

Lovestone Discovers Esthonia

The articles in the *Militant* commenting on the pledges made to Roosevelt by Litvinov in return for the recognition of the Soviet Union, struck the Stalinists a stiff and telling blow. By his promise to wipe out the Comintern as a factor in American political life, Litvinov—we asserted—had pledged the Soviet republic to something it had never before yielded to the imperialist bourgeoisie. By this, a flourishing Comintern had not, it is true, been suddenly dissolved. Litvinov had merely—we quote from our comments—“given formal and, so to speak, organizational acknowledgment to a process of political liquidation of the Communist International which has been going on under Stalinist rule for ten years and which is not initiated but only crowned by the latest act of perfidy at Washington.”

At that time we challenged the Stalinists to prove their contention that “every single one of these articles in some form or other, has been part of the numerous recognition pacts that the Soviet government has signed during the last ten years with the leading powers of Europe.” Had their collective mouths been filled with hot water and a bone stuck in their throat, they could not have been less vocal. They supplemented their silence by sending bands of hooligans to break up our mass meetings on the subject of Russian recognition.

Attorney for Stalinism

Yet it would be misguided sentiment to pity the Stalinists in their embarrassment. They neither deserve nor require it, for they have a professional champion. Not unlike the ambulance chaser who inflicts his legal services on the victims of misfortune, the head of the Lovestone group is always on the scene with a ready-drawn brief in defense of his unfortunate, unwilling but not entirely ungrateful client, Stalinism.

The *Daily Worker*, writes one of the unretained members of the firm in the current issue of the *Workers Age*, “has as yet made no attempt to answer the hysterical charges of the anti-Soviet demagogues, with Trotsky himself in the lead. It is incapable of making any serious reply because it is so sterile and ideologically servile, that it cannot even defend its own position.” Having thus recorded the mental incompetency and irresponsibility of the defendant, he establishes his own role in the case: “As usual, it is left to the Communist Opposition to explain the policies of the Soviet Union and champion them against its enemies and its doubtful friends.”

How do the Lovestoneites proceed to explain, or rather to explain away, the Stalinist policy with regard to American recognition, and particularly the notorious Paragraph 4 of Litvinov's November 16th letter? Very simply. They offer you a choice. They present two different alibis. And each explanation is diametrically opposed to the other! Who knows? they figure. One of the two ought to work.

“Explaining” Paragraph 4.

The first explanation for Paragraph 4 is given in the form of a learned disquisition by Herberg on “The Foundation of Soviet Diplomacy,” in the issue of December 15, 1933. “In 1933,” he writes, “the situation is surely quite otherwise” than in 1917-1918. “To talk and act in 1933 as in 1918, would not be Marxism, would not be Communism, but would be the crudest sort of petty bourgeois romantic sentimentalism.”

“The essence of the problem can be placed as follows. By 1921 (let us remember the date! Not 1918 but 1921—s.) it had become clear to all who had eyes to see that world capitalism had regained its stability and that its immediate collapse was out of the question. It became clear also that there would ensue a period, longer or shorter, in which the Soviet Union would have to live side by side with the capitalist world, economically and politically.

Propaganda Pledge Is Defended by Stalinist Attorneys

It became incumbent upon the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to revise its foreign as well as domestic course to conform to the new situation.

Explanation No. One, therefore, is that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union is not and cannot be the same today as it was in 1918 (or 1921) because of the change in the objective situation. We withhold comment for the moment on the astounding choice which Herberg makes of the date at which world capitalism regained its stability, and merely record the fact that he explains the Litvinov policy at Washington by a now twelve-year old revision of Soviet foreign policy.

Now comes explanation No. Two, for we are dealing with resourceful attorneys who are not, moreover, tyros at acrobatics and jugglery either. Without a ball being dropped, Herberg retires and his place is taken in the very next issue of the *Age* by Hackman, whom we quoted above. Two weeks have elapsed between issues and another and is hauled out which directly contradicts the first one. “We have given sufficient proof,” Hackman concludes his explanation, “that the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Lenin in 1920 and 1921, signed agreements precisely like that which Litvinov has just made with Roosevelt. The ‘new situation,’ the revision of the foreign policy which Herberg establishes for 1921, is not just ignored by Hackman, it is denied and refuted by him!”

What is Hackman's “sufficient proof”? The Lovestoneites have dug deep. To save the tarnished reputation of Stalinism, they must needs and some precedent for Paragraph Four.

The Soviet Treaty with Esthonia

On February 2, 1920 (that is, a year before Herberg's “world capitalism had regained its stability”), the treaty of peace was signed between Esthonia and Russia. In Article 7, Section 5 of the treaty is to be found a paragraph similar to Litvinov's Paragraph Four. On August 11, 1920, the peace treaty between Latvia and Russia was signed, containing an identical paragraph. The Russo-Polish peace treaty of March 18, 1921 even declares that “each of the Contracting Parties undertakes not to create or protect organizations which are formed with the object of encouraging armed conflict against the other Contracting Party or of undermining its territorial integrity, or of subverting by force its political or social institutions.”

The attorneys have won the case to their own complete satisfaction. They have presented, they assert, “sufficient proof” and are ready to rest their case. “The Communist International,” Hackman concludes, “did not thereby receive a death-blow. The world proletariat was

* Soviet foreign (and domestic) policy did indeed undergo an objectively enforced change in the Lenin period—more than one change, in fact. We do not deal with them here only because they do not affect, one way or the other, the fundamental problem of the relationships between the Soviet government, its diplomacy, the Comintern and the world revolution, on one side, and the bourgeois world on the other. Herberg's references to changes introduced in Soviet foreign policy under “Lenin, with the help of Trotsky” are a jesuitical attempt to foist upon the leaders of the Bolshevik revolution the responsibility for the truly fundamental change in Soviet policy introduced by Stalinism—the change towards nationalist degeneration.—S.

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WORKING IN MACY'S MODEL RESTAURANT

In the summer of 1931, R. H. Macy opened their new restaurant on the sixth floor. I was one of the applicants for a position as waitress. We were all given “intelligence tests,” and thorough physical examinations. Macy's, unlike other organizations of its kind, does give a thorough physical examination. Every girl hired was strong and physically fit. In spite of this, the work proved too hard and grueling for most of us. Approximately 125 waitresses were hired when the restaurant opened. Six months later there were about 25 girls remaining, who were employed at the same time as I.

“Improvements” Under the NRA
But now R. H. Macy is operating under the NRA and conditions are not the same as in 1931—not at all; they are worse. Wages are less, more work is required from each girl, and the list of restrictions grows longer and longer.

Each waitress is hired to work a certain shift at rates which vary with the number of hours of work, that is, a girl working from 11:30 until 2 P. M. five days a week receives a salary of \$2.50 for the entire week, and an average commission of \$3—a total of \$5.50 for an entire week's work. Girls working from 8:30 to 4:10 get \$10—the highest scale. The working hours are short, but they are the busiest hours of the day. As a matter of fact, in those two and a half hours each waitress works as hard and uses as much energy as some workers do in a whole day.

Under Macy's system of “no tipping” but of charging a service fee of 10 per cent of the amount of the check, the girls in Macy's are “tipped” on the average of six cents per customer, whereas the general average in other restaurants of this type is 10 cents per customer.

The stated hours of work may be from 11:30 to 2:00, but if a customer comes in at 1:59 the waitress must stay until the customer leaves. All the girls are thus forced to do actual extra waitress duty for about a half hour or more each day.

Discipline and Penalties

The girls are held to the most rigid sort of personal discipline. Every morning they are inspected. They stand at stiff attention in line while several trained disciplinarians look them over. They are required to have well cared for nails, with the proper shade of nail polish, they must wear a certain type of shoe, their hair must be finger-waved, no less, and their uniforms must be immaculate, all at their own cost, of course.

The Macy restaurant clientele being of the “refined” type that does not approve of a great deal of make-up, the restaurant management forbids the use of lipstick. The girls are urged, however, to use rouge to hide an inevitable pallor. The uniforms and the white aprons, collars, and cuffs, which are part of it must be washed, starched and ironed every day. This means an extra hour of work each night, which is somehow overlooked when the pay envelopes are filled.

The tiniest speck on a uniform is sufficient excuse to levy punishment. The terrible offenders may be punished by being sent to work in the kitchen, for which they receive 53 cents for the entire day, or else they may be sent home altogether and lose their salary and commission for the entire day. By a strange coincidence the greatest number of specks appears on the slowest days, and many a girl is “reluctantly” sent home to learn to keep her uniform clean in the future.

The restaurant has a seating capacity of seven hundred. A waitress must make an average of four trips to and from the kitchen for each customer or group of customers, and if there are any special requests, or mistakes, another trip or so. The front tables are about a block from the kitchen. Waitresses “take turns” on the different tables. On the weeks when a girl has the front tables, her commissions are negligible, because it takes so much longer to wait on each customer at these tables. It is not possible to serve more than a few.

The “Steady Extra” Racket

Recently there has been installed a vicious system which places an added pressure on waitresses. Girls are hired as “steady extras.” They receive no salary, but get the service charge for each customer wait on. They cover no regular tables, but may wait on any customer, and this is where the regular waitress must work fast so that her customers won't be grabbed by the extras.

the waitresses as a result of this system is not against the organization which imposes it upon them, but against the extras, workers like themselves. Meanwhile, there is a constant rivalry between them to beat each other to the orders which leaves them physically and mentally exhausted at the end of the two-hour rush period.

In the summer months the restaurant is stifling hot, and the kitchen, of course, far worse. I have seen more than one girl waiting in the kitchen for her orders fall over in a dead faint.

No Bus Boys

There are no bus boys. Waitresses must clear and set their tables. They may not enter the kitchen with an empty or half-filled tray. “If your own tables are cleared, another table that isn't can always be found,” says Rule II. This rule is more important at Macy's than the Ten Commandments, and is rigidly enforced. Girls are often forced to walk across the entire restaurant to find enough dirty dishes to allow them to enter the kitchen.

The waitresses are not the only ones who suffer in this restaurant. Part of the tray girl's job is to bring silver and water pitchers to the tables. These trays weigh from 25 to 40 pounds. The tray girls are supposed to be 17 years old. My guess is that some of these kids are even younger. The average stay at Macy's of a tray girl is between two and three weeks.

Fainting spells and illness among this group of youngsters are more frequent even than among the waitresses.

This wage scale is subject to no additions such as commissions. This is all they can earn. Carrying water and silver used to be their only job, but now, under the NRA they are forced to show their patriotism by cleaning tables, setting them up, and taking orders, just as any waitress, but without any commissions. (These particular commissions go

to the “house”). None of the girls is allowed meals as part of her salary. But if a girl comes in early enough she is allowed one roll and one cup of coffee. Those who have this munificent breakfast have nothing else until they go off duty. Those who come in a few minutes later, unless they have had breakfast out, also have nothing until they go off duty.

Macy's “Mutual” Benefit.

All salaries are subject to compulsory deductions. A certain percentage is taken off each month to pay M. M. A. dues (Macy Mutual Aid). This “mutual” benefit works in a mysterious manner. M. M. A. dues are deducted very soon after employment, but in order to receive the benefits you must have been with R. H. Macy & Company for six consecutive months.

Sick employees under the M. M. A. may receive two-thirds of their salary each week during their illness, starting from the fifth day of their illness, or part payment of their hospital and doctor fees. No payments continue longer than six months, no matter how sick the employee is.

Sick Workers Not Rehired.

If an employee is sick for four days or less, she receives nothing from the M. M. A. If and when she recovers from a long illness she cannot be rehired at Macy's. Nobody is ever rehired after a long illness—just one of the great store's “unadvertised specials.”

The intense rivalry among the employees of the restaurant because of the conditions under which they work makes difficult any expression of solidarity among these workers. They are played off against one another in the selfish interests of their employer. The elaborate spy system, about which another article might be written, is ever present in the entire store. These workers need the message of unionism badly. Outside help and advice are sorely needed.

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—MACY WORKER.

The Railroad Brotherhoods The “Obligation” as a Gaglaw

All of the railroad unions who use the ritualistic and secret work—and nearly all of them do—also use what is commonly known as the “obligation” which is administered to the newly admitted member when he joins the union. And when there are several new members initiated, practically the entire time of the meeting is taken up in administering the obligation to each member and rehearsing the rest of the “secret” work.

There was some excuse for the early pioneers in railroad unionism believing that the obligation served the organization as an added measure of protection. The same was true about the secret work. Both were still, they change continually and present conditions call for a far obligations and performing secret ceremonies.

Destructing Role of Secret Work

The fact of the matter is that obligations, as well as the rest of the secret work in use in the railroad unions, have outlived their usefulness, and they now play a most destructive role. These obligations now serve the Brotherhood Officials very effectively in gagging the members. The obligation is but part of the gaglaw system in the Brotherhoods behind which their official bureaucrats entrench themselves against the rank and file. For instance, to illustrate in a practical way how the obligation is used by the labor officials to cover up their misdeeds we will cite a concrete example!

A member was expelled from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers because he protested the flotation and levy, by the B. of L. E. officials, of a Ten Million dollar “Loyalty Loan” plus a Five Dollar monthly assessment for 120 months on all those members who declined to subscribe for the loyalty loan. The member in question took the position, that before such enormous tribute was levied on the B. of L. E. membership by its officials the members were entitled to an itemized statement which would definitely show the nature and kind of bills the members were called upon to pay. The fact of the matter was that the members were assessed all those millions for the personal benefit of the officials and their B. of L. E. officials themselves.

The member who fought against this wholesale looting of a labor union by its officials was found guilty of violation of the obligation and expelled from the following reasons: 1st, he had taken a “solenn” obligation not to injure the B. of L. E.; 2nd, the B. of L. E. of-

ficials, the very ones who robbed the organization, ruled that in obstructing the flotation and levy of the Loyalty Loan and Assessment he had intended to injure the organization and had therefore, violated his obligation.

This is just one of the hundreds of cases which could be cited to show how the obligation works and how it is used by labor officials to hold the rank and file in check. That is precisely why all labor officials favors the obligation as well as the secret work.

The Obligation Never Affects The Officials

It might be well to add here that, although the B. of L. E. officials brought the organization to the very brink of ruin by fraud and mismanagement, not one of them has been expelled for violation of obligation. Workers do not belong to labor unions and pay their dues there because of any obligation. They do these things because the workers in growing numbers are gradually learning that it is to their interest to act in an organized manner in dealing with the bosses.

Instead of wasting our time in repeating foolish obligations and secret work at our union meetings we should discuss the necessity and importance of workers being well organized in every industry. Whether workers know it or not, they belong to organized labor for the personal benefit and protection which they receive or expect to receive and not on account of any obligation they took when entering the union.

Whether the so-called obligation ever served a useful purpose or not in our trade union make-up is not important for us now. What vital concerns us at present is, that the obligation serves the labor bureaucrat as a vicious gag-law to stifle the expression of the membership. Every progressive railroad worker should raise these questions and discuss them in the Lodge, Union Meeting, and Convention and there point out and explain the destructive effect of these obligations as well as all other ritualistic work in the Lodge or Division room. Motions and resolutions should be introduced at every opportunity calling for the abolition of all “obligations” and secret work in our unions.

—A. E.
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