

Father of His Country Now Sires "People's Front"

CPers Discover Workers' Hero in Slave Owner George Washington

The sentimental outpourings in the Stalinist press on the occasions of the birthdays of Lincoln and Washington outraged many advanced workers. When Stalinism has already revealed a full-blown program of social-patriotism, it may seem superfluous to show how the Stalinists have "forgotten" how to analyze history. Nevertheless, their antics revealed an old truth: to break with Marxism at one point means eventually breaking with Marxism at every point.

The Stalinist celebration of Washington and Lincoln's birthdays was part of the campaign for a Farmer-Labor party. Every article and editorial beginning with Lincoln or Washington ended in a hortatory appeal to the farmer, the middle-classes, and the workers to get together to form a two-class party. To find a warrant for "linking up" Washington and Lincoln with the present Stalinist omnibus naturally involved a great deal of violence both to American history and to Marxism.

Tradition—Bourgeois and Proletarian

Broadly speaking, there are two very different tendencies in modern history, which Marxists have been at some pains to distinguish from each other: (1) the forerunners of the proletarian revolution; (2) the revolutionists of other classes, that is, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois revolutionists.

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mehring and other real Marxists have always made a clear distinction between those revolutionists who constitute direct pre-leaders of the modern proletarian struggle as

distinct from those whose ideology showed no trace of any organic connection with the struggle of the proletariat.

Thus, in treating of the first struggle against feudalism, Engels carefully distinguishes the demands of the middle classes from the more thorough-going demands of the peasant-plebian groups who gropingly and in religious terms already reached beyond modern bourgeois society. Although realistically estimating the more important results at that time of Wycliffe and Luther, Engels makes clear that it is not they who are our direct predecessors, but John Ball and Thomas Muenzer.

So, too, in estimating the French revolution the roles of Danton and Robespierre are in no way minimized, but Marxists have shown that our tradition comes down through figures like Babeuf.

We could give dozens of examples from Marxian historical writings, but the point is really a very simple one. So far as Marxists have gone to history for direct inspiration, they have sought it in those historical figures whose ideology had a social content connecting it with the proletariat.

Washington's Role

Serious Marxists, therefore, would not for a moment speak of Washington's tradition as connected with that of the working class. As a representative of the commercial planting aristocracy, his aims in the Revolution were far different from those of the mechanics and small farmers who constituted the left wing in the American revolution. (See "The Spirit of the U. S. Constitution," New Internationalist, Feb. 1933.)

The Stalinist approach, however, logically leaves no place in history for the role of other classes than Washington's in the revolution; for they identify Washington with the "monolithic" aims of the revolution; their very formulations provide no room for distinguishing between the aims of different classes. Say the Stalinists:

"His was the task of defeating the Tories and the Hearst, the Post, Liberty Leaguers of 1775. His was the task of leading the American people in their battle for independence against the English upper class which sought to reduce young America to colonial slavery. . . . A Farmer-Labor Party—of trade unions, middle class and Negro people, and anti-fascists—is the correct way to carry out the real American traditions championed by Washington." (Daily Worker, Feb. 22.)

And the Daily Worker cartoon shows Washington, with a copy of the Declaration of Independence under his arm, captioned to a policeman, with the exclamation "If He Were Alive Today."

Satire itself is helpless against such gross corruption of history. We may point out, however, that this is no accidental twisting of history. To propose to build a party covering different classes, the Farmer-Labor party, necessitates finding categories which include both classes—such terms as "the people," "the nation," "the country," "American traditions," etc. The ideology of such a two-class party, therefore, is inevitably nationalist and chauvinist, and takes over the nationalist interpretation of the history of the American revolution and the Civil War.

Browder vs. Marx and Engels

Another example is Browder's speech on "Lincoln and the Communists," now being widely distributed in pamphlet form. Browder makes a strenuous effort to find quotations from Marx praising Lincoln, and such as he finds he has to use in truncated form because Marx and Engels were severely critical of Lincoln and the policy he represented. (See "Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels," p. 135 ff., letters dealing with the Civil War.) Marx's estimate was that the Civil War dragged out because Lincoln and his petty-bourgeois policy clung to constitutional methods instead of pursuing a revolutionary course:

"The way the North is conducting war is only what might have been expected from a bourgeois republic, where fraud has been enthroned so long," wrote Marx in September, 1862.

And Engels, in November of the same year, wrote to Marx:

"Despite the screams of the Yankees, there is still no sign whatever available that the people regard this petty business as a real question of national existence. . . . I must say I cannot work up any enthusiasm for a people which on such a colossal issue allows itself to be beaten by a fourth of its own population and which after eighteen months of war has achieved nothing more than the discovery that all its generals are asses and all its officials rascals and traitors. After all, the thing must happen differently, even in a bourgeois republic, if it is not to end in utter failure."

But all this disappears from the Stalinist picture, except a carefully-worded remark by Browder that Lincoln hesitated at times. Why this distorted picture? Because to paint Lincoln in full-face will deprive the "people's party" of the Stalinist tradition that

does not exist and must therefore be faked.

Marxist Conception of History

This whole hunt for a national tradition is, in fact, alien to Marxism not only because of its "classless" character, but also because Marxism does not go to history merely to find direct inspiration from proletarian predecessors. In the writings of the Marxists on previous revolutions, the search for links with the proletariat present is, indeed, but a minor note.

Far more important for Marxist historians has been the task of showing that the history of bourgeois revolutions demonstrates that so long as classes exist all social evolution must take the form of political revolution. By demonstrating that the bourgeoisie has seized its power by force, employed terroristic methods in its struggle, confiscated private property, etc., we show that all power in class societies can be arrived at only by breaking through the myth of legality. It is primarily to teach this profound lesson (I except of course the more purely theoretical lessons which we learn from the history of bourgeois revolutions) that we must seek to popularize the history of the American Revolution and the Civil War.

To teach that the bourgeoisie, in the grip of necessity, has been uncompromising, bold, forthright in its use of illegal methods, in no way requires that we idealize the bourgeoisie. On the contrary: Marx and his successors have always laid bare the narrowness of bourgeois revolutionists, their viciousness toward the lower classes, their pomposity in clothing their special class interests with the language of universality, etc. Marx, and those who wrote in his spirit, have never sought direct inspiration from the bourgeoisie even in its most progressive periods. They have only made clear, again and again, that the bourgeoisie in coming to power have been forced to resort to force and illegality, and that if this was necessary when it was merely a question of shifting power from one class to another, how much more necessary is it when the task before the proletariat is, not only to take power, but to abolish private property altogether.

Engels' Letter to Bebel

In a famous letter from Engels to Bebel, after the Socialist successes in the election of 1884 despite the semi-legal status of the party under the Socialist Laws, Engels showed how an analysis of the illegal sources of the bourgeois rule can serve to teach the proletariat. This letter can serve as a model to us in drawing the same conclusions from American history, and is worth quoting at some length:

"The whole of the Liberal philistines have gained such a respect for us that they are screaming with one accord: Yes, if the Social Democrats will put themselves on a legal basis and abjure revolution then we are in favor of the immediate repeal of the Socialist Law. There is no doubt, therefore, that this suggestion will at once be made to you in the Reichstag. The answer you give to it is important—not so much for Germany, where our gallant lads have given it in the elections, as for abroad. A tame answer would at once destroy the colossal impression produced by the elections.

"In my opinion the case is like this:

"Throughout the whole of Europe the existing political situation is the product of revolution. The legal basis, historic right, legitimacy, have been everywhere riddled through a thousand times or entirely overthrown. But it is in the nature of all parties or classes which have come to power through revolution, to demand that the new basis of right created by the revolution should also be unconditionally recognized and regarded as holy. The right to revolution did exist—otherwise the present rulers would not be rightful—but from now onwards it is to exist no more.

Austrian Centrist Party Takes the Count

Among the participants in the I.A.G. conference (London Bureau of Left Socialist Organizations) in February 1935 was the Viennese Group, "Rote Front" (Red Front). In order to complete the picture of the famous Sapist (derived from the name S.A.P., Socialist Workers Party of Germany—Tr.) International it is worth the trouble to briefly depict the birth and . . . the collapse of this group.

The Red Front arose immediately after the event of February 1934 and was composed of numerous left wing leaders and of worker elements of the social democracy who had drifted to it. In this period of ferment in the illegal movement, it was the organizational expression of large sections of workers who were breaking with reformism and on the road to revolution, via centrism. For every revolutionary Marxist, it was already clear at this time that only clearly defined revolutionary principles could prevent this new group from collapsing under the impact of the powerful apparatuses of the bureaucratic centrists of the right and the left. However, the Red Front justified its existence by the defense of the idea of the united front and on the sentimental recognition of the U.S.S.R.

"Red Front" Disintegrates

The inevitable happened. The leaders of the Red Front emigrated to Moscow, and the revolutionary workers, not seeing any need for a substitute for a united front from the S.P. and the C.P., returned to the two major parties. Only a small number of stalwarts (about 200), of extremely heterogeneous composition, remained. Sincere worker elements in the ranks, with an understandable organizational patriotism, made desperate efforts to continue the work. The tops were composed for the most part of overcaution: intellectuals, a typical centrist formation eternally preoccupied with not crossing the prejudices of their "masses" and of balancing themselves between "extremes." Their great hope was that the decomposition of the workers parties would create new opportunities for an "intermediary party". The leadership never reached the point of elaborating clear principle. Its political documents were the result of innumerable amputation and mutual compromises of divergent opinions. The result: kneeling before the Soviet bureaucracy with some minor "reservations"; internationally, for the unity of the Second and Third International; nationally, against unity, for a new party.

Those who were able to get over the hurdle of these continual contradictions fell into a complete blind alley. It was at this time that the historic conference of the I.A.G. came to their aid. At last an international grouping where the principle of mutual abolition and not the mutual irreconcilability of principle prevailed: The Red Front became an enthusiastic partisan of "world-wide action for peace" and of "revolutionary unity". A close collaboration between the Red Front and the S.A.P. ensued. Its basis was: strict protection from any interference in the policy of either of the partners

"action for peace" passed from Schwab and Doriot to Stalin and Leon Blum, from the Red Front to Koplenig (leader of the Austrian C.P.) and Otto Bauer. If the I.A.G. could reconcile disarmament with revolutionary defeatism, there was no reason why the revolutionary socialists (new name of the Austrian S.P.) could not reconcile the dictatorship of the proletariat with the "Provisional Anti-Fascist Government", the revolutionary policy against war with the demand of Austrian "neutrality" guaranteed by the Entente. It only remained for the Red Front to note that "there are no longer any serious differences" with the party which it had left and to submit to the patronage of Otto Bauer in the name of "revolutionary unity".

Evidently, this is not a question of entry in it, but of its principle and political content. The crux of Austrian politics, bourgeois as well as proletarian, is the question of war. Placed in the vice of the Stalinist "Peace front" and the appeal of Otto Bauer for a "united front in world politics" (he had in mind a united front with the British sanctionists), the "left" leader of the Revolutionary Socialists sought for safety in their "independence on questions of Austrian tactics." But the great decisions of proletarian politics are made precisely in this period on the international arena. And here the "lefts" of the group supporting Mile (author of the pamphlet "The New Beginning") placed their confidence in tested leadership of the old fox, Otto Bauer. For the sake of the independence of the "Austrian tactic" they accepted and submitted to the social imperialist strategy of the Second International and its accomplices of the Third.

"Differences" Overcome

The social patriotic division of labor is thereby completed. All that was lacking was the "extreme left" complement. In France the "glorious" Spartacist group took the job. In Austria the Red Front has the distinction of carrying out this work. They declared: "Since there are no great differences between the internal policies of the two parties (Revolutionary Socialists and Communist Party) there are no great obstacles in the road to the formation of a united proletarian party." In order "to more effectively support this process" and in order "to struggle for the united revolutionary workers movement", the Red Front dissolved itself into the Revolutionary Socialist Party. There are no "great differences" between the R.S. and the C.P. The Red Front on its side "no longer has great differences" with the R.S. And for cause! All that was involved was only a minor difference in internal policy on the preparation of a bourgeois coalition (what is called the "peoples front" or "provisional anti-fascist government") and in external policy on the policy of free hands for the "peace action" of Stalin-O.Bauer. Over it all hangs the purple rag of "revolutionary unity". In a word: pure and unadorned social patriotism.

What marvelous progress of the historic progress! What great success for the S.A.P.ist realist revolutionary policy!

In the meantime the primacy of

December 2, 1925.

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Social Insurance Laws in Capitalist England

(Continued from Page 1)

ment Fund during the previous two years he is entitled to 17s per week if a single man or 9s per week for his wife if married and 3s per week for each child up to a maximum of six. A woman, who pays a lower rate of contribution, receives 15s per week. At the end of six months (unless the worker has been, previous to becoming idle, at work for five continuous years) he has exhausted his standard benefit and must make application to the Unemployment Assistance Board for transitional benefit—which will be paid upon condition that he can prove that—he is really in need of a assistance from the state. This is the notorious "Means Test."

An army of officials are employed to investigate the circumstances of the applicant for transitional relief. Has he any money in the bank? Has he a pension? If he is a father, have his sons or daughters an income? If he is a son or daughter, has his or her parents an income? This, and a dozen other lawyer-like questions are fired at the unfortunate victim. A man and a wife, it is estimated, can live upon 24s per week. If they have any income in excess of that amount, then benefit is reduced accordingly. Single persons must show desperate circumstances if they are living with their parents before they can receive any benefit. Before receiving benefit he must sign a declaration, declaring that he is willing to attend a training center which is another name for a concentration camp where hundreds of unemployed men are introduced into the gentle art of stone breaking, road-making or munition making. The terror of the "Means Test," which is applied every two months to those in receipt of Transitional Relief, has driven many poor people to

suicide, has broken up families and has forced men into jobs at less than trade union rates. It has also created the most intense bitterness amongst the unemployed but owing to a variety of reasons, this feeling has not expressed itself in rebellion, but on the contrary seems to be turning in on the workers in a wave of sullen apathy and reaction.

2.—The Effect of Social Insurance on the Worker

At the end of the 19th century old Chamberlain was canvassing the Tories for Old Age Pensions and in the first years of the 20th Century, the Liberals were toying with the schemes of Health and Unemployment Insurance. In the year 1936 all these schemes are in operation and are now worked up into a well-conceived system which not only throws a crust of bread to the worker but cunningly splits them into different groups and categories. Thus the aged worker with his 10s per week looks askance at the young man with 17s per week who in turn envies the married man with the large family drawing over 2 pounds per week. The worker in industry claims that—he is paying for it all and looks upon the unemployed as a lot of parasites.

From the working class political parties and trade unions—officials are drawn and corrupted in order to aid in the administration of the different schemes.

When the greedy taxpayers amongst the British capitalist class complained to Lloyd George about the burden of Unemployment Insurance, he replied: "Unemployment Insurance is a bulwark against revolution." This was a remarkably accurate forecast.

Social insurance has become a weapon used by British capitalism in order to demoralize the worker. For how long shall they succeed?

Green Urged In Steel Drive

(Continued from Page 1)

regard to the steel workers, who by several recent manifestations of revolt appearing even in their company unions have shown their growing readiness for reorganization; it applies to the whole trade union movement. The C. I. O. scored a real advantage in these recent broadsides and gained new support. It also made clearer the direction in which it is headed.

As a result new forces are rallying to the movement for industrial unionism. The automobile worker union and the rubber workers union have for some time been on the most friendly terms with the C. I. O. Judging from all present indications both of these union are drawing closer to its standard. The radio workers union and the flat glass worker union have now decided definitely to expand on the basis of an industrial form of organization. It may not be amiss to add that insofar as present trends are concerned, it is characteristic that all of these unions which are the first to rally to the industrial union movement, operate in mass production industries. But the growing support given to the program of the C. I. O. is by no means confined to the e unions. Several central labor bodies and numerous local craft unions have expressed their sympathy and support to this new movement.

It is to be expected that the craft union bureaucrats will retaliate, in the face of this growing support, with arbitrary measures of expulsion, not merely of individual members but of whole organizations. When confronted with the possibility that progressive ideas may take root and spread, they know of no restraint. In such possibilities they see a threat to their own reactionary domination. About this they make no mistakes. A real incentive to active unionization, they know will mean new and more bitter struggles against the monopoly corporations which are determined to resist; and of such struggles they are sworn enemies.

Trade Union Democracy

But it is equally reasonable to assume that the industrial union movement will find it necessary to draw closer together in defense of the elementary trade union rights of democracy and freedom of expression of ideas. The industrial union movement will be compelled to rally to the assistance of every

union that is victimized by the craft union bureaucrats. Thus there are hardly prospects of moderation of the conflict in the A. F. of L. The direction of a sharpening of the conflict all along the line.

But this is only one side of the present situation. As is already implied in the offer made of active assistance to a campaign of organization of the steel industry, the industrial union movement, in order to rally the support it needs, will find itself ever more actively engaged in the organization of the unorganized. As a matter of fact many unions already call upon the C. I. O. for a assistance in organization campaigns.

The outcome of this conflict is momentous for the American working class. A beginning has been made. An aggressive policy of organization and a program of industrial unionism is the need of the moment. This the C. I. O. has brought forward and on this basis a movement is taking form. Militant workers should have no difficulty in finding their place within it.

The beginning that has been made may open up a new period of union organization such as has seldom been witnessed before in this country. It has the possibility of laying the foundation now of a trade union movement that is geared to modern methods of production. But the struggle that this movement will experience before its existence is assured will have the effect of elevating it to a higher level of consciousness. On the basis of the old craft union ideology and in the spirit of class-collaboration it would be inconceivable. It can be born and grow only in the fire of the class struggle; and from the class struggle it will receive an indelible imprint that will help to shape its outlook and its policies.

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