

EDITORIAL NOTES

L. W. W. WISDOM
Some comrades who have contributed money to the General Defense Committee of the I. W. W. to help in the defense of the Kentucky miners—as the Militant suggested a number of times—have called attention to the statement in the Industrial Worker of February 2 to the effect that “the Trotskyites have never donated a single penny for the relief or defense of the Kentucky miners,” and the profound conclusion: “Classify the Trotskyites with the other traitors who have sabotaged the Kentucky miners.” We can only attribute the indignation of the comrades in question to inexperience. If you have any dealings with the I. W. W. you have to get used to playful remarks of this kind and not take them too seriously. It is just the I. W. W. way of writing out receipts.

What is more important to notice is the approach of the Industrial Worker to the serious defeats suffered by the working class in the convictions of Jones and Hightower. In these defeats, there is revealed a deplorable weakness of the labor movement. This should be the point of analysis and discussion by every militant who considers things from the standpoint of the class and its armament for future battles. But the Industrial Worker—if one is to judge by its extended comments on February 2—has not considered this side of the question. That is why its comments are so barren, so permeated with petty factional recrimination and so devoid of any proposals for the future organization of the class fight in such a way as to make good the defeats.

LASSALLE

The editorial board of the Militant owes an apology to its readers for the publication, in the issue of January 30, of the book review dealing with a recent biography of Lassalle. The superficial quality of this article, as well as its flippant and presumptuous tone, have been remarked as more appropriate for the New Masses than for our paper. The entire article contradicts our attitude toward the great historic figure of the proletariat, among whom we count Lassalle. Its appearance in these columns was entirely accidental. We are decidedly against the attitude expressed in the article, and we still more against the spirit of it.

CHICAGO OPEN FORUM
“The Two Billion Dollar Credit Pool, the Crisis and the Workers”

Speaker: Hugo Oehler
Sunday, FEBRUARY 21, 1932
at
1435 N. Western Avenue.
Auspices: Chicago Branch, C. L. of A. (Opposition)

N. Y. Open Forum

On Friday, February 5th, comrade Glotzer spoke to an audience of about eighty workers including some party members on the subject of Communism or Fascism in Germany. Comrade Glotzer developed the implication of a Fascist victory in Germany for the international working class, including the Soviet Union, and sharply criticized the Comintern's present capitulating policy.

The outstanding incident of the discussion which followed was a presentation of the Stalinist position on the German question. Incredible as it may seem the comrade argued that India or China, not Germany, was the key to the international situation. He claimed, too, that the victory of Fascism in Germany would not precipitate intervention in the U. S. S. R.

Comrade Glotzer's summation of the discussion shattered these arguments to bits. He showed again, upon the basis of the Stalinist move, the frightful consequences for the C. P. G., the trade unions, all working class organizations including the social democracy, of a Fascist victory in Germany; the inevitable world wide reaction that would follow, and the certainty of intervention on the U. S. S. R.

The forum was a demonstration that despite the shameful silence of Stalin and the Comintern generally and the Daily Worker in this country, on the burning importance of the situation in Germany, revolutionary internationalism is still alive even in the ranks of the party stifled by the bureaucratic leadership.

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Arne Swaback

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The founder of the German labor movement were not without shortcomings in the field of theory and tactics. Marx, who was his contemporary, explained them sufficiently and they are known to the students of socialist history. But, for every serious revolutionist, Lassalle remains Lassalle, the sword and the flame of the proletariat. We do not grant to anyone the right to disparage and belittle him—and thereby to distort him altogether and to obscure his grandiose historic import.

Lenin, who was not so presumptuous, spoke of Lassalle many times, and always with respect. He began his famous brochure “What is to be done?” by quoting, in thesis form, from a letter of Lassalle to Marx. In another place he speaks of “the historical service Lassalle rendered to the German labor movement.” Trotsky has referred to him in the same manner in “Our Revolution” and in other works. Such examples were lost on the reviewer who appraised Lassalle in the Militant.

It is necessary to protest against the utterly false evaluation of Lassalle in the review under consideration. But it is no less important to react against the spirit it manifests. We have to be careful that such a movement as ours which is obliged, especially under present conditions, to emphasize the critical side of its work, does not become a playground for smart-aleckism and parvenue self-assurance. Tendencies of this kind are to be seen now and then, especially among the youth. The parvenue spirit is the petty-bourgeois spirit. It is alien to an organization of proletarian revolutionaries and has no legitimate rights within it.

—J. P. C.

In Spain: The Socialists and State Power

Reformists Maneuver to Avoid Responsibility before the Laboring Masses

The party with the strongest influence among the workers and peasants of Spain today is the socialist party. In the coalition cabinet of the Cortes it is represented by three ministers, Caballero, de los Rios and Prieto. As a consequence of the relationship of forces in the country the question of a socialist government in power has become one of the most acute issues in the present-day politics of Spain.

One can scarcely point to any other body in the country that has played a more despicable role in Spain than the socialist party. During the period of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, with its record of reaction and repression, the socialist leaders worked hand in hand with the dictatorship. Largo Caballero, the leading spokesman of the socialist party and Secretary of the socialist General Workers Union, was a Councillor of State under Primo, and by his assistance to the dictator purchased a legal existence for his party and his trade union organization, both of which were converted into docile agencies of the state. It was Caballero, functioning as Councillor of State, who elaborated the notorious law providing for the “comites paritarios”, consecrating by compulsion the system of class collaboration throughout every industry. Until virtually the last day of the monarchy, the socialist leaders helped to drag the dictatorial juggernaut over the prostrate bodies of the Spanish working class and peasantry.

The intensification of the revolutionary situation, marked by fierce general strikes in the principal localities served to cut the reluctant socialist away from the dictatorship. The bourgeoisie, com-

pelled to sacrifice the monarch to the furious advance of the insurrectionary people, wisely provided themselves with a buttress on the Left side in the form of the bourgeois-socialist coalition in the revolutionary committee which subsequently constituted the government.

The Socialists in the Coalition

The drawing of the socialists into the coalition had a double advantage for the bourgeoisie. In the first place, the election apparatus of the S. P. was immediately placed at the service of the joint coalition—no small matter, for the S. P. constituted after the proclamation of the republic about the only political party with even a well-equipped skeleton organization. Secondly, the presence of these socialist and trade union representatives in the government served to give it sufficient of a rose tint at the outset to attract the support of masses of workers and peasants who, still dominated by strong democratic illusions, would have regarded a purely bourgeois government with considerably greater suspicion and even hostility.

But such an inconvenient combination cannot last forever. That is to say, the development of the struggle, far from moderating, is becoming increasingly acute. The masses are demanding a cash payment for their revolutionary uprising which ushered in the republic, they are demanding the fulfillment of those multitudinous promises with which the bourgeoisie bought their support. Issues are therefore being put so pointedly that it becomes increasingly difficult for the socialist leaders to take the same position towards them as is taken

by the reactionary bourgeoisie, out of fear of disillusioning the masses who still have a measure of faith in them.

The Purpose of a “Socialist” Government

In addition, the problem should be regarded from another angle. A bourgeois government in which the socialists merely participate but do not “govern” necessarily brings down upon itself growing measures of popular wrath. Necessarily, for the simple reason that the bourgeoisie, to consolidate its position, is compelled to inaugurate reactionary proposals which rob the masses of any pretense to democratic rights and which flaunts all the promises made in the early days. As the resentment and activity of the masses, rebelling as they are against these proposals, increase, the bourgeoisie, or at the very least, a substantial section of this class, find it the best part of wisdom to put a “Left” wall between its domination and the assaults of the masses, in other words, a “socialist government” which they hope will more easily absorb the shocks of mass action. Another section of the bourgeoisie, it is true, bolder and headier, demands even stronger measures for the establishment of “law and order”, measures which lead straight in the direction of Fascism. Thus is established the division of opinion in the ranks of the bourgeoisie: the latter standpoint is represented by Lerroux, who is already proceeding to organize a Fascist band throughout Spain; the former standpoint is advocated by fairly powerful organs of the ruling class, for example, the ex-monarchist and now “republican” daily in Madrid, El Sol.

The Attitude of the Socialists

In the ranks of the socialist party leaders themselves, however, there is a division of opinion on the matter of a “socialist government”, or more accurately, of a “socialist coalition”, for none of them has yet advocated a “purely” socialist cabinet. Largo Caballero, one of the least popular but strongest of the socialist leaders, ruling figure in the G. W. U., minister of labor in the cabinet, and ruled by an uncontrollable ambition to head the government, has already declared publicly the readiness of the socialist party to constitute the government and its cabinet. In the interview which he granted a couple of months ago, he emphasized however, that the socialists would not take over the government completely, but would include in their cabinet the representatives of other parties, for they realize that they have not enough strength and that the situation “is not ripe enough” for the socialists “to put through their complete program”. The same point of view was underscored

--From Comrade Trotsky's Letter to the National Sections--

1. I have received No. 5 of the organ of our Bulgarian friends, Osvobozhdenie (Emancipation). This number contains truly astounding material of the maltreatment of our comrades in the prisons by the Stalinists imprisoned there. It appears that a group of supporters of the Left Opposition has been formed against the prisoners in some of the Bulgarian penitentiaries. Against them, a rabid and thoroughly poisoned, that is, a purely Stalinist baiting is carried on, which is fostered by bureaucrats from the outside. One need not doubt that among the incarcerated Stalinists there are not a few honest and upright revolutionists. But when in the name of the Comintern they are told all sorts of atrocities about the Left Opposition, atrocities which they cannot verify in prison, they pour out their prison hatred upon the Left Oppositionists, that is, they take the road of least resistance. The demand of the Oppositionists that these accusations be stated openly and verified, leads to new calumnies and physical collisions.

In Plovdiv (Phillipopol) a few comrades were heavily wounded, the Stalinists applying to the state prosecutor with a complaint against our comrades who were thereupon completely locked into punitive cells. Concerning this incident a letter of comrade D. Gatschev, addressed to the state prosecutor, on October 16, 1931, is published in Osvobozhdenie. An excellent document which—as the editorial board correctly writes—bespeaks the high proletarian morale of our incarcerated friends. In my opinion this letter must be brought out in the whole international press of the Left Opposition; it deserves it in every respect. The declaration begins by pointing out that its author belongs to the International Left Opposition. Further on it says: “Mr. State Prosecutor, I have never wanted and would never permit your interference in our factional struggles. You are the representative of bourgeois class rule against which we are fighting in order to replace it by the rule of the working class. We are a fraction in the class struggle movement of the proletariat which is a foe of the class which you serve”. Since his faction opponents nevertheless turn to the state prosecutor, Gatschev considered it necessary to put the truth correctly. Further on, the tragic episode of the collision, is presented in detail. After Gatschev has quoted Trotsky's article on the impermissibility of terrorized methods in the internal faction fights of the working class, he continues: “We cannot make use of provocation, terror, swindle, calumny, killings, etc., in the struggle against comrades. But when we are assaulted—shall we not defend ourselves? Yes, we defend ourselves because we are not Christians”.

The letter ends with the following words: “The real judgment will be given by the working class. It is to it that I appeal”. Similar incidents took place in other prisons. The public opinion of the working class must be informed as widely as possible about these facts. Our Bulgarian comrades must feel that they are not alone, that there are hundreds and thousands of comrades with them in every country and that the number of their friends is growing rapidly.

It should be added that comrade Gatschev was at once time sentenced to death.

Greece

2. I have received a group picture of 23 Greek comrades, Bolshevik-Leninists, “Archie-Marxists”, who are incarcerated in Singros prison in Athens. This picture gave me a living and direct idea of the composition of our Greek section. Shameless, paid bureaucrats have had the cheek to call these proletarians whose revolutionary spirit is written upon their countenances—Fascists! Wherever the faction of the Bolshevik-Leninists in Greece has sunk firm roots in the working class the future belongs to genuine Bolshevism, to genuine Marxism. I salute most warmly our imprisoned comrades.

Russia

3. Just two months ago we received documents and material from the U. S. S. R., which characterized the theoretical and political work of the leading cadres of the Left Opposition. This material consists of a few hundred small sheets which are written with such microscopic letters (for the purpose of conspirative dispatch) that it took some six weeks to decipher it with magnifying lens in hand. By their externals alone they bespeak the high revolutionary efforts that are concealed behind them. The material received after so long a delay, we have begun to publish in the Bulletin of the Russian Opposition. In No. 25-26 there is reprinted a large article by comrade Rakovsky and programmatic theses of three exiles. Every reader will be convinced without difficulty of how far the Russian Opposition stands from the idea of a capitulation. The material, which contains the internal discussions in the Left Opposition evidences the high level upon which the theoretical political level of the Russian Bolshevik-Leninists is unfolding. In it a new generation of Marxists is taking shape, which will not permit the extinction of the theoretical spirit of scientific Communism. The less opportunity the Russian comrades have to let themselves be heard from at the right time and audibly, the more resolutely and intransigently the foreign comrades must repel intrigues and insinuations of all sorts, regardless of the source from which they come.

The January Conference of the C. P. S. U.

4. The preparations of the January Conference of the C. P. S. U. are entirely under the sign of the struggle against “Trotskyism”. How long ago is

it that the Stalinist bureaucracy declared “Trotskyism” liquidated? (Molotov exclaimed: “Coffin, finished!” and so forth.) Is it so long ago that it was established: “The Right opposition is from now on the main danger!” Now we have a new turn. “Trotskyism” is the principal foe! It is discovered that “Trotskyism” has penetrated into all the institutions of learning, into the most important text books and even into the commentaries to Lenin's works. The Central Committee informs the organizations by telegraph that—while the Right wing opposition seeks points of support on the land, in the Kolkhozes, etc.—the “Trotskyists” raise their heads in the industrial districts. Kaganovitch, the Amsterdamer, presented a speech before the Institute of Red Professors, which fills up a whole page of the Pravda, on the need of opening up a struggle against “Trotskyism” all along the line. On the political significance of this campaign, we will have to express ourselves especially in the near future. For the time being, it is sufficient to mention a few facts that leap particularly to the eye. The Stalinist top is compelled to draw the circle ever more closely around it. Ever less and less, can it base itself upon those who repeat the general incumbent formulae of fidelity. That is why it invents supplementary formulae, ever more enormous, which finally culminate in the dogma of Stalin's infallibility. Every attempt at Marxist research in any direction whatever, leads inevitably to conflicts with the ideology of Stalinism. An ever greater number of people who are not connected with “Trotskyism” by anything whatsoever, who are, on the contrary, even hostile to it, fall under the accusation of “Trotskyism”. On the other hand, it appears that the most important Marxist seats of learning in all the higher educational institutions are occupied by oppositionists who have capitulated. This fact demonstrates indirectly, but very convincingly, that a serious theoretical life exists only within the Left Opposition, so that the Stalinist bureaucracy is compelled to use renegades to occupy the most important seats of learning.

The fact that such a tremendous state and party apparatus is compelled, after eight years of uninterrupted and bitter struggles against the Left Opposition, to concentrate all its forces once again for the struggle against “Trotskyism”, shows the imperturbable vitality of our ideas. The Russian Left Opposition still has a great historical word to say.

—L. TROTSKY.

Pioneer Publishers Notes

The Catholic Church exercises a strict censorship over the books its flock is permitted to read. In this manner it keeps its sheep in peaceful ignorance, and therefore docile and obedient to the Church.

The readers of the official Communist parties have learned from the Pope—or have they never forgotten their early training? They too dictate to their flock: “You must not read anything by Trotsky or any of the Left Opposition writers.” By this prohibition they hope to keep the membership ignorant of the issues under discussion. But here and there, as in the Catholic Church, daring individuals rebel against being kept ignorant. They insist on their right and try to read the opposition material if they are to polemize intelligently. For the benefit of these, as well as others who want to know what the disputes are which have torn the Communist movement of the world into factions, we have undertaken the task of publishing for the first time in English all the manuscripts which have been suppressed by the “official” party.

THE DRAFT PROGRAM

The first of these manuscripts was The Draft Program, smuggled out of Russia. Months later we discovered that this was only part of Trotsky's criticism submitted to the Sixth World Congress. We then secured the balance, and published it separately under the title of The Strategy of the World Revolution. This pamphlet is in reality the second part of the Draft Program.

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by Caballero's colleague, de los Rios, minister of Justice, in his interview to El Sol last November.

Opposing this standpoint is the group headed by Besteiro, a more popular figure in the party, who is in fact, its chairman, as well as the chairman of the G. W. U. and the president of the Cortes. Besteiro opposes a socialist coalition until the party is in a “strong enough position” to carry out the “full socialist program for the reconstruction of society”.

The Reformists Fear the Consequences

Between both viewpoints, the whole essence of the issue is juggled around with an elaborate and pompous cynicism. The socialists are the strongest party in the country, with the largest representation in the Cortes. They do not take power as a “pure” socialist government for the simple reason that they fear the consequences of assuming so heavy a responsibility before the masses. A real socialist party government could do little more and little less than social democratic governments have done in the past in such countries as Germany, Belgium and England. It would carry out, in every essential respect, the policy of the bourgeoisie, to which it is bound by a thousand threads. But carrying out a bourgeois policy under its own name, without the possibility of furnishing pretexts or shifting responsibility, would hasten phenomenally the disillusionment of the masses who still follow the socialist party and are bedeviled with democratic fantasies. Upon the background of a socialist government, would be starkly revealed all the cowardice, shamelessness, impotence and reactionism of the social democracy, in such a manner as would become clear to all. That is why the socialist leaders recoil from the prospect; that is why even the most hard-pressed bourgeois thinks twice and three times before taking such a step—after it might come the revolutionary deluge.

What Is the Official C. P. Doing?

In view of this situation, the official party stubbornly refuses to adopt the slogan and tactic advocated by the Left Opposition which is for driving the socialists into a corner and compelling them to take a stand in the government which will facilitate the winning of the masses for the revolutionary cause: the slogan and tactic which Lenin's Bolsheviks applied with such exemplary success between the February and October revolutions in Russia. Against this position, the Stalinists adopt a thoroughly sectarian and sterile attitude. Bureaucratic boasting replaces revolutionary tactics.

The party is forced into a position of inactive expectancy, waiting and hoping for the socialist party to lose influence among the masses automatically, so to speak. It is quite true that the socialist party leaders have conducted themselves before and since the proclamation of the republic in a most hideous manner, which has undoubtedly resulted in a certain decline of its influence. Unfortunately, this process is by no means a one-sided one, it is not automatic, and does not follow a straight line. If it took place in a vacuum, one might even establish with mathematical accuracy the point at which socialist influence upon the masses would reach the vanishing point. But it takes place, on the contrary, in a live and complicated environment. Just as socialist opportunism has so often resulted in a strengthening of anarchist and syndicalist ideology in the masses, so also does anarchist sectarianism and impotence frequently drive the disappointed masses back into the arms of the social democratic opportunists. This is being proved in Spain today. One need only point to Barcelona, where the socialist G. W. U. is gaining strength for the first time in years as a result of the hopeless course pursued by the anarchists. Thus these two extremes of the labor movement feed upon each other parasitically. Worse yet, the antics and incapacity of the Stalinists have nullified many of the splendid opportunities which Communism was offered at the expense of the social democracy in Spain. A more detailed exposition of these phases of the Spanish situation we leave to the forthcoming articles.

—MAX SHACHTMAN.

MINNEAPOLIS
WORKERS OPEN FORUM
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What It Means to American Workers
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