

Welcome Back, H. M. Wicks!

Expert on Renegacy Returns from Long Absence

One of the big events of the month in American Party circles is the triumphant return of H. M. Wicks after a long sojourn in foreign parts. This return of a hero has been fittingly celebrated by the publication of an article from his pen in the *Daily Worker* of May 18th, in the course of which he excoriates the "renegades" in his own characteristic and inimitable style.

There is one thing to be said for Wicks: when he writes on the subject of renegacy he knows what he is writing about. In contrast to those bungling amateurs who denounce the "renegades" in routine fashion, without any real knowledge or conviction, Wicks brings to the task the ease and assurance and the cunning touch that derives from a practical experience in the business. Wicks knows the game from the inside; on the subject of renegacy, he is an expert.

In the article referred to above Wicks returns once again to the battle against us which he first began in the early days of the American Communist movement. Twelve years ago, when some of the present leaders of the Left Opposition were in jail as a result of the Palmer terror and others were organizing the underground groups of the future party on the outside, Wicks distinguished himself in the red-baiting campaign of that time. Originally a prominent leader of the Left wing of the Socialist party, and later of the C. P., he passed over to the other side under pressure of the terror and attacked his former comrades with no less venom than he has shown in the anti-Trotsky campaign of recent times. The dates and some of the names are different, but the essential content is the same.

In the *Militant* for September 15th, 1920 we printed the record of Wicks' renegacy. Shortly thereafter he disappeared from the country and nothing was heard from him for a long time. Now he is back again, and back to the old job of denouncing the "renegades". What better way to greet his return can there be than to print that record again? Here it is; a verbatim reproduction of the report of his speech from the Gary, Indiana, *Post* (now the *Post-Tribune*) of Thursday, March 25, 1920, pages 1 and 9:

BARES UNDERHAND 'RED' PLOT TO USE UNIONS TO RUIN UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

"H. M. Wicks of Chicago, a reformed Socialist, spoke on the revolutionary tendencies of the times to some forty Gary men last evening. Mr. Wicks established a Socialist local in Gary several years ago; he said he helped select Oscar Anderson as the leader of the Gary strike; therefore he did not appear to be an entire stranger.

"He charged that the steel strike was wholly the work of the syndicalist movement. Violent minorities in the steel unions forced the strike against the wishes of the majority, he said. The majorities did not want to strike but were hounded down by the leather-lunged minorities whose only argument was that the opponents of the strike were agents of Judge Gary.

BREAKS WITH PARTY

"Mr. Wicks has been a socialist in good standing until last fall when he openly broke with the Socialist Party. Previous to that time he had served as a member of the National Executive Committee of the Party. He said he was familiar with the work and attitude of the Socialists, I. W. W., Communists and all revolutionists.

"With very few exceptions, he said, the radicals are not Americans. Most of the Socialists are people of foreign birth and citizenship and many of them do not even speak the English language.

WORK FOR AMERICAN LEGION

"Bill Haywood and his satellites should not be tolerated in this country, Mr. Wicks said, he had been advising American Legion members not to permit these vermin to talk to them, but to knock them down. That, he said, is the only language they understand.

"The speaker charged that the Socialist Party was thoroughly pro-German during the war and is today controlled by the pro-German Victor Berger. He said Berger richly deserved the 20 year sentence meted out some time ago and he hoped the Milwaukee man would be forced to serve his time. He said if there ever was a traitor to his country Berger was it.

NO USE FOR 'REDS'

"Mr. Wicks has no respect for Socialists or radicals of any sort. Having associated with them intimately for years he claims to know them exactly as they are and he says that they are all selfish opportunists who are simply after something for themselves.

"He commended the deportation proceedings that have rid the country of many agitators and urged that other foreign trouble makers be given the same treatment. He urged an Americanization program for the foreign speaking workers and he said the American Legion is the one organization in the country which is doing good Americanization work.

EXPULSION FOR DEFEAT

"Mr. Wicks was especially severe of the brand of democracy that the various organizations subscribe to. He said when Victor Berger and Morris Hillquit were defeated by the Party vote they simply expelled many of the Socialists who voted against them and retained control.

"He told of attending the congress of the Communist Party in Chicago where by use of a caucus about one-fourth of the delegates controlled the meeting.

"Lenin is a dictator, and Emma Gold-

man and Ben Reitman would not dare to carry on the propaganda in Russia which they did carry on here. If they did it would be a firing squad for them.

"The purpose of the revolutionists today is not democracy. They want the rule of the militant minority. Mr. Wicks charged that Syndicalism had been taken up in many instances by unions. He said there is no question about the syndicalism of Foster, who was secretary of the Steel Strike organization. He said he knew Foster personally and was positive that the late strike leader had not abandoned any of his syndicalist beliefs. He also stated that the radicals were simply biding their time to call another strike.

"The speaker could not find words to describe his disgust for the I. W. W. He charged them with being cowards and the scum of the earth.

"Mr. Wicks is preparing to tour the country on the Chautauqua platform this summer in order to let the American people understand the true situation. He has given several years study to Sociology and is preparing to write two books on the problems of the hour.

"He has broken away from the Socialists so recently that this may be the first notice some of them will have of his apostasy."

Statement of Jack Macdonald

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I have a vivid recollection of this "corridor" congress. I recall the session of the Standing Committee where the Pol-Bureau of the C. P. S. U. made its declaration, drawn from it, in its own words because the delegations were "speculating" on the rumored differences within the Bureau. No such principal differences existed, ran the declaration signed by all members of the bureau and implemented by remarks from Stalin and Bucharin. Hardly had the delegations reached home before news broke out that not only were there principal differences, but that actual factions existed. And this after the lie had been given to delegates who had probed beneath the surface of official declarations and reported the existence of groupings and factions.

The creation of the "third period" at the Sixth Congress, as justification for the left about-face, unquestionably under the blows of the opposition,—a period that has apparently passed into history or been conveniently forgotten to avoid the creation of a "fourth" period; the rejection of the united front tactic with the non-party workers organizations in the slogan of the "united front from below", as an apology for the unprincipled maneuvering with the leaders of the Social Democratic and reformist trade union organizations; the tragic and catastrophic caricature of a bolshevist-Leninist policy in China, with its complete subordination of the Communist Party to Chiang Kai-Shek and its corollary of subsequent adventurism and putschist insurrection; the eclectic and mechanical creation of the "war danger", which led the parties to orientate their activities solely on the imminence of war from which the proletarian revolution would be born; the swing back to the "right" with its glaring legalistic and parliamentary activity, just as the world economic crisis broke, only to find the parties isolated from the consequences to a great extent of the third period tactics; the acrobatics on trade union policy, etc., etc.—all this is at least ample proof of the zig-zag centrist policy of the present regime.

The appalling debacle of the Communist forces in the recent German presidential election with the enormous growth of the Fascist forces; the almost complete isolation of the party from the trade unions; its insignificant influence over the social-democratic workers, despite the deep internal crisis in Germany; the theory of "social Fascism"; the flirting, to put it mildly, with certain Fascist leaders; the apparent developing theory that a Fascist victory with its demagogic program and slogans means rapid disillusionment of the workers, which will be followed by a flocking to the Communist standard, Italy, Poland, etc., notwithstanding; all this in the German situation if nothing else must impel a general stocktaking and inner searching in the ranks of Communism.

One looks in vain for any keen analysis of these phenomena in the official Communist Press. In the Canadian "Worker" after the first presidential vote in Germany, there appeared a leading editorial that for trifling, irresponsible, politician approach is, I believe without parallel. Two main points were made. Firstly, the opposition was "disarmed" with the assertion many times repeated that the "renegades" would possibly find cause to rejoice. Just why, wasn't stated. Secondly, finally and primarily, the most outstanding and significant result of the election was the gain of half a million Communist votes over last election. What humbug! The second vote with its loss of over a million Communist votes, still remains to be "explained", so far as I am aware.

The wealth of literature issued by the Left Opposition from the pen of Trotsky is something that no worker or student of Marxism or Leninism can afford to ignore or neglect. One listens in vain for the voice of Stalin on the outstanding events of today. Here in the opposition press and literature every question is approached and analyzed, clearly, fearlessly and dialectically. I recollect how

For Communist Unity

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appeal for re-admission. The differences which we have with the present party policy can, we repeat, and should be settled within the framework of one single organization, the Communist party. We aspire only to defend our point of view inside the party, to seek for it in the proper manner and at the proper time, in accordance with the provisions made for such discussion by the statutes of the party and the International, and in accordance with the principle of democratic centralism.

Our inability to agree with the methods pursued in the negotiations conducted with the Lovestone group does not in any way eliminate our conviction that the unification of the party is now more imperative than ever. We are quite prepared to go all the way towards making this unity a reality, a reality which we are sure will give our party a new impetus and added effectiveness in the class struggle. We make this appeal to the party at a moment when the gravity of the situation obliges every revolutionary worker to weigh his decisions and actions, for what is involved is the whole future of our cause.

In presenting our appeal to the party, we urge it to make a prompt reply so that we may be able to act quickly upon it.

With Communist greetings,
National Committee,
Communist League of America (Opp.)

In certain so-called discussions we used to blast and damn the theory of Trotsky's Permanent Revolution with an arsenal of quotations given to us by Bucharin. How the polemical differences between Lenin and Trotsky were magnified. How Trotsky underestimated or denied the role of the peasantry. How he would leap across historical stages. "Down with the Czar!" Up with the Labor Government!" How during Lenin's leadership he was held in check and did great service for the revolution. But since Lenin died his old false theories had cropped up again, his old Permanent Revolution which was the sources of all evil.

Every worker today can read Trotsky's Permanent Revolution for himself. Let us understand what the "differences" between Lenin and Trotsky were on the role of the peasantry, the "democratic dictatorship", etc. Acquire a knowledge of the re-arming of the Party on the return of Lenin to Russia before October—in short have done with fabrication and misrepresentation and read history.

The theory of the Permanent Revolution is not an attempt at a leap of the proletariat over definite historical stages, but the transformation of the nation under the leadership of the proletariat. Here I may quote section two of the fundamental thesis of the Permanent Revolution; "With regard to the countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks, democratic and national emancipation, is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of the peasant masses". The tasks of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" were completely realized not before October, not in the "dual power", but by October—through the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the poor peasants.

It will be instructive at some other time to retrace the directives to the Canadian Party, given by the opponents of the permanent revolution in their desire to find historical stakes that might not be "skipped over". These run the whole gamut, from the fight against the British monarchy, demand for constituent assembly, farmer-labor government, farmers political parties, national independence, etc., etc.

I reject the theory of national socialism—of socialism in one country—evolved in the struggle against Trotsky in 1925, as contrary to all the teachings of Marx and Lenin. The inevitable social patriotic errors that the Left Opposition warned against are strikingly evident today. The appeal to the International proletariat against Japanese Imperialism, in its general formulation is a recent indication of this. A still more recent example is the justification (based on an article in *Izvestia* of an alliance between the Soviet Union and American Imperialism against Japanese Imperialism. The propaganda and agitation surrounding the slogan of "Defend the Soviet Union" is saturated with pacifism. All this is the logical outcome of the false theory of "socialism in one country".

This statement is made in support of the Left Opposition after thoroughly probing all doubts and reservations, slowly, calmly and deliberately. I make it with the sincere hope that any influence I may have with the workers, through my association with and work in the working class movement in this country, may lead the advanced workers to a critical examination of the Communist movement today, in all its ramifications, theoretical, organizational, strategical and otherwise; and to an examination of the literature and theoretical position of the Left Opposition and particularly to the works of Trotsky.

From this I am convinced there will inevitably come again another "re-arming" of the movement—a reestablishment of the advance guard of the International working class movement, on the solid bed-rock of the theories of Marx and Lenin.

—J. MACDONALD.

Centrism «in General» and the Centrism of the Stalinist Bureaucracy

by LEON TROTSKY

The errors of the leadership of the Comintern and consequently, the errors of the German Communist Party pertain, in the familiar terminology of Lenin, to the category of "ultra-Left stupidities." Even wise men are capable of stupidities, especially when young. But, as Heine counselled, this privilege should not be abused. When, however, political stupidities of a given type are repeated systematically in the course of a lengthy period, and moreover in the sphere of the most important questions, then they cease being simply stupidities and become tendencies. What sort of a tendency is this? What historical necessities does it meet? What are its social roots?

Ultra-Leftism has a different social foundation in different countries and at different periods. The most thoroughgoing expressions of ultra-Leftism were to be found in anarchism and Blanquism, and in their different combinations, among them the latest one: anarcho-syndicalism.

The social soil for these trends which have spread primarily through Latin countries was to be found in the old and classic small industries of Paris. Their stability added an indubitable significance to the French varieties of ultra-radicalism and allowed them to a certain degree to influence ideologically the workers' movements in other countries. The development of large scale industries in France, the war and the Russian revolution broke the spine of anarcho-syndicalism. Having been thrown back, it has become transformed into a debased opportunism. On both of its stages French syndicalism is headed by one and the same Jouhaux: the times change and we change with them.

Spanish anarcho-syndicalism preserved its seeming revolutionary character only in the environment of political stagnation. By posing all the questions point-blank the revolution has compelled the anarcho-syndicalist leaders to cast off their ultra-radicalism and to reveal their opportunist nature. We can rest definitely assured that the Spanish revolution will drive out the prejudice of syndicalism from its last Latin hide-out.

The anarchist and Blanquist elements join all kinds of other types of ultra-Left trends and groups. On the periphery of a great revolutionary movement there are always to be observed the manifestations of putschism and adventurism, the standard bearers of which are recruited either from backward and quite often semi-artisan strata of the workers, or from the intellectual fellow way-farers. But such a type of ultra-Leftism does not ordinarily attain to independent historical significance, retaining, in most instances, its episodic character.

In historically backward countries, which are compelled to go through their bourgeois revolutions within the environment of a full-fledged and world-wide workers' movement, the left intelligentsia often introduces the most extreme slogans and methods into the semi-elementary movements of the predominantly petty-bourgeois masses. Such is the nature of petty-bourgeois parties of the type of the Russian "Social-Revolutionaries", with their tendencies toward putschism, individual terrorism, etc. Thanks to the effectiveness of the Communist parties in the West, the independent adventurist groups will hardly attain there to the importance of the Russian Social-Revolutionaries. But on this account the young Communist parties of the West may include within themselves the elements of adventurism. As regards the Russian S. R.'s, under the influence of the evolution of bourgeois society, they have become transformed into the party of the imperialist petty bourgeoisie and have taken a counter-revolutionary position in relation to the October revolution.

It is entirely self-evident that the ultra-Leftism of the present Comintern does not fall under any one of the above specified historic types. The chief party of the Comintern, the C. P. S. U., wittingly leans upon the industrial proletariat, and operates for better or for worse from the revolutionary traditions of Bolshevism. The majority of other sections of the Comintern are proletarian organizations. Are not the very differences of conditions in various countries, in which the ultra-Left policies of official Communism are raging simultaneously and in the same degree, tokens of the fact that there are no common social roots underlying this trend? Indeed, the ultra-Left course, which is also one and the same "in principle", is being put through in China and in Great Britain. But if so, where are we then to seek for the key to the new ultra-Leftism?

The question is complicated, but at the same time is also clarified by one other, extremely important circumstance: Ultra-Leftism is not at all an unvarying or fundamental trait of the present leadership of the Comintern. The same apparatus, in its basic composition, held to an openly opportunistic policy until 1928, and in many of the most important questions switched over completely onto the tracks of menshevism. During 1924-1927 agreements with reformists were not only considered obligatory but were permitted if thereby the party renounced its independence, its freedom of criticism, and even its proletarian foundation*. Therefore the discussion concerns not at all a particular ultra-Left trend, but a prolonged ultra-Left zig-zag of such a trend that has demonstrated in the past its capacity for launching into profound ultra-Right zig-zags. Even these outward symptoms suggest that what we are dealing with is centrism.

Speaking formally and descriptively, centrism is composed of all those trends within the proletariat and on its periphery which are distributed between re-

formism and Marxism, and which most often represent various stages of evolution from reformism to Marxism—and vice-versa. Both Marxism and reformism have a solid social support underlying them. Marxism expresses the historical interests of the proletariat. Reformism speaks for the privileged position of proletarian bureaucracy and aristocracy within the capitalist state. Centrism, as we have known it in the past, did not have and could not have an independent social foundation. Different layers of the proletariat develop in the revolutionary direction in different ways and at different times. In periods of prolonged industrial uplift or in the periods of political ebb-tide, after defeats, different layers of the proletariat shift politically from left to right, clashing with other layers who are just beginning to evolve to the Left. Different groups are delayed on separate stages of their evolution, they find their temporary leaders and create their programs and organizations. Small wonder then that such a diversity of trends is embraced in the comprehension of "centrism"! Depending upon their origin, their social composition and the direction of their evolution, different groupings may be engaged in the most savage warfare with one another, without losing thereby their character of being a variety of centrism.

While centrism in general fulfills ordinarily the function of serving as a left cover for reformism, the question as to which of the basic camps, reformist or Marxist, a given centrism may belong, cannot be solved once for all with a ready made formula. Here, more than anywhere else, it is necessary to analyze each time the concrete composition of the process and the inner tendencies of its development. Thus, some of Rosa Luxemburg's political mistakes may be with sufficient theoretical justification characterized as left-centrism. One could go still further and say that the majority of divergences between Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin represented a stronger or weaker leaning toward centrism. But only the bullies and ignoramuses and charlatans of the Comintern bureaucracy are capable of assigning Luxemburgism as an historical tendency toward centrism. It goes without saying that the present "leaders" of the Comintern, from Stalin down, politically, theoretically and morally do not come up to the knees of the great woman and revolutionist.

Critics, who have not pondered the gist of the matter, have recently accused me more than once of abusing the word "centrism", by including under this name too great a variety of tendencies and groups within the workers' movement. In reality, the diversity of the types of centrism originates, as has been already said, in the essence of the phenomenon itself and not at all in an abuse of terminology. We need only recall how often the Marxists have been accused of assigning to the petty bourgeoisie the most diverse and contradictory phenomena. And actually, under the category "petty bourgeois", one is obliged to include fact, ideas and tendencies which at first glance appear entirely incompatible. The petty bourgeois character pertains to the peasant movement and to the radical tendencies of urban reformism; both French Jacobins and Russian Narodniki are petty bourgeois; Prudhonists are petty-bourgeois but so are Blanquists; petty-bourgeois are: the French anarcho-syndicalists, the "Salvation Army", Gandhi's movement in India, etc., etc. If we turn to the sphere of philosophy and art, even a much more polychromatic picture obtains. Does this mean that Marxism indulges in playing with terminology? Not at all, this only means that the petty-bourgeoisie is characterized by the extreme heterogeneity of its social nature. At bottom it fuses with the proletariat and extends into the lumpen-proletariat, on top it passes over into the capitalist bourgeoisie. It may lean upon old forms of production but it may rapidly develop on the bases of most modern industry (the new "middle estate"). No wonder that ideologically it scintillates with all the colors of the rainbow.

Centrism within the workers' movement plays in a certain sense the same rôle as does the petty-bourgeois ideology of all types in relation to the bourgeois society as a whole. Centrism reflects the processes of the evolution of the proletariat; its political growth as well as its revolutionary set-back conjointly with the pressure of all other classes of society upon the proletariat. No wonder that the palette of centrism is distinguished by such iridescence! From this it follows, however, not that one must give up trying to comprehend centrism but simply that one must needs discover the true nature of a given variety of centrism by means of a concrete and an historical analysis in every individual instance.

The ruling faction of the Comintern does not represent in itself centrism "in general" but quite a definite historical form, which has social roots, rather recent but powerful. First of all, the matter concerns the *Soviet bureaucracy*. In the writings of the Stalinist theoreticians this social stratum does not exist at all. We are only told of "Leninism", of incorporeal leadership, of the ideological tradition, of the spirit of Bolshevism, of the imponderable "general line"; but you will not hear a word about a functional, breathing and living, in flesh and bone, who manipulates this general line like a fireman his hose.

—L. TROTSKY.

(To Be Continued)

* A detailed analysis of this opportunistic chapter of the Comintern that lasted a few years is given in our books, *The Draft Program of the Comintern—A Criticism of Fundamentals!* *The Permanent Revolution; Who Is Leading the Comintern Today*, etc.

(From WHAT NEXT—Vital Questions for the German proletariat)