

Socialism in Words but Treacherous Patriotism in Action

Beware of Social Patriotism Masking its Judas Game Behind Empty Revolutionary Phrases

By JOHN WEST

There is—and naturally enough—a widespread confusion about the nature and meaning of "social-patriotism". Indeed, if it were not for this confusion, social-patriotism would not be capable of producing the powerful effects which it does in fact produce; and, consequently, would not represent the mortal danger to the working class which it does in fact represent.

The confusion can be illustrated by a reply frequently heard from Stalinists, whether party members or sympathizers, to the accusation that the policy of the Comintern is social-patriotic. "This accusation," they protest, "is libellous slander. Why, look at such and such an article and this or that resolution. You can see for yourself, the C. I. theorist puts forward the great Leninist slogan, "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war". Here are the paragraphs which state that war can finally be eliminated only under socialism, that capitalism inevitably in the end leads to war, etc. etc. How, then, can you continue to call the C. I. social-patriotic in the face of such evidence?"

To many honest people, not fully clear about the nature of politics, such a reply is convincing. To Marxists, however, it is entirely meaningless.

We have here an example of a technique of betrayers familiar since the beginnings of the revolutionary movement, and typical of demagoguery in every form. It is the same argument that is used in general by supporters of reformism and social-democracy. Do not the social-democrats declare in favor of socialism and against capitalism? How, then, can you say that they are an obstacle to the working class, that they actually serve to uphold the continued rule of capital and to foster the basic interests of the bourgeoisie within the working class?

Unfortunately, the effects of the actions of men are not measured or determined either by their hopes and wishes or by the abstract slogans which they from time to time formulate.

A Perfumed Poison

Above all is this true in the case of social-patriotism. The truth of the matter is that if a social-patriotic policy were openly and explicitly stated as such, it would make no headway among the masses, and would be of minor importance. It would be merely repudiated. Social-patriotism gains its influence precisely because it is disguised, because it is clothed outwardly in the noble raiment of proletarian and revolutionary phraseology. Only thus can social-patriotism gain access to the consciousness of the masses. The deadly poison of social-patriotism must on all occasions be heavily perfumed.

It is the critical insight of Marxism alone that can penetrate to the poisonous core. And Marxism is able to do so because it judges programs—any program—not on the basis of ideals and wishes, nor on abstract phrases and distant goals, but on the specific answers to specific questions, the concrete policies on concrete issues, and on the actions which follow from such answers and such concrete policies.

Social Patriotism in 1914

In 1914, the European social-democratic parties carried through a social-patriotic betrayal of the working class to the war, turned their following over to the guns of imperialism. But, of course, this was done entirely—for the sake of socialism. Not for one moment did the leaders of the social-democracy abandon the ideal of a socialist society. None of them made declarations for the support of the class enemy. Many of them—Kantovsky included—continued even to advocate "the proletarian dictatorship".

But, in spite of all this unexceptionable conduct, they supported the imperialist war; they recruited the workers into the army; they voted for the war credits; they took their places in the war machines. It is for this, and not for their phrases and ideals and words that we characterize their policies as social-patriotic.

How could these concrete acts be reconciled with the abstract ideals? The social-democratic leaders were skilled and ingenious men. They found little difficulty. It was necessary, in Germany, for the social-democracy to defend the gains and achievements of the German working class against the tyranny and despotism of Russian Czarism, the most reactionary government in the entire world, which, if victorious, would have destroyed those gains and achievements. This was a very plausible argument, and could be defended by most convincing "socialist" reasoning.

Its plausibility is decreased, however, when it is compared with the equally convincing socialist reasoning which was employed by the social-democrats of France and England. The latter pointed out, of course, that it was necessary to defend democracy and freedom (and the possibility for the advance to socialism which democracy and freedom allowed) against German militarism, which would, if victorious have destroyed democracy in France and England, and thus turned back the struggle for socialism.

In each case, the concrete content of the policies of the social-democrats meant simply: support of one's own government—that is, support of the class enemy through its representative, the state. In other words, it means and, could only mean, the betrayal of the workers' struggle for socialism, which is necessarily the struggle against the class enemy and the state; and thus it meant also the abandonment of the struggle against war, which is inseparable from the class struggle for socialism.

The basic characteristic of social-patriotism remains the same: support, within the working class, of the capitalist state and through it of the bourgeoisie in the war. The specific forms of social-patriotism, however, necessarily change, since these must be adjusted to the concrete circumstances of the given war crisis. It is by these specific forms—not by the general and abstract phrases—that we must always judge any "anti-war" policy.

In the present war crisis, therefore, it is irrelevant to argue over the appearance of phrases about "civil war", the "dictatorship of the proletariat", or "the struggle for socialism". These are, on the proper occasion, important. But they do not at all determine the meaning of the "anti-war" policy, do not at all mark it as on the one hand, revolutionary, or on the other, social-patriotic.

Four Forms of Social Patriotism

We must examine the specific and peculiar issues of the present crisis, since it is with respect to these that the differentiation between revolutionists and social-patriots takes place.

In the present war crisis, the specific and peculiar issues have been four: (1) Defense of the Soviet Union; (2) Wars of democratic nations against fascist nations; (3) Neutrality Legislation; (4) League and governmental sanctions.

This does not mean that other issues are not present. All the old issues remain, and take on new meanings in the new crisis. But these four appear in a special manner at present, offering problems not wholly solved in previous crises.

MARCH OF EVENTS

By JACK WEBER

The defeat of the combined reactionist-monarchical-fascist forces in Spain, even though confined as yet to the parliamentary sphere, has sent a wave of joyous confidence and daring through the hearts of millions of toilers in town and country. The flames of proletarian and peasant revolt, all but extinguished under the onslaught of the bourgeoisie, have burst out anew and even more fiercely. The brutal repression suffered by the workers after the defeat of the last insurrection have called forth a spontaneous outburst which carries the movement far beyond the clerical stage. For the moment the reactionary forces are being scattered like chaff before the wind. In the agrarian regions—Badajoz, Cadiz, Salamanca, Caceras—the starving peasants have begun to seize the land, driving out the big landowners. Under the tremendous pressure developed in the new situation, the government has been forced to legalize this "distribution" of land temporarily, "pending passage of necessary laws by the Cortes." A revolutionary situation exists. But equally clearly, all the dangers that threatened to engulf the Spanish proletariat previously and give the victory to the counter-revolution, remain.

The "People's Front" The People's Front by means of which the proletariat was completely subordinated to the "democratic" bourgeoisie, is already breaking up into its irreconcilably antagonistic elements, the moment the workers' resort quite spontaneously to independent action in their own interests. The petty bourgeoisie have taken immediate alarm at the uncontrollable power shown by the masses. Azana, republican mainstay of the bourgeoisie, has been extended credit anew among the masses by the betraying People's Front of Republicans-Socialists-Stalinists. In order to derail the workers' revolution for the second time. With the reported consent of Caballero, so-called left socialist, Azana has prohibited all demonstrations. The order was applied in particular against Socialist farm laborers who had planned to hold monster demonstrations in Madrid and all provincial capitals in favor of immediate parceling of grandees' estates. It remains to be seen whether Azana will succeed in "normalizing" the situation. Meantime, as is always the case with the "liberal" bourgeois elements boosted into power with the aid of the masses, Azana is already making overtures to the reactionaries to whom he feels in-

and around which new and basic re-groupments consequently take place.

On these four issues the dividing line between Marxists and social-patriots is sharp and unmistakable. It is indeed characteristic of a war crisis that it tends more and more clearly to reduce all the complex divisions within the labor movement to the basic two: revolutionary Marxism and social-patriotism. The divergence here can be summed up as follows:

(1) Defense of the Soviet Union.

The Marxists stand for the defense of the Soviet Union by the extension of the October revolution to the capitalist nations, by the overthrow of the bourgeois state by the revolutionary working class. The Marxists maintain that this policy holds equally in "peace" and in war, and is the only way in which the international proletariat can defend the Workers' State. The social-patriots stand for the defense of the Soviet Union by the defense of the nations (i.e., the bourgeois states) which may be (for whatever reason) in military alliance with the Soviet Union in the war. Within any capitalist country, they stand for support of the war, if the country in question is allied with the Soviet Union.

(2) Wars of democratic nations against fascist nations.

The Marxists make no distinction between democratic and fascist nations with reference to the policy on war, since they regard both as merely two different forms of capitalist class rule, and recognize that democracy necessarily leads to fascism in the decline of capitalism, unless capitalism itself is overthrown. Within both democratic and fascist states, Marxists call for struggle against the war, against the state; they insist that the chief enemy is at home—the class enemy. The social-patriots call for the support of democratic nations in a war against fascist nations.

(3) Neutrality Legislation

(This is a problem chiefly for the United States.) The Marxists are against all forms and types of Neutrality Legislation, and for an independent revolutionary working class policy against the imperialist war. The social-patriots are for various kinds of Neutrality Legislation, differing among themselves on the most "desirable" kind. (It should be remarked that advocacy of Neutrality Legislation is not always social-patriotism in the strict sense of the term. In the "isolationist" form, it is rather a variety of pacifism, which is not here under discussion. Pacifism, however, tends always to pass over into social-patriotism though it does not necessarily do so. In any case, the revolutionary struggle against war must always include the struggle against every variety of pacifism.)

(4) League and Governmental Sanctions.

The Marxists are against all forms of League and governmental sanctions, and for independent working class "sanctions". The social-patriots are for League and governmental sanctions against so-called "aggressors". The social-patriots will of course, say that such a bald outline grossly "misrepresents" their position, that the questions are "not so simple as all that", etc. And it is certainly true that in the writings and speeches of the social-patriots the questions are not so simply put. They are covered over a cloud of modifications, provisos, additions, justifications, exceptions, and "but" clauses. The social-patriots inform us that they are for not merely governmental sanctions, but also for working-class sanctions—and "the latter are basically the more important." They assure us that when fighting in the armies of France or the United States against Germany or Japan, they will not "really" be fighting in support of the governments of France and of the United States, but against Nazi Germany and despotic Japan, and for the Soviet Union; and as soon as the threat against the Soviet Union and the menace of Fascism is put out of the way, they will turn their arms against the bourgeois governments of France and the United States. (Similarly, in 1914, the social democrats fought not to support the Kaiser and the Junkers and industrialists, but against the Czar; and not for the English bankers, but against the Kaiser.) They will quickly grant that Neutrality Legislation "cannot permanently ensure peace, which can only be done by the victory of the working class, but we must utilize every means at our disposal."

No "Buts" in Anti-War Struggle

But this is all merely evasion, equivocation and deception. At heart, the questions are really as direct and simple as here stated. Yes and No answers are the only two possible. There are no "buts" in the revolutionary struggle against war. All the modifications in a 20,000 word thesis serve only to hide and in no way to alter the social-patriotic betrayal. It is for this very reason that the issue of war provides so unerring a touchstone whereby to distinguish the tendencies and developments within the labor movement.

These four specific forms which social-patriotism has taken during the present war crisis are not, of course, unrelated. The Marxist position on each of the four issues follows not accidentally nor arbitrarily, but from one fundamental underlying set of principles, in terms of which the concrete answers are given. Marxists hold that the struggle against war is inseparable from the class struggle in general; that the class struggle means in the present era the struggle of the proletariat (in alliance with colonial and subject peoples and sections of the middle classes) against the bourgeoisie, and its representatives, the bourgeois states. No compromise in this struggle is permissible. Nor can it be suspended because of "exceptional" situations—such as, for example, war. Rather must it be intensified and brought to culmination in "exceptional" situations. Consequently, the Marxists must always reject any policy which involves a subordination to, compromise with, collaboration with, the class enemy and the state.

Collaboration with Class Enemy

But the policy of the social-patriots is exactly a policy of subordination to, compromise with, the class enemy and the state. The social-patriots propose to conduct the struggle against war in collaboration with the bourgeois state; to defend the Soviet Union along with bourgeois states allied with the Soviet state; to defeat Fascism in collaboration with the bourgeois-democratic states; to stop war for the United States by collaboration with the imperialist U.S. government in enacting and enforcing Neutrality Legislation; to punish "aggressors" by relying on the "sanctions" of imperialist states and the imperialist League against the "aggressor". The Marxists point out that a struggle against war cannot conceivably be conducted in collabora-

tion with those who make war; that "collaboration" with the class enemy and the bourgeois state can only mean for the working class subordination to the class enemy and the bourgeois state; that, in general, the struggle against war cannot be formulated within the framework of capitalism, since capitalism inevitably breeds war, but must always be the struggle against capitalism, for workers' power and for socialism. Consequently, they pose the problem of the struggle against war—in whatever manner it appears—sanctions, Neutrality Legislation, defense of the Soviet Union, attitude toward Fascist states—as always the struggle against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state.

The programs of all the parties, organizations and groups of the working class can be rigidly tested by reference to the four special issues of the present crisis.

By making this test, we discover at once the fact of major importance: that, on all four, the most vigorous, relentless and unceasing advocate of the social-patriotic positions is Stalinism—the Communist International and its national sections throughout the world. The Communist parties have become the material embodiment of social-patriotism in the thorough and fatal form it can take in the present crisis. The primary historical function remaining for Stalinism to fulfill is to act as the chief functionary for imperialism within the working class in the coming war.

"Defense of the Soviet Union"

The same test, secondly demonstrates with equally crystal clarity that the leaders of the Second International, together with the leaders of the chief parties affiliated to the Second International, continue unchanged the social-patriotic tradition of 1914. On all four of these basic concrete issues they have given exactly the same answer as Stalinism: the social-patriotic answer. The four answers are embodied, for example, in the Dan-Zyromski-Bauer Thesis, as well as

in the positions of Blum and his associates. This is particularly revealing in the case of "defense of the Soviet Union." It should hardly be necessary to comment on the record of these gentlemen with reference to the Soviet Union. They were at the beginning, and have remained consistently, the bitter enemies of the October Revolution. Nevertheless, in the face of the war crisis, they are able to formulate a policy with regard to the defense of the Soviet Union which is indistinguishable from the policy of Stalinism. The reason for this is not far to seek. Stalinism, too, has now ranged itself on the side of the enemies of the October Revolution. Stalinism translates "defense of the Soviet Union" in "defense of bourgeois states"—and this naturally coincides with the aims of Messrs. Blum and Bauer. Blum and Bauer are not afraid of words: If the slogan "Defense of the Soviet Union" can aid them in making the social-patriotic pill palatable to the working class, they are perfectly willing to borrow it from Stalin. They go thus a step beyond the leaders of the British Labour Party and of the Old Guard Socialists in this country. These stick mainly to the three other issues for their social-patriotic platform giving to them exactly the same answers as the Stallus and the Bauers), but still balk at the first. They will doubtless learn, however. And, if it is needed in order to speed up recruiting for the army, we shall find that Waldman, Oneal, and the chiefs of the British Labour Party have overnight become among the loudest of the defenders of the Workers' State.

These four issues thus provide us further with a decisive test for the nature of the two Internationals. They prove beyond any possible doubt that the Internationals are on the side of the war, that they will function for the war during this final period of preparation as well as during the actual conflict. From this it follows necessarily that, as one integral part of the

struggle against the war, the revolutionists must proclaim the Fourth International; and that the struggle against the war is inseparable from the struggle against the old Internationals and for the new. This conclusion and this task cannot be hidden: we know in advance what the task must be, and to fail to declare it openly is betrayal in the struggle against the war.

In addition, these four issues provide major criteria by means of which to measure the new differentiations within the labor movement. The approach toward a revolutionary position is signalled by clarification on these issues. For example, we discover by such an examination that the Militant Socialists in this country have given—though not without certain vitiating "modifications"—the revolutionary as opposed to the social-patriotic answers to three of these four questions posed by the present crisis. They retain a blend of pacifism and potential social-patriotism in their answer to the fourth—Neutrality Legislation—which is of particular importance for a party in the United States, since this is almost exclusively a U.S. question (our revolutionary policy, one might say, must begin at home). The Y.P.S. L.'s have taken a revolutionary position even on this fourth, and have fairly consistently opposed all forms of Neutrality Legislation.

It would be an error to conclude from this that the Y.P.S.L.'s—and, consequently, still less the Militants—have reached the full clarification of a Marxist program, in general, or specifically on the war question. This is not yet by any means the case. In spite of their on the whole correct stand with respect to these four crucial present questions, they retain, on the issue of war, other confusions carried over from their earlier heritage: confusions, for example, with reference to pacifism and particularly concerning the proper concrete attitude of Marxists toward pacifist organizations; they have romantic ideas about such matters as "the general strike against war"; and they have so far failed entirely to draw conclusions from their war position with respect to the international question. Nevertheless, the answers they have given on these four questions establish, for the time being at least, the direction in which they are moving. Whether this movement will be completed in adherence to the full and uncompromising program of revolutionary Marxism is of decisive importance for the building of the revolutionary party in this country.

WORLD OF LABOR CP's Neutral to Lithuanian Fascist Gov't In a War with Germany

We quote from a letter (January, 1936) written by our Lithuanian comrades: "The Stalinists claim some 1,000 members, of whom about 200 (including the youth) are in Kovno. But the enormous development of the activities of provocateurs, which is in part due to the bureaucratic leadership, reduces their work almost to nothing. On the other hand, this party, as is the case in the entire world, has made a sharp turn to the right during the past year. The slogan, "Long Live the International Revolution!" which was still to be found last year on all their leaflets and publications, has been completely deleted today from the columns of their press. The reader no longer gets the jitters from such abusive words as "socialism," "revolution," etc. . . . Everything is rational and sane. Instead of this they broadcast homilies to the "Narodniki" (In France they go under the name of Radical Socialists); and they appeal to them to engage instantly in a struggle for a People's Front Government with their own participation (i.e., that of the Stalinists), or even without their participation in general which they pledge to support. When they are told that such a democratic government had occupied itself intensively up to the year 1926 to clap revolutionists in jails, and then proceeded in 1926 to surrender the power to the Fascists without the slightest resistance, their answer is: "Oh, but today it will be an entirely different sort of a democracy." As if there can be any other kind of bourgeois democracy! We, the Bolshevik-Leninists, are naturally not at all opposed to a struggle for the democratic rights of the workers, only we understand very well that under the existing conditions, democracy cannot in general long maintain itself and cannot prove to be anything except a transitional stage either towards Fascism or revolution. But as for the Stalinists, they have discovered, it seems, a new social order, some sort of an "entirely different democracy."

The Lithuanian people. It is they themselves who are really prepared to defend the country. It is self-evident that our directing Fascist clique (whose social base is relatively very narrow), who rely in the main upon the "Independence of Lithuania," find it easy to parry such "charges" and are able to compete with great success with the Stalinists so far as the "national sentiment" is concerned. "Nevertheless the Stalinists are prepared, in the event of war, to defend bravely 'their own country' (and, consequently, also the existing government). "A Stalinist (one of the most "class-conscious") expressed himself as follows, during a conversation with one of our comrades: "I have spent seven years in jail, but if Hitler suddenly attacks Lithuania, I will enlist as a volunteer in the Lithuanian army." "There you have the true spirit, stripped of all veils. Once upon a time, in Czarist Russia, the Mensheviks, staunch defenders of their country, were likewise clapped in jails. "In their leaflets, for August 1, the Stalinists officially declared: 'We will not put obstacles in the way of the Fascist Government in its measures against Hitler.' In other words, they accept in reality the increase of the army, and of the military budget, etc., etc., as if it is possible to determine beforehand whether these measures will be directed against Hitler, or somebody else. In any case, up to now these measures have been directed against the peasants who are rebelling. Such is the miserable state in which the Stalinist party finds itself at present."

GREECE The Daily Worker has of late made a great fuss about the "slanders" cast at its sister party in Greece. Under the date-line of December 24, 1935, our Greek comrades wrote us a very illuminating letter. We have just received it. The delay was due in a large measure to the fact that our comrades in Greece have been functioning under extremely onerous conditions. During the period of illegality (prior to the fall of the Kondyllis government), they suffered very severe blows in proportion to their forces. Six of our Greek comrades, among them Georges Vitsoris, have been exiled to various islands. Another leading comrade was court-martialled three years in prison. Here is what our Greek comrades report about the activity of the Stalinists

during the critical situation in Greece, and the furious offensive against the workers' movement: "During the events that unfolded, after the sanguinary clash in March (1935), the Stalinist party, compelled by the events to take a clear-cut position, one way or the other, went the whole hog, and revealed its true nature. During this whole period the C.P. has openly and cynically collaborated not only with the supposedly democratic parties but even with the Liberal Party. "The Liberal Party is the party that conducted all the wars from 1912 to 1922. It is the party that has applied the most bestial terrorism against the workers' movement. It is this party that created and voted for the 'Idionyme' (a rigorous law against communists), for the law against the press, the exile law, etc. In particular, during the recent period of the last four years of the Venizelos Government, this party dissolved several workers' organizations and organized at Salonica and elsewhere the anti-semitic gangs of the "Three E's." "The coup d'etat of last March was originally evaluated by the Stalinists, with their usual and inherent stupidity, as a Fascist attempt on the part of the Liberal Party. And so, they then proceeded to collaborate with this very same party of Venizelos! "In all their documents, the Stalinists present themselves as consistent democrats. At the outbreak of the Italo-Abyssinian war, they took the initiative in addressing a burning appeal to all political parties in the country, exhorting them to unite for the defense of "National Independence and National Integrity!" "The coup d'etat of October 10, 1935, was executed without the "democratic coalition" (depicted by the Stalinists as a powerful mass organization) being able to so much as lift its little finger. The Stalinist party has publicly come forward as a democratic party and as a defender of national unity. In the domain of internal policies, it is in agreement with the policy of the Balkan Entente. None of the sections of the Communist International has so ignominiously and so stupidly disgraced itself as has the Communist Party of Greece during this recent period."

CPers Neutral to Lithuanian Fascist Gov't In a War with Germany

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