

Soviet Union and the Intellectuals

By WM. Z. FOSTER.

THE tremendous advance of the Soviet Union is a world shaking event. Its importance is emphasized and dramatized by the decay of world capitalism. It profoundly affects ideologically every class in every country. The workers are being inspired and stimulated to fresh struggle against capitalism.

The capitalists, terrorized by the spectre of vicious socialism, are redoubling their preparations for war against the Soviet Union, and are attacking the working class more viciously than ever. The petty-bourgeois intellectuals are sharpening their attitude toward the Soviet Union in varying directions. It is with the American section of these intellectuals that this article has to do.

American Intellectuals.

Prior to the war there was a broad streak of radicalism among American intellectuals. The socialist party was full of doctors, lawyers, preachers, writers, and what not. But the war and, above all, the ten years of high "prosperity" following it, almost entirely liquidated this intellectual radicalism. The older generation of intellectuals were silenced into "conservatism" by "good times."

American universities and colleges became utter quagmires of bourgeois complacency and 100 per cent Americanism. Crop after crop of sprouting intellectuals were turned out yearly by these institutions and they slipped into the easy berths provided for them by the flourishing capitalism. Almost unanimously, the intellectuals were blatant, unqualified glorifiers of American imperialism.

The Economic Crisis.

But now, with the development of the economic crisis, the situation changes sharply. The whole petty-bourgeoisie, including the intellectuals, feel the pressure of the crisis, through the wave of trustification, the falling off of their business, the decline of stock values, the cutting of salaried employees, etc. The "hotsy-totsy" days for the intellectuals are over. The position of those now in active work is being greatly worsened, and those coming fresh from the hundreds of universities and colleges must accept poorer conditions, or even, in many cases, slip down into the ranks of the proletariat.

Two Trends.

This economic pressure creates strong currents of discontent among the intellectuals. This flows into two main channels—fascist (and social fascist) and revolutionary. The influence of the Soviet Union is a factor hastening these developments.

First, the fascist trend. This is exemplified by innumerable writings in capitalist papers of all kinds. It follows the main course of the petty-bourgeoisie, trying to find the solution of its problems, despite its de-

the leader of the miners when the agreement expires. We have been warned by the C. I. and C.E.C. against expectations of spontaneity, and we must take this warning seriously. Unless we do the daily Jimmie Higgins work, organize the miners in struggle, expose the U. M. W. officials, build united front conferences from below, mobilize working class organizations, we are in danger to remain isolated from the miners.

We cannot expect to neglect these "little" things now and on September 1, when the anthracite miners revolt against the coal operators and the Lewis machine, we the Communists, will come down and say, "Here we are, the leaders of the working class, won't you please miners follow us?"

mands upon the capitalists, by more militant defense of capitalism and increasing attack upon the awakening working class. To these elements the Soviet Union operates as a red flag to a bull.

The social-fascist trend ranges from liberals tintured with radical phrases to "lefts" of the Scott Nearing type. This new current, although primarily in the worsening economic conditions of the petty-bourgeoisie as a class, is being intensified by the influence of the Soviet Union. Naturally, the tremendous reality of the growing socialist system is not lost upon such intellectuals. On the contrary, they are especially coming forward as ardent admirers and "friends" of the Soviet Union.

They are also usually advocates of a third or "labor" party. This social-fascist trend becomes more and more manifest in the flood of articles, speeches, etc., from professors, engineers, economists, etc., "favorably" commenting upon the progress of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. The universities and colleges also begin to show traces of it. While all this general tendency cannot be called social-fascist in the strictest sense of the term, its drift is in that direction. It is crassly opportunist, revisionist, dilettante.

These intellectuals almost instinctively realize the profound effect that the Russian Revolution is exerting upon the working class and they are seeking to distort its great lessons and to utilize its great prestige in the service of their class, the petty-bourgeoisie, which means in the end, the service of the capitalists. They are trying to "adapt" the Russian experience to this country, to bolster up the sickly capitalism, to use it in defense of their petty-bourgeois conceptions, to make it appear that the lesson to be drawn from the Soviet Union is that we must support in this country not a revolutionary but an "evolutionary" program—that is, engage in a hopeless attempt to remodel capitalism.

Finally, there is a revolutionary trend among the intellectuals. This is very weak as yet, but it will surely grow stronger with the deepening of the economic crisis, the sharpening of the class struggle, and the continued upsurge of the Soviet Union. We may be certain that a small per cent of these intellectuals, especially those with a proletarian background, will become genuinely revolutionary and real Communists. To these elements, of course, the Russian Revolution is a real inspiration and guide. Now the question is: what shall the Party do about this whole development.

Of course the Party must aggressively fight the openly fascist intellectuals. But its most dangerous enemies are those of the social-fascist type. The natural havens of such elements are the socialist party, the Muste group and the Lovestone organization. But some will gravitate in and around the fringes of our Party. Originators and stimulators of opportunist tendencies, they will be ideological feeders and natural allies of the right danger within the Party.

But as pointed out above, these new currents among the intellectuals cannot be entirely a minus quantity. There will also be plus factors. There will be some good elements and the Party must, even in the midst of its growing mass campaign among the workers, take the necessary steps to bring them within the sphere of its influence and to make such use of them as may be possible. It would be an error to conclude off-hand that the whole trend must inevitably go to the profit of fascism and social-fascism. The Party must pay more attention to this entire problem