

Feuchtwanger Defends Stalin Against Attack of Andre Gide

By Blake Lear

Rudely shaken for the first time by the German fascist dictatorship, thoroughly permeated with liberal-bourgeois prejudices, and shamelessly virginal politically, Lion Feuchtwanger fills to a nicety the role of literary advocate for the Stalin régime.

Feuchtwanger's pot-boiler, *Moscow 1937*, is explicitly directed against André Gide's *Return from the USSR* and his *Retouches*, bitter criticisms of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which have created a furore in Europe. More generally it is addressed to the liberal intelligentsia of the world, whose faith in the USSR has been severely shaken by the recent executions.

Only the fact that the good bourgeois Feuchtwanger trembles sympathetically to all the bourgeois manifestations of the Stalin régime, as one tuning fork does to another, can explain his statements upon the key questions of soviet life. Let us examine a few:

A Bourgeois Defense

On wage differentials: "The idea that, so long as citizens in a socialist state cannot all live well, they must all live meanly, or at any rate very modestly, seems to me an atavistic derivative of primitive Christian views and more pious than reasonable."

On freedom of political criticism: "...one never hears criticism of the general principle of the Party. In this they 'conform,' that is true." And elsewhere: "At bottom, the Soviet dictatorship is confined to prohibiting the propagation of two opinions in word, deed, or writing: first, that the establishment of socialism in the Union is impossible without a world revolution, and, secondly, that the Soviet Union is bound to lose the coming war."

On Stalin's estimation of the masses: "If he tolerates all the cheering, he explained, it is because he knows the naive joy the uproar of the festivities affords those who organize them."

Why did Trotsky lose in his fight against Stalin in the Soviet Union? "...Trotsky clung to the principles which had been proved during the heroic, emotional period, but which were bound to go awry the moment they had to serve everyday needs." In addition—a grievous error—he "declared world revolution to be a necessary condition for the establishment of socialism; he adhered rigidly to the Marxist doctrine of absolute internationalism; he advocated the tactics of the permanent revolution and demonstrated with a great show of logic the correctness of the Marxist proposition that the establishment of socialism in any one country was impossible."

A Story-teller's Story

It is not hard for Feuchtwanger to prove to his complete satisfaction that Trotsky is a terrorist. "Trotsky has given expression time and time again to his unbounded hatred and contempt for Stalin. Would he not translate into action what he had expressed in word and writing?" Q. E. D.

What impression did the trial give? "...the impression one received was that the accused, prosecution, and judges had the same, I might almost say sporting, interest in arriving at a satisfactory explanation."

Does the language of the trial seem melodramatic, like a bad dream? "That the confession sounded emotional is due chiefly to the translation. It is difficult

to catch the modulations of the Russian language and, when translated, it can very easily have a superlative, extravagant and odd effect." This from a man who confessedly doesn't speak Russian!

Why were there no documents, no witnesses? "Details of circumstantial evidence, documents and depositions may interest jurists, criminologists, and historians, but we should only have confused our Soviet citizens had we spun out all kinds of details." What typical contempt for the masses is expressed, and what cynicism!

Does Feuchtwanger consider the defendants guilty? Well—ah—yes! "I must admit that, although the trial has convinced me of the guilt of the prisoners, I can find no completely satisfactory explanation of their behaviour before the court..." Further: "What I have understood is excellent. From which I conclude that the rest which I have not understood is also excellent."

What is necessary to make everything comprehensible? "It would take a great Soviet poet to make their guilt and their sin comprehensible to Western minds"

Swears by Stalin

Could it possibly be that Stalin has concocted a frame-up? Oh, no. "Read any book or any speech of Stalin's, look at any portrait of him... It at once becomes as clear as daylight that this modest, impersonal man cannot possibly have committed the colossal indiscretion of producing with the assistance of countless performers so coarse a comedy..."

Let it not be thought, however, that Feuchtwanger, who can admit that a petty-bourgeois mentality is developing in the USSR, and who can dismiss criticism in the USSR as "carping, whining, and alarming," without a qualm, has no criticisms to make. He dislikes the totalitarian régime in literature, he thinks that "sabotage" is caused in great part by "incompetence pure and simple," he is opposed to the fulsome praise of Stalin, he has his doubts about the Moscow trials—yet, in the end, he finds "the attitude which many Western intellectuals have adopted towards the Soviet Union short-sighted and without merit."

Moscow 1937 is significant because it indicates the struggle which has begun among the intellectuals over the question of Stalinism. Preceding every deep social crisis, like the wind which precedes the storm, comes ideological turmoil among the intellectuals. Some come over to the side of the socially progressive forces; others, like Feuchtwanger, for long or for short, remain with the reaction.

California YPSL Summer School

This year's annual Socialist Summer School in California met with unprecedented success. From all parts of the State members of the YPSL and their friends arrived by thumb, truck, and train to spend a week of highly concentrated study at the workmen's Circle Camp in the San Bernardino Mountains. Under the trees or in the cabins students assembled to read and discuss Marxian economics, philosophy, history, or union organizational work, cementing a real

Sacco-Vanzetti Rally Disrupted by Chicago Clarity Leaders

By Melos Most

CHICAGO.—A Sacco and Vanzetti Memorial Rally held by the Socialist Party on Chicago's south side was disrupted in the presence of protesting outsiders by a group of Clarityites led by Roy Burt, national party secretary, and Maynard Krueger, national action committee member, in an attempted "coup d'état" to capture a left wing center.

At the rally, held August 17 by the Jackson Park branch, Burt and Krueger appeared with a group of Clarityites some of whom had to introduce themselves to the branch membership. Before the lecture could begin, Burt personally rose to move that four branch officers be considered removed and new elections be held then and there, without even time for the required official notice, on the basis of a reapportionment of delegates made by the County Delegate Body the night before.

Outsiders Protest

The action was so disruptive that outsiders present who were total strangers at least to us of the left wing, took the floor to protest that "we have come here to hear about Sacco and Vanzetti, not your internal squabbles." The Burt-Krueger-Clarity "packers," however, refused either to refer the question to a special meeting or to move executive session (fearing too much discussion).

Burt finally accepted an amendment to hold the election at the next meeting when members declared they would otherwise boycott it and protest its legality, but refused to call a closed meeting before then at which his case for a midterm election might be examined.

The members of the branch, now forewarned, will overwhelmingly repudiate this action at the next meeting and uphold their branch officers. Several Clarity rank-and-filers have begun to express doubts about the unholy alliance with Burt, an Altman-Thomas sympathiser. Charges against Burt are being preferred by 14 branch members present at the meeting.

Attack on Left

The Jackson Park branch, second biggest in the city, is the south side center of the left wing. It ranks first in fund-raising, attendance at city-wide functions, and union activity.

Having no Altman to do their dirty work for them, the Clarityites themselves have had to take the initiative in beginning the split here. That they have begun by disrupting a public Socialist meeting is only one more proof of the fact that they can only carry out their plan of stopping the leftward advance of the membership by trying to liquidate the Party.

foundation for future study and activity.

After six hours of work, appetites were sharpened with swimming, baseball, etc., until the dinner gong rang and the forks began to fly. At night around a bonfire impromptu entertainers amused the camp, and voluminous voices stirred the hills with revolutionary songs. Aside from winning many new recruits into the League, the entire organization felt a stream of new blood run thru its veins when the students returned, and has started on the road of developing a powerful revolutionary cadre of youth.—Tida Moore.

Letters from Barcelona Picture Bourgeois-Stalinist Repressions

The following extracts are from a number of letters, sent from Barcelona between Jan. 25 and May 15, 1937. Their authorship cannot be revealed lest the GPU murderers and another victim to their list.

JAN. 25.—Counter-revolution continues making headway, and each day we are in a more and more delicate situation. The PSUC under Moscow's orders as interpreted by the Barcelona Consul (Antonov-Ovseenko), is organizing physical repression. They already have their Cheka, directed by elements from outside. Tonight in a town near Barcelona in Tarragona province there is fighting with guns because PSUC elements have tried to occupy CNT headquarters.

This we interpret as a provocation against the CNT. It was initiated by flying squadrons of the PSUC, composed of foreigners. Yesterday there was a meeting in Barcelona at which it was proposed that POUM be liquidated.... The man who said it was Carrillo, the same who, at the Valencia Congress of the United Socialist Youth, declared it necessary to invite the Catholics to join the youth organization because "we have stopped being Marxists and are fighting for Spanish independence"....

MAY 4.—I am writing to the rhythm of pistol shot, rifle shot, an occasional hand grenade, and some machine-gun firing.... The Ramblas are held by the CNT-FAI-POUM.... Since yesterday afternoon the overall element is back on the street, armed and with barricades springing up like mushrooms. The uniformed crowd retired to their strongholds, and from there keep up intermittent firing.... It started with provocation from government armed forces. Yesterday the Commissioner of Public Order sent out the uniforms to take the Telephone Building. The overalls resisted. The mass was aroused. Without orders from their organization, they went out into the streets, and there they are. Last night CNT-FAI ordered their men back, but the overalls paid no attention....

It's a sorry sight to see the Telephone Building with only the Catalan and Spanish flags and no anarchist flag. It is the first time since July 19 that the black-red symbol of proletarian power is down. So many anarchist flags have come down in the city that the CNT-FAI masses must feel terrible....

M. just came in; he says the CNT at 3 p. m. ordered its people to drop arms and retire to work—but they are still at it. We are locked in, running low on food but trying to hold out.

MAY 5.—It is 11:30. M. tells me that in about 10 minutes the overalls will attack the Assault barracks around the corner. The slogan is: "CNT-FAI-POUM! Long live the revolution!"

The night was terrible, with radio speeches by CNT leaders in Valencia pleading with the overalls to back down. An Assault Guard just came over. He wants to know, what will we do if the overalls attack them? He knew in advance; as far as we can make out, his real purpose was to insinuate that if the attack breaks, we can get ready to take in some of his crowd as prisoners; they don't like fighting the overalls. At Sans, 400 Civil Guards were disarmed and arrested without a fight.

MAY 5.—4 p. m. It's a good thing the overalls did not let the phone building go altogether but

fighting rages in others. The attack here has not developed. We were warned that the Assault Guards might now attack us so we got ready. We can't get out because all the nearby streets are in the hands of the uniforms. We will not attack but will not die without a fight. We hear some sailors have fraternized with the overalls.

CNT has ordered the overalls back again, this time threatening to disown them if they don't obey. The friends of Durrutti have given out a leaflet urging the workers to stay in the streets to defeat the counter-revolution, and hailing POUM as a comrade organization. The machine-gunning is getting louder.

MAY 9.—All over, at least temporarily. On Thursday we were told to give up our arms and that all armed forces would be taken off the streets. Our military committee agreed. The doors were opened and in came the Assault Guards, Estat Catala and some PSUC people. They took our guns. Some of the yeggs among them wanted to kill M., and took a workout tearing up posters and papers, smashing furniture etc.

We went out in twos and threes and got over to GHQ, which sent some new overall guards over to our place. M. urged them not to, saying the men would be held as hostages. The argument was still going on when the police phoned up: the new guards were already pinched. Fortunately, we had a couple of Assault Guards under arrest and we made a trade.

All Thursday was tense, although we enjoyed sunshine and fresh air for the first time in five days. We could go around the lower end of Ramblas, but not to the Plaza Catalana. I saw a couple of doctors from the U. S. ambulance corps; they wanted the dope and seemed not to have swallowed the Stalinist line 100 per cent. But they are very confused. We worked all day and M. spent the night in an ex-brothel, very luxurious, he says, including soap, while I stayed at the Hotel for 12 pesetas and got no soap. The government had the phones and we had to talk guardedly whenever we called.

Friday was relatively quiet, although 5,000 police from Valencia paraded provocatively. On Saturday all the workers were back at their jobs and giving up arms to their unions, etc. The streets swarmed, as they still do, with armed police of all varieties, including many foreign Stalinists and professional gangsters. They patrol with fixed bayonets in groups of four and six. The PSUC is howling for suppression of POUM.

MAY 15.—I want you to use these letters to counteract the international slander campaign. The May events have clearly demonstrated the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism in bourgeois service. Hand-in-hand with police and reactionaries they go around in searching parties, using strong-arm tactics, tearing up union cards, arresting, shooting workers (12 of the Libertarian Youth found dead in Sardanola)... They have enlisted writers in their slander service. They pay well. Ramon J. Sender, who showed up the real character of the republic so well in his *Man and Seven Red Sundays*, has been lined up with rables; now he undertakes to modify his books for Russian publication.... Don Passos knows a thing or two, but will he tell?