

In the World of Labor

By Paul G. Stevens

A Controversy Regarding the Facts on France

We have received this week a letter from Marceau Pivert, leader of the French Socialist Workers and Peasants Party (P.S.O.P.), respecting some facts we have printed in this column recently about his party and its actions against the revolutionary minority within it. Since comrade Pivert, who is at present in this country, challenges our information, we feel it is our duty to air the controversy before the readers of the Socialist Appeal. We confine ourselves here to the bare essentials. Should further developments require it, we are quite prepared to go further lengths in proving that every bit of information printed here, on French matters as well as in general, is based on sources whose reliability is uncontestable.

The letter of Marceau Pivert and the reply by the author of this column follow below:

Pivert's Letter

The Socialist Appeal
116 University Place
New York City

April 16, 1940

Comrades:

Once again, in your issue of April 6, you make such a fantastic presentation of events in regard to the Socialist Workers and Peasants Party of France (P.S.O.P.) that a simple comparison of this article with that of December 2nd suffices to characterize your method. Yesterday, you announced that your friends had captured the leadership of the P.S.O.P.; today, you are obliged to confess that this leadership was struck by the suppression. You use this occasion to slander the imprisoned militant revolutionists. You accuse them, in a word, of having capitulated at a time when they have remained faithful to their Party, to its program, and when they are brutally condemned for having courageously carried out its decisions in time of war. You find in that an occasion for irony. Nevertheless, you cannot be unaware of the terrible conditions in which they are placed, as, for instance, the tubercular Emile Rouaix, former general secretary of the Party. Enough said! We merely register our opinion that your incurable pretensions to the monopoly of revolutionary action leads you to the use of the same methods as Stalinism in relation to other sectors of the working class movement which are not subservient to your exigencies. But bluff and lies can last only a limited time. Before the French proletariat, all accounts will some day be reckoned.

With socialist greetings,

Marceau Pivert

P.S.: Because of a discretion (which you will no doubt be incapable of understanding) I will refrain from discussing your information in regard to Lucien Weitz and Daniel Guerin. One thing, however, is certain; that is, that they have not been expelled from the Party.

Our Reply

Marceau Pivert

April 18, 1940

Dear Comrade:

Your letter of April 1 is at hand and has been turned over to me for reply.

First of all, I am sorry that the first occasion

for contact between us is one which involves a dispute on minor matters of fact. However, let us hope that we will be able to straighten out these lesser disagreements and establish a relationship that will permit of a fruitful political discussion between you and us.

As to the actual matter under dispute, allow me to state the facts as they are. You say that in my column in our December 2nd issue of the Appeal, we announced that our "friends had captured the leadership of the P.S.O.P." A reading of that column will reveal that we announced nothing of the sort. We merely said that rumors had reached us to the effect that some of the leading Freemasons in the P.S.O.P., including yourself, had been expelled by the leadership of the organization with the participation of Jacquier, the secretary.

This information I received by word of mouth from a reliable Spanish militant passing through the States at that time. I have since checked the information with the comrade in question and he insists that that information was correct for that time. Furthermore, I have received direct word from France substantiating that same information. Should you persist in denying that the incident occurred, I shall furnish adequate evidence.

The expulsion of the Freemasons and yourself was later revoked. Just how that was done and how the Right Wing in your party resumed control is not as yet clear to me. Under the conditions under which our correspondence with France—which, let me assure you, is quite ample and quite regular in other respects—is being carried on, it is impossible to check on every detail at once. But we will get around to clearing that up, too, in good time.

Next, you say in your letter:

"Today you are obliged to confess that this leadership [the Right Wing of the P.S.O.P.] was struck by suppression. You use this occasion to slander the imprisoned militant revolutionists. You accuse them, in a word, of having capitulated at a time when they have remained faithful to their party and its program," etc.

Let me remind you of the actual facts:

1. In the April 6 issue of the Appeal we called attention to the arrests of three of the leaders of the P.S.O.P. To my knowledge, that is the first publicity given to these arrests in the United States. We consider that kind of publicity a duty inspired by international working class solidarity.
 2. In this respect, it seems to me that, instead of complaining, you should commend us for reacting more quickly and with greater efficiency than others.
 3. Solidarity with our co-fighters against French imperialism in the P.S.O.P. leadership cannot and must not blind us, however, to mistakes made by them, some almost fatal. Such blindness, to our mind, could only nullify that solidarity.
 4. We said about the imprisoned P.S.O.P. leaders in the April 6 Appeal that they "refused to prepare for illegal work and insisted on carrying on as if the war had not broken out."
- Is that slander, comrade Pivert? Do you deny this fact? If you do, I am quite ready to furnish undisputed evidence in this respect, which I am sure you have at hand also, by now.
5. You say of the leadership of the P.S.O.P. (referring, of course, to those who have the formal leadership and have expelled the militants of the "minority") that they have remained

Christian Front Trial Portends the Wide Government Use of Agents Provocateurs

By JOSEPH HANSEN

J. Edgar Hoover, chief of the FBI, arrested and indicted 17 members of Father Coughlin's Christian Front last January for "conspiring to overthrow the government of the United States by force, the theft of munitions and other government property."

The trial is now on—and its real meaning and purpose are becoming apparent. It is preparation by the U.S. government, as part of its war plans, for an intensified drive against labor. It is preparation to accustom the public to the use of provocateurs as an official method of the FBI.

Avoiding an attack against the real fountain-head of the Christian Front, Father Coughlin and his financial backers, the FBI is cunningly making a bid for favorable publicity for its infamous use of that most perverted and degenerate of human beings—the agent-provocateur. Thus the FBI is laying the basis for similar use of provocateurs in the trade union movement, where it has doubtless already planted them by the hundreds, as indicated by their use in the WPA strikes in

Minneapolis. It is therefore of first importance to study the trial of the Christian Fronters—despite the fact that these defendants are the mortal enemies of labor—in order to see more clearly how the FBI practises provocation.

So far, the government has utilized the testimony of only one provocateur, although the FBI agent in charge of the case, Peter J. Wacks, admitted on the witness stand that at least 15 more agents were employed.

His Father One, Too

This provocateur is Denis A. Healy, an expert machine-gunner of the National Guard in his spare time, by profession a junior civil engineer of the New York Central Railroad. He was born in Ireland 36 years ago, came to this country in 1926. His father, he has admitted, was a sergeant in the Irish Royal Constabulary often assigned to do secret service "for the British Government."

Healy himself has "ten or fifteen friends" in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The story as to how Healy joined the Christian Front is not

clear. According to one admission he was invited to join and serve as a machine gun instructor by one of the leaders of the so-called Action Committee, the name used to designate the 17 defendants. According to other admissions, he was sent in by the FBI. Both versions may be true. On the witness stand he reported that after joining he got in touch with the FBI, that he reported to his superior in the railroad company that he was doing work for the FBI. Whatever the circumstances the FBI paid for his initiation fee and the company cooperated by giving him a leave of absence.

Was Well Paid

For his services, the FBI paid him expense money (about \$25 a week) and \$75 every two weeks during his leave of absence, and paid his wife \$34 a week to compensate her for taking a leave of absence from her job with the Queens Electric Light and Power Company—in all avowedly about \$1,300.

Healy, however bought himself a Packard and later a Mercury automobile. He is also buying a new house for \$5,960.

faithful to the party program. Allow me to correct you. In the same issue of the Appeal that you refer to, my column says:

"In fact they (the P.S.O.P. leaders) had voted to expel the revolutionary minority because the minority [demanded] that the party carry out in action its resolution for revolutionary struggle against war (revolutionary defeatism), adopted at the last convention of the P.S.O.P."

Do you deny that the St. Ouen Congress of your party officially made revolutionary defeatism the party position?

Do you deny that, instead, the "leadership" of your party carried out a social-pacifist policy? Who was it, then, that remained "faithful to the program of the party"? Are you going to oblige me to republish the well-known documents in this matter also? I am quite ready to do so.

In any case, I regard it as the highest duty of a revolutionist, while maintaining complete solidarity with those struck down by imperialist suppression, to state the real facts. That is all I have done.

Finally, you object that we "find in that (the arrests) an occasion for irony." Let me set you straight on this also. What we find ironical, as any objective reader will attest, is not the action of the bourgeois government. Not that—but the criminally stupid policies of kowtowing to the legality of that same government; policies pursued by your friends who, by refusing to prepare for illegal work, thereby not only endangered the lives of the revolutionary militants in the rank and file, but eventually fell as victims themselves.

One last point—with regard to my information on Lucien Weitz and Daniel Guerin. Nowhere in

the column mentioned have I said that these two specific persons are among those actually named as expelled. I do not know whether they are, in fact.

It may be that your friends who are left in charge of the party are attempting a sorry maneuver to split these two excellent militants from the rest of the minority. But in vain—that shabby maneuver will not succeed. The fact is that the P.S.O.P. minority, including Guerin and Weitz have, as stated in that column "joined in a body with the Committees of the Fourth International (our French section) for joint work in the building of a united party on the program of the Fourth International." Let me assure you that I have word from Guerin himself to this effect and I am ready, if you oblige me, to substantiate that also.

Your reference to the condition of comrade Rouaix and others of your comrades now under arrest is, of course, in spite of the fact that you manipulated this situation very crudely against us in place of an argument, of deepest concern to us. We are prepared, let me assure you, in spite of the deep-going differences existing between us, to join with you at once in a close collaboration to bring immediate aid to all of our French class war prisoners, as well as to the comrades now hit by the spasmodic spread of the war in other countries. We are prepared to discuss this with you, and others of the F.O.I. (International Workers Front Against War), either informally or formally, and await word from you at your earliest convenience.

Assuring you of my most cordial respect, I remain,

Fraternally yours,

(signed) Paul G. Stevens

Provoked Fascist Moves

Healy's technique was to gain the confidence of the members of the Christian Front, to get them attached to him as a bosom friend and then to provoke them into some action or declaration which was recorded by agents of the FBI hidden nearby.

With expense money furnished by the United States government, Healy bought his "friends" roast pheasant at \$2.50 a plate, liquor for parties, invited them to dinner at his home where the FBI agents were hiding.

In constant touch with the FBI agents, Healy arranged methodically for them to gather their evidence. He often invited the Christian Fronters to his home where he served wine and food paid for by the government while he engaged them in leading conversations as FBI agents listened through dictaphones and made recordings of the conversations. FBI agent Wacks testified that he was hidden in the attic of Healy's house listening through a device called the detectaphone while Healy talked in the basement with Claus Ernecke. On another occasion, testified Wacks, he and Special Agent Charles Cannon listened through a device known as a "contact mike" to a meeting of the Christian Fronters in the dining room of Healy's home.

Joined Target Practice

When Healy went with the Christian Fronters to Narrowsburg, New York, for target practice with rifles, FBI agents hidden in the shrubbery of a nearby hill made motion pictures of the defendants with the aid of a camera equipped with a six-inch telephoto lens. Wacks testified also that they had made sound recordings of the conversations at which Healy talked with his "friends" about a "campaign of sabotage in the event the United States should enter the war."

At meetings of the Christian Fronters where the FBI were apparently unable to install their listening and recording devices, Healy took down notes on his cuffs as to the names of those present, the subject discussed. These notes he transferred to a notebook to which he referred constantly during the heavy cross-examination from the attorneys of the defendants.

The extent to which Healy inveigled the Christian Fronters into incriminating actions is shown by the note which Ernecke left in the basement where he hanged himself. According to the police, this note mentioned that Healy had giv-

en him one gun and told him where another could be bought for \$1.

The FBI apparently instructed Healy on every move.

Agent Helped In Robbery

When some of the Christian Fronters plotted to steal some ammunition and equipment from the locker of John F. Cook, one of the defendants, the FBI instructed Healy to go along with the others. "I knew they could not succeed," he hastened to explain, "because all the things they had sought had been removed from Cook's locker. The agents did not want to involve me in crimes."

Defendants Red-Baiting

The lawyers for the defendants have attempted to link Healy with the Stalinists. They have persistently demanded, for example, whether or not his sister-in-law who lives with him and his wife, a person named Minnie Kaznowski, was not employed by the Daily Worker. They have asked him if he is acquainted or related to Michael Quill, head of the Transport Workers Union. Healy denied both imputations. Since the lawyers failed to introduce any evidence which would indicate there was anything back of their questions, it may be ascribed to an attempt of the Christian Front to cry persecution from "Communists" and "Reds," in line with the familiar Coughlin thesis that the Roosevelt government is Jewish and communist.

Agents In Unions?

One other aspect of the use of provocateurs by the FBI is of interest: In September of 1939 immediately after war broke out in Europe, President Roosevelt issued an order requiring investigation of "subversive activities" by the FBI. The FBI began paying Healy \$25 a week (the amount admitted in court) for expense money as a provocateur on October 10. It would be interesting to see the secret files of the FBI.

How many provocateurs, following the order of President Roosevelt, were sent into the labor movement? How many applications of would-be provocateurs were officially approved by the FBI during this period and their names added to the government pay roll?

During the coming period trade unionists must watch with the utmost caution for these wolves in the pay of those out to crush the labor movement as an obstacle in the path of the war machine.

The Struggle for a Proletarian Party

By JAMES P. CANNON
National Secretary, S.W.P.

(The following article is the second chapter of a pamphlet written by comrade Cannon to sum up the seven-months' discussion in the party on the question of the Soviet Union and the "organization" question. The pamphlet was published in the Internal Bulletin. Now that the Third National Convention of the party has settled the disputes by a decisive majority, this article will acquaint our readers with the party's estimate of the dispute. In the next issues of the APPEAL we shall publish other chapters of comrade Cannon's pamphlet—Editors.)

II.

A New Stage in the Development of American Trotskyism

The body of doctrine and methods known as "Trotskyism" is indubitably the genuine Marxism of our time, the heir and continuator of the Bolshevism of Lenin and the Russian revolution and the early Comintern. It is the movement known as Trotskyism and no other that has developed Bolshevism in analyzing and interpreting all the great events of the post-Lenin period and in formulating the program for the proletarian struggle and victory. There is no other movement, there is no other school that has answered anything. There is no other school that is worthy of a moment's consideration by the proletarian revolutionists. Trotskyism, embodied in the Fourth International, is the only revolutionary movement.

But the road from the elaboration of the program to the organization of firm cadres, and from that to the building of mass parties of the Fourth International, is difficult and complicated. It proceeds through various stages of evolution and development as a continuous process of selection, attracting new forces and discarding others who fail to keep step. The American section of the Fourth International is right now in the midst of a crisis in this evolutionary process. If, as all signs indicate, we are moving toward a radical solution of the crisis, it is to be accounted for by the speed at which world events are marching and the immensity of their scope and the sensitivity of our party to their impact.

The second world war, no less than the first, strikes all organizations and tendencies in the labor movement with cataclysmic force. Our own organization is no exception. Like all others, it is being shaken to its foundations and compelled to reveal its real nature. Weaknesses which remained undisclosed in time of peace are rapidly laid bare with the approach of war. Numerous individuals and whole groupings, whether formally members of the Fourth International or sympathizers, are being submitted to the same tests. There will be casualties, which may seem to indicate a weakening of the movement. But that is rather the appearance of things than the reality. Trotskyism is the veritable doctrine and method of proletarian revolution; it reveals its true substance

most unflinching in times of crisis, war, and revolutionary struggle. Those who have assimilated the program, the doctrine, the method and the tradition into their flesh and blood, as the guiding line of struggle, cling all the more firmly to the movement under the pressure of the crisis.

It is only those who took Bolshevism as a set of literary formulas, espousal of which gave one a certain distinction in radical circles without incurring any serious responsibilities; those who adopted Trotskyism as a form of "extreme radicalism" which never went beyond the bounds of sophisticated debate—it is such people who are most inclined to falter and to lose their heads under the pressure of the crisis, and even to blame their panic on that same "Trotskyism" which simply remains true to itself.

Everybody knows the crisis has dealt heavy blows to the imposing movement of Stalinism. With the signing of the Soviet-Nazi pact the flight of the Stalinist fellow travelers began. They could stomach the Moscow Trials but not the prospect of coming into collision with the democratic government of U.S. imperialism. After the Soviet invasion of Poland and then of Finland the flight of the fellow-travelers became a rout. This wild migration attracted wide attention and comment. We ourselves contributed our observations and criticisms on this ludicrous spectacle. Up to now, however, we have remained silent on an analogous phenomenon in our own "periphery." The flight of the more sophisticated, but hardly more courageous, intellectual fellow-travelers of American Trotskyism has been scarcely less precipitate and catastrophic.

With the approach of the war Trotskyism as a doctrine and as a movement began to lose its "respectability." Many of the intellectuals, sniffing danger, arranged a somewhat hasty and undignified departure. In truth, there is not much left of that considerable army of drawing room heroes who used to admire Trotsky's literary style and confound the less intelligent periphery of Stalinism with nuggets of wisdom mined from Trotsky's writings. The collapse of the Trotskyist "cultural front" was taken by some people, especially the ex-fronters themselves, to signify a collapse of our movement. In the journals of the class enemy to which they promptly attached themselves some of them have already worked up courage to write about Trotskyism as an "outmoded sectarian tendency." However, it is they who are "outmoded," not the movement of the proletarian vanguard, Trotskyism.

The petty-bourgeois intellectuals are introspective by nature. They mistake their own emotions, their uncertainties, their fears, and their egotistic concern about their personal fate for the sentiments and movements of the great masses. They measure the world's agony by their own inconsequential aches and pains. Insofar as our party membership consists in part of petty-bourgeois elements completely disconnected from the proletarian class struggle, the crisis which overtook the periphery of our movement is transferred, or rather, extended, into the party.

It is noteworthy that the crisis struck the New York organization of the party, thanks to its unfavorable social composition,

with exceptional force and virulence, while the proletarian centers of the party remained virtually unaffected. The tendency of the petty-bourgeois elements to flee from our program and to repudiate our tradition is counterposed to a remarkable demonstration of loyalty to the program and to the party on the part of the proletarian membership. One must indeed be blind not to understand the meaning of this differentiation. The more our party revealed itself as a genuine proletarian party, the more it stood firmly by principle and penetrated into the workers' mass movement, the better it has withstood the shock of the crisis. To the extent that our party has sunk its roots in proletarian soil it has gained, not lost, during this recent period. The noise we hear around and about our movement is simply the rustling of the leaves at the top of the tree. The roots are not shaking.

The evolution and development of American Trotskyism did not proceed according to a preconceived plan. It was conditioned by a number of exceptional historical circumstances beyond our control. After the initial cadres had accustomed themselves to withstand the attacks and pressure of the Stalinists, the movement began to take shape as an isolated propaganda society. Of necessity it devoted an inordinate amount of its energy to the literary struggle against Stalinism. World events, one after another, confirmed our criticisms and prognoses. After the collapse of the Comintern in Germany, the failure of the successive 5-year plans to bring "socialism" in Russia, the monstrous excesses of the forced collectivization and the man-made famine, the murderous purges and the trials—after all this, which Trotsky alone had explained and analyzed in advance, Trotskyism became more popular in petty-bourgeois intellectual and half-intellectual circles. For a time it even became the fashion. Party membership conferred a certain distinction and imposed no serious hardships. Internal democracy was exaggerated to the point of looseness. Centralism and discipline existed only in the program, not in practice. The party in New York was more like a sophisticated discussion club than a combat party of the proletariat.

The fusion with the Muste organization, and later the entry into the Socialist Party, were carried out with the deliberate aim of breaking out of propagandistic isolation and stagnation and finding a road to wider circles. These actions brought hundreds of new recruits to the party, and gave us the possibility of expanding our activities. But the successes also brought their own contradictions. The membership of the Socialist Party in New York, including its left-wing and its youth organization, was primarily petty-bourgeois in composition; and, despite their good will, were not easy to assimilate. If our party organization in New York had been much larger, and predominantly proletarian in composition, the task would have been much easier. As it was, some of the new forces from the S.P. complicated the problem of proletarianizing the party and contributed fresh recruits to the petty-bourgeois clique of Abern.

At the same time, thanks to our deliberate orientation toward trade union work, the party in other centers of the country was developing in a proletarian direction. Penetration into the trade unions was bringing into the party fresh elements of proletarian fighters; and the contrast between the proletarian centers and the New York organization flared up in numerous skirmishes before it finally exploded in the present party crisis.

The approach of the war, with its forewarning of heavy difficulties and sacrifices for members of the party, brought with it a restlessness and dissatisfaction among many of the petty-bour-

geois elements. These sentiments found authentic expression in a section of the leadership. They began to translate their own nervousness into exaggerated criticism of the party and demands upon it which could not be fulfilled in the circumstances. After the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact, the opposition became more articulate. It began to express itself in the form of a fight against our program and, eventually, in a revolt against the whole doctrine, tradition and method of Marxism and Bolshevism.

It would be utterly absurd, however, to characterize the party crisis as the result merely of political differences of opinion. We would not touch the core of the problem if we confined ourselves to a "political" characterization of the fantastic proposals and flip-flops of the opposition. Serious political struggles, such as these, are an expression of the struggle of classes; that is the only way to understand them. The leaders of the opposition, and a very large percentage of their followers, have shown that they are capable of changing their opinions on all fundamental questions of theory and politics over night. This only demonstrates quite forcibly that their opinions in general are not to be taken too seriously.

The driving impulses behind the opposition as a whole are petty-bourgeois nervousness at the prospect of impending struggles, difficulties and sacrifices, and the unconscious desire to avoid them at all costs. For some, no doubt, the frenzied struggle against our program and our tradition is simply a device to mask a capitulatory desertion of the revolutionary movement in a cloud of dust and controversy. For others, their newly discovered "political position," and their endless talk about it and around it are an unconscious rationalization of the same inner compulsion. In such cases it is not sufficient to stop at a political characterization of the outlandish propositions of the oppositionists. It is necessary to expose their class basis.

The present crisis in the party is no mere episode. It is not to be explained by simple differences of opinion such as have occurred at times in the past, and will always occur in a free and democratic party. The crisis is the direct reflection of alien class pressure upon the party. Under this pressure the bulk of the petty-bourgeois elements, and the petty-bourgeois leaders, lost their heads completely, while the proletarian sections of the party stand firm, and rally around the program with a virtual unanimity.

From this we can and must draw certain conclusions:

(1) It is not sufficient for the party to have a proletarian program; it also requires a proletarian composition. Otherwise the program can be turned into a scrap of paper over night.

(2) The crisis cannot be resolved simply by taking a vote at the convention and reaffirming the program by majority vote. The party must proceed from there to a real proletarianization of its ranks. It must become obligatory for the petty-bourgeois members of the party to connect themselves in one way or another with the workers' movement and to reshape their activities and even their lives accordingly. Those who are incapable of doing this in a definite and limited period of time must be transferred to the rank of sympathizers.

We stand at a decisive stage in the evolution of American Trotskyism from a loosely-organized propaganda circle and discussion club to a centralized and disciplined proletarian party rooted in the workers' mass movement. This transformation is being forced rapidly under pressure of the approaching war. This is the real meaning of the present party struggle.