

Perspectives Of Marxism

Open Letter by Leon Trotsky to V. F. Calverton on the Revolutionary Intellectuals

Dear Comrade Calverton:—

I have received your pamphlet, "For Revolution", and read it with interest as well as advantage to myself. Your arguments against the American "knights of pure reform" are very convincing...

By its character and structure, your pamphlet was most appropriate for the thinking representatives of the academic youth. To ignore this group would, in any case, be out of the question...

CALVERTON OMITTS

REVOLUTIONARY REALITIES

Is this a reproach on my part? Both yes and no. In its essence your little book represents an answer to that kind of petty bourgeois radical (in America they seem to be wearing out the threadbare name of liberals) who is ready to accept...

Yet at the same time there is a reproach, since, beside pamphlets and clubs where academic discussions for and against revolution are carried on...

I would not put this circumstance in the first place if it did not seem to me that your political position as I conceive it from your articles is typical of a quite numerous and theoretically very valuable stratum of left intelligentsia in the United States.

INTELLECTUALS FEAR

CONSEQUENCES OF CLARITY

To talk of the Hillquit-Thomas party as a tool of the proletarian revolution is evidently out of the question. Without having achieved in the slightest degree the power of European reformism...

I would not like to be misunderstood. Under the tendency to avoid the practical consequences of a clear position, I am far from understanding the concern for personal well-being.

ussion club into the street. But to dispute about a revolutionary party with such snobs is a waste of time. What we are talking about are the other, more serious Marxists, who are in no way inclined to be scared by revolutionary action...

STALINISM DRIVES

INTELLECTUALS TO QUANDARY

The opportunist and adventurist vices of the present leadership of the Communist International and of its American section are too evident to require emphasis. In any case, it is impossible and useless to repeat within the framework of this letter what is said on this theme in a series of independent works.

MARXISM NO DOGMA—

GUIDE TO ACTION

It is necessary to remember that Marxism both interprets the world and teaches how to change it. The will is the moving element in the domain of knowledge, too.

When the Left bourgeois Journalists summarily defend the Soviet Republic as it is, they accomplish a progressive and praiseworthy work. For a Marxist revolutionary, it is absolutely insufficient.

To avoid direct answers, to play blind man's bluff with great problems, to remain diplomatically silent and wait, or still worse, to quiet oneself with the thought that the present struggle within Bolshevism is a question of personal am-

* I permit myself to refer you to a New York weekly paper, The Militant, and a series of books and leaflets issued by the Pioneer Publishers. The paper as well as the publishing house belongs to the Communist League of America (126 E. 16th Street, New York City).

itions, means to protect mental laziness, to yield to the worst Philistine prejudice, and to be doomed to demoralization. On this subject, I hope we shall not have any differences with you.

The policy of the proletariat has a great theoretical tradition and that is one of the sources of its power. A trained Marxist studies the differences between Engels and Lassalle with regard to the European war of 1859. It is necessary to do so.

AMERICAN MARXISM

AT CROSS ROADS

It is very useful to study, let us say, the old differences among Russian Marxists on the character of the future Russian revolution; naturally, according to first hand authorities, and not the ignorant and disloyal compilations of the epigones.

Impenetrable for Marxist theoretician to pass by the congresses of the First International. But a thousand times more urgent is the study of the living differences concerning the Amsterdam anti-war congress of 1932.

Is there now a theme more important for a revolutionary, more gripping, more burning, than the struggle and the fate of the German proletariat? Is it possible, on the other hand, to fix one's relations to the problems of the German revolution while passing by the differences in the camp of German and International Communism?

It is not enough to preach the utility of technology; it is necessary to build bridges. What would be thought of a young doctor who, instead of working in the operating room, would satisfy himself with reading the biographies of great surgeons of the past?

All the evidence is that the present crisis will be a great milestone in the political road of the United States. The self-sufficient American provincialism is in any case nearing its end.

With sincere greetings, Prinkipo, Nov. 4, 1932 L. TROTSKY.

HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN

REVOLUTION

Volumes two and three of the History of the Russian Revolution by comrade Trotsky will be out in January.

We know that a great many of our comrades and readers are anxious to read and study these books but are unable to pay for them at one blow. For them we offer the following arrangement: they may begin now to pay for them on an installment plan...

THE UNEMPLOYMENT PAMPHLET

The raging financial crisis has made it necessary to postpone for a while the publication of the two popular Marxist pamphlets we announced a short time ago.

We are getting around to the first one. Unemployment and the American Working Class by comrade Swaback. If we are able to keep anywhere near our schedule it should be out toward the end of January.

persist in their backwardness in the domain of Socialist theory, it does not mean that they will remain backward always. It is possible to venture without much risk a contrary prophesy: the longer the Yankees are satisfied with the ideological old clothes of the past...

The proletarian movement has displaced in the course of the last hundred-odd years its national center of gravity several times. England, France, Germany, Russia—this was the historical sequence of the home of Socialism and Marxism.

You are totally right; the vanguard of the American proletariat must come to base itself on the revolutionary traditions of its own country too. In a certain sense we can admit the slogan, "Americanize Marxism!"

NEW VISTAS BEFORE

U. S. COMMUNISTS

On the occasion of strikes in the United States, where the decomposing center of the First International was transferred, Marx wrote, on July 25, 1877 to Engels: "The porridge is beginning to boil, and the transfer of the center of the International to the United States will yet be justified finally!"

Before the American Marxist open virtually grandiose, breath-taking perspectives!

With sincere greetings, Prinkipo, Nov. 4, 1932 L. TROTSKY.

The A. F. L. and Union Unity

(Continued from page 1)

Will There Be a Change of Policy In general the whole question of trade union policy, and in particular, the question of independent unions by splitting off minorities versus the issue of trade union unity is due for some serious attention by the Comintern and the various parties.

In Germany, for example, the official party has attained a mass basis. But it has, of course, pursued the Comintern policy of splitting the trade unions. The independent, "revolutionary" unions failed to attract the masses.

But within the Comintern the turn toward the Right has since become more unmistakable. Many of the lesser bureaucrats, who want an end to the policy of trade union splits, are therefore again turning upon Lozovsky, not merely to conquer him, but also to annihilate him.

Should these shifting winds not fully succeed in affecting a change at this moment we may expect that the actual forces of class relations will soon exert a sufficiently strong pressure in that direction.

The Unorganized and the A. F. of L.

Such consideration involves primarily the question of attitude toward the two main problems: the organization of the unorganized and activity within the A. F. of L.

Today the only trade union base resembling a mass character is the A. F. of L. and the kindred unions of the railroad brotherhoods. It would be foolish to contend that things will always remain so.

These, in general, were our views when we participated in shaping the correct party policy. But, subsequently, following our expulsion, the policy became completely emasculated.

We are unable to assign dates now for these. The financial crisis plays ducks and drakes with our plans. But the publishing fund is the key to the problem. We will return to this theme again.

USE THE CLUB PLAN. GET SUBS FOR THE MINERS. This is the picture of devastation

wrought by a false trade union policy. And it is from this that the Left Opposition proceeds with the slogan of trade union unity fully cognizant of the fact that the forces of class relations are in constant motion.

Two years ago the Left Opposition advanced the unity slogan for the needle trades unions in the form of proposing a united front leading to a merger between the party directed industrial union and the ILGWU.

In the minefields today, on the other hand, we have a situation of a different character. In the soft coal fields the UMW of A. broke down, the rebel forces within became the majority and found no alternative but the formation of a new, independent union.

To the party leadership these questions are still anathema. Can they remain so very long? Obviously not.

If the revolutionary party is to have any influence upon the future course of the trade union movement it must, first of all, return to the policy of active work within this movement.

PARTY MILITANT SPEAKS FROM PLATFORM OF OPPOSITION IN NEWARK, N. J.

A very interesting lecture was arranged by our Newark branch on Sunday, December 4, at the Hungarian Workers' Home. The lecture was delivered by comrade Basky on the subject of the world crisis and the immediate tasks of the Communist parties.

The lecture of comrade Basky, presenting the position of the Left Opposition on the world crisis and counterposing the Marxian-Leninist policies of the Left Opposition to those of the Stalinist leadership of the party...

Pioneer Publishers Notes