

TROTSKY ON THE STALIN INTERVIEW

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weakening the positions of imperialism and in strengthening the positions of the proletariat and of the colonial peoples in the entire world. An unfavorable relation of forces may compel, in the interests of saving the main base of the revolution, the surrender of many "inches" of soil to the enemy, as was the case in the epoch of Brest-Litovsk, and partly also in the case of the Chinese Eastern railway. And, on the contrary, a more favorable relation of forces places on the workers' state the duty to come to the assistance of the revolutionary movement in other countries, not only morally but also, if need be, with the assistance of armed force: wars of emancipation are an integral part of revolutions of emancipation.

Thus, the experience with Mongolia shatters to pieces the ideology of conservative pacifism which bases itself upon historical frontiers, as though they were the Ten Commandments. The frontiers of the U.S.S.R. are only the temporary front line trenches of the class struggle. They lack even a national justification. The Ukrainian people—to take only one of many examples—is cut in two by the state boundary. Should favorable conditions arrive, the Red Army would be duty-bound to come to the aid of Western Ukraine which is under the heel of the Polish executioners. It is not difficult to imagine the gigantic impulse that would be given to the revolutionary movement in Poland and in the whole of Europe by the unification of a workers' and peasants' Ukraine. All state frontiers are only fetters upon the productive forces. The task of the proletariat is not to preserve the status quo, i.e., to perpetuate the frontiers, but on the contrary to work for their revolutionary elimination with the aim of creating the Socialist United States of Europe and of the entire world. But to make such an international policy possible, if not at present then in the future, it is imperative for the Soviet Union to free itself from the rule of the conservative bureaucracy with its religion of "socialism in one country."

WHEREIN LIES THE CAUSE OF WAR?

In reply to Howard's question as to what causes underlie the threat of war, Stalin said in accordance with tradition: "It lies in capitalism." As proof he cited the last war which "arose from the desire to divide the world." But remarkably enough, no sooner does Stalin pass from the past to the present, from dim theoretical recollections to real politics, than capitalism immediately disappears, and in its place are to be found individual evil-minded cliques that are incapable of grasping the benefits of peace. To the question of whether war is inevitable, Stalin replies, "In my opinion the positions of the friends of peace are being strengthened. The friends of peace can work openly (!), they base themselves upon the force of public opinion, and they have at their disposal such instruments as, for example (!!!), the League of Nations. This is an asset for the friends of peace . . . as for the enemies of peace, they are compelled to work secretly. This is a liability for the enemies of peace. Incidentally, it is not excluded that precisely because of this (?) they may decide upon a military adventure as an act of despair."

Thus, we find that humanity is divided not into classes, nor into imperialist states warring with each other, but into "friends" and "enemies" of peace, i.e., into saints and sinners. The cause for war (at any rate, for future if not past wars) is not capitalism that breeds irreconcilable contradictions but the ill-will of the "enemies of peace" who "work secretly," while the French, British, Belgium and other slave-owners do their work in broad daylight. But precisely because the enemies of peace, like all evil spirits, work secretly, they may, in a fit of despair, plunge into an adventure. Who needs this philosophic mush? At best it can be of service only to some old ladies' pacifist society.

As we have had the occasion to state before, the agreement between the Soviets and France gives infinitely more guarantees to France than to the Soviets. In the negotiations with Paris, Moscow evinced a lack of firmness, or, to put it more bluntly, Laval fooled Stalin. The events in connection with the Rhineland are an indisputable confirmation that, with a more realistic appraisal of the situation, Moscow could have wrung from France much more serious guarantees, in so far as pacts in general can be considered as "guarantees" in the present epoch of sharp turns in the situation, of continuous crises, break-ups and regroupments. But as we have already said, the Soviet bureaucracy shows much greater firmness in the struggle against the advanced workers than in negotiations with bourgeois diplomats.

But, no matter how he might evaluate the Franco-Soviet pact, not a single serious minded proletarian revolutionist ever denied or denies the right of the Soviet state to seek for an auxiliary support for its inviolability through a temporary agreement with the French or some other imperialism. For this purpose, however, there is not the slightest need to call black white and to rebaptize bloody brigands as "friends of peace." As an example to be emulated one might take, let us say, the new ally, the French bourgeoisie: in concluding the agreement with the Soviets the French bourgeoisie presents this action very soberly without becoming lyrical, without lavishing any compliments and even maintaining a constant undertone of warning against the Soviet Government. However bitter it may be, it is necessary to speak the truth. Laval, Sarraut, and their associates have shown a great deal more firmness and dignity in defending the interests of the bourgeois state than did Stalin and Litvinov in the service of the workers' state.

Assuredly, it is difficult to conceive a more vicious stupidity than that which divides the world brigands into friends and enemies of peace! One could still speak, in a certain sense, about the friends and enemies of status quo: but these are two entirely different things. Status quo is not the organization of "peace," but the organization of the infamous oppression exercised by a minority over the overwhelming majority of mankind. Status quo is being maintained by means of constant warfare within the sacred boundaries and beyond their precincts (England—in India and Egypt; France—in Syria; De La Rocque—in France). The difference between the two camps, which are, besides, very unstable, consists in the fact that some of the brigands think it more advisable already today to maintain the existing boundaries of oppression and enslavement with arms in hand, whereas others would prefer to blow up these boundaries sooner. This correlation of appetites and plans is itself continually changing. Italy favors a status quo in Europe but not in Africa: yet every assault upon the boundaries in Africa is immediately reflected in Europe. Hitler decided to send troops into the Rhineland only because Mussolini had succeeded in slaughtering several thousand Abyssinians. Where should we enroll Italy: among the friends or the enemies of peace? And yet, France cherishes the friendship with Italy infinitely more than the friendship with the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, England is courting the friendship of Germany.

The "friends of peace" work in the open (who would have thought it!) and have at their disposal "such instruments as, for example, the League of Nations." What other "instruments" have the friends of peace, outside the League of Nations? Obviously, they have the Comintern and the Amsterdam-Pleyel Committee. Stalin failed to mention these auxiliary "instruments" partly because he himself does not attach any great importance to them, and partly because he did not want to frighten his interlocutor unnecessarily. But Stalin does transform completely the League of Nations, whose nose has caved in, in the full view of all mankind, into a bulwark of peace, the prop and hope of nations.

In order to utilize the imperialist antagonisms between France and Germany there was not and is not the slightest need for idealizing the bourgeois ally or the particular combination of imperialists that temporarily screens itself by the sign of the League of Nations. The crime does not lie in this or another practical deal concluded with imperialists but in the fact that both the Soviet government and the Comintern are dishonestly embellishing their episodic allies and their League; are duping the workers with slogans of disarmament and "collective security"; and thereby are transformed in action into the political agency of imperialists in relation to the working masses.

The program of the Bolshevik party drafted by Lenin in 1919 replied to all these questions with remarkable clarity and simplicity. But who thinks about this document in the Kremlin? Today, Stalin and Co. find embarrassing even the eclectic program of the Comintern compiled by Bukharin in 1928. For this reason we think it useful to quote from the program of the Bolshevik party on the question of the League of Nations and the friends of peace. Here is what it states:

"The growing pressure on the part of the proletariat and especially the victories gained by the latter in various countries tend to increase the resistance of the exploiters and engender on their part the creation of new forms of the international unification of the capitalists (League of Nations, etc.), which, while organizing on a world scale the systematic exploitation of all the peoples on earth, aim their immediate efforts toward the direct suppression of the revolutionary movements of the proletariat in all countries.

"All this inevitably leads to the correlation of the civil war within the individual states with the revolutionary wars both of the proletarian countries defending themselves as well as of the oppressed peoples struggling against the yoke of the imperialist powers.

"Under these conditions the slogans of pacifism, of international disarmament under capitalism, of arbitration courts, and so on are not only a reactionary Utopia but also a downright swindle of the toilers aimed to disarm the proletariat and to distract the workers away from the task of disarming the exploiters."

It is precisely this criminal work that both Stalin and the Comintern are fulfilling: they are sowing reactionary Utopias, swindling the toilers, disarming the proletariat.

THE "COMIC MISUNDERSTANDING" WITH REGARD TO THE WORLD REVOLUTION.

Nobody compelled Stalin to satisfy Howard's thirst for knowledge on the question of the world revolution. If Stalin gave the interview as the unofficial head of the Government (and this is indicated by his statement with regard to Mongolia), then he could have simply referred his interlocutor to Dimitroff on the questions of the world revolution. But no, Stalin went into explanations. At first sight it appears entirely incomprehensible why he should have thereby compromised himself so cruelly by his cynical and, sad to say, not at all clever disquisitions about the world revolution. But he is driven onto the slippery road by an insurmountable need: he must break with the past.

What about the plans and intentions relating to the revolution? asks the visitor.

"We never (!) had such plans and intentions."

But, what about . . .

"This is all the result of a misunderstanding."

Howard: "A tragic misunderstanding?"

Stalin: "No, a comic, or, perhaps, a tragic-comical one."

It is embarrassing even to read and transcribe these lines, they are so inappropriate and indecent. For whom is this . . . wisdom intended? Even the pacifist ladies will reject it.

Asks Stalin: "What danger can the neighboring states see in the ideas of the Soviet people, if these states are really firmly placed in the saddle?" Very well, permit us to ask, what about those who are not placed firmly in the saddle? Yet, that is how matters stand in reality. Precisely because its position is precarious, the bourgeoisie fears Soviet ideas, not Stalin's ideas but those ideas that led to the creation of the Soviet state. To soothe the bourgeoisie, Stalin adduces a supplementary argument: "The export of revolution is nonsense. Every country, should it so desire, will itself achieve its own revolution, and if it does not desire it, there will be no revolution. Now, for example, our country desired to make a revolution and made it. . . ." And more of the same, in the self-same, smug, edifying tone. From the theory of socialism in one country Stalin has completely and decisively passed over to the theory of revolution in one country. If a "country" so desires—it will make it, should it not desire it—it won't make it. Now, "we," for example, desired it. . . . But before desiring it, "we" imported the ideas of Marxism from other countries and made use of foreign revolutionary experience.

In the course of decades, "we" had our emigre organization in other countries which directed the revolutionary struggle in Russia. In order to give a methodic and an active character to the exchange of experience between countries and their mutual revolutionary support, "we" organized the Communist International in the year 1919. "We" more than once proclaimed as the duty of the proletariat of a victorious country to come to the assistance of the rising peoples—with advice, material means, and, if possible, with armed force. All these ideas (incidentally, they bear the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Liebknecht) are written down in the most important programmatic documents of the Bolshevik party and of the Comintern. Stalin has proclaimed that all this is a misunderstanding! A tragic one? No, a comic one. Not for nothing has Stalin recently announced that it has become "merry" to live in the Soviet Union: now even the Communist International has become transformed from a serious personage into a comedian. And how could it be otherwise, if the international character of the revolution is mere and sheer "nonsense"?

Stalin would have made a much more convincing impression upon his interlocutor, if instead of impotently calumniating the past ("we never had such plans and intentions"), he had on the contrary openly counterposed his own policy to the antiquated "plans and intentions" which have been relegated to the museum. Stalin might have read Howard the very same quotation from the program which we gave above, and then made approximately the following brief speech, "In the eyes of Lenin the League of Nations was an organization for the bloody suppression of the toilers. But we see in it—an instrument of peace. Lenin spoke of the inevitability of revolutionary wars. But we consider the export of revolution—nonsense. Lenin branded the alliance between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie as a betrayal. But we are doing all in our power to drive the French proletariat onto this road. Lenin lashed the slogan of disarmament under capitalism as an infamous swindle of the toilers. But we build our entire policy upon this slogan. Your comical misunderstanding"—that is how Stalin could have concluded—"consists in the fact that you take us for the continuators of Bolshevism, whereas we are its gravediggers."

Such an explanation would have dispelled the last shreds of suspicion of the world bourgeoisie and would have definitely established Stalin's reputation as a statesman. Unfortunately, he does not dare as yet to resort to such frank language. The past binds him, the traditions hamper him, the phantom of the Opposition frightens him. We come to the assistance of Stalin. In accordance with our rule, in the given case, too, we openly say what is.

March 18, 1936.

French Gov't Jails Zeller, Youth Leader

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In one place, on the rue Asseline, where a group of the Action Francaise had assembled to celebrate the attack on Blum, the workers mobilized spontaneously and introduced an unexpected note into the festivities. Immediately the Stalinists of this section, the 14th Arrondissement, issued a disclaimer for any responsibility of this action while at the same time denouncing the Bolshevik-Leninists to the police.

C.P. Rats on Bolsheviks

The contents of this stool-pigeon leaflet, a facsimile of which appeared in Revolution, February 28, were as follows:

"The Communist unit of the 14th Arrondissement warns the workers against impulsive actions very often incited by irresponsible people or provocateurs successively expelled from the Communist and from the Socialist party, who are trying to canalize in a false way the justified anger of the working class.

"Republican defense of liberties and the defense of workers cannot and must not consist in actions or expeditions which usually play the game of the fascist bands."

The police were not slow in taking the hint and immediately arrested an individual named Jonot, a member of the S.F.I.O., who turned out to be a stool-pigeon and squealed out only on Levaque but on some ten members of his party.

It is interesting and characteristic that Populaire which filled its columns with vile tirades against the J.S.R. (Revolutionary Socialist Youth) for their revolutionary policy on war, breathed not a word about the government agent Jonot. Indeed, why should it, when Jonot is an agent for the same government they support in parliament and it was a common enemy he was betraying. The same holds for the National Committee of the S.F.I.O. which acted with undignified haste in expelling Bolshevik-Leninists and took its time in taking action against Jonot. It might be remarked that the People's Front of the district followed suit in "exploring" the incidents at the rue Asseline!

Questioned upon his arrest, Levaque denied his participation in the events in question but stated without hesitation that he approved the action of the workers and had he been present he would have encouraged them and acted by their side. The Stalinists immediately took the opportunity not to support Levaque but to give information to the government to insure a severe sentence. "The J.S.R.," say these rats in L'Humanite, "is under the leadership of Trotskyist elements whose provocative methods we have vigorously fought. Levaque is a member of the Central Committee of the J.S.R."

In Company With Royalists

The baiting of revolutionists, however, is not the private preserve of the Stalinists, which, once begun, must be done in company with those who devote their main energies to it—the Fascists. Thus Action Francaise, organ of the royalist group, takes up the cry of L'Humanite:

"The J.S.R., or workers' militia whose leader is Marceau Pivert (an error in fact—Ed.) and whose organ is the paper Revolution, are the strong arm men of the S.F.I.O. . . . The J.S.R. admits its participation in the incidents of the rue Asseline. . . . The guilty are therefore known. They admit they proclaimed not only their participation in the crime but their deliberate intention to repeat it and they call for direct action. Has direct action become legal under the Sarraut government? When will the groups signing this press release (quoted below—Ed) and poster be dissolved?"

What a revealing picture! The thug Maurras, who caged Blum over the head with a snare, remains at liberty. Levaque, the revolutionist, who supported the workers in their spontaneous action which would make the Fascists wary of any similar action in the future, is cast into prison. Fascists . . . and Stalinists demand the overment action against Levaque's organization!

While the Stalinists disavowed, disassociated . . . and disgraced themselves by making common cause with the Royalists, the Bolshevik-Leninists and Revolutionary Socialist Youth sprang to the defense of Levaque, issuing the following statement to the press:

Solidarity with Levaque
"The royalist assault upon Leon Blum gave rise to a spontaneous reaction in many working class districts. In the 14th particularly, workers of all tendencies and all organizations, swelling with anger demonstrated their intention of punishing Royalist assassins in the scuffle that ensued on the rue Asseline.

"But the Communist party believed it its duty, too late, to disassociate itself from this action and in a leaflet to openly attempt to place the responsibility for the

Unemployed to Unite in Washington on April 7

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Deal helped to drive home the lessons. Roosevelt's pretty pre-election promises to the "Forgotten Men" raised in the unemployed new hopes and new illusions. But three years of Roosevelt have taught the unemployed what to expect from the promises of the representatives of the bourgeoisie. The unemployed have been learning who are their friends and who are their enemies, that their friends are their class allies, and their enemies the class enemy.

Tactics for the Jobless

The unemployed have been learning the lesson of the inseparable

New Support for Newsmen

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financial support. Gunnar Nickolson, Milwaukee vice-president was elected permanent chairman of the district guild, and Al Haut of the Chicago Guild was made secretary-treasurer. Plans were made for organizing new guild units in the district, which now includes Milwaukee, Chicago, Rockford, Des Moines, Madison and Indianapolis. Teachers Association Sympathetic As an antidote to an attack on the guild by the Citizens Law and Order League, stood the resolution supporting collective bargaining of the Milwaukee branch of the Association of Wisconsin State Teachers Colleges, a voluntary association which for 20 years has been recognized by the board of normal school regents as the bargaining agent for class-room teachers and librarians of the nine teachers' colleges in the state.

Unmoved by the Law and Order League's espousal of the Hearst cause, the guild will serve notice Saturday to the News management that its strike lines are unbroken and its support unwavering, with a huge demonstration Saturday noon at the News plant. Then, Saturday night there will be a torch light parade on the South Side of Milwaukee, followed by a mass meeting indoors. Guildsmen will make the necessary contacts with labor organizations and other groups during the week to insure success of the demonstration.

demonstration of the anger of the workers on our organization and to endeavor to direct the investigations of the police to the 'Trotskyists.'

"With the aid of a 'confession' our comrade Levaque, member of the Bolshevik-Leninist group and of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Socialist Youth was arrested.

"We protest against this arbitrary arrest by the Sarraut-Debos government dictated purely by class interests and political motives, and not even 'justified' by an iota of juridical proof."

"At the same time we declare our solidarity with our comrade Levaque who courageously declared that he fully approved the action of the workers at the rue Asseline, regretting only not having participated in them.

"Our two organizations, the J.S.R. and B.-L.G., who no longer belong to the S.F.I.O., and who, besides, were expelled from it for having practiced, as against the timidity of the Socialist leaders, an intransigent class policy, loudly declare that they approve the action of the workers of the rue Asseline.

"We are the initiators of the slogan of workers militias.

"Our motto of action against the wild dogs of Fascism is: For one eye, both eyes, for one tooth, the entire jaw.

"We remain true to the teachings of Marx, Lenin Trotsky.

"We have nothing in common with those who betray the workers by deceiving them with 'national reconciliation' and dragging them in the tow of Sarraut, the man who declared: 'Communism, that is the enemy.'"

"Long live the J.S.R. and the G. B.L.

"Long live the Fourth International."

Intense Campaign

It goes without saying that neither L'Humanite nor Populaire printed this release nor did the C.P. or S.P. respond to the call for a conference for the defense of Levaque. But this conspiracy of silence did not prevent the workers of Paris or of France from hearing about Levaque and joining in the protest. More than 20 organizations have agreed to participate in the defense work, among them sections of the S.R.I. (International Red Aid, same as I.L.D. here—Ed.), 10,000 circulars were distributed and Paris was placarded with posters. Throughout Paris and France, even as far as Geneva, workers' organizations have protested the arrest of Levaque and condemned the treacherous action of the Stalinist and Socialist bureaucrats.

This agitation, although we have no direct information as yet, we are certain will be increased a hundred fold in the defense of Zeller.

unity of their interests with the working class as a whole. Perhaps the most distinctive contribution of the National Unemployed League, along with its insistence from the beginning on the methods of militant mass action, was its initiation of direct cooperation between employed and unemployed workers, in strikes, boycotts, demonstrations and mass picket lines.

And the unemployed have learned also that their movement cannot be effective when used as political kites for political parties or factions, whether of the bourgeoisie or the working class. They have had their taste of organizations built to get votes for ward-healers or to send delegates to fake Congresses; and they have found that neither serves their interests.

In Washington in the unity Convention, the unemployed, represented not by highly paid officials and bureaucrats, but by those who have taken the lead in their own direct struggles, will sum up the results of a number of the chief lessons. The conclusion they have reached is that the next big step for the unemployed requires as a pre-condition aggressive, fighting unity in a single national organization.

Johnson's Treachery

Unity is without question a great step forward, perhaps the greatest which the unemployed movement has yet taken. It would, however, be romantic and dangerous to imagine that unity will solve all problems. Serious difficulties remain, and are present even in the organization of unity. It is a disruptive blow at the entire unemployed movement that the ardent convert to social-patriotism, Arnold Johnson, working under cover during recent months in the National Unemployed League, has attempted to split the NUL by calling a rump Convention behind the backs of the National Executive Committee. His attempt has been sternly repudiated by all the active and functioning Leagues, but he may still try to get together in Washington next week a medley of stooge delegates. His split maneuvering must be exposed and counteracted, in order to wipe out a sore spot of the new organization at the beginning.

Likewise must the Convention be on guard against attempts of the Stalinists to stuff the new National Committee with members from fake "independent" organizations created overnight for bargaining purposes. And even more must the Convention reject Stalinist efforts—so noticeable at every recent Convention or Conference attended by Stalinists—to transform the new Workers' Alliance from the united, fighting class organization of the unemployed into a pale adjunct of the collaborationist People's Front and Stalinist social-patriotism. This must be no Convention of the American League against War and Fascism, or National Negro Congress.

The Convention must look forward to three great immediate tasks, and must prepare the organization for facing them: An aggressive organizational campaign, carrying the Workers Alliance into every state of the Union, and strengthening the locals particularly in the industrial centers; a rapid offensive against the Roosevelt relief program, to forestall the cutting down of work relief, increase the public works program, and raise direct relief by appropriations from the Federal government; and all along the line more direct cooperation with the trade union movement in all fields, especially with the progressive industrial union forces in the American Federation of Labor. Unity gives a basis for putting such a policy into effect on a scale never before possible in the unemployed movement. By carrying it out, the unemployed will play their part in a notable advance for the working class.

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