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TROTSKYISM

IN THE PERIOD OF

WARS AND REVOLUTION

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TROTSKYISM IN THE PERIOD OF WARS AND REVOLUTIONS

GENERAL ASPECTS

The Allied imperialists justify their war to the masses with the lie that this is a war of Democracy (bourgeois democracy) against the indescribable terrors of Fascism.

This lie - the distortion of the fundamental character of the War - would not in itself, however, suffice to deliver before the altar of Imperialism the sacrificial body of the Allied proletariat. Before the lie can take root, before it seeps into the marrow of the confused working masses and deadens its desire to fight the war - before all that it is first necessary that the Lie be repeated by the treacherous social-patriots. In the mouths of Roosevelt and Churchill the Lie of bourgeois Democracy is still-born, sterile. Only when the Social Patriotic O'Neals, Browders, Bevins, Morrisons, Thomases and the pro-war labor fak-ers, begin to parrot the slogans of Imperialism, does this Lie attain any meaning. It needs no illustration to prove that without the invaluable service of the social-patriots and bourgeois reformists the Second Imperialist War would have been impossible.

He who shouts today for the preservation, in any form, of Bourgeois Democracy as the lesser evil to Fascism, is merely greasing the road for the Fascist advance. The war is a war to preserve Capitalism IN ANY FORM POSSIBLE. But if the social-patriots still nourish illusions about the possibility of preserving our decadent system in its "democratic" form, it is absolutely certain that the infinitely more practical and hard-headed bourgeoisie has long ago decided that the "preservation of capitalism in any possible form" means only the preservation of the system in an open dictatorial form: Fascist or military dictatorship. The Social-Patriots may have some illusions; the bourgeoisie know most certainly that their demogogy is a lie.

The statement then that bourgeois democracy is preferable to Fascism is the thin thread upon which hangs the whole ideological justification of the Second Imperialist War. The platform of "restoring" Bourgeois Democracy is the confounding illusion which is supposed to keep the masses welded to the imperialist structure.

Therein lies the significance of Trotskyism in the present carnage. The experiences of the masses lead them to tear the veil from one illusion after another. Advanced sections have already

seen through the mirage of liberalism and social-patriotism and are striving for a Revolutionary solution. Precisely at this juncture, however, there stands the impassioned obstacle: Trotskyism. Spouting forth Revolutionary clichés by the thousands, it nevertheless suggests as a line of action, in one form or another, the restoration, propping up, and support of Bourgeois Democracy. Thus it repeats the role of the phrase-mongering centrists of the first World War, who likewise shouted for many Revolutionary abstractions but invariably filled it with the content of preferring Bourgeois Democracy as the lesser evil.

No one here, of course, is trying to create an amalgam between the two Trotskyist groups in America and elsewhere. We intend to deal with them separately, but the basic tenets of Trotskyism are really common to both despite some important differences.

Beneath an exterior of revolutionary words, Trotskyism still spreads many and considerable illusions concerning bourgeois democracy. Very likely in the next period it will have a substantial growth, but the growth will represent merely a transition on the part of the masses away from the morass of social patriotism, in which Trotskyism will be a temporary catch-all. Ideologically, however, this tendency represents an obstacle to Marxian science and action. It is a prop to the bourgeois illusions fostered during the imperialist war. In the classical definition of centrism by Lenin it is revolutionary in words, reformist in deeds.

THE SCHACHTMAN TROTSKYITES

The September issue of the Schachtman theoretical organ, New International, has a long article by Schachtman himself, with the imposing title, "The European Revolution Has Begun, Problems of the Italian Revolution." If the European revolution has begun, one would think that the main, immediate problem of the Italian working class would be the seizure of power. A revolution implies the dovetailing of immediate and ultimate demands and the impossibility of a solution for immediate problems without Revolution. But the theme of Schachtman's article is quite different. The whole article pivots around the one point: an immediate struggle for the right to vote!

The masses, says Schachtman, "want an end to Fascism and an end to war... (but) these demands, especially the first, cannot be realized without elections which pre-suppose the right to vote, of which the masses were deprived by Fascism. Without the simple democratic right the people may exhaust themselves in the routine of declining demonstrations instead of developing their movement to a struggle for power."

This is certainly very interesting! Without the right to vote the proletariat in Italy will not be able to struggle against Fascism. Its attempts are doomed!

The whole dynamics of proletarian revolution is here turned upside down. Nowhere in the world have all the problems of the bourgeois revolutions been settled. In every country many carry-over demands still remain. And in some nations, as a result of the decay of capitalism, it is now necessary all over again to fight for some of the demands which were won during the bourgeois revolution but which Fascism, in an historical regression, has eliminated. But does that mean, that demands for this or that right should be the center of gravity of the proletarian revolution? The Italian proletariat has suffered long under the tyranny of the Mussolini dictatorship. Under it, it has been deprived not only of the right to vote but of even more important rights, the right to strike, for instance, the right to organize, the right to picket, etc. At the present moment of revolutionary upsurge, shall the revolutionary Marxists concentrate their energies on regaining those rights without which a struggle in the streets and at the point of production is impossible (strike, picket, etc.) or shall they in the manner of Schachtman concentrate on those rights (to vote) in the purely auxiliary field of parliamentarism?

The right to vote is a solution of no problem anywhere on earth. It was one of the demands during the bourgeois revolution. Since then the Marxists have utilized the right to vote as secondary to the main tasks of strike, demonstrations, etc., at the point of production. The gaining of force and strength in the bourgeois parliaments through the ballot box has been conceived as negative work only to disrupt the bourgeois parliaments. Marxists stand in the parliamentary pulpits and denounce the bourgeois and anti-working class character of this august body and its activity. By itself, the right to vote is meaningless, just as reformism and parliamentary cretinism can accomplish nothing for the working class. The ballot gains force and significance only as it crystallizes and utilizes the independent actions of the proletariat in other spheres. That is Marxism.

In that light then, if we were to interpret the main democratic needs of the proletariat in Italy today it would not be the right to vote, it would be the right to strike, organize, picket, and other such demands. To lay the major emphasis on the ballot box is to foster, as we have indicated above, the usual democratic illusions of which Schachtman is so guilty. It is absolutely false to state that without elections the Revolution is doomed. Take the Revolution of 1917 in Russia. Did the right to vote in parliamentary elections play any significant role in the Revolution? It did not. The strength of Bolshevism came in the conquest of other democratic demands, linked up to the struggle at the point of production.

Without the right to vote Schachtman claims the masses will exhaust themselves "in a routine of declining demonstrations instead of developing their movement to a struggle for power". In other words, without a bourgeois parliament the struggles of the masses will constantly decline. Quite the contrary. The whole thing is upside down. Demonstrations, strikes, and other mass action lead directly to the conquest of power, with or without the right to vote. In what way can the right to vote in elections to a bourgeois parliament aid the demonstrations and strike struggles of the masses? Nowhere in his whole article does Schachtman indicate the answer. If anything, the strike struggles for the major demands of the masses will have as a by-product result the effect of gaining, if it is at all necessary, the right to vote - not the other way around.

A proletarian revolution means simply that a point has arrived in the history of class relations of any given country where not a single important immediate demand can any longer be solved except through a struggle for power. In the course of all revolutions attempts are made by liberal, reformist, and centrist forces to solve such immediate problems precisely without the seizure of power by the revolutionary proletariat. But such attempts can not and did not yield any results whatsoever.

Let us go back to the October Revolution. The simple immediate needs of the masses were peace, bread and land. Successively, the monarchists, the liberal Kadets, and the bloc of Social Revolutionaries and mensheviks tried to give some answer to these problems. Their answers, however, were absolutely worthless. Only after the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks was it possible even to think of a solution of these immediate demands. Precisely the same situation prevails in Italy today. The masses want peace, bread, and improvements in working conditions. The whole essence of the present situation in Italy is that none of these demands can be achieved without the struggle for power. The issue is clear-cut: The immediate necessity is not for secondary demands, but for a struggle for power as a result of which ALL demands will be gained.

The main necessity for the bourgeoisie is also for ultimate weapons, for counter revolutionary Fascist forces to smash the present upheaval. But the proletariat has disorganized the bourgeois forces. It is therefore necessary to gain time! The role of democratic illusions, the setting up of new parliaments, etc., is precisely for that purpose: to canalize the efforts of the masses, to demoralize, confuse them, sidetrack them into familiar capitalist channels. Devide the enemy, gain time! The demand for the right to vote as the PIVOT of the present struggle leads just into such channels, away from the tasks of the moment, into traps and painful illusions.

Schachtman attempts to justify this program on the flimsy grounds that the proletariat in Italy has gone through a harrowing experience, (22 years of the Fascist dictatorship) without organizations, without trade unions, without democratic rights. "To think that the Italian working class," writes Schachtman, "can or will simply pick up over night where it left off when Mussolini took power is not even worthy of an infant's intellect." But the "infant's intellect" in this situation and the Italian facts are a thousand times stronger than Schachtman's centrist nightmares. As a matter of fact, the working class did pick up over night just where it left off when Mussolini took power. In the November 8th issue of the New Republic, Gaetano Salvemini, noted Italian liberal, writes. "Last March gigantic strikes broke out in the industrial cities of Northern Italy. The Fascist dictatorship was unable to forestall or suppress that upheaval...during the following month strikes and sabotage went on unabated...To squelch those movements, Badoglio (after he came to power) proclaimed martial law... (but) the soldiers refused to fire on the populace. The Italian army disintegrated everywhere in July and August in the same way as, for different reasons but with analogous military results, the Russian had disintegrated in 1917, the Austro-Hungarian army at the end of 1918, and the French army in June, 1940."

Does this sound as if the Italian proletariat was so terribly backward that it still had to fight for the slogans and demands of the bourgeois revolutions of 1848, the right to vote as its main demand? Very definitely not. Even Schachtman records, "When the first demonstration of workers broke out in the industrial north, Italy heard again the cry that had echoed throughout the land 25 years before: SOVIETS." The memory of the Italian masses was so good, in fact, that they even sought out the murderer of Matteotti in Milan and punished him for the brutal crime committed 20 years ago. Does all this sound as if the first task of the Italian proletariat is to re-establish bourgeois democratic institutions? The illusions and fears exist only in Schachtman's mind, they are not germane to the living events.

For the bourgeoisie, the re-establishment of bourgeois democracy in any shape or form today, has only one purpose: it gains the necessary time for a restoration of military dictatorship or Fascism and the smashing once again of the working class organizations and instruments. Democracy (bourgeois democracy) paves the way for Fascism. Without any ifs, ands, or buts, he who does not understand that, has missed the whole lesson of the 30 defeated revolutions from 1918 to 1938. The bourgeois parliament in a period of Revolution is a COUNTER force to any and all action of the proletariat and particularly to its dual power, its soviets. He who presents the problems as if they were supplements in reality is repeating the whole menshevik role of 1917,

and is leading the revolution towards the same decline that Schachtman's predecessors, Dan and Tsertselli, did in 1917.

Of course, in the typical manner of centrism, Schachtman leaves himself plenty of ifs and buts. The fundamental line, however, is quite clear. He says, "It is impossible -- more accurately it would be wrong -- to state dogmatically the exact contours of the road the struggle will take." Of course, it is impossible to state the exact contours, but anyone with an iota of Marxism can state the general contours. The general contours exclude a struggle for Bourgeois Democracy by the proletariat ! We go on, "It is quite possible, however, and even probable that the struggle will first take the form of a demand for a national, popularly elected, plenipotentiary parliament, a variety of a constituent assembly." It is interesting to note that in the first days after July, there was no such popular demand except on the part of certain exiled liberals. But let us assume that there was such a popular demand. Let us assume a large section of the middle class demanded "a variety of the constituent assembly." What is our task as Marxists ? Shall we too support the bourgeois instrument for corraling or suppressing the revolution ? Or in the interests of the masses shall we oppose it with the demand for our own dual power (Soviets) ? The centrists will never understand that the Marxists do not struggle at all times and under all circumstances for what the masses wish. The masses sometimes wish that which is not good for them. The Marxists as a part of the working class, the most advanced section, struggle -- sometimes, isolated and without support -- for the INTERESTS of the masses.

Is a constituent assembly in the interests of the proletariat in Italy today ? To a Marxist the question is quite simple. Italy is not a colonial country nor even a small capitalist country. It has long since passed through the stage of bourgeois revolutions. If it regresses back to these bourgeois forms, that is for the proletariat not a victory but a historical tragedy, a defeat. The constituent assembly nowhere on earth can solve any important problems. But in a highly industrialized, imperialist nation it cannot even be organized, except artificially, and with the one malignant purpose of circumventing the needs of the masses. It is absolutely certain that the masses themselves will rise far beyond that level even at the first step. Fortunately, we have before us the experiences of Spain in 1936-38. The question of a constituent assembly had already been by-passed from 1931 on. Even in backward Spain in 1936; let alone in imperialist Italy, the question of a constituent assembly found no roots in the proletariat or even amongst other sections of the oppressed.

Schachtman attempts to justify himself by an analogy between Italy today and China in 1925-27. The analogy is 100 % false.

In 1925-27, China had not yet experienced the bourgeois revolution. The demands of the peasantry for the solution of their problems, primarily problems of a nationalist and democratic character, (land, suffrage, etc.) made the demand for a constituent assembly an actual living problem for these masses. The roots of the constituent assembly lay in the objective situation, not in the subjective wishes of this or that liberal or centrist tendency. But even there, however, as Trotsky pointed out, the solution of the problems of the Chinese masses lay in the direction of exposing the Kuomintang and its program for a bourgeois republic. STALIN, not the Marxists, supported the Bourgeois Republic of Chiang-Kai-Shek !

It is necessary for Marxists to MANEUVER with constituent assemblies in backward countries. Under certain circumstances we enter it in order to expose it. Under other circumstances we boycott and disregard it entirely; depending on the local conditions, the relationship of forces, etc. But to come out boldly and openly for the establishment and BUILDING of this bourgeois instrument EVEN in a backward country is a betrayal of the Revolution. That is the essence of the whole left opposition position on China. We may have to MANEUVER with a Constituent Assembly ; we NEVER place any hope in it. By maneuvering we expect to destroy such Bourgeois instruments, or at least prepare for its destruction by undermining it from within. But we NEVER call for BUILDING such institutions - that is the opposite road to that of Marxism.

Furthermore Italy is not China. There, there is no objective need for a constituent assembly. For the most part the tasks of the bourgeois revolution have already been accomplished. The objective problem of the masses is far beyond the level of the bourgeois revolution, and they start, as has already been indicated by the events themselves, on the level of strikes, demonstrations, sabotage and the call for soviets.

The cry for the right to vote is the cry of the liberal Sforza, who wants to sidetrack the Revolution. Schachtman aids his plan. He sees no further in reality than the bourgeois democratic restoration : FIRST, a bourgeois democratic setup ; then, we shall see about the proletarian Revolution. That is the essence of centrism, Trotskyism, both in Spain yesterday, Italy today and in all other countries tomorrow.

THE BRITISH CANNONITES

Along similar lines but with different chapter and verse, the British Trotskyites are today putting forth the slogans of "Labor to power." (the word, Labor, in Britain is used to denote Labor Party)

The following is from the September Bulletin of the Workers International League of Britain (Cannonites): "This dictates as the main strategic agitational slogan of the Fourth Internationalists in Britain: End the truce ! Labor to power ! By this we facilitate and reassert the independence of labor from capital. The coming to power of a labor government would be the means of giving the impetus to the revolutionization of the masses." Trotskyism has truly travelled a long way when it can assert that the accession to power of a Second International Party reasserts "the independence of labor from capital." The accession of a reformist party to power in a capitalist state merely means that the masses will be more firmly shackled to the bourgeois state than if liberals or conservatives were doing the job. It eliminates the independence of labor from capital.

In 1917, Lenin was confronted with a delicate situation in Russia, the Social Revolutionary and menshevik bloc had control of the workers Soviets, in which the Bolsheviks were a minority. At the same time the menshevik leaders supported the dual power of the bourgeoisie, the Kerensky government. As a means of severing the ties of the Soviets from the bourgeois state, Lenin put forth the slogan "All power to the Soviets." By this maneuver he said, "Here, mensheviks, you are in control of the Soviet. BREAK with the bourgeois state of Kerensky and take power in the name of the Soviets. Even though we Bolsheviks do not agree with your program we will, nevertheless, support this move, although within the Soviet system we will fight for a majority." By this maneuver Lenin hoped either to force the mensheviks to sever ties with the bourgeois state, thus isolating the capitalist regime still further, and leading to its complete destruction ; or at least to expose the fawning role of the mensheviks who preferred to wag an undignified tail tied to the bourgeois kite rather than take power in the name of a workers' instrument which they themselves controlled.

Compare this, however, with the line of the Trotskyites of Britain today. Instead of breaking with the bourgeois state, they call upon the workers to support the strengthening of the bourgeois state. Instead of an independence of labor from capital they are in reality demanding a subordination of labor to capital through the instrumentality of the bourgeois state. In Great Britain today under the stress of events, strike struggles and disillusionment, the masses are demanding more clear-cut solutions, more radical action. The Churchill regime is losing its hold over the war-weary populace. The taking over of the bourgeois helm by the so-called representatives of labor will have the effect of temporarily scotching proletarian vigilance, of kindling false hopes in the proletarian masses.

Is that a danger or a benefit for the working class of Great Britain ? Should the revolutionary marxists point out the pit-

falls of such a situation, so that tomorrow the masses may recognize who has been telling them what is right and what is wrong throughout the years, or shall the marxists advise the proletariat to plunge into such an abyss, purely for the reason that after they have fallen and broken their necks they will then recognize that the Labor Party Government was a trap ? We think the facts speak for themselves.

It is possible that the rotten stinking hulk of the British Labor Party, the social-patriotic treacherous corpse, will soon accede to power. But this will represent not a step forward for the masses. On the contrary. It will merely mean that the masses have already taken steps forward (independent class action), and the Labor Party Government is being hastily erected as a barrier to hold that independent action off at this point and push it backward. Instead of the demand for Labor to power, the British proletariat must demand today an increase of strikes, demonstrations against the war ; fraternization between soldiers ; the organization of a national shop steward movement ; the constant exposure of the social chauvinists and those who unite with them ; the organization of workers councils in those cities and areas where it is possible ; building of workers' defense guards to protect the masses against the inevitable reaction ; and as an auxiliary on the parliamentary field, the running of Marxian candidates against not only the conservatives but against the social patriotic Labor party as well. The Trotskyites claim that "The coming to power of a labor government would be the means of giving an impetus to the revolutionization of the masses." Again, what is day is presented here as night and what is white is presented here as black. A Labor Party cover would be an effect of the revolutionization of the masses not a cause of it. And instead of being an impetus to further revolutionization, it would be a damper on it. That is A, B, C. Anyone who has studied the history of the "labor government" around the period of the general strike of 1926 and after, anyone who has studied the effects of the "labor government" of France in 1936-37-38 (the Peoples Front), knows that this is not the case. Peoples Fronts, and Labor governments do not develop mass action ; they check mass action, increase arbitration, increase and develop the various halts of the bourgeois state, and confuse and demoralize ; they do just the opposite of "give an impetus" : they throttle the revolutionization of the masses. He who says the opposite is again fostering the big lie, or at least giving aid to the big lie of the imperialists in this war, that democracy, bourgeois democracy, must be restored to avoid Fascism.

Trotskyism in England is not only aiding the "Labor" Party peddle the lie of the Allies, by such a false program, but all indications are that the Trotskyists are orienting on entering the Social-Patriotic Labor Party. We have here, thus, an excellent

belt line. The reformists give weight to the imperialist lie of "Peoples" war. And the centrists give the Labor Party a left cover which perpetuates the lie. If the "r-r-revolutionary Trotskyists are for a Labor Party government, and, in fact are on the verge of joining the Labor Party, then it can't be so bad, after all, can it? So reasons the worker who is beginning to move left but is disoriented by Trotskyism back into the Social-Patriotic camp.

After condemning the Independent Labor Party of Britain for being centrist, the Trotskyites say that "from the viewpoint of revolutionary socialism the entry of the ILP into the Labor Party would constitute a progressive step... Within the labor party the ILP would act as a gathering point for all left elements. This would facilitate the education of these elements as well." Aren't the Trotskyites here laying down the premise for their own entry into the Labor Party? If it is desirable and progressive for the ILP to enter the Labor Party so that it would be a "gathering point for all the left elements", isn't it even more desirable for the revolutionary marxists (as the Trotskyites call themselves) to enter into the Labor Party and gather these left elements to themselves? The fact that the Trotskyites call for a Labor Party government and limit their plenum resolution to only a few words of criticism of the present Labor Party is a strong indication that the French Turn is about to be repeated again, this time in Britain. Our arguments against the French Turn are contained in innumerable documents in our struggle against Trotskyism in 1934, 35, and 36. There is no need of enlarging on them, except to note again and once again that the general direction of Trotskyism is towards unification with the reformists, conciliation with bourgeois democracy and left-handed support to the social-patriots.

Thus the general line of Trotskyism runs directly counter to the general line of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the first World War. Lenin wrote in 1915 "unity with the opportunists has become nothing but hypocrisy... unity with opportunism means unity of the proletariat with its national bourgeoisie, i.e., it means submission to the latter, it means a split in the international revolutionary working class."

Instead of "Break with the Bourgeoisie and its agents", the Trotsky program is "Unite with the Reformists, push them into State Power". Trotskyism in both its forms represents conciliation with and subordination to bourgeois democracy. The proletarian Revolution is merely a festive garment to be trotted out when occasion demands for the edification of those Trotskyites who still retain a few marxian principles. The deeds of Trotskyism, however, like the deeds of its counter-parts in 1914-18, are reformist through and through.

MANOUVERS AND MANOUVERS

To justify their Parliamentarism the Trotskyites have searched desperately for analogies from the past, for words of comfort in Lenin's writings, for instance. At long last they have discovered that in 1920 Lenin proposed a bloc with the reformists against the conservatives in England for one election, and that for a short time he even considered (although a few weeks later he dropped the idea) affiliating the Communist Party of Great Britain to the Labor Party.

This "discovery" has enthused the Trotskyites as much as a divine communication does to a religious fanatic. Here at last they can quote chapter and verse.

Unfortunately Lenin himself stated that when dealing with a manouver "one must have the brains to analyse the situation in each separate case." "Naive and utterly inexperienced people", he wrote in "Left-wing Communism, an infantile disorder", "imagine that it is sufficient to admit the permissibility of compromises in general in order to obliterate the dividing line between opportunism, against which we wage and must wage an uncompromising struggle, and revolutionary marxism or Communism... In the practical questions of the politics of a given or specific historical moment it is important to single out those questions which manifest the principle type of impermissible, treacherous compromises which are the embodiment of opportunism fatal to the revolutionary class, and to exert all efforts to explain them and combat them."

"In each case then we must see whether the compromise is "permissible" or is an "impermissible treacherous compromise." What should be the guide to a correct manouver? Trotsky himself gave a most excellent answer in his "Strategy of World Revolution", when he was still a Marxist: "The most important, best established and most unalterable rule of every manouver says: 'One's own party organization should never be diluted, united or combined with another, no matter how "friendly" the latter may still be today. Such a step should never be undertaken which leads, directly or indirectly, openly or maskedly, (our emphasis), to the subordination of the party to other parties... or a step through which one is made responsible, even if only in part for the political line of other parties. You shall not mix up the banners, not to speak of kneeling before another banner."

The words of Trotsky in 1929 are incisive and absolutely 100% correct.

Let's analyze in that light, both the manouvers of Lenin and the "manouvers" (i.e. capitulations) of the present Trotskyites.

What was the situation in England in 1920? The British Labor Party was considering affiliation with the Third International. Within its ranks there was a great left wing. There was as yet no Communist Party in Britain, although a number of organizations were negotiating to form such a Party. Lenin therefore proposes a TEMPORARY election bloc in order to hasten the differentiation within the great mass of workers who still believe in the Labor Party. But he insists on "complete liberty to carry on agitation, propaganda and political activity. Without the latter condition, of course, no such bloc could be concluded, for that would be an act of betrayal." Was this maneuver correct or not? Unfortunately it was never tested in life itself: the bloc was never concluded. But please note the enormous differences between the proposal of a BLOC for ONE election in 1920 and the general LINE of left support to reformism of the Trotskyites today (the slogans of Blum-Cachin government, Caballero-CNT government, Labor to Power, support of the Canadian Commonwealth Federation, etc.). In 1920 there was a WORLDPARTY OF MARXISM the 3rd International which was attracting MILLIONS of workers all over the world. The Labor Party itself was sucked in by this sentiment (although its leadership continued on its own reformist course) and was actually contemplating affiliation with the Third International. For the small and unorganized Marxist forces to enter into a maneuver with such large forces, for the Communist groups to have a bloc with the Labor Party for one election and to continue its own independent agitation might have helped substantially in breaking down the barrier of the Third Internationalists to the masses in the Labor Party. The same is true of the short proposal to enter the Party as a whole (on which Lenin does not commit himself, but which he subsequently opposed when there was a change in the situation). The Labor Party had a loose structure which would have permitted the Communists to publish their own paper and have their own organizational autonomy. With the SPECIFIC circumstances in Britain as they were THEN the idea of entry - WITHIN THE GENERAL WORLD FRAMEWORK OF SPLIT FROM THE REFORMISTS - might have had some merit.

But today? Today in Britain matters are exactly the opposite. There is no world party of marxism. There is no great force within the Labor Party clamoring for such a World Party. The leaders of the Labor Party still adhere to the pro-war policy of the allied imperialists. The conditions are not analogous: They are opposites. Entry into the Labor Party or support of a Labor Party government does not today help differentiate the masses from their leadership; it helps weld them to the bourgeois state. There have been no new octobers; there is as yet no important sign of a new marxian World Party. A maneuver to support the Bevens and Morrisons today is a TREACHEROUS compromise, a compromise in principle.

THE AMERICAN CANNONITES

In 1934 the Stalinist Convention voted 100% against a Labor Party. A few days later Earl Browder stepped off a boat from the Soviet Union and the same group voted 100% FOR a Labor Party. Browder and Stachel then wrote a pamphlet to justify the switch. They berated their "sectarian" comrades who do not understand "new events". Times have changed, they said. NOW we need a Labor Party. Furthermore, said Browder, are we for a REFORMIST Labor Party? Some comrades are foolish enough to think so, but of course we are NOT. We are for a "REVOLUTIONARY" Labor Party, without the John L. Lewises, the Norman Thomases, or the Governor Olsons.

The argument of Browder and Stachel was specious, of course. We Marxists in the Communist League of America, at that time, made short shrift of this hypocrisy. We proved, on the basis of Marxian PRINCIPLE that a Labor Party was merely an American edition of the People's Front, that it could be nothing else BUT a REFORMIST party.

Who would think that 9 years later the apostle of Leon Trotsky, James P. Cannon would resurrect the same type of arguments? In the August 1943 issue of Cannon's magazine we read this amazing statement:

"Under present conditions the labor party idea can have far more revolutionary implications than in past periods when it was advanced as a reformistic measure. There is no need at all for us to speak about a reformistic labor party. What we are advocating is an independent labor party, and WE ARE PROPOSING OUR OWN PROGRAM (our emphasis - editor), which is not reformist."

Shades of Browder and Stachel! We are for a Labor Party, but not a reformist one. We are for building a new party, a Labor Party, not on a reformist program, if you please, but on OUR PROGRAM, which WE claim is Marxist!

But if they are for a Labor Party that is NOT reformist, but one which has a "Marxian", Revolutionary Program, then why not invite the masses into their Party direct? Certainly if they are ready for proletarian revolution, for the overthrow of capitalism, for a socialist order - certainly under those circumstances they won't be offended by the "terrible" sounding name of the "Socialist Workers" Party. In fact, if the "Labor" Party has THEIR program, then why not liquidate THEIR Party into the Labor Party and be done with it once and for all? Isn't it a useless duplication, particularly since the Labor Party will have much more member?

"There is no need at all", says Cannon, "for us to speak of a reformistic labor party". If it is not reformistic then obviously it is revolutionary.

"For some it (the labor party) can mean a purely moderate demand that the reformist labor leaders take over the government as agents of the bourgeois regime. For others it can indicate a call to the workers to take power and change the whole system."

Cannon here does a sleight-of-hand. The REFORMIST slogans of the Labor Party have a double meaning to the masses, he says. Some consider it merely as a measure to reform capitalism; while others consider it as a revolutionary proposal to destroy capitalism. That is undoubtedly true. But that is precisely the danger of the Labor Party: that a REFORMIST organization sows illusions in the minds of REVOLUTIONARY workers, and what is infinitely worse, it binds them - through the Labor Party organization - not to revolutionary but to reformist action.

But the hypocrisy of Cannon goes much deeper. He attempts to show that because SOME workers will gain revolutionary illusions from a Labor Party, that therefore it "can have far more revolutionary implications than in past periods when it was advanced as a reformistic measure." On the contrary the Labor Party is a prison for revolutionists; it restricts them; it canalizes their activity into PARLIAMENTARY, not independent workers, action. Revolutionists in the Labor Party merely add a "left cover" to a rotten swamp.

But what about the trade union, don't we go into a reformist controlled trade Union, ask the Cannon theoreticians today, just as did the Browder theoreticians of yesterday. Yes, we do go into a reformist controlled Union. But a Union is not a rival to our Party. It is an economic organization, an ELEMENTARY working class organization. We go into the Union in order to win the masses over to our POLITICAL program in the course of INDEPENDENT WORKERS ACTION. A Union is just such an organization; it makes CLASS action possible, even when it has a reformist leadership.

But what about a Labor Party? There we have a RIVAL to OUR Party the Marxian Party. It has a program not just on elementary economic questions, but on all major political premises. It is not a Party of CLASS action, class STRUGGLE, but a Party of parliamentary manouvers, class COLLABORATION.

The masses by themselves will never attain Socialist consciousness. Lenin wrote in "What is to Be Done", they can only attain trade union consciousness. Without the revolutionary party the masses can make the hurdle from no-unionism to large mass unions. But without the Marxian organization they can not make the jump

to socialist consciousness. If we, the Marxists, tell them to join a REFORMIST party, then obviously we are keeping them at the low level of "trade union politics", reformist class-collaboration politics, not revolutionary politics.

But, should we refuse to be with the masses in the Labor Party? The Marxists are against working in the Labor Party, that is the theme of the Cannonite centrists. Ridiculous! Marxists will work within a Labor Party as an independent fraction. We will send individuals into the Party and recruit forces inside ON OUR MARXIAN PROGRAM. But the question is what shall our perspective within the Labor Party be. The Cannonite line is BUILD the Labor Party because it has "revolutionary implications". The RWL line is, work within the Labor Party to destroy it; because it is an OBSTACLE to revolution; split the Labor Party; treat it as an enemy, not a friend. The individual workers within it we try to rally to our side, we point out to them the purely parliamentary and people's frontist role of the Labor Party; but the Labor Party as a whole we condemn, we fight. That is the REVOLUTIONARY method of participating in the Labor Party.

"In the past", says Cannon, "under the pressure of circumstances, parties based on the unions have taken a far more radical turn than the ordinary reformist conceptions. The Norwegian Labor Party was almost a replica, in its structure, of the British Labor Party. But, following the war, it formally adopted the Communist program and joined the Comintern".

This is certainly a "strong" argument for the Labor Party! The Comintern, with the prestige of the Russian Revolution and the correct program of Lenin behind it, succeeded in SPLITTING the whole Second International. In many countries a majority of the Socialist Parties went over to Communism. In the process they had to:

- 1 - Change their program basically.
- 2 - Throw out their reformist wing (as Cannon points out happened in the Norwegian Labor Party).
- 3 - Change their structure.

In a split, who gets the majority and who gets the minority is determined by events, by the pressure of the class struggle and the abilities and tactics of the leadership. The fact that a majority in a split goes over to Marxism does not mean that the original organization WAS Marxist. During and after this war there will be splits in all reformist and centrist organizations (including both the Labor Parties and the Trotsky Parties). We hope that a majority of these organizations will go over to the

Marxists, but that does not mean that the Trotskyite PARTY or the Reformist PARTIES were anything but an OBSTACLE to the Revolution. They had to be destroyed. Lenin had to fight such organizations as the British and Norwegian Labor Parties BEFORE Comintern could be organized. Had he adopted the program of the Kautskyites (1914 Trotskyites) of "unity" with the Second International, there would have been no Third International and no Bolshevik Revolution.

Cannon is so contemptuous of facts that he fails to mention that the Labor Parties in Norway and Britain were Parties of the Second International, SOCIALIST Parties, but that in the United States, the Labor Party now being contemplated is NOT internationalist even in that respect.

In 1915 Lenin wrote : "It is impossible to carry out the tasks of Socialism at the present time, it is impossible to accomplish a really international unification of workers without radically breaking with opportunism..."

Cannon, on the other hand, feels it is impossible to accomplish a really international unification of workers without BUILDING a Party TOGETHER with the opportunists.

Unity with the opportunists during and after the war is a BETRAYAL of the interests of the proletariat, wrote Lenin in 1915.

Cannon in 1943 insists that unity with the Tobins, Lewis', Thomas', Greens and Murrays, is a CONDITION for proletarian revolution, for building the Marxian Party. He compares his present Labor Party orientation with the "fusion with the American Workers Party and the entry into the Socialist Party." That's how important it is.

It is essential to note that Cannon does not once - please note - NOT ONCE in the two articles in this issue of his magazine, mention the imperialist war. After all, what is so important in an imperialist war? Is it really so terrible for "us" who are supposedly "against" the war, to unite with Dan Tobin who is 100% FOR the war? Can't we all "work" together anyway? Yes, we sure can - on Tobin's program!

Cannon has the gall to criticize his Schachtman offshoot because they "decided to boycott the A.L.P. ticket" in the last elections. The American Labor Party ran candidates who were absolutely and unalterably pro-war and pro-Roosevelt (as is naturally to be expected from "Labor" Parties). The Schachtmanites (no better than Cannon theoretically) were nevertheless too ashamed to openly support such people. For that Cannon criticizes them! They should have done as Cannon did, support the A.L.P. candidates. Certainly such a little thing as a program, such a minor matter as

support of the imperialist war shouldn't stand in the way of "Marxists" supporting the Labor Party candidates, should it?

Naturally, of course, Cannon criticized the A.L.P. people while he supported them. How touching! "We", the S.W.P. tell the masses to vote for those rotten and miserable traitors who support the most infamous war in history, and "we" justify this action by saying "we" spanked their wrist while doing so.

What is important to these centrists, we would like to know. If they can gloss over such things as an imperialist war, if they can sleep in the same bed with the class enemy, then to what lengths will these opportunists not go as the crisis of capitalism develops?

The Labor Party stands exposed by its supporters, in this instance the Cannon Trotskyites who have no scruples about uniting even with the devil - the open agents of the bourgeoisie.

The main question before the American proletariat today is the WAR question. All other matters revolve around this question. Unity with those who support the war is treachery to the working class - no matter what the rotten justifications are. The "Labor" Party is the last refuge of Bourgeois Democracy. He who supports it supports the enemy of the working class.

Trotskyism is an obstacle to Proletarian Revolution, as much today as were the centrists (Kautsky and Company) in Lenin's time. That does not, of course, mean there are no Revolutionists in their ranks. Unfortunately there are still good comrades who have not seen through the opportunism of this political tendency. But the general program and strategic line of Trotskyism is today crystallized and clear. The war has pushed it still further to the right.

Revolutionary Marxists who remain in the Trotskyites will draw the correct organizational conclusions. Split from the centrists and reformists, unite with the Marxists to Build a New Fourth Communist International.

November 1, 1943.