of years what Lenin in 1919 characterized as "lies spread by landowners, etc.... or their conscious or unconscious servitors."

This is how sadly matters stand. And not by accident. Centrism is not very inventive. It is ideologically poor and possesses a short memory. When this intermediary, shaky, unprincipled current leads a struggle against the revolutionary wing, it must necessarily borrow conclusions from the Right wing. It has none of its own and by its very nature, it can not have. And because by the logic of the struggle, Centrism is compelled to deepen its accusations against "Trotskyism" it is by that itself compelled to look for all the more muddy sources of inspiration. On this road matters have reached plagiarism of Manuilsky and Co. from the agent of the Okhrana, Oskar Blum.

What next?

—D.

If the number on your wrapper is

52

then your subscription to the *Militant* has expired. Renew immediately in order to avoid missing any issues.