

The New _____
INTERNATIONAL

***THE ISL FIGHT AGAINST
ITS "SUBVERSIVE" LISTING***

By Albert Gates

***THE MYTH OF LENIN'S
"REVOLUTIONARY" DEFEATISM***

By Hal Draper

***THE PRESENT AND PROSPECTS
OF AMERICAN LABOR***

By Walter Jason and Ben Hall

BEVANISM DURING THE WAR

By Donald Slaiman

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THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

A Marxist Review

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THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

A Marxist Review

Vol. XIX, No. 5

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1953

Whole No. 161

Notes of the Month

The ISL Fights Its "Listing"

Meeting the Government's Challenge to Democracy

Informed persons know that the Independent Socialist League (its predecessor, the Workers Party) and the Socialist Youth League appear on the Attorney General's list of "subversive organizations." They also know that for a number of years, the Independent Socialist League has endeavored to obtain two things from the Department of Justice under four successive Attorneys general (three appointees of the old Administration, and the new one under the Eisenhower government): the basis for the placement of the ISL, et al., on the list and a hearing at which the original action of the present Supreme Court Justice, Tom Clark, could be challenged and refuted.

The efforts of the ISL to achieve these two simple things is a four-year story that winds through the elaborate bureaucratic jungle of Washington. This time, however, the issue is one that goes to the very heart of democratic processes and involves at once the witchhunt atmosphere that has been slowly and with fearful certainty spreading to almost every aspect of American life.

The only tangible result of these efforts of the ISL to be removed from the list came a few months ago when the Attorney General, for the first time, presented a statement of grounds and interrogatories which

the organization replied to in preparation for a hearing. A hearing, however, is still pressed for against a reluctant Department of Justice.

Back in 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order 9835 to his attorney general to set up a list of subversive organizations which would serve as an employment guide to governmental departments. Ostensibly, membership in any organization listed by the Attorney General would bar one from government employment. This simple purpose of the list was immediately obscured by its publication, and before long it became a nationwide index used in private industry, the entertainment world, private organizations, etc. A series of private organizations mushroomed up to police the nation and to make sure of the issue of "anti-communism" as a private racket—of course, in no more objectionable form than politicians who, in their general incompetence, have made it their sole stock-in-trade.

The original responsibility for this offense against democratic processes and civil liberties, belongs to former President Truman. For under his executive order, no provisions were created whereby organizations listed by the Attorney General could challenge the action. Secrecy characterized the whole conduct of the Attorney General. No organization ever knew that

it was being considered for the list and no organization was ever informed of any decision that it would be placed on the list. None, of course, knew the basis for the action of the Attorney General.

Efforts to obtain that information were unavailing, since all the successive Attorneys General took the position that the Executive Order 9835 did not provide for disclosure of the basis for their decisions. The Executive Order not only did not provide for such a disclosure, it did not provide for a hearing of any kind at which a proscribed organization might challenge the listing. Neither was any provision made for notifying an organization directly that it had been placed on a list. The organizations listed learned about it simultaneously on a day in 1948 when the Attorney General merely sent out a nation-wide press release announcing the existence and membership of the list.

In protesting its listing, the former Workers Party demanded an immediate hearing at which it could challenge the Attorney General's action. It demanded, also, the basis upon which the Attorney General had acted. Both requests were denied to it: the Attorney General, under the Executive Order, would grant no hearing, and he would not disclose the basis for placing the Workers Party on the list.

Thereafter, the ISL continued to pursue the matter and finally agreed to attend a meeting to present its point of view before an assistant to the Attorney General. The reader, however, should bear in mind that when the ISL agreed to such a meeting it had not the slightest idea of what charges it had to meet. In preparing a written petition to Attorney General McGrath, prior to the meet-

ing, for removal from the list, it proceeded on certain assumptions about the methods of the Department of Justice, and its subordinate Federal Bureau of Investigation, which it was also certain played a determining part in the case of the ISL.

At its meeting with Assistant Attorney General Raymond P. Whearty, in January of 1951, the ISL delegation, accompanied by Rowland Watts, Secretary of the Workers Defense League, was advised that Whearty had been on the committee which drew up the list. He declared that he was certain that a *prima facie* case could be made out for his action in any court! What the *prima facie* case was, Whearty could not disclose! It was based on information supplied by official and unofficial informants!

The delegation assumed that the Attorney General adopted a criteria that an organization which advocated the overthrow of the government by force and violence, supported a foreign government, or was agent of such a government should be on the list. It was led to this belief by the nature of the partial information contained in the press. Therefore, the delegation made a forceful statement of its views to Mr. Whearty, and on the above-stated assumption, refuted the position of the Attorney General.

THERE WAS UNDOUBTEDLY a certain folly to the trip to Washington in the first place because of the position taken by the Attorney General in refusing to divulge any information or grant a formal hearing which would require an official decision by him in response to the protest and challenge made by the ISL. Yet, so strong was the position taken by the ISL and its counsel, that Whearty made a commitment to the delegation that the

case of the ISL (and the SYL) would be reconsidered.

What happened thereafter was that the Attorney General refused to honor the commitment. The ISL was given a complete runaround on its case. Letters to the Attorney General requesting information and a decision on the reconsideration, were either not answered, or, only answered upon repeated requests for a reply. The replies merely shifted the ground of the Attorney General's refusal to honor the commitment made. More accurately, the Attorney General stated that the reexamination had been made but the decision would not be disclosed until the termination of a case or two which had been languishing in the District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. By now two years had passed and a new Administration took over in Washington.

Immediately after the presidential election of 1952, rumors began to circulate that a "new deal" would follow in the scandal-ridden Department of Justice. Mr. Herbert Brownell, with a reputation as a firm believer in democratic processes, civil liberties and the Bill of Rights, was appointed as Attorney General. The country was told that the new Administration would revoke the Executive Order of Mr. Truman and issue a new one to guarantee that there would be no violations of the democratic rights of any person or organization. Organizations threatened with placement on any index, would be notified of charges and given the opportunity of a hearing before any decisions were drawn.

It was tempting to think that the old list might go out of existence, superseded by a new one based on charges against an organization, and followed by hearings at which charges could be refuted, witnesses confronted

and cross examined. But it didn't work out just that way. No, the old list, which had created so much mischief in the land, was retained. It was learned that Mr. Brownell would apply the aforementioned procedure only to new organizations who were not yet on the list (these were becoming fewer and fewer). But even here, the formal terms of the procedure of the new administration became a meaningless thing, because the new Attorney General, as in the case of the National Lawyers Guild, convicted the organization in a public statement before any charges were submitted to it or any hearing held. Thus, the National Lawyers Guild must now fight its case after it had been one-sidedly aired in public by the man elected to defend the democratic rights of any and all citizens!

Upon the announcement of the new executive order of President Eisenhower, the ISL immediately telegraphed the Attorney General protesting its retention on the list of "subversive organizations" and demanding an immediate hearing where it could contest the list and its placement on it. Under the new procedures adopted by the Attorney General, any organization demanding a hearing within a specified time from publication of its listing, could have one. The Attorney General would, upon such a request, present the protesting organization with a list of charges and interrogatories to which a reply must be forthcoming. The reply was to be accompanied with a formal request, once more, for a hearing. Thereupon, the Attorney General would grant a hearing presumably based upon his charges and interrogatories and the reply of the organization in question.

In July of this year, five years after its original listing by Tom Clark, the ISL received from the present Attor-

ney General, a Statement of Grounds containing charges against the ISL and Interrogatories, reiterating the charges and requiring answers by the ISL. The reply was made on September 3 and returned to the Attorney General by Max Shachtman and Albert Gates, as officers of the ISL and in behalf of the organization. (See *Labor Action* of September 28, for full text of Attorney General's charge and the reply.) There remains now the setting of a date by the Attorney General for a hearing. This, however, is slow to come forth as we shall show at the conclusion of this story.

The Statement of Grounds and Interrogatories of the Attorney General is an unusual document which has already brought protests from many quarters. It is sometimes difficult to fathom the bureaucratic mind with police powers, whose interests are based upon an active hostility to any non-conformist views or doctrine which challenge the validity of this society and its state power. It is disorderly; it is primitive.

The Attorney General's document contains not merely the stock charges which are leveled against Stalinist organizations, but because someone apparently advised the Department of Justice that the ISL is undoubtedly somewhat different from a Stalinist organization, contains new ones which mark a departure from the ordinary or usual position taken by an administrative body of the government in former times.

Nowhere does the document of the Attorney General charge directly that the ISL, and its predecessor, the Workers Party, ever advocated the overthrow of the government by "force and violence" or by "unconstitutional means," even though they are on the list on those grounds. The most the Attorney General does is to place an

interpretation on Marxism and Leninism and declare that the ISL is Marxist and Leninist. As there is no direct charge made against the aforementioned that they advocated "force and violence" no refutation can be made except in a negative way that the ISL does not advocate those methods for social change in the United States.

Is the ISL (and was the WP?) an agent of a foreign power, or some reprehensible and objectionable international organization? No, the government does not make any such charge! It merely asks the question: whether the ISL is such an agent, and whether it does belong to any international body. It knew the answer before it even asked it.

The Department of Justice, as was clear from its document, is in a difficult position because in the case of the ISL, et al., it is dealing with a truly independent, revolutionary socialist organization, which does not fit into any of the categories of its proscription. It knows the ISL as an anti-capitalist, anti-Stalinist organization, which is opposed to all imperialism, United States as well as Russian, as a socialist anti-war organization, which stands for the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by socialism. Its crime then is clear: It is opposed to capitalism! For the Eisenhower Administration, that is enough. Here then is the "crime" of the ISL.

"The 'changes' advocated by the WP, ISL and SYL, if carried out, would result in the destruction of the existing form of government in the United States, and in place thereof would be established an entirely new social philosophy and system of 'proletarian internationalism! . . . (it teaches that) capitalists control the existing form of government in the

United States and use it against the workers as a repressive force."

THROUGHOUT, THE DOCUMENT of the Attorney General is an unconcealed defense of capitalism and its class divisions against socialism and its liberating ideal. The fight of the ISL is therefore in essence a fight for the right to advocate the ideas of Marxian socialism against a government that openly proclaims itself the government of big business and "free enterprise."

The Socialist Reading *Labor Advocate*, mindful of the many differences it has with the ISL in the field of socialist theory and practice, nevertheless came to its defense editorially, because it saw instantly the meaning of the position taken by the Attorney General.

The *Weekly People*, organ of the Socialist Labor Party, in violent disagreement with the ISL, likewise was able to tear the document of the Attorney General to shreds, to show how it was speaking in the narrow interests of the American capitalist class.

Norman Thomas, with whom we have our share of differences, was quite astounded at the nature of the Attorney General's Statement of Grounds and Interrogatories and made known his severe criticism. He and others are fully aware that the position taken by the Attorney General is such that it could be employed against almost any movement or organization solely on the grounds of opposition to capitalism. John Finerty, the noted labor lawyer, likewise voiced his sharp critical attitude toward the position taken by the Attorney General.

What is really involved in the case of the ISL are fundamental and decisive questions which relate to the future of civil liberties in the United

States. This is the first time that an organization listed on the Attorney General's index of "subversive organizations" has received the grounds upon which the Department of Justice acts in these matters. It is a document not calculated to hearten anyone about the prospects of civil liberties and civil rights, and democratic processes in the country. Socialism and its advocacy has become the object of government proscription and forms a new legal basis for administrative action against political opponents.

Having conformed to the rules of procedure set down by the Attorney General, the ISL had thought that by this time it would have received a date for its first formal hearing upon the charges and Interrogatories. After waiting for a number of weeks, it telegraphed the Attorney General inquiring whether any date had been set for a hearing. The reply received from Assistant Attorney General Warren Olney III was couched in such provisional and hypothetical terms, that at the time of this writing, it cannot be said with any certainty that a hearing will actually be forthcoming.

In his letter to the ISL, Mr. Olney merely said that the ISL would be informed in ample time to prepare for "any hearing" which "may take place." The ISL in turn replied pointing out that the hearing could not be made such a provisional matter, since the procedures of the Attorney General state that upon a reply to interrogatories and a request for a hearing, the Attorney General "will" set a date and notify the organization in question by registered mail.

At the time of this writing, the ISL is still awaiting a forthright reply from the Attorney General.

Albert GATES

Present and Future of U.S. Labor

Two Analyses of Labor's Status and Prospects

1. by Walter Jason

AMONG THE MORE significant traits of the modern American labor movement has been the persistence of its unexpected developments that often confounded its critics, confused its friends, and, if the truth be known, dazzled and baffled its own leadership. The over-all result of this turbulent history, since the great depression of the Thirties, has been the growth of a vast union movement quite unlike anything forecast or foreseen, or for that matter, anything previously seen in world labor.

In 1953, labor's status in America is not what its leadership desired, expected, or was prepared for. Its enormous size and puny political role are an embarrassing paradox. It is plagued by a growing cancer of racketeering; it is disturbed by the impending recession, after living in the frenzy of an inflationary period. Its tremendous economic strength is reduced to half-size by the pernicious Taft-Hartley law. Nevertheless, labor's leaders find solace and sources of optimism in the experiences of the past decade.

Surely no union leadership in the world was less prepared for events than the AFL of 1929, living in the fool's dream of American prosperity unlimited, and concerning itself almost exclusively with the affairs of the "aristocracy of labor," the skilled workers. When the split in the AFL took place in 1935, and the dynamic growth of the CIO startled the nation, even the AFL hierarchy was inclined to accept the general opinion of that day; namely, that the future of the labor movement rests on the ascen-

dancy of the CIO. Its leadership moved with lightning speed compared to the slow motion of AFL leaders.

How surprising, then, and reassuring for the AFL leadership, meeting this fall in annual convention at St. Louis, to take notice of its membership of over 8,600,000 (with perhaps another million not reported since International unions of the AFL like to keep their per-capita tax payments down.) This is at least twice the figure of the junior CIO. It creates a relationship of forces on the unity question that assures the AFL of decisive voice, and eliminates for all time the notion that the CIO would dominate American labor.

Nor was the prevailing situation in 1953 any more startling than the twists and turns along the way. The very success of the early CIO gave organizational impetus to the AFL (many employers preferred it by far) and it quickly doubled its membership in the late Thirties. It benefited also from the splits in the CIO; Dubinsky's return to the AFL; the walk-out of John L. Lewis and the coal miners union; and the purge of the Stalinist-dominated unions from the CIO.

Another unexpected and largely gratifying experience of the American labor movement came in World War II. The transformation of the New Deal into the War Deal caused understandable alarm in union circles, and the acceptance of the theory that war meant the strangulation of the unions, their complete domination by the state, and the reduction of labor leaders' status to flunkey rôles. This did occur, to one degree or another, but a new factor emerged

which changed the over-all picture in a positive sense. Unions hit an organizational bonanza, and unionism found itself larger, wealthier and more powerful in 1945 than in 1941!

Likewise, the gloomy forecasts of quick post-war depression turned out to be erroneous, and a restless rank and file was quite prepared for major strike struggles to achieve some of the war-postponed Brave New World. While the political vacuum in Europe was filled largely by a resurgent Stalinist movement, the American Stalinists lost ground and became less than a decisive problem. The triumph of labor in the 1945 elections in Britain aroused certain dreams and ambitions in American union leaders, but, by and large, the peak of social consciousness was reached in the General Motors strike with Walter Reuther's bold program, including the "Open the Books" slogan.

From that point on, there has been a marked retrogression in the real power, influence and role of labor in America. Even before the Korean war served to domesticate the union leadership, the passage of the Taft-Hartley law signified the turning point: the unions were and remain basically on the defense. The capitulation to the Truman administration's action in breaking the coal miners strike with an injunction and a \$3,000,000 fine stimulated the reactionary forces in America. Servility brought only intensified attack.

Labor's failure to defeat the late Senator Robert Taft of Ohio in 1950 spelled out the lowering of influence and prestige of the top union leaders. It was the harbinger of the 1952 national election, in which the union movement received the shock of losing behind a candidate considered ideal by most union officials. The first reaction of the union hierarchy to these

adverse times and events, including the triumph of an avowed pro-business administration, was to seek quiet adjustment to the new realities. It furnished a reasonable answer to impatient ranks and critics: "Now is not the time for . . ." Having made the theory of the lesser evil the *modus operandi* in all political affairs the labor leaders quickly adopted the strategy of working with the White House against the reactionary Republican wing of Congress.

THE PAINFUL REALITY for labor is that the season for the kind of relations existing during the Roosevelt régime is long past. The Eisenhower régime is a war-conscious administration. Herein lies the crux of the dilemma of labor. Its support to foreign policy chains it in domestic politics. Its vigorous protests against armaments reduction—in which it merely echoes Democratic party spokesmen—makes ludicrous its claims for social gains.

Nor is this Gordian knot likely to be cut by any sharp move in the direction of independence in foreign policy or the creation of labor's own party. Here, the past successes of the union movement imprison its leaders, no matter what important set-backs remain in mind. For the union movement has become far too deeply integrated as a social institution on the American scene to allow it the kind of freedom of action desired. Its stake in the *status quo* has become too large. In world terms, the American union movement has reached the once privileged position of British labor of the early Twenties. It is the world aristocracy of labor. Behind all complaints, demands and dissatisfaction stands the knowledge that compared to other countries, this is paradise—a TV and auto paradise, to be sure, but then that is the accepted

standard. Of course, the impact of a recession is bound to change this mood among the ranks.

How about the leadership? Its new status in society makes it far more difficult to influence than the formative CIO, or the expanding AFL. Unionism is now an institution with 15,000,000 members. The total wealth of the union movement is between three quarters and one billion dollars. Its annual income averages over 700,000,000 dollars. Its staff and administrative machinery number over 150,000 persons. And this stratum lives with an income equal to that of the average Yale or Harvard graduate ten years out of school! The big army of ex-radicals who found a haven in the paying jobs of the union movement has achieved "socialism in their time." Parenthetically, the impatience of union officials with critics is easy to grasp when this overwhelming fact of growth and wealth is recognized. Does not this successful officialdom deserve the paeans of praise it gives itself at conventions and conferences?

The middle-age spread has also been accompanied by a hardening of the arteries. Various critical sociological studies have probed somewhat into the bureaucratic trends. Questions posed by these critics have been answered negatively by events. The 15-year period of relative growth and prosperity for the union movement has left its mark in the ascendancy of business unionism. Democracy in the union movement does not consist in the intervention of the ranks in their own destiny. Less than 5 per cent of the ranks are active in any way in the life of the union. It consists rather in the freedom of various International union leaders or leaderships to maneuver, without domination from the parent organization. The CIO had an election for president after Phil Mur-

ray's death not because it was considered democratic and desirable, but because it was necessary in the power clash between the Reuther and Macdonald factions. The autonomy of the AFL unions also rests on relationship of forces within the council.

Perhaps the best commentary on the state of democracy in the AFL is provided not by the longshoremen's union—it was allowed its disgraceful misconduct for 15 years until exposed by outside opinion—but the recent defection of the Carpenters' Union. Ordinarily, William Hutcheson acts as czar of that 800,000-man organization. He hand-picked his son for president. But when he arbitrarily withdrew the Carpenters Union from the AFL he was forced to reverse himself, not because his decision was undemocratic (his own executive board wasn't informed until after the announcement of withdrawal) but because that maneuver threatened to upset the lesser empires that his associates had built within the AFL building trades. George Meany, and old building-trades men, knew this and acted accordingly, with expected results.

AT THE PRESENT TIME, the overwhelming bulk of American labor leaders are motivated by power-consciousness, important considerations of prestige, and a determined drive to achieve respectability as befitting their economic station in society. The cruder types like Dave Beck acknowledge this openly. The more sophisticated prefer to dress in statesman togs. To identify this kind of urge with class-consciousness is to make the wish the father of the thought. George Meany, rather than the early Walter Reuther, is the prototype of the American labor leader.

The philosophy of business unionism finds its expression also in the political activity of the union move-

ment. It operates under the guise of "practical politics." Its thought process includes the deceptive formula, "something is better than nothing." It is another variant of the theory of the lesser evil. Loss of a "friend" in the White House and on Capitol Hill brings more fear of "isolation"—which is how labor leaders view independence. Thus, the labor leaders cling ever more desperately to whatever is left in Congress of "friends of labor," and the importance of these allies is doubly exaggerated precisely because they are impotent as a moving political force. In national politics it gives rise to a fervent hope that Adlai Stevenson will be available in 1956. The parvenu bureaucracy is far more interested in finding the right coat-tail to hang to, than asserting its own will.

The futility of this approach has been amply demonstrated in previous Don Quixote excursions by the CIO in politics. The latest illustration concerns the ignoble state of affairs in Michigan, home of the UAW-CIO and of CIO President Walter P. Reuther. Just a few years ago, the CIO entered the defunct Democratic party in Michigan, gave it flesh, blood and bones, and even produced a winner for governor, G. Mennen Williams. Now, such being the times, the UAW spends its energies parading as responsible Democrats, wooing recalcitrant Democrats, and, if it must be admitted, urging Governor Williams to treat it as having something better than second class citizenship. The crowning touch in this spectacle—and this reverts back to the point of integration into society—is added by the conduct of many CIO officials who found a comfortable home in the Democratic party. Increasingly, the attraction and prestige of being on the "Governor's team," is far more satisfying than mere union accolades.

(And the increasingly routine character of most union jobs, which take on an errand boy status intensify this byplay.)

The Michigan example has been duplicated, with slight variations, a thousand and one times on the national scene. It forces the general observation that the intertwining of the union bureaucracy with the Democratic party machinery, and the privileged status of the union bureaucracy operate to keep the participation of labor in politics within the framework of the Democratic party in the next foreseeable period. This general outlook, which admittedly excludes any labor party development in America in any old expected form, is reinforced by making an examination of the increasing gap between the union officialdom and the ranks.

THE CHANGING CHARACTER of the union movement is not to be found only in the emergence of a full-blown bureaucracy, with a privileged status in America, and the great wealth of the organizations, but also in the composition of its ranks. Large, new untapped layers of unorganized workers joined the CIO and the AFL during the recent period of boom and expansion of American industry. They did not share the vital mass upsurge kind of unionization that was literally a social crusade in the late 30's. They are organized but by no means unionized, as Walter Reuther has pointedly remarked on more than one recent occasion.

The socially-conscious depression generation is not a distinct, basic current in the union movement anywhere. Its leaders are in the bureaucracy, or in private business. After 15 years of steady employment it owns homes, and has reached the point in life where pensions become increasingly attractive. The vast bulk of the union

ranks are either young workers, war veterans who absorbed far too much cynicism about unionism during military life, and the recruits from the hinterlands, bringing all their prejudices and notions along with them.

The potential danger of a *backward* organized mass movement was foreseen, of course, by many union leaders, and was to be overcome by genuine educational programs. "We've got to unionize the organized," Reuther insists. But how timid and pathetic any gestures in this direction have been was told recently by Kermit Eby, former CIO educational director, in his articles in the *Antioch Review*. In the frequent choice of either educating new and fresh leaders, who might turn out to be rivals, or simply adding to the staff to furnish "leadership" and incidentally retain control, the CIO leaders inevitably took the prudent course. The hamstringing of the once ambitious UAW educational program by confining it to the teaching of techniques rather than ideas and a philosophy of labor speaks for the power of bureaucratic pressures. The rude attack by Sol Barkin of the Textile Workers Union against a sound critique of union education by Eby, which was printed in *Labor and Nation*, indicates how sensitive and blind the union leaders are to this vital issue.

Thus, there is a mood of no-confidence between large layers of the ranks and the top leaders. Ironically, the very backwardness of the newly organized workers, and the disappearance of the old cadres, creates a relationship in terms of ideas and programs that contradicts the old saw about the bureaucrats being behind the masses. Since many of the leaders were unionized before they became bureaucratized, and they have developed a sense of social outlook

through many experiences, they act far in advance of the thinking of the bulk of the delegates at many union conventions. While this has not been always true, it does apply to a period like this where secondary leaders, closer to the ranks, succumb to all pressures, good or bad, from the people in the shops.

It hardly seems reasonable or likely that the distrust, and in some cases fear, that the top leaders have of the ranks will embolden the union movement to take a major step of breaking from within its confines and setting up its own political party. An additional reason remains to be added.

This period of American labor history is unlike any previous epoch in that, for the first time in its broad life, the union movement lacks any kind of radical compulsion. There is no serious political force challenging the *status quo* and the leadership personified by the *status quo*. The AFL historically was challenged by everything from the Socialist Labor Party to the Wobblies and the post-World War I radical movement. And, although it has been erased from all official union history in recent decades, neither the CIO nor the AFL would have achieved anything like their status without the eager participation of thousands of young radicals, Socialist, Communist, Trotskyist, or others, in the hectic and hard days. Ideas, criticisms, programs, new leaders; the whole gamut of internal union life and organizational growth owes itself to this milieu, most of which today is in the upper strata of the union movement, living with faint recollections of the good old days, and kidding itself with the pleasant thought that once a depression hits, they'll revert back to their youth.

Labor lacks an internal motive force, as a result of this condition. It

lacks a conscious stratum concerned with creating and expanding a labor ideology, a philosophy of unionism, with some of the grand nobility of ideals of socialism. The union paycheck has become the reward and work-drive rather than the profound conviction and satisfaction of being part of man's great struggle for emancipation. This is the basic crisis of labor leadership in America today. The growing intolerance of union leaders to any form of dissidence, the pressure against any sign of independence, and the comfortable middle-class mode of existence enjoyed by

the new bureaucracy suggest that, as far as they are concerned, the crisis simply doesn't exist, or, in any event, the problem is not an important one.

The fate of the once powerful German social-democracy before the impact of events and the challenge of fascism should serve, however, as a warning. Neither unionism as usual, nor politics as usual, serve the cause of labor in time of great crisis. And surely, the converts to capitalism among the labor leaders do not have quite the confidence they boldly expressed a few years ago. 1929 was a fool's paradise also.

2. by Ben Hall

In twenty years the character of the labor movement in the United States has been radically transformed. Compared to the European movement, it remains backward, dedicated to capitalism and attached to bourgeois parties. In Europe, the term "labor movement" automatically includes the labor and socialist parties, parties which in most cases took the initiative in creating unions as part of a broader struggle for workingclass emancipation.

In the United States, however, the labor movement is restricted almost exclusively to unionism. But it has already seen the birth and ascendancy of a radically new unionism which has carried it far from narrow concentration on trade conditions to politically conscious unionism, a peculiarly American type of social reformism. It has created a new type of labor officialdom, with far-reaching aspirations and a corresponding ideology; while not at all union leaders share this outlook to the same degree, and some not at all, its prevalence and dominance is now unmistakable.

A momentary lull in the class struggle obscures the emergence of new features; in these, its days of doldrums, the unions are incapable of meeting the key issues of the day—domestic political strategy, foreign policy, and war—and so, are unable to rouse their own members, much less the people as a whole, beyond a moderate pitch of boredom. The calm is relative and temporary. Even in the most placid periods, the struggle does not vanish; spectacular routine-busting strikes are replaced by smaller little publicized conflicts which persist and repeat. And even these serve only as a preface to big strikes and quasi-political actions in which the labor movement reveals its nature, as in the immediate post-war years.

In the previous stage of its development, the dominant craft section of the old AFL determined the character of unionism. Now, the AFL has risen to a claimed membership of 8 million outdistancing the CIO with its 5 million. But this AFL revival by no means signifies a rebirth or reinvigoration of old line unionism: the growth takes place in a new atmos-

phere. When it arose, the CIO was the prototype of the new unionism, which went far beyond a new form of organization to a new class orientation. With time, the AFL has been slowly forced away from its old positions toward that of the CIO. In this sense, while the CIO has not supplanted the AFL it has in fact conquered it and the triumph is final and irrevocable.

Unions are not merely bigger and more powerful; they are changing in their outlook. The affect of this change is curiously reflected and noted in the sequestered circles in which academicians and scholars move. In professional journals sociologists and their research workers detect important sociological phenomena in every commonplace of union life, translating them into their own trade jargon complete with charts. This is itself a sociological phenomenon. Professors write books proving that unions are altering the whole fabric of society, however they may disagree on the causes and significance of their discoveries. In their own way, they reflect the impact of modern unionism on American intellectual life.

In the winter of 1951, the now defunct *Labor and Nation*, published by what has been termed the "labor intellectuals," devoted most of its issue to a symposium reevaluating the Perlman-Commons interpretation of the labor movement. This school of thought which dominated the thinking of non-socialist liberals for decades saw the labor movement as inherently job conscious rather than class conscious, basically non-political and pro-capitalist; consequently they recorded the doom and futility within it of all socialist aspirations. Its old-guard defenders in the pages of *Labor and Nation* are hard pressed to fit the CIO into such a pattern. One stresses

"the inner likeness of the unions in the two labor camps" without troubling to inquire whether the AFL which resembles the CIO today resembles itself of yesterday. Another writes, "But the term, job interest, cannot be interpreted too narrowly. The worker does not operate in a social and economic vacuum. His position in the shop is influenced, not only by the political climate in the community but also by government and social policy." Here is the crux of his difficulties, for once "job interest" is linked with broad political and social questions it crosses over into workingclass consciousness. In his own contribution to the same symposium, Selig Perlman is constrained to refer, in passing, to the Reuther General Motors strike program; but he dismisses it simply as "keen public relations."

In only one aspect does there remain even an apparent verification of their theses; the weakness of socialism in America.

SOCIALISM IN THE UNITED STATES has in fact dwindled from a mass movement into a group of uninfluential sects. The causes of this disintegration, however, are to be sought not in any putative "nature of the labor movement" but in the concrete effects of world and domestic politics upon the workingclass movement. The victory of fascism in Germany weakened the self-confidence of socialism and labor; the New Deal revived faith in the potentialities of capitalism just as Stalinism succeeded in plagiarizing the name of socialism, on behalf of an anti-labor totalitarianism. Thousands of former socialists drifted out of the movement, so imperceptibly that it is impossible to record when their membership and dues lapsed, to take positions inside the labor movement, in

its officialdom or paid staff. In the UAW they literally dominate its leadership. But in abandoning their socialism they did not simply revert to the old AFL ideology which so dominated the thinking of the Commons school. The process of adaptation could be so natural and painless because the new labor movement augured a wide scope for a peculiarly American version of laborism, a social-democracy devoid of its socialist form and content. Thus, socialism disappeared as a mass force but the ground was cut from under the Commons thesis simultaneously.

And this is remarkably demonstrated by the critics who reject this thesis in the pages of *Labor and Nation*, even though they are not quite sure what must replace it. The present stage of development is so clearly a phase of evolution toward a new class policy that they approach with diffidence any effort to evaluate and define it.

THE MOST OBVIOUS ASPECT of new unionism is the industrial form of organization. The battle for industrial unionism has been won, against employers outside and opponents inside the labor movement. As unity negotiations between the AFL and CIO proceed no one dreams of suggesting the dissolution of mass production unions. Old craft unions themselves have modified their methods to accommodate industrial organization.

In the dispute over form, a deep cleavage over the class content of union policy was revealed. Historically, American unionism began among craft journeymen; out of a multitude of experiments in organization, the AFL arose with its fundamental basis in the crafts and a corresponding craft ideology, despite the attachment of industrially organized miners and

clothing workers. This form of organization proved viable in the ebbs and flows of 40 years; for decades, apart from the socialist movement, the AFL and its similars remained the labor movement. But the rise of mass production created a new working class—semi-skilled and unskilled outside the AFL which was isolated from it. The AFL became increasingly a narrow privileged minority stratum divorced from the class. In the crisis of 1929, industrial unions in mining and clothing were all but obliterated, clinging with difficulty to a shattered skeleton organization. It was after the ordeal of this near-fatal crisis that these unions faced new possibilities in the favorable climate of economic upturn. They recaptured their power but the mass of workers remained organized.

At this critical turning point in the history of labor, a decisive question was posed: shall the *organized minority* of the class remain preoccupied with its craft interests, seek a niche of undisturbed safety, and, in contemptuous disregard for the wider needs of the class *majority*, avoid the risks of battle against powerfully entrenched monopolies. Or, shall the organized minority prepare for a life and death struggle, as a vanguard of the class, to organize the whole class, or at least its decisive sections? In taking up this challenge, the CIO became a great social movement, transcending "unionism" in the narrow sense, enlisting hundreds of thousands of hitherto voiceless, disorganized workers in a popular crusade for unionism—and democracy, attracting thousands of intellectuals and liberals. In a wave of organization and enthusiasm, an American labor movement was founded anew, not the organized minority but the *organized class*. In the end, the CIO did not become the labor movement but it created it; and in

the process, the AFL was reshaped and altered. Unity between the two federations would be a belated official expression of this historic achievement and the triumph of the CIO.

FROM BIRTH the new unions confronted government. They were caught up in a spreading network of labor boards and then faced with government wage-fixing and virtual compulsory arbitration, during the war. Labor, just mobilized for union action as a class was immediately impelled toward political action as a class. The full significance of this simple truism deludes alike sociological investigators far from the scene and union officials in direct personal charge of political action.

Diligent research into facts cramming newspapers' frontpages leads one sociology professor to detect an exceptionally persistent labor activity in the field of politics; he concludes that unions act much like any "pressure group" concerned with advancing its own pet schemes for private advancement—say, a real estate lobby for higher rents or a sportsmen's council for striped bass conservation. In the momentary confusion following Eisenhower's election, George Meany, newly elected AFL president, abjured the role of political "opposition" for labor and promised to continue in the future, as in the past, the traditional AFL "non-partisan" policy, i.e., no ties to any political party. Labor's League for Political Education, recently created political arm of the AFL, in announcing an intensified political action program, imagines that it revives and perpetuates the old Gompers policy which regrettably had been permitted to atrophy after his death. In their touching memorial to Gompers, they do not notice that his policy is dying away labor

official by labor official, and that they themselves have already passed it.

In the depths of the depression, the AFL steadfastly refused to demand a national system of unemployment insurance, lest the worker, having received a bounty from government, lose his union loyalty. The fact that unemployed outnumbered employed unionists ten to one and that the organization of the unorganized was not remotely within the purview of its limited imagination made little difference so long as those who were union members were union members. When at last, it endorsed this demand, its action was hailed as a radical new departure, a turning point for the AFL. Twenty years later, it is almost impossible to discover an important public issue on which the AFL will not take a stand, good or bad.

The old AFL was never strictly non-political, but its political demands were restricted. Political action consisted in year-round lobbying and election day endorsements for a series of closely defined labor measures. To win these demands, it impartially supported candidates of either party without over-concern for their actions or views on broad social questions. The formula, "reward your friends; punish your enemies" guided its skirting sallies on the fringes of politics. It strongly opposed the formation of any labor party; this hostility was but one facet of a general reluctance to be identified with any political party. Such was its "non-partisan" character. But to define its attitude is to make it seem more definite and consistent than it ever was in life. Actually, it followed even this line in a wavering and contradictory fashion.

Labor's new political policy perpetuates hostility to a new party and, formally, supports candidates of either old party. In this lies the similarity of

the old policy and the new, a similarity which permits labor officials to genuflect before the memory of Gompers and depict themselves as nothing more than modest continuators of a hoary tradition. "In politics," comments the U. S. Department of Labor's *Brief History of the American Labor Movement*, "both the AFL and CIO, as well as most of the independent unions, officially continue to adhere to Gompers' slogan of reward labor's friends and defeat labor's enemies." This superficial glance at surface facts ignores 20 years of class struggle, a world over, the rise of a new unionism, and the evolution of labor's politics.

As far back as 1936, Matthew Woll, AFL Vice-President, wrote in *Liberty*, that labor in America "differed from the labor movements of most other countries" and was content to support the prevailing parties. "But now that the government has become our biggest employer of labor, employing one out of every seven people in the United States, and has therefore assumed a position of new and possibly dangerous importance to labor as well as to industry, labor may be compelled to form new political alliances and attachments." In the same article, appeared this oddity: "Dictatorship by anyone should be avoided. But, naturally, if there is any dictating to be done in this supposedly free country, labor is going to have something to say about who does the dictating. Labor abhors all the principles and implications of dictatorship. But labor is compelled frequently to adopt the line of action which promises to be effective." It was a curiously phrased portent of the new line.

With the New Deal, labor stirred in politics on behalf of a social program of radical reform; it soon formed an organized wing in bourgeois politics

attaching itself to the New Deal-Fair Deal section of the Democratic Party. Its occasional endorsement of Republicans ceases to express "non-partisanship" but merely indicates that to a certain extent the program and alliance it seeks cuts across established party lines. It is no longer content with the expression of a friendly attitude by politicians for its scattered requests. It seeks nothing less than a recognized voice and real influence in determining all state policy on every important question. This striving for a share in government is its own "struggle for power."

(The last flare-up of the old policy on a grand scale fizzled in 1940 when John L. Lewis vainly tried to switch labor's allegiance from Roosevelt to Willkie. Although by 1943, their irritations with Roosevelt had become public knowledge and led labor officials to withhold endorsement of the fourth term until the last minute, they remained loyal to the New Deal as a political tendency. Lewis' sally into the Willkie camp, to punish an enemy, Roosevelt, was a move with no long range perspective and began his era of grand isolation.)

In its election platforms, the CIO ranges far beyond "pure" labor questions, taking its stand on foreign policy, civil rights, farmers—every question of the day. In 1951, when a United Labor Policy Committee led a walkout from Truman's war boards, a simple struggle over wages and prices was immediately transformed into a union political demonstration for a change in the course of national domestic policy, a demonstration supported by all wings of organized labor.

With persistent regularity, one labor leader or another threatens to form a new party. Dave Beck, Meany, Walter Reuther, Emil Rieve—to men-

tion a few. For some, it is a momentary open expression of a vague ultimate goal; for others, a mere blackmail threat to extort political concessions from the party in power. In either case, the ease with which they slip into the threat reveals how little the concept of a labor party is excluded by any formal adherence to "non-partisanship." On the contrary, the founding of a new party is the logical and inescapable next step in the process which leads from the organization of the class into unions, to its constitution as a wing in bourgeois politics, to its independent organization in a class party.

A STORY THAT CROPS UP perennially tells of a prominent labor leader who confounds his interviewer, traveling companion, or poker-party guest with a logical defense of "free enterprise," brilliant beyond the capacities of any businessman. The tale is the same; only the hero changes as it is tailored to fit the official who breaks into current newspaper headlines. With one unanimous voice, the union officialdom proclaims undying devotion to the capitalist social system. But in their capitalism, mills are made of marble and machines of gold. It is the steady uninterrupted rise of living standards; it is the perpetual growth of union power; it is ever-expanding democracy; more security, more rights for the common man; even peace! They ask so much of capitalism that they annoy the capitalist class. Some politicians, businessmen, or economists gingerly suggest that perhaps in some unknown future we must adjust to economic downswing or that perhaps the possibilities for progress are somewhat limited . . . labor leaders unhesitatingly denounce such pessimists for lack of confidence in the American way of life.

But they themselves suspect that the future may hold gloomier prospects. Their public speeches are compounded half of warnings of what may come and half of warnings against those who warn of what may come. Is the unprecedented era of prosperity founded upon war and pre-war economics; what of the Taft-Hartley law and its injunction provisions; the rise of McCarthyism and the power of Dixiecrats in the Democratic Party? And every now and then, their discontent with the dwindling liberalism of the Democratic Party breaks through their official optimism. They support capitalism because they expect so much from it but they understand this much: what they get will ultimately depend upon how hard they are ready to fight in strikes and in politics. Their official optimism will not block the way to a new policy in the long run. The labor leader, full of faith in capitalism and making demands upon it, will travel the road to a new party.

The new unionism has succeeded in organizing the main body of the American workingclass. Its intervention in politics has injected modern democracy with whatever vigor it possesses but its inadequacy is fully revealed in this: the "main drift" of society away from democracy, the legal and extra-legal undermining of civil liberties and the rights of labor continues. Nevertheless, there is one limit beyond which democracy cannot be whittled and chipped away: modern unionism stands as the bed-rock foundation from which a new beginning and a new advance is always possible.

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The Myth of Lenin's Defeatism—I

Discussion Article. Part I: 'Defeatism' Before 1914

"All of Marx is contained in the Communist Manifesto, in the foreword of his Critique and in Capital. Even if he had not been the founder of the First International, he would always have remained what he is. Lenin, on the contrary, lives entirely in revolutionary action. Had he not published a single book in the past, he would nonetheless appear in history as that which he is now, as the leader of the proletarian revolution, as the founder of the Third International."—LEON TROTSKY¹

"When Vladimir Ilyitch once observed me glancing through a collection of his articles written in the year 1903, which had just been published, a sly smile crossed his face, and he remarked with a laugh: 'It is very interesting to read what stupid fellows we were!'"—KARL RADEK¹

Since the First World War, more than one generation in the Marxist movement has been brought up, in good part, on a close study of Lenin's anti-war position.

Lenin was not the only Marxist of the time who reacted to the war with a policy of consistent and thorough opposition to all varieties of "social-patriotism" or "social-chauvinism." But even in comparison with the other anti-war socialists, his writings on the war have a special force because of the exceptionally clear fashion in which he did one thing: he analyzed the political character of the war in the context of the *new* epoch of capitalism—imperialism.

Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg (to take these as the best examples of the non-Bolshevik socialist-internationalists) did so also; the difference is in degree, not in kind; but no one so successfully hammered this home as sharply as did Lenin, and on so well thought-out a theoretical basis. His study of imperialism as a stage of capitalism, together with the political approach to the war question which flowed from it, was Lenin's chief *theoretical* contribution to the arsenal of Marxism.

1. Reference notes, marked by superior figures, are collected at the end of the article; they give source data only. Informational footnotes, marked by asterisks, are at the bottom of the pages as they occur.

In most other respects, as Lenin rightly saw it himself, his role was to revive and reanimate the revolutionary substance of Marxism that had been overlaid by the creeping reformism of the Second International. In this respect, however, he did not merely revive: he had to, and did, *readapt* Marxism and its ideas to a new epoch. From that time on, the Marxist analysis of war had a new starting point.

The old starting point, the starting point of Marx and Engels and the old Second International, was one that had befitted the previous epoch of capitalism, the pre-imperialist era when progressive wars by the young, rising bourgeoisies of Europe were not only possible but of great historic significance. In this epoch of struggles between bourgeoisies engaged in progressive tasks and outlived classes seeking to block the road of capitalist progress, Marx and Engels had asked themselves typically: The victory of which contender will be of the greatest advantage to the working class and the possibilities of socialist revolution? Which is more progressive and which more reactionary? Whose victory is the lesser evil? Whose victory will help to widen the road down which the working class can march to intervene in the name of its own in-

terests? And conversely: whose *defeat* will help to eliminate an important force which blocks the road to progress?

By 1907 the anti-war resolutions of the Second International had already implicitly broken with this approach, but only implicitly. The world war that all saw looming ahead was imperialist on all sides. The 1907 Basle and 1910 Stuttgart resolutions of the Second International did not pose the question in the old way: namely, the victory or defeat of which war coalition will be best for us? Instead, the political attitude which they recommended was dictated by the facts of life, the *reality* of the imperialist era and its manifestations, pointed out in detail in the resolutions; but there was no consistent and conscious realization that a great change had occurred in theory. When the war broke out and the wave of chauvinism and patriotic hysteria swept over the belligerent nations, it was easy for the social-democratic parties, rotted from within by reformism, to snap back to the standpoint of the past, from which they had never consciously broken, and which afforded them the rationalizations they needed to justify their betrayal of their anti-war pledges.

In 1914, Lenin, like the other "orthodox Marxist" leaders of Second International parties, had not yet really worked out the foundations of the new standpoint on war. But unlike them he reacted to the war on the political bases already implied by the Basle and Stuttgart resolutions—and proceeded to go *beyond* them, to make *explicit* and theoretically founded the viewpoint there contained, and to work out the political tactics that followed. The thinking of the Second International snapped back to the old bases as if on the end of a

rubber band which had been stretched far beyond its normal scope—but only stretched; Lenin reacted by breaking the old bond.

But the old Marx-Engels-Second International tradition was strong, stronger than Lenin knew. It was deeply embedded in the thinking of all them, Lenin included, and had only been overlaid by the impress of events. Lenin too retained more of it than he was aware.

This was the fundamental reason why there remained with him an idea which constituted, in truth, an alien intrusion into the body of his politics—better still, a fossil remnant. It was this, we shall show, which gave rise to the notion which later came to be called "revolutionary defeatism."

THE CONTENT OF THE MYTH

At a certain time after Lenin's death, and for reasons which we shall see, this "defeatism" became a fixed part of the Lenin-canon; to question it was to question a "fundamental principle" of Leninism. That it is any principle at all is part of a myth. The rest of the myth includes the following:

(1) During the war Lenin alone adopted a completely consistent and uncompromising policy of opposition to the war, all others among the anti-war socialists being guilty of some "centrist" deviation or other or of some unclarity tending in such direction.

(2) In this "defeatist" principle was contained the very heart of Lenin's anti-war position; or as it has sometimes been put, this "defeatism" of Lenin's "summed up" his anti-war politics.

(3) Such "defeatism" is the necessary alternative to defensism—these being the only consistent choices. To reject "defeatism" means to make

some degree of concession to social-patriotism.

(4) This "defeatism" had a whole historical tradition and was not merely invented by Lenin. Its historical precedent was particularly to be found in the "defeatism" which permeated all classes of Russian society in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, this experience being the reason why the Bolsheviks so readily came to the "defeatist" position in 1914.

*So goes the myth.**

When we look at Lenin's writings themselves we will find a variety of shifting and inconsistent formulations on "defeatism" at various times, but the part which has entered into the canonical form of "defeatism" includes the following.

(1) In a reactionary war, you must *wish for the defeat* of "your own" government, *desire* defeat, be in favor of *defeat*, nothing less than defeat.

(2) It was not enough, then, merely to be against the war, against voting the war credits for example; it was not enough to organize or be in favor of organizing mass struggles against the war; it was not enough to organize or be in favor of organizing mass struggles against the war; it was not enough to denounce "defense of the

*That is, the myth as it is accepted among those who consider themselves Leninists. Confusing as defeatism has been for the latter, we can imagine what it does to the bourgeois professorial "authorities" on Bolshevism. One such expert has recently published a book entitled *A Century of Conflict: Communist Techniques of World Revolution* with a whole section on "The Theory of Revolutionary Defeatism." According to the erudite scholar, Prof. Stefan T. Possony, "In July 1915, eleven months after the outbreak of World War I, Lenin outlined the doctrine of revolutionary defeatism for the first time," whereas Zinoviev had written about it in February; therefore this savant finds it "interesting to note that Sinoyev [sic] rather than Lenin seems to have been the originator of revolutionary defeatism." The trouble seems to be that this devotee of learning and truth did not even bother to check Lenin's collected works before announcing his historical discovery; he is obviously going by the selected articles of Lenin and Zinoviev to be found in *Gegen den Strom*. The rest of his pages on the subject are just as illuminating as this pearl of academic profundity, up to and including his sole word of political analysis: "treason!"

fatherland" and its social-patriotic proponents; it was not enough, certainly, to denounce the consequences of military *victory* by "one's own" government, since there were "centrist" positions which were "against both victory and defeat." In fact, an anti-war position which fell short of avowed defeatism was either "left-centrist" or tinged with pacifism, or, at the very best, it was an "unconscious" defeatism which could not be carried out consistently and fearlessly in action until the "slogan of defeat" itself was embraced.

These were Lenin's claims during the 1914-16 period, and he counterposed them in polemic to the anti-war views of Trotsky and Luxemburg. The latter two (to continue to use them as examples of the non-Bolshevik opposition to the war) held the same analysis of the war and of what-is-to-be-done as did Lenin, straight down the line on all essential questions which were moot among the socialist left, including the need for breaking with the Second International and forming a new revolutionary international.* But Trotsky specifically attacked Lenin's "slogan of defeat," and Luxemburg (who possibly never even heard of it during the war) wrote along a line which precluded any sympathy for it. What exactly would have been added, supposedly, to their anti-war clarity or effectiveness if they had proclaimed "For *defeat* in the war," in addition to the position they held?

In the later exegesis of the Trotsky-

*The outstanding qualification to this statement, if it is considered an "essential question," was Trotsky and Luxemburg's difference with Lenin on the question of raising the slogan of peace. Lenin was never very clear on whether he criticized any use of the peace-slogan or only its use without tying it up with the socialist class struggle and the aim of revolution (a pacifist deviation of which Trotsky and Luxemburg were not guilty in any case, in spite of the picture which might be gained from some of Lenin's polemics especially against the former).

ist movement, Trotsky (for example) was retroactively admitted into the ranks of the wartime defeatists on the ground that this term is "really only a synonym" for an internationalist opponent of imperialist war. If it is only this synonym, as has been often stated, then most of what Lenin actually wrote on the subject, even abstracting the polemical heat, was a congeries of nonsense; whereas in truth it was merely a congeries of confusion. In any case we have to find out what *Lenin* meant by his "slogan of defeat," as distinct from the later reinterpreters who confounded his confusion with their own.

For this purpose the test question is not what Lenin meant as against the pro-war defensists, but what he meant as against the other anti-war socialists who held the Third Camp point of view, like Trotsky and Luxemburg, but who were not "defeatists."

WHAT DOES DEFEATISM MEAN?

Our study of what Lenin meant by his "defeatism" will begin with the historical sources of his conception, rather than by trying directly to take hold of the tangled threads of his 1914-16 formulations and shifts. This means beginning some distance away, with the Marx-Engels-Second International period, and then with the period of the Russo-Japanese War.

In doing so, however, we shall have to refer often to the attempts which were made in 1914-16 by Zinoviev, as Lenin's righthand collaborator on the editorial board of *Sotsial-Demokrat*, to invent an historical tradition for their "defeatism" in precisely these two periods. Part of Zinoviev's stock-in-trade in this strenuous endeavor is a systematic confusion of their "defeatism" with entirely different political viewpoints which might be called defeatism too.

(1) The most obvious and, at first blush, painfully unnecessary point to make is that there is another word, also spelled "defeatism," in various languages, which means a *mood* of pessimistic, despairing or hopeless resignation to *admitting* defeat. We think it can be shown that this other meaning enters into Zinoviev's 1915-16 articles on "defeatist" moods among the Russian people during the Russo-Japanese War, and also into the writings of bourgeois historians on the same "defeatist" moods, the latter being under the doubled disadvantage of not understanding anything about political defeatism in the first place.

(2) Not less elementary but more important: Obviously not everyone who is for the defeat of some government in a war is a "defeatist." Every pro-war patriot is for defeat—of the enemy government. In the First World War, it was the pro-war socialists who were most enthusiastically for defeat—of the enemy government. In a just war which we support, we are for defeat—of the enemy government. Is it really necessary to point this out? Well, we find Zinoviev making a point of the fact that even Engels was a "defeatist"—because he called for the defeat of tsarist *Russia* in a war with Germany which Engels was then ready to support as a German revolutionist!² If Engels thus becomes a proponent of "defeatism" and a predecessor of Lenin's war line, then Scheidemann and Ebert have an equal right to be denominated "defeatists," and it does not matter that Engels may have been correct in his time and the German social-patriots wrong in theirs.

This serves to give some example of the sort of thing of which Zinoviev's "historical precedents" are full, reflecting on the fearful entanglement of thinking behind his articles, which

were written under Lenin's editorial eye.

In another case, Zinoviev cites as a predecessor in "defeatism" the views expressed by the French Marxist leader Jules Guesde, in 1885, about the looming conflict between England and Russia over Afghanistan.³ Guesde explains that *whichever* of the two governments is defeated, it will be a good thing "for us," for socialism, since both are "equally oppressive although in different ways." His words were merely an expression of refusal to support either war camp. But in any case he was not talking about the defeat of "his own" government.

(3) Then defeatism means desiring defeat of *one's own* government, as Lenin indeed often stressed* (Zinoviev too, for that matter!). But there is still a very notable ambiguity which this phrase covers up.

To take an example from our own day first: In the Second World War many *German* liberals and radicals were violently pro-war—in favor of the Allies. They were for the defeat of "their own" government. Aside from the difference in national origin, their *political* position was identical with that of pro-war socialists and non-socialists in the Allied war camp.

As a matter of fact, there were such "defeatists" also in the First World War, and Lenin was well acquainted with them. There were Russian socialists who were for the defeat of Russian tsarism, "their own" government, and by the same token for the victory

*Lenin made it explicit that he did not consider anything else defeatism in only one passage, an incidental mention in 1918 in the course of his "Theses" on the Brest-Litovsk peace, in answer to an argument that the German left socialists do not want the Bolsheviks to sign the treaty with the kaiser's government. He said in passing: "They say that the German Social-Democratic opponents of war have now become 'defeatists' and ask us not to give in to German imperialism. However, we have always considered defeatism as an attitude toward one's own imperialist bourgeoisie . . ." [CW 22 (Russ. ed.), p. 195-6.]

of Germany, this being the lesser evil for them, since they took their stand not as admirers of Prussian junkerdom but as enemies of tsarism. The political position of these Russian "defeatists" was the same as that of the German social-patriots, who also were for German victory as the lesser evil.

There were also analogous tendencies among the socialists of the nationalities in the Hapsburg Empire, who were for the defeat of "their own" government — i.e., the government which oppressed them—the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. They were pro-Allied.

These were *pro-war* defeatists. They were defeatists *because* they were pro-war, "pro" the war of the imperialist camp aligned against their own rulers.

Lenin was, of course, well aware of these tendencies. He never looked upon them as defeatists, never called them defeatists, never thought of them as fellow defeatists. He classified them as social-patriots along with the other social-patriots of the Second International who ranged themselves with one or the other of the imperialist camps. In recognizing no political kinship with these defeatists, he was of course entirely correct: they were *social-patriotic defeatists*.

A terminological hassle ensues: according to the myth, defeatism and social-patriotism are opposites; a pro-war defeatist is something like a red blackbird. Very well then, we must re-define: a defeatist is not only one who desires the defeat of his own government but one who also does *not* wish the victory of the enemy camp. As a "definition" of defeatism, it is perfectly arbitrary and *ad hoc*, but if it is insisted on as a definition of Lenin's special variety of defeatism, then we will find out some very peculiar things about the Lenin-myth.

LENIN'S COMBINATION

To sum this up, then, we have the following:

(1) On the one hand, we have the leading anti-war internationalists like Trotsky and Luxemburg who were against both camps of imperialism in the war; against voting war credits; for irreconcilable class struggle during the war; for transforming the fight against the war into a fight for socialist power; for breaking with the International of the social-patriots of both camps. They counterposed, to the military victory of their own government's imperialism, the victory of their own working-class struggle for socialism. To the military victory of their own government, they did *not* counterpose a desire for its military defeat. They counterposed their own socialist solution to *any military outcome, victory or defeat, on the plane of the inter-imperialist conflict.*

These anti-war socialists were not "defeatists."

(2) On the other hand, we have tendencies which *were* for the defeat

of their own government *and* at the same time pro-war on the basis of a position politically identical with that of their fellow social-patriots across the state lines.

But in the case of the position peculiar to Lenin, we have an attempt at a different kind of "defeatism"—one which sought to combine some variety of "defeat of your own government" with the *anti-war* policy of opposition to both war camps.

Lenin attempted to *combine* defeatism and an anti-war line.

Note that this is put in a manner precisely opposite that of the Lenin-myth, which has come to paint "defeatism" as the inescapable and necessary expression of anti-war line, which cannot see any problem at all in making such a combination.

We will get a good idea of how great indeed the problem is as we follow (a) Zinoviev's efforts to find Marxist historical sanction for his "defeatism," and (b) Lenin's efforts to settle on a precise meaningful content for his anti-war "defeatism."

I. The Marx-Engels—Second International Tradition

The Marxists of our day are accustomed to thinking of the "lesser evil" theory in war as being characteristic of the reformist social-patriots. This is historically conditioned. The question has to be thought of in the context of the difference between the progressive period of capitalism and the imperialist stage of capitalism.

1. MARX'S CRITERION IN THE PRE-IMPERIALIST EPOCH

When Marx and Engels, in their time, asked "The victory of which nation (i.e., which national ruling class) would have the most advantageous consequences for the working-class

movement?" and decided support or non-support on this ground, this also obviously based itself on a kind of lesser-evil choice, though they did not use the term. But this approach had two fundamental historical premises:

(1) The difference between the two belligerents was not *basically* one of "lesser" or "greater" evil, but of the difference between the *historical roles* which they played. Marx and Engels' "lesser evil" was essentially an historical category, not at bottom a matter of eclectically reckoning up "consequences" on two pans of a balance-scale. This is why Lenin was still using their *method* when he made his

great contribution in drawing a sharp dividing line between the progressive wars of the young bourgeoisie against feudal reaction and the modern wars among bourgeoisies all of whom were gripped in a world-wide imperialism which decisively conditioned the politics and consequences of these wars. But this *replaced* Marx and Engels' "lesser evil" criterion.

(2) Throughout his world-war polemics against the social-patriots, Lenin always emphasized another accompanying difference between the two epochs: Today, he argued, unlike yesterday, the struggle for socialist power is on the order of the day in Europe. The socialist working class is on the scene as a contender for power itself. This means: There may still be "lesser" and "greater" evils (there always will be) but *we do not have to choose between these evils*, for we represent the alternative to both of them, an alternative which is historically ripe. Moreover, under conditions of imperialism, only this revolutionary alternative offers any really progressive way out, offers any possibility of an outcome which is no evil at all. Both war camps offer only reactionary consequences, to a "lesser" or "greater" degree.

In this context, any number of quotations can be found in Marx and Engels in which they come out for the defeat of one side in a given war on the ground of the progressive consequences which would thereby be facilitated. By the same token this meant for them: preferring or desiring the *victory* of the other side, on the ground of the same progressive, revolutionary consequences. Their "defeatism" in these situations was the *pro-war defeatism* which we have discussed.

It is therefore simply quotation-mongering to utilize such expressions

by Marx and Engels to "prove" that they believed that "defeat facilitates revolution." Of course they did, in given historical wars. In the same way it is just as possible to prove that "victory facilitates revolution," and this proposition was just as true in the same historical contexts.

In 1915-16 Zinoviev, the only Bolshevik propagandist who stood at Lenin's side in support of the "slogan of defeat," specialized in such historical arguments. When we find him appealing to the authority of Marx and Engels in support of "defeatism," what he is doing in linking up this policy with the *methodology of pro-war defeatism*. He does not give the slightest sign of being aware of what he is doing.

Thus Zinoviev⁴ quotes Engels' position on the threatened Austro-Prussian war (letter to Marx, April 2, 1866):

Although every man who bears any part of the responsibility for this war—if it breaks out—deserves to be hanged, and with absolute impartiality I do not exclude the Austrians from that, yet I wish above all that the Prussians should get a monumental drubbing.⁵

For, says Engels, then one of two things would happen: either (1) the Austrians would dictate peace in Berlin in two weeks, thus avoiding intervention by Bonaparte, and the Berlin régime's position would become impossible and a movement against "Prussianism" would start; or else (2) a change-over would take place in Berlin, before the arrival of the Austrians, and the movement would begin all the same."

So in this case Engels was "for the defeat of his own government," but what this meant for him was desiring or preferring the *victory* of the enemy government. For Zinoviev even to use this as a "Marxist" precedent for his

brand of "defeatism" is a give-away.

2. THE "SPECIAL POSITION" ON WAR AGAINST TSARISM

But this methodology of Marx and Engels was directed by them, most of all and most vigorously, against tsarist Russia. To them, Russia was the prop and inciter of all reaction on the Continent, the center and fortress of counter-revolution, the inspirer and supporter of every vestige of the old regime in Germany particularly. Behind every manifestation of reaction loomed the tsar and his diplomats and the threat of his armies. Once the Russian autocracy was destroyed, all the forces of democracy in Europe (in Germany first of all) would bound forward with seven-league boots, and the proletarian revolution would not be far behind. "Down with tsarism!" therefore, smash it by any means possible, revolutionary war against tsarism!⁶

Just as Marx and Engels saw a special rôle being played by Russia in the configuration of European politics, so they advocated a special position by revolutionaries against this threat, through demands which they did not direct against any other state.

This *special* position on Russia was bequeathed to the Second International at its foundation, and ingrained in it. It was an axiom of the Marxist movement for decades: "For the defeat of tsarism!"

It was this axiom which became the rationalization of the German Social-Democrats for its collapse before the war hysteria on August 4, 1914. True, in 1914 Russia was no longer the monolithic society of feudal barbarism that it had appeared in the days of Marx's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. A modern working-class and socialist movement had developed strongly. In 1905 this Russia had gone

to the head of the European revolution. Tsarism could no longer hope to play the old rôle in Europe; now it had the revolution at its own back. The political bases of the "special position" had radically changed. But the "special position" and its tradition was still there, still ingrained. It was not the cause of the collapse of the German Social-Democracy but it was strong enough to act as its effective ideological cover.

Just before the black day of August 4 when the Reichstag group stood up to vote for the kaiser's war credits, the Social-Democratic press snapped back into the groove:

The German Social-Democracy has always hated tsardom as the bloody guardian of European reaction; from the time that Marx and Engels followed, with far-seeing eyes, every movement of this barbarous government, down to the present day, when its prisons are filled with political prisoners, and yet it trembles before every labor movement. The time has come when we must square accounts with these terrible scoundrels, under the German flag of war.⁷

So wrote the Social-Democratic *Frankfurter Volksstimme* on July 31. The press filled with such evocations of the old outlived tradition (not un-mixed with a new note of simple chauvinism): "fight first against the Russian knout" . . . "Shall the Russian tsar . . . who is the worst enemy of the Russian people themselves, rule over one man of German blood?" . . . "War against tsarism . . . worst enemy of all liberty and all democracy" . . . "Poor devils, really creatures without a fatherland, these downtrodden subjects of bloody Nicholas. Even should they desire to do so, they could find nothing to defend but their chains." . . .

Rosa Luxemburg commented:

Long-forgotten chords that were sounded by Marx in the *Neue Rheinische*

Zeitung against the vassal state of Nicholas I, during the German March Revolution of 1848, suddenly reawakened in the ears of the German Social-Democracy in the year of our lord 1914, and called them to arms, arm in arm with Prussian Junkerdom against the Russia of the Great Revolution of 1905.⁸

Or as Zinoviev himself wrote in 1916:

For 60 years the vanguard of the revolutionists of Germany preached justified hatred of tsarism to the German people. Since the time of Marx's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, the call to struggle "against tsarism" has not ceased to resound in the ears of the German workers. And now, when the war of 1914 has broken out, the German social-chauvinists, who have passed over into the camp of imperialism, have consciously *exploited* this revolutionary hatred borne by the German workers against bloody tsarism. They have cynically *utilized* the old slogan "against tsarism" in order to cover themselves and to force the German workers to spill their blood in the interest of German imperialism.⁹

And not only at the beginning of the war. To the last the social-patriotic leaders insisted that by supporting the kaiser's war they had been carrying out the behest of Marx and Engels, and when the March Revolution took place in Russia they pointed to it as *their* handiwork, their justification, their "progressive consequence." Paul Lensch claimed: "as a matter of fact, the Russian Revolution is a child of the German victories!"—for does not defeat in war facilitate revolution, and did they not "facilitate" the defeat of tsarism? In October 1917 Dr. David defended the party's war record at the first wartime party congress where the leadership had to give an accounting of its policy, at Würzburg:

The justification of our attitude has still another strong argument. A policy is best judged by its successes. What success has it had? The one immense fruit of this war, which we all greeted with jubilation, is the collapse of the tsarist

system, is the Russian Revolution, the Russian democracy, and with it an end of the perils which the tsarist system meant to Europe. But this event would not have occurred if we had acted as Haase and his friends wanted us to on August 4, 1914.¹⁰

By 1914 the old "special position" had been totally emptied of its political and historical content, but it still echoed hollowly in the thinking of the Second International. We will see its echoes in Lenin's "defeatism."

3. HOW ZINOVIEV MAKES A DEFEATIST OUT OF ENGELS

In one of his most tortuous articles of 1916,¹¹ Zinoviev attempted to refute this "anti-tsarist" rationalization of the social-patriots *and at the same time* to wrap the authority of Engels around his own variety of "defeatism." The result is revealing.

To pull off this *tour de force*, he goes back to Marx and Engels' line of "revolutionary war against Russia" and seeks to prove that, in putting forth this position, they advocated *first* the overthrow of the German government and then the carrying out of the "revolutionary war" *by a workers' government*. This is necessary for him since he wants to (a) rebut the social-patriots and (b) secure Engels' authority for "defeatism," but (c) *without admitting that this precedent requires equating such "defeatism" with support of the victory of the enemy government*.

How does he try to do it? In more than one place (especially in the '90s) Engels took up the question of what German socialists should do if Russia (or even Russia in alliance with France) attacked Germany. Zinoviev describes Engels' reply as follows—but using his own words, not Engels':

What then should the German proletariat do, what should the German Social-Democracy do? defend the Prussian

junkers, support its "own" government? No, that is inadmissible . . . Engels proposes an entirely different solution: the German proletariat should overthrow its own government and lead a *revolutionary war* against tsarism, uniting with the French workers for the common struggle.

What authority has he for claiming that Engels considered it was "inadmissible" in this situation for socialists to support a non-socialist German government which was fighting against Russian attack? What authority has he for claiming that Engels proposed: *first* overthrow the government and *then* lead a revolutionary war against Russia?

He has a quotation, from Engels' article of the '90s, "Socialism in Germany." Here, speaking of the same hypothetical situation, Engels wrote:

In this struggle our country can save its national existence only by applying revolutionary measures. . . . We have a very strong party. . . . It is the Social-Democratic Party. And we have not forgotten the great example which France gave us in 1793 [the example, that is, of "Jacobin" tactics]. . . .

Zinoviev then challenges: "We will not insist on the fact that today's war is *not at all the one* that Engels envisaged. [This is exactly the main thing he has to insist on, but he has other fish to fry in this article—H. D.] We ask only: Why then didn't the German social-chauvinists overthrow their government? Why didn't they have recourse 'to the most revolutionary measures'?"

But all of this is a falsification of Engels' viewpoint. Engels left no doubt whatsoever that he was thinking of supporting a defensive war *under a government still led by the old class*. His reference to "revolutionary measures" meant that the socialists should demand that *this* government take such measures—just as

earlier Marx, during the American Civil War, had advocated that the Lincoln government of the North take "revolutionary measures" against the South, e.g., free the slaves. Engels also looked to the victory of *this* government as preparing the way for the socialists to come to power *eventually*, soon or late, possibly even during the war itself; but he did not advocate "overthrow the government" as a precondition for supporting its defensive war against tsarism.

In a letter to Bebel (October 24, 1891), Engels wrote on exactly the same theme:

. . . If Russia is victorious we shall be crushed. Therefore if Russia begins war—go for her! go for the Russians and their allies, *whoever they may be*. [Engels has France in mind—H. D.] Then we have to see to it that the war is conducted by every revolutionary method and that things are made impossible for any government which refuses to adopt such methods. . . .¹²

The same day Engels wrote to Sorge:

. . . If Germany is crushed, then we shall be too, while in the most favorable case the struggle will be such a violent one that Germany will only be able to maintain herself by revolutionary means, so that very possibly we shall be forced to come into power and play the part of 1793.¹³

It is clear that Engels is not thinking of the war as being conducted by a socialist government, necessarily. This was part and parcel of his and Marx's mode of approach *in this pre-imperialist epoch*. The social-patriots tried to utilize such quotations for their own purposes. But in this case, once Zinoviev has announced that he will not argue against this sleight-of-hand of the social-patriots on the only ground where their fundamental mistake showed up, he has taken up the gage with them *on their own ground*.

He then argues himself onto thin ice, *because he himself is trying to preserve a remnant of the same tradition on which the social-patriots based themselves*. He is led to distort Engels because he is trying to retain the old methodology (only in connection with defeatism!) without accepting the conclusions. He is trying to claim Engels as a "defeatist" without revealing that Engels' call for the defeat of Russia *meant support of "his own" government*.

4. HOW ZINOVIEV INVENTS A 'DEFEATISM' FOR PLEKHANOV

From the "defeatist" Engels, Zinoviev goes on to the "defeatist" Plekhanov. He approvingly quotes the position taken by Plekhanov at the 1893 congress of the International in Zurich. There, reporting for the Russian socialists, Plekhanov had said:

When the German army crosses our border, for us it will be a liberator, as the French in the time of the Convention, a hundred years ago, were liberators when they came into Germany to bring liberty to the people after having vanquished the kings.

Zinoviev actually quotes this as an "authority" in the year 1916, when the German social-patriotic theoreticians are reveling in like quotations! Though he himself does not make this point, he could not have hit on a clearer example of how the "special position" on Russia was involved, in Marx's view, with a *different* period of capitalism, typified by the French Revolution, the progressive days of a young rising bourgeoisie fighting against feudalism. Why does Zinoviev do this? He is quoting Plekhanov enthusiastically because, *in this context*, Plekhanov naturally came out for the defeat of tsarism:

The more our German friends attack Russian tsarism [the quotation from Plekhanov continues], the more grateful

we are to them. Bravo, my friends, beat tsarism, drag it onto the judgment dock as often as possible, strike at it by every means at your command!

Plekhanov was for "defeatism" against Russia, you see—Q.E.D. So are we Bolsheviks in this war. We have precedent on our side. . . . And Zinoviev apparently does not suspect that he is giving the show away as to the political methodology of this "defeatism."

We have cited the declarations by Plekhanov at the Zurich congress which are "defeatist" in their way [winds up Zinoviev triumphantly].

But to cover the traces, here again as in the case of Engels he falsely claims that Plekhanov was thinking only of a "revolutionary war" led by a workers' government. With that ambivalence which his double-barreled aim imposes on him, he hastens to add that, of course, it would be improper to make those same declarations today in 1916 that Plekhanov did in 1893! No Russian socialist today, he says, would issue such an invitation to the Germans, the situation is different, etc. But then, what remains of the point of citing Plekhanov as a "defeatist in a way"? Of course Plekhanov was then a "defeatist in a way," but it was precisely the "way" which was used by the German social-chauvinists to justify their betrayal in 1914.

The same methodological shuttle sticks out in a couple of quotations which Zinoviev fishes out of Marx. For example, in the Russo-Turkish war, Marx wrote (September 27, 1877) that the "gallant Turks have hastened the explosion [in Russia] by years with the thrashing they have inflicted" on the autocracy. He does not mention that Marx was not simply commenting on the frequently revolutionary consequences of defeat in war.

Marx was in favor of a Turkish victory in that war.¹⁴

5. SUMMARY

To sum up:

(1) We will see the echoes, in Lenin's position on "defeatism" in 1914-16, of the Marx-Engels-Second International "special position" on the defeat of Russian tsarism, as the "lesser evil" in a certain sense.

(2) In going back to this tradition, as Lenin's specialist in historical precedents, in the course of specific polemics in defense of "defeatism" during the World War itself, Zinoviev betrays at all points the reliance of the defeat-slogan on the *methodology* of the old tradition, and most particularly—

II. Defeatism in the Russo-Japanese War

According to the myth, the most solid historical precedent for Lenin's "defeatism" is supposed to be found in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. Lenin's "defeatism" of 1914-16 was only the continuation of the line he developed for the earlier war, and indeed, we have been told, in 1904-5 not only Lenin but even the Mensheviks and large sections of the liberal bourgeoisie were pervaded with "defeatism." Lenin's line for the First World War grew out of this experience. In 1916 Zinoviev wrote¹⁵ along these lines: "Germany today does not possess the tradition of 1905; it could not have any clear 'defeatist' tradition"—whereas we Bolsheviks, happily in possession of the 1905 tradition, were ready to come to the "defeatist" position easily in 1914.

This is not true. Lenin's position on the Russo-Japanese war was fundamentally different from his position on the First World War, and precisely with respect to defeatism.

(3) Zinoviev implicitly identifies the political viewpoint of his "defeatism" with the political approach of *pro-war defeatism*. He has found no precedent in Marx and Engels for any combination of "defeatism" with an anti-war policy against both war camps. He cannot even see the difference between a "defeatism" which is for the victory of the enemy government, and his attempt to invent a "defeatism" which is not.

Before going any further, we could be quite sure at this point that we are dealing with a political viewpoint which is rife with confusion about its own ideas, even if those ideas were after all correct.

The true story of Lenin's real war policy in 1904-5 has never been told in any literature familiar to our movement—indeed, as far as we know, it has not been told anywhere. It has to be exhumed from his writings of the period, where it is plain enough.

One might have expected that in 1914-16, when Lenin was hotly arguing for his defeat-slogan of that time, he would have referred (if only in passing) to the phenomenon of defeatism in the previous war and his position on it. He never does, not even in passing. Zinoviev, however, was a horse of a different color. The latter deliberately concealed and falsified the truth, and it was his account which served to miseducate the movement.

1. THE PECULIARITY OF ZINOVIEV'S HISTORY

Let us start, again, with Zinoviev's version of the history of "defeatism"—rather, his attempt to *invent* a history

for Lenin's brand of "defeatism."

The work by Zinoviev which was the main source of this miseducation was his *History of the Russian Communist Party* (1925),¹⁶ which in turn on this question was in good part based on an article he published in 1916, entitled "'Defeatism' — Then and Now,"¹⁷ in which he dealt in detail with the "defeatism" of the Russo-Japanese War.

In both his *History* and the 1916 article, Zinoviev correctly relates that defeatist sentiment was common in Russia not only among socialists but also among bourgeois liberals. (As a matter of fact, defeatism had also appeared earlier in Russia in the Crimean war.) This is a solid fact. The peculiarity of Zinoviev's version of history is this: that in not one line of his extensive discussion does he permit himself to use any of the plentiful evidence which proves this fact; we will have to do that ourselves later, and the reason why Zinoviev does not will be all too clear.

None of the examples of "defeatism" which Zinoviev selects is an example of the real defeatism which existed.

To be sure, even his examples show the widespread scope of *anti-war* feeling in the country; but by this time we should be aware of the gap between being merely against a war and being for defeat of one's own country in that war. In fact, when Zinoviev wrote his 1916 article he was vociferously insisting on the difference.

He certainly does show that the Russo-Japanese War was unpopular; that the people were against it; that there were "defeatist" moods (in the other sense) which *expected* defeat, and linked this expectation of (or in some cases, resignation to) defeat up with coming revolutionary changes. He does show that large sections did

not look to *victory* in the war, and even were afraid of the prospect of victory for tsarism. But we have already made clear that a point of view which says "Against victory" does not *yet* add up to a "desire for defeat," though it can go over to it. Lenin and Zinoviev were well aware of this, since in the First World War they polemized against the viewpoint which they called "Neither victory nor defeat" as "centrist." In 1904-5 a point of view which rejected *both* the desire for victory *and* defeat was even more of a definite tendency. We have already stated that real defeatism existed, but a good deal of the anti-war opinion of the time deliberately stopped short of defeatism. This tendency did so either (a) in uncertainty or ambivalence, (b) where more thought-out, in a wish for a war of exhaustion and stalemate, which was a not-infrequent perspective also.*

2. ZINOVIEV'S FAKE EXAMPLES

Keeping this in mind, let us look at Zinoviev's examples, before raising the question of the motive for his peculiar omissions.

(1) *Boris Chicherin*:

This is Zinoviev's prize example, in both writings mentioned. In his 1925 *History*, he tells us that Chicherin, who was a prominent liberal though a monarchist, wrote as follows¹⁸

The consequences of this war will, finally, help to solve the internal crisis. It is difficult to say what outcome of this war is more to be desired to this end.

That is all! It does not seem to express a desire for defeat. But Zinoviev immediately adds:

These words, which declare with little ambiguity the defeat of tsarist Russia to be more desirable than its victory, were written under the Russian censor.

*For this tendency, see remarks by S. A. Korff in *Autocracy and Revolution in Russia* (1923), p. 67-9.

Well, that puts a new face on it. Zinoviev is telling us that Chicherin was using Aesopian language to get by the censor, and that what he really meant to convey was that he desired defeat.

But this is untrue. The witness against Zinoviev is himself, namely, his 1916 article, in which he had detailed the case of Chicherin a little more fully.¹⁹ There we learn, still from the same Zinoviev, that Chicherin's statement was not "written under the Russian censor" at all. In fact, it was not written. It was a remark made by Chicherin a few days before his death, and was quoted by another man (who vouched for it as coming from a reliable source) in Struve's organ *Ozvozhdeniye*. But perhaps this other man, M. Zemetz, was writing "under the Russian censor"? No, he was not; Struve's organ was published in emigration.

In other words, this prize example, Chicherin's statement, meant exactly what it said: this liberal-monarchist *did not know* what outcome of the war to desire. Nothing strange about that! It was a common state of mind among bourgeois liberals who did not like the war at all.

This quite understandable frame of mind was also very prevalent during the world war, but we would like to see Zinoviev citing such indecisive, soul-torn characters as fellow defeatists in 1914-16! Elements in Chicherin's frame of mind were then a good deal to the right of the "centrists" that Zinoviev was attacking because they rejected "defeatism"! But for the purposes of historical precedent, Chicherin became a "defeatist"!

It seems amazing: why on earth does Zinoviev have to drag this ringer in, and falsify it to boot, when there were real defeatists to be cited?

(2) *The S-R leader Gershuni:*

In the 1925 *History* Zinoviev makes a long and garrulous to-do about this. Gershuni is in prison. His lawyer informs him that the war has broken out, tells of its unpopularity, and the defeats that have taken place. And Gershuni remarks: "A second Crimean campaign? And Port Arthur—Sebastopol [where tsarism had suffered a heavy defeat]?" Then Gershuni relates in his memoirs:

... everything suddenly seemed to become clear. I felt that something infinitely terrible, infinitely menacing and infinitely sorrowful was rushing upon us, which would hit the state like a thunderbolt, arousing the sleepers, and rending asunder the veil which conceals from the majority of the people the true essence of the autocratic system.²⁰

The thing that was "infinitely terrible," etc., was, of course—defeat. If Gershuni *desired* defeat, he neglected to mention it in his memoirs so that Zinoviev could quote it. Later in his memoirs, when Gershuni writes after the fall of Port Arthur, "We trembled. Port Arthur had fallen—the autocracy would fall too," Zinoviev quotes this and comments, "Clearly a defeatist state of mind."

Clearly, indeed! The one thing certain about this "Gershuni" example is its ambiguity. It becomes twice as suspect when we add the information that the S-R Party's organ came out *against* the viewpoint which desired the defeat of Russia by Japan!

(3) The above are Zinoviev's two first and longest examples. Next he cites a novel, *The Pale Horse* by Savinkov, whose fictitious hero, a terrorist, hears of the Russian naval disaster at Tsushima and "is seized by the most contradictory feelings." In his 1916 article Zinoviev adduced other examples: Struve, etc. Without exception, they are even less likely examples of "defeatism" than the above;

he proves that liberals were anti-war, and then tags them with the "defeatist" label, gratis, with an appropriate assertion.

(4) *Plekhanov:*

Finished with examples of bourgeois defeatism, Zinoviev claims that "The Mensheviks, albeit not without some hesitation, had also adopted the defeatist position." His example is Plekhanov. At the Amsterdam congress of the Second International, held during the war in 1904, opening addresses were given by both Plekhanov for the Russian delegation and Sen Katayama for the Japanese socialist delegation. On the stage they embraced amid the enthusiastic applause of the assemblage. They were vigorously anti-war. But Zinoviev says that Plekhanov's speech was "defeatist." In point of fact, he quotes Plekhanov as going so far, in a peroration, as denouncing the prospect of Russian *victory*. It is this that Zinoviev automatically equates with "defeatism," entirely without justification. (We will see later that the Menshevik party was *not* for defeatism.)

3. ANTI-WAR MOODS IN RUSSIA

So we still do not have from Zinoviev a single clear example of anyone who came out as *desiring defeat*. If one judged only by Zinoviev, a critical reader might be led to the conclusion that this alleged "defeatism" that was supposed to have existed in 1904-5 was only another myth created by this fertile writer.

And that would be quite wrong. It existed. It even obtrudes into Zinoviev's own *History* in the form of a couple of real examples—*when Zinoviev attacks Martov for giving these examples!*

Here he goes from concealment to falsification. Zinoviev, having ceased to drum up examples, has turned his

attention to the position of the Mensheviks on the war. He writes:²¹

But today, Martov, reviewing the past in his *History of the Russian Social-Democracy*, endeavors to disown the defeatist position of the Mensheviks during the war.

He gives the following quotation from Martov's history:

As soon as, following the failures of the Russian army [Martov wrote], a typically defeatist attitude developed among liberal society and in revolutionary circles, and the hope grew stronger that continued military disaster would deal a mortal blow to tsarism almost without any new effort upon the part of the Russian people; as soon as there commenced to be manifested a certain 'Japanophilism' and idealization of the role that Japanese imperialism was playing in the war—*Iskra* [Menshevik organ] came out against defeatism, and in defense of the position that it was to the interest of the people and of the revolution that the war should not end by imposing heavy sacrifices upon Russia, and that freedom would not be brought to the Russian people on the bayonets of the Japanese.

And Zinoviev complains:

Martov is obviously beclouding the issue . . . attempting to exculpate his revolutionary sins in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. . . . The pro-Japanese position had absolutely nothing in common with defeatism.

Let us see who is beclouding the issue. What Martov referred to is a fact. The *real* defeatists of 1904-5, the elements who really *did* come out with a "desire for defeat," tended to merge this sentiment into its obvious consequence: a wish for the victory of Japan, pro-Japanism.

Naturally this was not true of those anti-war elements who were for neither-victory-nor-defeat, who were either ambivalent on that score or who consciously held the view that the favorable outcome would be a *stalemate of mutual exhaustion*. But

for those, especially bourgeois-liberal, elements who were indeed for defeat, the obvious corollary was also to be for Japan's victory as progressive. This was a widespread feeling not only in Russia but throughout the world, where, particularly in England and America, Japan was looked on as a civilizing agent as compared with Russian barbarism. (The "Yellow Peril" had not yet overwhelmed the U. S.)

The strength of the Russian liberal bourgeoisie's feeling on the war was not hard to explain. The rising bourgeoisie wanted political reforms and concessions; the tsarist government froze them out of all participation in the state power. They knew that a victory in the war would only consolidate the autocracy's attitude, make it feel its oats, and strengthen its obstinacy. The bourgeoisie wanted a division of power with tsarism, and knew that it would be aided insofar as tsarism was weakened and had to yield. Many felt further that the aims of this war were dynastic, and did not bear upon the "national interest," i.e., their own class interests. Many considered it merely a tsarist adventure. There were also divergences on whether Russia's imperialist drive should turn face to the Far East or to the west.

For example, Struve's organ *Ozvo-bozhdeniye* wrote on the outbreak of the war:

The occupation of Manchuria and the outlet to the sea were economically nonsensical for Russia. . . . The loss of Manchuria and the Kwantung Peninsula [to Japan] will be no loss at all but will be to our advantage, for, in the pursuit of our own interests, we should long ago have abandoned this awkward adventure. And our enemies will ask no more than that from us.²²

The last sentence is important from the point of view of the going-over of

liberal sentiment from anti-war feeling to outright defeatism. For the bourgeois liberals felt that defeat by Japan would be no skin off *their* back, since there was not the remotest possibility that Japan would carry the war to attack Russia at home, but that a Japanese victory would only mean the loss of Far Eastern outposts that were a white elephant anyway and not of interest to their own class, while a definitive tsarist defeat would weaken the autocracy and make it amenable to internal compromise. "The Japanese," said a Russian liberal, "will not enter the Kremlin, but the Russians will."²³

Moreover, the bourgeoisie knew that one reason why the autocracy had gotten into the war was to use pro-war enthusiasm against revolutionary stirrings. Prime Minister Plehve had said, "We need a small victorious war to stem the tide of revolution,"²⁴ and Prince Urussoff wrote in his memoirs that "the members of the government expressed a hope, after the first battle, that the war would evoke a wave of patriotism, and that it would thus arrest the anti-governmental propaganda, and render it easier for the local authorities to preserve order and public tranquillity."²⁵

4. PRO-JAPAN DEFEATISM

But reasons aside, the fact is the evidence shows that the existence of a real "desire for defeat" was in association with a wish for the victory of Japan. Zinoviev is forced to cite some cases in polemizing against Martov:²⁶

During the war, when the Japanese were battling with the troops of the Russian tsar, certain circles of liberal society (the students in particular) went so far, it was rumored, as to send a telegram to the mikado of Japan.

(A. G. Mazour's history *Russia Past and Present* states this as a fact. The

students "wired the Mikado their best wishes for victory.")

But, continues Zinoviev, we revolutionaries came out against Japanophilism.

And from this point of view [Zinoviev writes], we condemned every excess [!] on the part of the liberal bourgeoisie and the superficial student revolutionaries, who, if they did not actually send, doubtless intended to send, the telegram to the emperor of Japan. In this sense Martov was correct: yes, we were against "Japanophilism," but we did stand for the defeat of the tsarist armies. . . .

Zinoviev is then asserting (in 1925) that the Bolshevik position was for defeat of tsarism but *not* for the victory of Japan. If that were true, we would finally have here an *anti-war* defeatism. (We will see that it was not true.)

Zinoviev continues with another involuntary example of the real defeatism of 1904-5, in the same peculiar form of an attack on Martov for bringing up the subject:

. . . Martov is deliberately mixing up the cards when he writes as follows:

"The leader of the Finnish 'Activists' [nationalist group], who later headed the Finnish government in 1905—Konni Zilliacus—openly proposed to Plekhanov as well as to the foreign representatives of the Bund, that they enter into negotiations with the agents of the Japanese government in regard to aid for the Russian revolution in the form of money and arms."

Very interesting—we have defeatists here. Boris Souvarine, in his *Staline*, recounts that

The Japanese government . . . offered money and arms to all the subversive parties; the only ones that accepted were the Finnish Activists, the Georgian Socialist-Federalists and the most nationalistic faction of the Polish Socialist Party whose leader Pilsudski even went to Japan to discuss terms with the enemies of the oppressor Russia.²⁷

But why is Martov "mixing up the

cards" when he brings out this not-irrelevant fact? Zinoviev says:

Martov adds that this proposal was rejected. This is true. When the Russian revolutionaries, and even a section of the Russian bourgeoisie, came out definitely as defeatists, the Japanese and some of their agents tried to hook us with the following bait: Since you are in favor of the defeat of the tsar, we will be glad to support you with money and arms. It goes without saying that a proposal of this nature met with indignant refusal on the part of our organization and of all honest revolutionaries, as well as on the part of Plekhanov and the Mensheviks.

This does not tell us why Martov was "mixing up the cards." Zinoviev merely *asserts* that "The pro-Japanese position had absolutely nothing in common with defeatism." It would be more convincing, even at this point, if he himself had been able to trot out one real defeatist who was *not* for the victory of Japan.

A contemporary magazine article (in the London *Fortnightly Review* for February 1, 1906) described the state of affairs in Russia:

No sooner did the news of the Japanese war spread through the country than, with the one exception of the peasants, the Empire unanimously declared that should the Russian aims succeed, Russia herself would be ruined. From the first, the Russians prayed for Japanese victories. . . .

When the first batch of Japanese prisoners reached Kalouga, everyone turned out to witness their arrival, flowers were showered on them, and at a dinner given at the best club in town, members and also officials of the provincial council were present, and the speeches were of a very liberal, not to say revolutionary character. It was at that dinner that the memorable phrase, "They are fighting for Russia's freedom," was uttered for the first time. In consequence of these proceedings, the club was shut up. . . .²⁸

Souvarine writes:

Defeatism, which had already appear-

ed in the Crimean war, showed itself this time very widely in the liberal bourgeoisie, the oppressed nationalities, and among the workers and peasants. As against imperial Russia, which was undergoing defeat after defeat, the young Japanese imperialism took on almost the aspect of a champion of civilization.²⁹

This was the real face of the defeatism of 1904-5. It can come as a surprise only to those who have been nurtured on the Lenin-myth of the First World War. What else in fact could have been expected? It took a couple of highly skilled political theoreticians even to make an attempt, in 1914, to develop a "defeatism" which did not mean desire for the victory of the enemy's government—and they did not succeed. For liberals, workers or oppressed nationalities whose hatred of tsarism led them from "mere" anti-war sentiment to a desire for *defeat* of tsarism, this automatically meant (in their case) defeat by *Japan*.

If Zinoviev denies this, it is simply out of ex-post-facto embarrassment, embarrassment which he takes out on Martov in the form of round abuse. This is why, in 1916 and 1925, Zinoviev casts around vainly for "examples" of defeatism in 1904-5 *which do not reveal the truth that defeatism in the Russo-Japanese War meant pro-Japanism*—and more often than not, not merely pro-Japanism in the sense of desiring the victory of Japanese imperialism but also in the sense of "idealizing" Japan as a progressive force.

Perhaps the above is only true of the politically unsophisticated elements who were against tsarism and the war—raw workers, raw students, raw liberals, etc.?

No. Among those who most enthusiastically carried their anti-war anti-tsarism to the point of pro-Japanism were:

(1) Some of the most outstanding

leaders of the Second International, and—

(2) *Lenin*.

5. LENIN'S PRO-JAPAN POSITION

The picture painted by Zinoviev's "history" is a fairy tale from beginning to end. By the same token, so is the picture held by the Marxist movement of Lenin's position in the Russo-Japanese War, specifically the meaning of his defeatism.

Lenin was for the victory of Japan in the war, as the standard-bearer of progress versus tsarist reaction.

We have to turn to Lenin's writings of 1904-5 for this.

First of all, all during the year 1904, Lenin scarcely even mentions the fact that there is a war on. The party is in the after-throes of the Bolshevik-Menshevik split at the 1903 congress, and Lenin's absorption in the internal situation is virtually complete.

All through 1904 there are only two references to the war in his collected works.^{29a} First mention comes in April: it is not an article, thesis or resolution discussing the war but simply a May Day manifesto which Lenin wrote for distribution as a leaflet, signed by the Central Committee and editorial board of the party—three months after the war broke out in February. Its content: against the war, overthrow tsarism, demand peace, etc. There is no mention of defeat, defeatism, or any related idea.

Second mention of the war comes in a document addressed "To the Party," on the split crisis (July-August), which refers to the war in order to make the point that revolutionary ferment is growing with its continuation. There is nothing on defeat or defeatism.

As the year 1905 began, the big military debacle, the fall of Port Arthur, was in plain sight, but had

not yet occurred. An article by Lenin in *Vperiod*, January 4, made the point that

The development of the political crisis in Russia depends . . . on the course of the war with Japan. . . . Absolutist Russia is henceforth defeated by constitutional Japan. . . . The military fiasco is inevitable, and with it a redoubling of the discontent, ferment and indignation.³⁰

There is as yet, however, no more explicit statement than this on the desirability or necessity of defeat, which comes 10 days later, with the news of the military disaster at Port Arthur.

Now (January 14) for the first time Lenin writes a full-scale discussion of the war and the defeat, and of his line on the war — "The Fall of Port Arthur."

This, and subsequent articles, are full of political characterizations of Japan as the progressive side of the war. We have already seen his remark, in the previous issue of *Vperiod*, that "Absolutist Russia is henceforth defeated by constitutional Japan." The idea which is already implicit in this political counterposition is developed explicitly:³¹

Progressive, advanced Asia has struck an irreparable blow against reactionary and backward Europe. . . .

. . . The criticism of the autocracy formulated by all advanced Russians, by the Russian Social-Democracy, by the Russian proletariat, is now confirmed by the criticism of Japanese arms. . . .

He refers to Russia's war as a "conflict with a progressive people."

The war of an advanced country with a backward country has once again played a great revolutionary role, as has happened many times in history. And the class-conscious proletariat, resolute enemy of war, which is the inevitable result of all class rule, cannot conceal from itself this revolutionary work that has been accomplished by the Japanese

bourgeoisie in its victory over the autocracy. The proletariat is hostile to every bourgeoisie . . . but this hostility does not relieve it of the necessity of distinguishing between the representatives of a bourgeoisie that is playing a progressive role or a reactionary role in history.

Japan, he writes, is playing an "historically progressive role."

But while fighting free competition, we cannot forget that it represents progress with relation to semi-serfdom. While fighting all war and every bourgeoisie, we must in our agitation distinguish with care between the progressive bourgeoisie and the feudal autocracy; we must stress in all circumstances the great revolutionary rôle of the historic war in which the Russian worker is taking part despite himself.

What we see is that in this, the first big inter-imperialist war of the 20th century, Lenin is continuing to apply the Marx-Engels-Second International criterion of "progressive bourgeoisie" versus "reactionary regime" which was the old approach with respect to the earlier epoch of progressive, rising capitalism. He is asking the question: In this given war, the victory of which nation, which national ruling class, carries with it the progressive consequences for social and revolutionary development?

Theoretically speaking, what we find in Lenin's position on the Russo-Japanese War is the analysis which, on August 4, 1914, became the theoretical rationale of the German social-patriots. Lenin puts this theoretical approach forward most clearly in an article written later on April 5:

. . . it is necessary, when a war sets exploiting nations against each other, to distinguish between the progressive and the reactionary role of the bourgeoisie of each given nation. The Russian Social-Democracy has had to apply these general principles of Marxism to the war with Japan. [In the same context, Lenin immediately refers back to the article "The Fall of Port Arthur."]³²

Nothing could be clearer as to the methodology which underlay his defeatism in this war.

In line with this view of the role of Japan, and in line with his sympathy for its victory, his articles are full of sympathetic, even enthusiastic, references to Japan's armed might, etc. Thus, in "The Fall of Port Arthur":³³

And along comes little Japan, up to now despised by all, and in eight months it seizes this citadel [Port Arthur] while France and England allied together took a whole year to take Sebastopol [in the Crimean war].

He catalogs Japan's military strength, crowing with delight at the statistics, as if glorying in its military and naval power. He exults over "the Japanese fleet, magnificently armed and equipped with the most modern means of defense"... "the growing power of young, new Japan."

In "The Fall of Port Arthur," he even seems to defend Japan's imperialist expansion and gains as progressive. In the Sino-Japanese war, Japan had defeated China, but when the treaty of Simonoseki came in April 1895, Russia, supported by France and Germany, ganged up on Japan to force her to give up all annexations in China, though she did get the whole Liao-Tung peninsula. Here is Lenin's reference to this fact that Japan's burgeoning imperialism had been done out of its "rightful" spoils:

Progressive, advanced Asia has struck an irreparable blow against reactionary and backward Europe. Ten years before, this reactionary Europe, headed by Russia, was worrying about the defeat inflicted on China by young Japan, and it combined to snatch the finest fruits of its victory away from the victor. . . . The return of Port Arthur to Japan is a blow struck against all of reactionary Europe.

But this is not all: he dots the i's

and crosses the t's, in a passage defending the views expressed on the Russo-Japanese war by Jules Guesde and H. M. Hyndman.

6. GUESDE AND HYNDMAN

A French socialist monthly *Le Mouvement Socialiste*, had, in its March 1904 issue, carried a symposium on the war by a gallery of the most prominent Second International leaders of various countries. The general line expressed was that of support of Japan in the war in order to defeat Russia, especially by Guesde, the leader of the "orthodox-Marxist" wing (God save them!) of the French Socialist Party, and by H. M. Hyndman, leader of the Social-Democratic Federation in England.

The Russian S-R organ, *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya*, in its May 18 issue, had attacked these two. The S-R organ was, of course, strenuously against Russia's war, but it criticized Guesde and Hyndman for being *for Japan*. It rejected Guesde's injunction to be "against Russia and for Japan." It noted, quite truly, that "Hyndman's answer [in the symposium] is nothing but a dithyrambic eulogy of Japan." And it said:

We think the question . . . is posed in a radically false way. We are of the opinion that all socialists must and can be only for the working-class and people's Japan against the imperialist Japan.³⁴

Lenin comes to the defense of Guesde and Hyndman's pro-Japan position, and attacks the S-R criticism as "confused." After one of his formulations about distinguishing between a progressive and a reactionary bourgeoisie, he goes after the S-Rs:³⁵

. . . One understands therefore why the most determined and intransigent representatives of the international revolutionary social-democracy, Jules Gue-

side in France and Hyndman in England, have expressed without any circumlocution their sympathy for Japan, which is battering the Russian autocracy. Naturally there has been found among us, in Russia, socialists who show that they are confused in their ideas on these questions. The *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* has censured Jules Guesde and Hyndman, declaring that socialists could sympathize only with the Japan of the workers and people, not with bourgeois Japan. This censure is as absurd as if one censured a socialist for recognizing the progressive character of the free-trade bourgeoisie as compared with the conservative bourgeoisie. Guesde and Hyndman did not defend the Japanese bourgeoisie and its imperialism but, dealing with the conflict between the two bourgeois countries, they correctly noted the historically progressive role of one of them. The confusion in the ideas of the Socialist-Revolutionaries is naturally the inevitable result among our radical intellectuals of a lack of comprehension of the class point of view and of historical materialism.

This passage continues with an attack upon the Mensheviks, to be discussed later. In this passage Lenin, labeling the Mensheviks confused also, attacks their

. . . platitudes about the impropriety of "speculating" (!!) about the victory of the Japanese bourgeoisie and about the war which is a calamity "whatever may be" the result—victory or defeat—for the autocracy.

In his later article of April 5, he calls this "only sentimental phrases alien to the class point of view and to an analysis of the existing social forces."³⁶ The class point of view, it would seem, was represented by the policy of being for the victory of imperialist Japan, not by a policy which fought tsarism and its war but refused to become an advocate of Japan's military victory.

To get a close up of the views which Lenin was defending, let us see what Guesde and Hyndman had actually written. In fact, the entire symposium

in *Le Mouvement Socialiste*³⁷ gives a valuable insight into (a) the thinking of the Second International on the war question, in which the full-blown social-patriotism of 1914 can be seen in the bud, and (2) specifically, the meaning of defeatism in the Russo-Japanese war from the point of view not only of socialists but of the most prominent leaders of the socialist movement.

In the preceding issue of this magazine, M. Beer had painted the historical background as follows:

. . . in the course of the last 30 years, Japan has undergone a development diametrically opposite that of Russia.

In 1868 Japan abolished feudalism and founded the national state; the absolute monarchy was abolished in 1889, to give way to a constitutional government, which opened the way to a liberal development. During the same period, Russia set aside all the liberal measures taken around 1860, and about 1880 returned to the old Russian policy, to become, in 1890, an Asiatic cultural and political force.³⁸

In the symposium in the following issue,³⁹ Jules Guesde wrote:

In order to see which side, in the conflict which is reddening the Far East with blood, should receive the sympathies and best wishes not only of socialists but even of the most vulgar democrats, it is enough to examine the consequences (1) of the defeat, and (2) of the triumph of those who are improperly called "our allies" [i.e., France's allies—Russia]. . . .

If Russia is beaten, he argues, the Russian people would suffer no organic damage in losing Manchuria and Korea. As a necessary first step toward the social revolution, the backbone of European reaction must be broken.

So no hesitation is possible.

In the interests of and for the peace of France and the world; in the interests of and for the liberation of Russia itself, it is necessary to be against Russia and for Japan.

Long live Japan!

"Long live Japan!" cries this "intransigent representative of the international revolutionary social-democracy," but it is nothing compared with Hyndman's contribution. Hyndman does exactly what Lenin denies he does: whitewash Japanese imperialism. Wrote Hyndman:

What Japan is demanding is nothing less than reasonable. It is demanding, in effect, that Manchuria, which Russia seized without any scruples, be recognized as belonging again to the Chinese empire. . . . [Geography shows] the importance, for the future of Japan, of not leaving Manchuria any longer in Muscovite hands.

For Russia, the possession of this part of Chinese territory is assuredly one more step in its long career of annexation and expansion.

For Japan, it is nothing more nor less than a question of life or death.

All who, like us, recognize the Asians' right to work out their own destiny . . . all who, like us, consider that the extension of the infamies of the Russian régime in China . . . would be . . . harmful to humanity, all such must necessarily wish the triumph of the Japanese.

Forty years ago, Hyndman goes on to say, Japan was considered barbarous but today it combats "the black beast of Europe." One must "admire its progress and its policies" though they have great defects. In Japan "we have seen a display of patriotism in its most noble aspect." The assault by Japan on China was merely "the result of bad judgment," but now Japan is not only fighting for its own existence but also for the independence of China! "I hope it will be victorious, not only for our own cause, but for the consequences which will flow therefrom."

All socialists must aspire to see the exhaustion of Russia. If the Muscovite despotism is weakened either by a defeat or by a costly victory, we will see a new era open up for this great country and its neighbors.

He also hopes that the war will wake up China, and that China, "encouraged and enlightened by the example of the Japanese," will clean out the Russians, Germans, French and English.

Thus, Hyndman. One is tempted simply to assume that Lenin must have read this very important symposium (*Le Mouvement Socialiste* was an outstanding journal of the international socialist movement and Lenin was in Switzerland) and that he was not merely going by the S-R organ's quotations. Perhaps he did not actually get a full dose of it. In any case, if the S-Rs erred, it was only in the direction of mildness.

7. THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL

Let us continue with the articles in the symposium in order to get a fuller cross-section of social-democratic thinking on the Russo-Japanese War. Lenin was not alone; he was, alas, in the deep current.

The contributions by Kautsky and Franz Mehring were more circumspect. Kautsky says:

Never, in my opinion, has the problem been posed in terms so simple, and never has there been greater unanimity in international socialism, than on this question. The struggle against tsarism—that is the central point of the foreign policy of the socialist parties of all countries. . . .

But Kautsky does not take up an attitude on *Japan's* side of the war.*

Mehring's article is one of the vaguest. He makes the cloudy distinction that the revolutionary party can never have an interest for war, but it can

*But in 1907 at the Essen congress of the German Social-Democratic Party, August Bebel said in passing: "The Japanese were the aggressors beyond doubt; we rejoiced over that; we wished victory for them. . . ." His point at the moment was that socialists do not base their attitude on who is the aggressor; when he refers to socialist support of Japan's side of the war, he is obviously assuming it as being well known and beyond the need of discussion.

have an interest in certain wars. The nearest he gets to the moot point is in the statement that the working class is not indifferent to the question whether Russia or Japan will win; if Japan wins, tsarist despotism gets a mortal blow; if Russia triumphs, tsarism will be consolidated; etc.

Vandervelde wrote:

. . . One can state that, on this question, the socialist democracy is unanimous. It is with the Russian socialists and with the Japanese socialists when they denounce the capitalist influences which have unleashed the war; it has no more sympathy for the imperialism of the mikado than for the imperialism of the tsar; but, in view of the inevitable repercussions of the conflict on the international and external politics of Europe, it cannot fail to take sides and wish for the defeat of the more dangerous of the two adversaries, whose victory would constitute the most fearful menace for the militant proletariat.

And so from this point of view, hesitation is not possible: *tsarism, that is the enemy!*

Note that more than any of the others, more than Lenin too, Vandervelde "criticizes" the imperialism of Japan as well as the imperialism of the tsar; but only to introduce the plainest formulation of a "lesser evil" policy: we "wish for the defeat of the more dangerous of the two adversaries," i.e., we support the less dangerous imperialism against the more dangerous imperialism.

The editor of *Le Mouvement Socialiste*, André Morizet, sums up the symposium in the same vein, equally delighted in the "unanimity" of socialist opinion. The unanimity was an illusion; all were opposed to tsarism's war, but other political questions were glossed over. The International Socialist Bureau of the Second International limited itself to urging all socialist parties "to struggle with all their strength and combined efforts to prevent any extension of the war, so

that their countries, far from participating in it, will seek to re-establish and maintain peace."⁴⁰

How much was glossed over we see when we get to the position taken by the socialist party which forthrightly came out *against Japan in the war*. This was—the young Socialist Party of Japan itself, led by Sen Katayama. But before we quote Katayama, let us hear from one later contributor to the symposium, the leading figure among the Russian socialists, Plekhanov.

Plekhanov is very cautious. Writing in a later issue of *Le Mouvement Socialiste*,⁴¹ he says that he has little to add after the articles in the March issue. He does not ascribe the war to imperialism: war came, he explains, because tsarism wanted war for internal reasons, to counter revolutionary sentiment; that is all. He spends much space on the incompetence and stupidity of the Russian military leaders. He predicts more defeats for the autocracy, which will thereby be weakened; if tsarism falls or gets very much weaker, socialists would rejoice. . . .

There are two passing references to Japan:

. . . whereas in Japan the government and the nation are one, the socialist movement being only at its beginning, with us an abyss already exists between the rulers and all the best elements among the ruled. . . .

Who told him that in Japan "the government and the nation are one"? When he wrote this, he had already read a first article by Katayama on the anti-war position of the Japanese socialists, not to speak of Katayama's attacks on the anti-working-class policies of the mikado's regime generally. We can recall that Hyndman had seen in the Japanese people a "display of patriotism in its most noble aspect." No doubt this English Japanophile

would have denounced the Japanese socialists as "unpatriotic."

The second reference to Japan by Plekhanov is not due to him, but is very interesting. Plekhanov quotes at length two resolutions which had been adopted by social-democratic workers' groups in two Russian towns. Both express solidarity with the anti-war stand taken by the Japanese socialists against their own government; indeed the first says further that the war is "of benefit only to our governments and harmful to the working class without distinction of language or nationality." This occurs in the course of the quotation but Plekhanov does not comment on it or point to it.

The position taken by Sen Katayama was apparently partly based on pacifism and partly on a general feeling of class hostility to the mikado regime, not on any reasoned-out analysis of the war question. Indeed, in an article⁴² of his written just before the war broke out but when it was clearly on the way, he seems to whitewash the Japanese regime's policy even though he is opposed to war against Russia. The Japanese people (he says in this article) are indignant at the arrogant and unfriendly attitude of Russia, especially because Russia and its allies deprived Japan "of the fruits of our victories in the Sino-Japanese War." The attitude of the people is hostile to Russia. "Japan's policy with regard to Korea and China has always aimed at opening these countries to civilization and developing them along the lines of modern culture. Russia has always blocked these beneficent efforts of Japan." The principal cause of the war crisis is the fact that Russia has ignored its pledges to withdraw its troops from Manchuria. Among the people there is a peace-faction and a war-faction, but "The attitude of the

government is rather ambiguous; but it does not seem to want war. . . ."

Then, after all this, Katayama sets forth the anti-war views of the Japanese socialists. They are "opposed to war against Russia." The war would only be a war in the interests of capitalists, for whose profit thousands would die. "If Japan is beaten, we would have to pay a heavy war indemnity to Russia—we, that is, . . . the proletarian class. If we are victorious, the result does not seem bright for the workers." The workers got no benefits from the victory over China; they just had to pay new taxes to maintain the armed forces, and militarism intensified. "I myself do not believe that the occupation of Manchuria by Russia is a question of life or death for Japan. Very far from it: the Japanese workers have no vital interest in it."

He goes on to describe the oppressive character of the Japanese regime: conscription; militarism; police state; no laws to protect the working class; meetings broken up by police; the workers have no right to vote. He says he is sure that the great majority of the Japanese people are opposed to war with Russia, and the working class certainly is.

In a subsequent article⁴³ after the outbreak of war, he says more or less the same thing:

The position taken by the Japanese socialists in the present conflict with Russia has been very clear and very frank from the very beginning. They were and remain hostile to war, not only to the war with Russia but to all war in general . . . the protest of the Japanese socialists against the war has been courageous and energetic.

The Japanese party organized many anti-war meetings, very successful ones too. The government harassed them, and also suspended socialist publications.

8. THE MENSHEVIKS' POSITION

Was the Japanese Socialist Party alone in the Second International in specifically opposing the war by Japan? We have already mentioned the position taken by the S-R organ *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya*, which was the central organ of the S-R Party itself. In addition, the Menshevik party too rejected the pro-Japanese defeatist line.

The position of the Mensheviks leads us back to the views expressed by Lenin. We have already seen, quoted by Zinoviev, what the Menshevik leader Martov said about it in his later *History of the Russian Social-Democracy*. Zinoviev pretended that this was an ex-post-facto revision by Martov of the "defeatist" line which the Mensheviks too held during the war itself. He accused Martov of "obviously beclouding the issue . . . attempting to exculpate his revolutionary sins in the eyes of the bourgeoisie."

Were the Mensheviks really for defeatism during the war, and was Martov concealing this in his later *History*? It appears not. It seems to be a case of literary "Zinovievism" again.

We have already seen that Lenin not only criticized the S-Rs as "confused" on pro-Japanism but he linked this with an attack on the Mensheviks for the same sin. The reason is that the Menshevik organ had polemized against Lenin's article on "The Fall of Port Arthur," the article in which Lenin's pro-Japanese defeatism had blossomed. The Mensheviks had inveighed against "speculating on the victory of the Japanese bourgeoisie," and Lenin had ridiculed this caution as a "sentimental phrase."

A very interesting example of the Mensheviks' views on the war is afforded by a document which the editors of Lenin's *Collected Works*

quote, in a footnote, to explain Lenin's attack on them. This was a Menshevik statement, distributed as a leaflet and signed by the editors of *Iskra* (undated):

If Russia is victorious in the present war, the tsar and his accomplices will have won a victory over all of Russia, over the working class and likewise over the bourgeoisie. If Japan inflicts defeat on Russia, the bourgeoisie will have won over the imperial government, after which it will unite with it and both will turn their combined forces against the working class. Complete victory of Russia or defeat of Russia will have only disadvantages for the working class, although in truth no defeat can do more evil in Russia than is daily done to it by the existence of the autocracy. But the working class does not have to choose between the victory of democracy and the defeat of Russia. Although defeat is the lesser evil, it would, we have seen, bring enough calamities. What does the working class need, what result would be of advantage to it? First of all, it needs *the end of the war*. It needs *peace at any price*.⁴⁴

It is clear that this is a pronouncement "against both victory and defeat." The Mensheviks are trying to work out an anti-war position which will eschew the error of supporting Japan's victory. They are trying to get away from the alternatives of victory-or-defeat. We will later see how Trotsky and Luxemburg did this in the First World War, in a revolutionary Marxist fashion. But the Mensheviks are Mensheviks: they are not capable of doing so. (The anti-war Mensheviks of the First World War were to fall into the same pattern.)

In attempting to avoid the dilemma of victory-or-defeat, they fall into the slogan of "peace at any price." And Lenin tears them apart on this. He shows how a socialist cannot possibly be for "peace at any price"—peace, yes, but not peace *at any price*, as Lenin emphasizes at one point.

In Lenin's article⁴⁵ of April 5, his polemic against this slogan is especially vigorous. He notes with justified glee that the Menshevik *Iskra* had started backwatering in an editorial on March 16 which modified the position. "One cannot *limit oneself*," said the new Menshevik editorial, "to demanding peace because peace combined with the maintenance of the autocracy would mean the ruin of the country." That is very good, comments Lenin; one cannot in truth speak of peace *at any price* but only at the price of the overthrow of the autocracy.*

In other words: fight for peace, yes, but this fight for peace must be indissolubly linked with the continuation of the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the autocracy.

Furthermore (and here we are *not* paraphrasing Lenin): it is an error to call for the defeat of Russia by Japan; but it is an opposite error to make an entirely false estimate of the *objective* effect of military defeat on the tsarist regime and internal politics. The Menshevik analysis denied that the weakening of the autocracy by the war debacle would open up revolutionary opportunities for the working class and other enemies of tsarism. They drew no revolutionary perspective from the war.

The Menshevik conception of "neither victory nor defeat," then, was one of a return to the *status quo ante bellum*. They did not know how to avoid the dilemma of victory-or-defeat without falling into this centrist and

pacifist pattern, which flowed from their fundamental politics, not from their rejection of support to Japan.

But in polemizing against the Mensheviks on "peace at any price," Lenin writes as if a refutation of their position on this slogan was also, and automatically, a refutation of their position on pro-Japanism. And this is not true.

We note another interesting thing in the Menshevik statement quoted above. To anticipate a discussion which will arise when we get to the First World War period, we note that it contains a kind of "lesser evil" formulation: "Defeat is the lesser evil" as compared with tsarist victory, says the statement, though it refuses to *choose* the "lesser evil" by advocating the defeat of Russia by Japanese imperialism.

Let us grant that, in the tsarist despotism, and under the conditions of this tsarist despotism, defeat of tsarism is the lesser evil as compared with its victory. But the whole point is that a *recognition* of the existence of a greater and lesser evil does not necessarily obligate socialists to support the lesser against the greater. *We do not remain within the confines of the choice* between lesser and greater evil, as if these unequal evils were the only alternatives. We propose our own socialist alternative to the victory or defeat of either government by the other.

In this political sense, it is entirely possible to speak of defeat in a given war as being a "lesser evil" as compared with one's own government's victory *without thereby becoming "defeatists,"* since one puts forward a *third* road to take. But when we come to meet the "lesser evil" formulation in Lenin in September 1914, it will not be *this* approach that will be embodied in it. The 1905 Menshevik use

of the phrase "defeat is the lesser evil" is, therefore, by no means an anticipation or precursor of the same phrase in Lenin-1914, as might appear on the surface or out of context. The political idea is quite different. It is useful to have this example of the formulation that "defeat is the lesser evil" in the course of a position which dissociates it from defeatism.

9. THE "SPECIAL RUSSIAN" CHARACTER OF LENIN'S LINE

The key idea is that the socialist approach in such imperialist wars does not base itself on the perspective of a military decision between the imperialist contestants. But in the Russo-Japanese War, Lenin explicitly looked to an end of the war by the military power of one or the other government. Thus, writing on June 9, 1905 after the destruction of the tsar's fleet at Tsushima, Lenin, rejoicing over this crushing defeat, points out the significance of the event by writing: "Everybody understood that the definitive outcome of the war depended on the naval victory of one of the belligerents."⁴⁶

Lenin here writes "naval victory" because he wants to show that with the debacle of the fleet, the tsar is done for; but in passing, his methodological approach is made crystal-clear. The outcome of the war to which he looked was the "victory of one of the belligerents."

Finally, it is important to take note of another over-all aspect of Lenin's position on the Russo-Japanese War. At no time did Lenin generalize it into a "defeatism" as a matter of general socialist policy. It was a policy for *this* war, between *these* contenders, in *this* concrete situation. He never gave the idea of defeat the "principled" character which he and Zinoviev were to give it later in 1914-16. It obviously

could not be "internationalized." In no way could this defeat-concept be applied to any other country, except Russia or some other backward, semi-feudal reactionary despotism at war with a "progressive" capitalist state.

While this is obvious from the position itself, Lenin's argumentation brought it out from still another angle. This was his reiterated analysis that Russia's defeat was due to, and necessitated by, not merely the reactionary character of its war aims (imperialism, etc.), but by its rotten, outlived, un-modern, backward social structure as compared with "progressive" Japan—which, we must remember, may or may not have been "progressive" as compared with Russia but was hardly so in comparison with Western Europe.

Thus in his June 9 article, he wrote:

The autocracy . . . now faces the end it deserves. The war has revealed all its running sores, brought to light its whole rottenness, showed how it is divorced from the people. . . . The war has been an implacable judgment.⁴⁷

This he does at even greater length in "The Fall of Port Arthur":

[The autocracy's collapse in war is] a symptom of the collapse of our whole political system. . . . War is now made by peoples, and that is why one sees an essential characteristic of the war brought out in particularly bold relief: the manifestation in action . . . of the incompatibility of the people and the government. . . .

The fall of Port Arthur draws one of the greatest historic balance-sheets on the crimes of tsarism. . . . The military and civil bureaucracy has been revealed as being fully as venal and parasitic as in the days of serfdom. . . . The ignorance, lack of culture, illiteracy and extremely oppressed state of the peasant masses were manifested with terrible clarity in the conflict with a progressive people, in the course of a modern war which requires human material of high quality as imperiously as does contemporary technology. . . . Tsarism is re-

*The same notes by the editors of Lenin's *Collected Works* state that the slogan "peace at any price" was also at that time put forward by Trotsky in his pamphlet *Our Political Tasks*. They quote him as writing: "It is necessary to cover Russia with proclamations which are as clear, simple and short as possible, all of which must aim, in the present period of agitation, at the same goal: peace at any price." Without an independent check, it is impossible to take this at face value, given the falsifications of Trotsky's views that fill the Stalinist notes. The position of the Mensheviks is attested by Lenin's articles, not only by the notes.

vealed as an obstacle to modern organization, an obstacle to attaining the high level of present needs. . . . The connection between the military organization of the country and its whole economic and cultural structure has never been as close as at the present time. Therefore the collapse could not fail to be the beginning of a deep political crisis.⁴⁸

Lenin connected defeat with revolution, to be sure, but even more basically he connected defeat with the un-modern, precapitalist social structure of tsarism, the social divorcement between the despotism and the people—in comparison with which Japan was “modern,” “young,” “fresh,” and “progressive.” The historical basis of his defeatism was, therefore, the type

of situation which belonged to the youthful epoch of capitalism, which could not be carried over into the new imperialist era which had already begun. His position on the war was a case of “political lag” (on the analogy of the famous “cultural lag”): socialist theory had not yet caught up with political reality. More than anyone else, Lenin caught up with it in the First World War, but without throwing off all the remnants of the past which weighed on the socialist movement.

Hal DRAPER

(Next issue—Part II: “Revolutionary Defeatism” in the First World War, 1914-1916)

REFERENCE NOTES

CW stands for Lenin's *Collected Works* and refers to the English edition unless otherwise noted: it is followed by the volume number, book number if any (in the case of Vol. 20 and 21), and the page number. References to the Russian edition are to the second or third edition. The French edition was used for Vol. 7 only, and the German edition for Vol. 6 only.

Page references to *Gegen den Strom* (a collection of wartime articles by Lenin and Zinoviev), are of course to the German edition, but in point of fact all translations from the second half of this book were made from the French edition (*Contre le Courant*, v. 2).

Emphasis within all quotations follows the original; no italics added.

Grateful acknowledgments are due to four comrades for translating and checking passages from Russian and German: Jack Maxwell, Elizabeth Frank, Max Shachtman, and Gordon Haskell.

1. From articles by Trotsky and Radek published in *Current History* magazine for March 1924, translated from *Pravda*, there noted as “written shortly before Lenin's death.”

2. In Zinoviev's article “The Second International and the Problem of War—Are We Renouncing Our Heritage?”, pub. in *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Oct. 1916, collected in *Gegen den Strom*.

3. In Zinoviev's “‘Defeatism’ Then and Now.” Oct. 1916; in *Gegen den Strom*, p. 440-1. For this aspect of Guesde's views, see also Charles Rappoport: *Jean Jaurès, l'Homme, le Penseur, le Socialiste*, p. 371.

4. In his article “Russian Social-Democracy and Russian Social-Chauvinism,” pub. in *Kommunist*, Nos. 1-2, 1915; in *Gegen den Strom*, p. 243. Zinoviev quotes the passage from Engels very incompletely.

5. Here translated from the French edition of the Marx-Engels *Correspondance*, tome IX, p. 39.

6. For Marx and Engels' position on war against tsarism, see the collection *The Russian Menace to Europe* by Marx and Engels, ed. by Blackstock and Hoselitz, Free Press, 1952.

7. Quoted by Rosa Luxemburg in her “Junius” pamphlet, *The Crisis in the German Social-Democracy*, 1915.

8. In *The Crisis in the German Social-Democracy*.

9. Op. cit. (note 2).

10. Quoted by Shachtman in *NI*, June 1939, p. 181.

11. Op. cit. (note 2).

12. Marx-Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (International Pub.), p. 492.—See also letter to Bebel of Sept. 29, 1891, pp. 489-90.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 494.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

15. Op. cit. (note 3); in *Gegen den Strom*, pp. 441-2.

16. Translated into English serially in *The Workers Monthly*, Sept. and Oct. 1925 and following issues; but the whole book was not published here, the series ending before it got to 1914. Considering the great space which Zinoviev devotes to defeatism in the Russo-Japanese war, it is strange that his section on the World War does not mention the defeat-slogan at all (cf. the French edition, *Histoire du Parti Communiste Russe*, Paris, 1926).

17. Op. cit. (note 3); in *Gegen den Strom*, pp. 427-442.

18. *Workers Monthly*, Sept. 1925, p. 518.

19. Op. cit. (note 3); *Gegen den Strom*, p. 432.

20. *Workers Monthly*, Sept. 1925, p. 519.

21. *Ibid.*, Oct. 1925, p. 569-70.

22. Quoted in Dailin, *The Rise of Russia in Asia*.

23. Quoted in Pares, *A History of Russia*, p. 428.

24. Op. cit. (note 22), p. 79.

25. Quoted in G. Alexinsky, *Modern Russia*.

26. *Workers Monthly*, Oct. 1925, p. 570.

27. *Staline* (Leiden, 1935), p. 70.

28. Article, “The Revolutionary Movement in Russia,” by Almar and Jayare.

29. Op. cit. (note 27), p. 69.

29a. CW 6 (German ed.) pp. 449-53 for first, and pp. 461-2 (final draft p. 472) for second.

30. CW 7 (French ed.), pp. 45-6, “The Autocracy and the Proletariat.”

31. CW 7, pp. 58-66. “The Fall of Port Arthur,” from *Vperiod*, No. 2, Jan. 14, 1905.

32. CW 7, 205. “European Capital and the Autocracy,” from *Vperiod*, No. 13, April 5, 1905.

33. Op. cit. (note 31).

34. Quoted in editors' note to CW 7, 63.

35. Op. cit. (note 31).

36. Op. cit. (note 32).

37. The main body of the symposium was carried in

the March 1904 issue of *Le Mouvement Socialiste* (Paris). A second article by Sen Katayama followed in the April issue, and Plekhanov's contribution in the May issue.

38. *Ibid.*, February issue, p. 180.

39. *Ibid.*, March issue.

40. Quoted in the contribution by André Morizet, *March issue*.

41. *May issue*.

42. Included in the *March issue*; originally published

in *L'Aurore* of Jan. 11, 1904, i.e., before the war started. 43. *April issue*.

44. Quoted in editors' note to CW 7, 64; statement titled “Who Must Win?”

45. Op. cit. (note 32).

46. CW 7, 389, “The Debacle,” from *Proletarii*, No. 3, June 9, 1905.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 392.

48. Op. cit. (note 31), p. 61.

Bevanism During the War

The Background and Subtleties of Bevan's Approach

(The following article is from a chapter in a thesis on *The Origins of Bevanism* which the author, Donald Slaiman, has given us his kind permission to reprint. This chapter on *Bevanism during the war* will be concluded in the next issue—Ed.)

The march of the Labor Party, from utter defeat in 1931 to an overwhelming victory in 1945, was, in a sense, interrupted by the war. In another sense, the basis of its victory was laid during those years. On one hand, the period of the war marked the disintegration of the British Empire and the passing of the reign of Britain as a first class world power. On the other hand, it marked the emergence of the Labor Party as a major contestant for power on a permanent basis. It is true that the Labor Party was tied to the Government throughout the war, but opposition to policies of the Government did develop, and it was within the Labor Party that it found the nucleus of its growth.

The outbreak of the war created strong feelings for national unity and as a result, political and class conflicts were suspended at least on the surface. The war could be supported by the most ardent supporters of the Empire among the Conservatives, and by the most vigorous opponents of Fascism among the Socialists. There

were exceptions. A splinter of a pro-Nazi group and an equally small core of anti-war Marxists and pacifists existed. To these can be added, for the period of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the Communists and the “fellow travelers.” However, the Chamberlain Government did not receive the same measure of support as the war it led. It fact, it was held in such poor repute that the Labor Party would not dare enter the Government while it was in office.

Between the death of the “Popular Front” movement at the Labor Party Conference in May, 1939, and the birth of the war-time “Coalition Government,” there was a hiatus of a year. For Bevan and the amorphous left wing of the Labor Party, it was, in the main, a period of confusion, inactivity, and despair. For a time, Bevan was not only relatively inactive but sick as well.¹

The Hitler-Stalin Pact was a final blow. The Communists had been an active element in the “Unity Campaign” and the following “Popular Front” struggle. They had not only been the strongest ideological part of the movements, but had been the main bone of contention in the disputes of the left with the Labor Party leadership. On this score, the Party bureaucracy had been vindicated.

1. Jennie Lee, *This Great Journey*, p. 204.

The political scene at this time found the Communists almost totally discredited by the Hitler-Stalin Pact and the startling shifts of line by the British Communist Party. At the same time, the I.L.P. was becoming increasingly an isolated and dwindling splinter. The remnants of the Socialist League were not only in a state of despair and defeat but were atomized and left leaderless by the entry of Sir Stafford Cripps into the service of the Government. However, the political turmoil of the previous years had left a residue. There were in the labor movement large numbers of people who considered themselves part of an unaffiliated left. They were more than ever disillusioned with the Communists, antagonistic to the Tories, and distrustful of the leadership of the Labor Party. The I.L.P. had little attraction for them. Moreover, they had no clear direction or any degree of cohesiveness. The majority of them were in the Labor Party.

Bevan was one of the more prominent figures that fell in this shade of the political spectrum. It was this fairly large group of the population that he depended upon for support and to whom he made his appeal. One reason that he had an appeal for them was that he had no clear program of his own and was an eclectic thinker but he had, like most of them, a residue in his ideas that was carried over from political struggles of the past.

During the previous period, it has been noted that the leftward trend of the Socialist League had ended with the "Popular Front" campaign. This did not mean that all traces of leftism had been eradicated from Bevan's mind. The preeminence given to the fight against the Spanish Embargo and for the "Popular Front" did not erase Bevan's traditional thoughts on

domestic affairs. This explains why, at the time, the Communists subordinated everything to their foreign policy line and became the advocates of all measures to strengthen the "Democracies" militarily, Bevan retained his opposition to conscription. He also retained reservations in regard to the coming war in spite of his desires for strong action against Fascism.

Speaking on the conscription issue prior to the outbreak of the war in the House of Commons, he presented a clear explanation of his attitude toward the coming war. He began by stating,

I have never heard anyone in any Labour Party Conference or any Labour leader, industrial or political say that they would cooperate in the preparation for a war, the only purpose of which is the defense of British Colonial possessions. I have never heard it said by any responsible body of the Labour Party that we are prepared to make sacrifices and incur the risks for a repetition of 1914-1918.²

This reference to a more radical anti-war position of the past was only a prelude to a formulation for support to the war, but it was a unique formulation that had little in common with a conservative outlook. Rather it was one that would appeal to those of the amorphous left who would like to support the war and at the same time maintain an opposition to their old antagonists. He said,

The Government and Members of the Conservative Party will pardon me if I speak frankly. They have never been concerned about collective security and they have never been primarily concerned with the protection of democracy or British liberties because they have in the last two years connived at the destruction of two democratic states in Europe. But there is a common assumption between us that Fascism was a menace to their colonial wealth and to our liberties; that a new condition of affairs had arisen which distinguished the menace of Ger-

2. 346 H. C. Debates, 5s, p. 2133.

many from the menace of other powers, and that the difference is that it is not merely an attempt to a redistribution of the international swag but it is also a great movement injurious to the political ambitions of the party opposite and at the same time to the things that we hold precious.³

From the above, it can be seen that Bevan conceived of the coming war as one with a dual nature. In it the Labor Movement would be in alliance with the Conservatives, but they would be fighting for different reasons and for different goals. He conceived that there would be a struggle on two fronts. The alliance would be in effect on the international or war front but not on the domestic front. Even in the first, he granted no full confidence to his allies.

This conception of the war allowed for the continuation of the left's old struggle against the Chamberlain Government. It also allowed for the maintenance of ideas accumulated during Bevan's earlier leftward development. By this time, he was so much a part of the political movement that some distinctive line possessing a continuity with the past was necessary. This formulation did far more. It laid a basis for a continuous opposition to the Government which would maintain as its objective the return to power of the Labor Party after the war. Since the Labor Party leadership could not participate in this activity as it was part of the Government, it laid the basis of a new insurgency within the Labor Party whose objectives could be completely loyal. These goals, which entailed the strong partisanship of Labor's unique interests while advocating support of the war in a manner that was differentiated from that of the Government, were not open to charges of disloyalty as

3. Ibid. p. 2134.

were those of the "Popular Front" movement.

ALTHOUGH THE SOCIALIST League was dead and the movements that had been carried on by its ex-members were equally dead, the *Tribune* remained. It became the center for Bevan and a small number of M.P.s and intellectuals in the Labor Party. Its main political line at the time of the outbreak of the war was one carried over from the "Popular Front" period. This line could be summed up in the phrase "Chamberlain Must Go." Less than two months before the war had begun, Bevan speaking in the House said:

... Nothing will satisfy us except that the Government should resign and give way to a Government in which people could believe and to which the defense of democracy could be safely entrusted.⁴

This *Tribune* campaign was crowned with success not because of its own efforts primarily but because of events. The Nazi sweep through Holland brought the need for Labor participation in the Government. Labor's price was Chamberlain's ouster. Churchill took over in time for the fall of France and Dunkirk. With the assumption of the reins of power by Churchill, Labor entered the war cabinet. At first only two Labor men were in the small War Cabinet of five, Attlee and Greenwood; but others were added later. Bevin in 1940, Morrison in 1942, and even Cripps, though technically not reinstated in the Labor Party, played a leading role in the coalition.

Before we enter into the account of the development of political opposition to the War Government and the insurgency in the Labor Party, it seems necessary to present a complete picture of the *Tribune*. We will take up its origin, function, content, polit-

4. 346 H. C. Debates, 5s, p. 2140.

ical character and influence. For without a picture of the *Tribune*, it is impossible to understand the development of Bevanism.

The *Tribune* was founded in January, 1937, as an organ for the Socialist League. Upon the demise of that organization, it became the remaining link as well as the organ of expression for those M.P.s and Labor Party figures who supported Sir Stafford Cripps and the "Popular Front" movement. When he became an active figure in the Government after the outbreak of the war, a small number of his supporters gathered around the *Tribune* continued to grope for the formulation of policies which would enable them to rebuild a left-wing within the Labor Party in some manner similar to the defunct Socialist League.

Early in 1940, a new editor was obtained for the paper. He was Raymond Postgate, who remained as editor just under two years. When he resigned in December 1941, he wrote,

At the time I was invited to take over, the position was very grave . . . the main reason was that the then editor, in spite of the Board of Directors was pursuing a policy which was to all intents and purposes a Communist Party line.⁵

The problem, then, was not only the collapse of the Socialist League, the failure of the "Popular Front", and the departure of Cripps from the immediate scene, but one of ideological reorientation for the *Tribune* and therefore for Aneurin Bevan and his associates in the Labor Party and in the House of Commons.

From 1937 to 1940, the fundamental appeal of the *Tribune* was based on two conceptions of leftism. The first was according to the traditions

5. Raymond Postgate, "A Statement of Resignation," *Tribune*, December 19, 1941, p. 3.

of the I.L.P., in the sense of more militancy and more socialism. The second was in the sense of greater proximity to the Communists and had to do with the idea of the unity of all left forces. The *Tribune* almost broke its back when the latter conception became predominant. The reorientation period under the editorship of Postgate witnessed a reaction. He summed up the principles of the paper in 1941 as: "1. For the defeat of the Nazis. 2. Its controllers must be members of the British Labor Movement and not under suspicion however faint of being finally responsible to other influence. 3. For Socialism."⁶

This vague statement of principles indicated a swing towards an anti-Communist leftism but as yet with no clear direction. Upon Postgate's resignation, it was announced that Aneurin Bevan would become the Treasurer of the *Tribune*. The paper from this time until the end of the war carried the name of no individual as editor. Instead, there was an editorial board of three of which Bevan was one. He wrote many if not most of the unsigned editorials during the war period as well as many signed articles. It is safe to assume that Bevan devoted a substantial share of his activity to the running of the *Tribune* and the direction of its policy. It is conceivable that a more open role as main figure was not taken because of his position as an M.P.⁷

IT HAS BEEN NOTED in previous chapters that it was characteristic of Bevan when faced with a defeat no matter

6. *Ibid.*

7. During the debates on press censorship especially that of Beaverbrook's paper, Bevan had spoken of himself as the editor of a paper himself. He also has been accredited the authorship of a series of articles written under the pseudonym of Thomas Rainsboro which we will deal with a little further on.

how catastrophic to seek a new avenue of attack. This was as true in 1940 as in 1926, 1931, or 1933. Bevan's role had now crystalized into that of the leading figure of a political tendency within the Labor Party which had as its main assets merely a weekly newspaper and a handful of MPs, but a potential of becoming the center toward which the amorphous left of the Labor Movement could be attracted. It had a far greater potential too, that of providing the leadership for any dissatisfaction in the Labor Movement or in the country as a whole.

This potential was at least partially understood by the editors of the *Tribune*. In the same issue that carried Postgate's resignation, there appeared a statement of "beliefs and aims" the style of which indicates that it was written by Bevan. It introduces the next period for the *Tribune* as follows,

The *Tribune* is the organ of no political party and has no association or understanding with any party. It was launched four years ago by a number of people who desired a weekly devoted to the promotion of understanding between and among those who having "left political views" wanted them translated into appropriate action.⁸

Here we find not only a turn from the pro-Communist orientation of the past but a presentation that ignores the fact that it ever existed and an appeal to all left-wingers of the non-Communist variety. In spite of the statement that the *Tribune* had no relation with any political party, it was the organ of a kind of substitute for a party. It had a leadership or executive committee, a program which though vague was distinctive, and a specific line on all significant events of importance domestically or internationally. It had, moreover, a Parlia-

8. *Ibid.* p. 6.

mentary group and individual supporters in the Labor Party. There remained in existence, in other words, a sort of Socialist League with a *de facto* leadership but no cohesive body or membership.

Although a weekly paper with no organizational connections or backing, the *Tribune* was more than able to compete with any possible rivals for primacy among the amorphous left. This was not only true because the Communists were discredited and the I.L.P. isolated but because of the positive assets of the *Tribune*.

In the first place, there was a demand for a paper expressing left-wing sentiments within the framework of the Labor Movement. Such papers had existed in Britain for over half a century and had become traditional. From the days of *Justice* edited by Hyndman, *Commonweal* by William Morris, *Clarion* by Blatchford, and the *Labour Leader* by Keir Hardie in the 1880's and early 1890's, thousands of British socialists had subscribed to political weeklies which offered opinions to the left of those of the official leadership's. The *Labour Leader*, continued as the organ of the I.L.P., received a similar reception for years and had an influence far beyond the strength of the organization.

Next, the paper was well edited and interesting. It had as regular contributors not only capable writers such as George Orwell who had a regular column for years but people with national reputations such as Bevan, Cripps, Harold Laski, H. N. Brailsford, and Jennie Lee as well as a liberal sprinkling of Labor MPs. In addition the *Tribune* attracted to its columns contributions from a host of well known figures from the political and literary world. A listing of the famous names whose articles and letters appeared in the *Tribune* during the

war would take far too much space but I will list a few of them to indicate the interest that the paper could have and its standing and importance in the Labor Movement.

From 1941 to 1945, one could find in the *Tribune* articles or letters from G. B. Shaw, H. G. Wells, G. D. H. Cole, Maragret Cole, Ignazio Silone, Arthur Koestler, Louis Fischer, Michael Straight, the present editor of the *New Republic*, Sir Robert Acland, the founder of the Commonwealth Party, John Strachey, Morgan Phillips, the National Secretary of the Labor Party, and many MPs not associated with the *Tribune*.

While the *Tribune* always had a definite policy of its own on most issues, it contained a large variety of opinions from its various contributors, and in fact lent itself to the role of being a forum for many unorganized points of view in the Labor and Socialist Movements. All in all, it was a lively, interesting, and informative paper, especially for British socialists of almost any political shading.

However, none of the above assets accounted primarily for the growth in the influence of the *Tribune*. It was rather the activities of Bevan and his associates in the House of Commons and in the Labor Party that attracted great support to the paper. These activities had their origin in mass desires created by the inevitable disintegration of national unity and the reemergence of the political struggle between Labor and the Tories. This was something that did not happen overnight but took place over a long period of time and entailed a process of development. In the background was the chronic appearance of the class struggle and many incidental discontents from various segments of the population. It was not that the *Tribune* initiated these desires or started

or even organized any movements. What did happen was that Bevan and his supporters played a leading role at the right time in political movements that did develop.

IT HAS BEEN NOTED that the outbreak of the war brought a suspension of class and political conflicts. The form that this took was an electoral truce concluded in 1939 among the three major parties. The essence of this agreement was that there would be no national election until the war was over and that in the case of the necessity of a by-election, the party that previously held the seat would be able to nominate a candidate unopposed by either of the other two major parties. The purpose was to prevent vigorous political controversy in the country during the war. The effect was to freeze the political *status quo* in parliamentary strength. While originally this was not meant to create a complete political truce, the accession of Churchill and the formation of a coalition government created one for all practical purposes (that is except for back bench opposition).

There had been strong feeling against the truce from the beginning within the ranks of the Labor Party. There were many reasons for this opposition. The poor standing of the Chamberlain Government was the main reason for the initial resistance to the truce. While this was partially wiped out when Churchill came to power, there remained many other factors that created anti-truce sentiment. In the first place, many of the secondary leaders of the Labor Party felt that the political *status quo* did not accurately measure the Party's actual strength in the country. They felt that they were being deprived of seats and posts that they could obtain if the truce did not exist. These secondary

leaders were among the most active and vocal members of the Party. Among the rank and file this feeling was echoed for other reasons. There was dissatisfaction with the concessions wrung from the Government by the Party leaders inside the cabinet. There was a demand for more open opposition to Tory policies as a means of improving the workers' lot during the war.

Among the more conscious and vocal elements in the Party, there were further reasons for the desire for some political warfare. They wanted to express to the country various criticisms of the Government's policies on many scores. Some were for merely ending the electoral truce. Some were for ending the coalition itself. Others had no clear aims but had vague opposition views. The *Tribune* catered to all of them, but concretely was toward the center of the political spectrum. If it was extremely radical in tone, it was stationed toward the right of the amorphous left-wing when it came to concrete proposals. The *Tribune* group was made up of practical politicians.

The entry of Labor into the Coalition Cabinet had for a time muted the opposition to the truce, but it had another effect as well. It created for different reasons a situation similar to that of 1931 as far as Bevan was concerned. At that time, his importance increased because of the fact that the number of Labor MPs was so sharply reduced. In 1940, a new vacuum was created not by the absence of a large number of Labor MPs but by the fact that the Labor Party had relinquished the role of being an opposition in the House. It was this new vacuum that Bevan began to fill from the back benches. It was at this time, too, that the Bevan that was known to the American press was born. After

more than a decade in Parliament and after many developments and some catastrophic defeats, Bevan moved onto the center of the stage. It was a stage blacked-out with a spotlight on Churchill, but Bevan walked into that spotlight and attracted some attention to himself.

Although he supported the war, Bevan had available a wide field for criticism of the government conducting it. He could criticize the conduct of the war on grounds of being not vigorous enough, on grounds of mistaken policy and on grounds of poor personnel at the helm. He could also criticize the home front. The question of equality of sacrifice existed in Britain as well as anywhere else, and there were criticisms in regard to the organization of the country's resources to be made. The limitations of civil liberties due to war time exigencies was another difficult problem for the government and an opportunity for censure by Bevan.

His last attack on the Chamberlain Government consisted of a criticism of the organization of the country's resources for the war. In a speech on the budget a few weeks before Chamberlain resigned, he said:

... but we are entitled to ask why after eight months of war and eighteen months of active preparation, there remains such a very large proportion of unexploited resources in the country. . . .⁹

... it is a bad business indeed that we should have a budget after eight months of war which discloses so appalling a failure to organize the whole resources of the country.¹⁰

Churchill came to power in May, 1940. On May 30, Bevan employed a debate on export trade to interject his political view toward the coalition:

The personnel has been improved enormously. But the main case we had against the other Government was not merely that they were a poor lot them-

9. 380 H.C. Deb., 5s, p. 461.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 468.

selves but that they were adopting a poor policy. I would rather have a bad man with a good policy than a good man with a bad policy. Many of my Hon. Friends have crossed the Floor, but that is no good to us unless their principles have crossed with them. We do not want the principles of those on the opposite side to cross over to here.¹¹

It can be seen from this that Bevan does not oppose the idea of the coalition nor does he deny its necessity but he does show a distrust of what may result from it. He expresses vague fears and offers himself as a watchdog to see that Labor is not sold down the river by its own leaders. Earlier in the session, he had made it clear that in spite of the fact that Labor was in the cabinet, an opposition would nevertheless exist in the House. He did not wait long before criticizing the government. Directing himself to the Front Bench, he said:

We shall need to put forth immense exertion and energy if we are to win, as win we shall, but we shall not win if we do not put forth that energy. It is no use when talking about the disasters which have befallen us to say that we had disasters in the last war and yet we won, as though disaster points the blueprint of victory. Disaster was never a blueprint of victory.¹²

Bevan did not limit himself to heckling in his speech. He not only found that the government needed to be criticized but that there was need of a fundamental change in its direction of war mobilization. While performing the function of an opposition in the House, he offered a program to effect this change. It was basically to rally the British people by introducing equality of sacrifice among the various classes of the population. To Bevan this meant to begin the introduction of socialist measures during the

war. Thus the continuance of the fight for socialism was identified with victory in the war and therefore victory was associated with Labor hegemony. In this he posed not as a doctrinaire socialist but as a practical politician looking out for the country as a whole. Still addressing the Front Bench, he said:

Why not cut through to the people by bold action? The Government have the power, and I am certain that the people outside . . . will not tolerate seeing the utilization of our coal resources handicapped through the failure of the Government to use the power which has been given to them. The Government are using the power against Labor, and we expect it to be used against property, but we shall not expect it to be used against property merely because it is desirable to nationalize property. They should consider the matter empirically. They should bring under state ownership at once those basic industries which produce a standardized product and can be easily organized and discuss compensation to be paid after the war is over.¹⁴

It was not only domestically that Bevan found the need of social action for the winning of the war. In the international arena, he argues, a program with a socialist content is even more important. In the fall of 1940, he said the following while discussing war aims:

This is the moment that our war aims should be stated, and this is the moment when they should be declared. I know that the Prime Minister would tell me that he would like to win the war first. The essence of the matter is that we can only win victory if we inspire the people by having the right aims. It is not enough to offer the people of Belgium, and France, and other countries merely the defense of democracy against Nazi dictatorship, because they recognize that after all it was that sort of democracy that brought Europe to war. If we are to persuade and inspire them with the defense of democracy, the conception of democracy has to be fitted to

modern needs. We have to fill it up with a social content.¹⁵

In a sense here, Bevan was anticipating the "Four Freedoms" although it seems clear that he was demanding more of a program than was to be offered by Roosevelt and Churchill. In reality, Bevan was not making demands on the government as yet but propagandizing a program which telescoped two tasks into one, that of winning the war and continuing the struggle against the capitalist *status quo* in Britain. From the above two

quotations we can infer the outline of a political program which would appeal to a large number of people. It consisted of two main sections. The first had to do with the home front and consisted of demands for equality of sacrifice and the protection of civil liberties. The second concerned itself with the international scene and envisioned a social war against Hitler based on war aims which would have some sort of goal for the post-war world of a socialist nature.

Donald SLAIMAN

Lord Acton and Political Power

English Historian's Concept of Freedom and Power

For Lord Acton, the late 19th Century English historian, freedom was the sense and purpose, the grand design of history. Accordingly, the great work he proposed for himself was a History of Liberty. Yet some secret paralysis sapped his energies and blocked his will. In the end, the book was never written. All that remained of this ambitious project were some essays and voluminous notes that point to a profound conflict in Acton's thinking.

The current energetic attempts to rescue Acton from obscurity rest their case on his life-long preoccupation with the problem of political power. For Acton, the unlimited accretion of political power in the hands of the state is the source of all public, and ultimately, private evil. It is, to use the language of Acton's religion, the original sin of politics. Hence his well-known and much-abused aphorism, "power tends to corrupt, absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely."

Acton's whole passion is to limit the state power. And for that reason he early looked upon democracy and socialism as unmitigated twin evils. Democracy, he would write, was the "true government of brute force" because power increases as the number of those who wield it increases, and therefore, the most irresistible authority, the greatest tyranny is that of a majority over a minority. As for Socialism, with its doctrine of equality, it was the "worst enemy of freedom."

What the young Acton had affirmed, the older Acton was to deny. Another and later Acton would say that democracy means "Liberty given to the mass. Where there is no powerful democracy, freedom does not reign." And as for socialism, he would refer to that eminent Liberal Victorian politician, Gladstone, as a "socialist of the chair, and recommend to him the reading of the first volume of Marx's "Das Kapital." Clearly, Acton's thinking underwent a strange change.

If the absolutism of the state was an

11. 361 H. C. Deb., 5s, p. 725.

12. 361 H.C. Deb., 5s, pp. 31-32.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 726.

14. 361 H.C. Deb., 5s, p. 728.

15. 365 H.C. Deb., 5s, p. 346.

unqualified evil, freedom was the ideal good. And while Acton's notion of freedom remains fixed in form, its substance changes. It is here that any interpretation of Acton begins, if it is to explain his inability to complete his life's work. In tracing the change we shall be able to weigh his relevance for our time and see if his present-day enthusiasts are justified in crowning him with the mantle of the prophet. For no lesser claim is made than that Acton saw wide and deep, grasping the intimate connection between democracy, socialism, the worship of the state, and that monstrous off-spring of our times, totalitarianism.

The early Acton, as passionate in his love for liberty as the later, is an embarrassment to his disciples. He is a Tory of Tories (although he insisted this was true Liberalism), violently opposed to democracy and its appendage of universal suffrage, the centralized state—always tending to merge executive, legislative and judicial powers, and the doctrine of nationalism. At this stage in his thinking, Acton flatly declares "Democracy is government of the strongest, just as military despotism is. This is the bond of connection between the two. They are the brutal forms of government and as strength and authority go together, necessarily arbitrary."

His true master in this period is the Edmund Burke who preached a holy war against the French Revolution. It was Burke who thought he divined the inescapable connection between democracy and despotism. The disorder attending on the rule of the subversive many must give way to the despotism of the one. The revolutionary mob gives way to Napoleon. And where Burke had the Great French Revolution as text,

the young Acton, coming to manhood in the 60's of the 19th century, could point to the revolutions of 1848. Most particularly to the French revolution of that same year, which had begun with democratic and socialist slogans and ended three years later in the plebiscitary dictatorship of Napoleon III.

At this point in his thinking, Acton's profound hostility and distrust of the masses was not limited to political questions alone. In the early sixties he could write that those in want through no fault of their own have a claim on the state, but at the same time he was suspicious of public works to relieve unemployment as likely to increase the power and possible tyranny of the state! And in his opinion, strikes were illegal and coercive. The issue between capital and labor must be decided by the normal operations of supply and demand.

The deep embarrassment felt by some of his admirers with the young Acton lies not so much in his abstract prescriptions as in their application to the great events of his day. How is one to justify the fact that Acton warmly advocated the cause of the Southern Slavocracy in the American Civil War and hotly chastized the North for its barbarous disruption of the sacred federal union?

There are those among Acton's admirer's* who argue that his error in judgment is due to an insufficiency of fact and acquaintance with conditions in the United States. But of all defenses, this is most feeble, since no other writer in England, with the exception of Marx, had a better grasp of the facts and social conditions underlying the conflict. At all stages of Acton's career one of his most attrac-

*Will Herberg in the *New Leader* of June 29, 1953.

tive sides is his insistence on knowing all the facts relevant to a problem. The truth is, of course, that Acton was sternly applying his criteria of the conditions necessary to freedom. Not the facts but the criteria are wrong.

In the first instance, Acton was not then opposed to Slavery. (Later he would change his mind.) He argued that "slavery is not hostile to Christianity in abstract" and therefore is not immoral. However, his defense rested on other grounds since he was willing to concede the desirability of eliminating slavery. But this, he argued, should be done slowly, without disrupting the social fabric, by a process of accommodation.

What he is arguing against is the appeal of the Abolitionists to an abstract principle. He says of them, "Their democratic system poisons everything it touches. All constitutional questions are referred to the one fundamental principal of popular sovereignty, without consideration of policy or expediency. The influence of these habits of abstract reasoning to which we owe the revolution in Europe, is to make all things questions of principle and of abstract law."

Just as damaging as the appeal to abstract principle and popular sovereignty, in Acton's opinion, was the destruction of federalism and the subjection of the Southern States to the authority of the national government. Acton considered America's immortal contribution to political science to be the principal of "states rights", which "limits the central government by the powers reserved, and the state governments by the powers they have ceded." This acts as "the true natural check on absolute democracy."

Acton therefore believed the South was defending liberalism, the princi-

pal of freedom which involves a division of power; the North, on the other hand, was attempting to impose a popular despotism, the tyrannical centralized authority of the national government. Be it noted that all his life Acton held to his belief in the principle of federalism as an effective curb on political absolutism.

THE READER MAY WELL ASK why one should revive writings of so shallow and reactionary a nature. To defend slavery, to emphasize a political form at the expense of the social substance, to show complete incomprehension of the irrepressible conflict between two antagonistic social systems is not exactly the mark of a profound thinker. But the point is that Acton's thinking did change. The conflict between reality and his ideal norm drove him toward a point of view that did connect political form and social content to a degree, which did investigate the social conditions that nourish the tender plant of freedom.

Men do not change their thinking in the abstract. In Acton's case the revolution was to be a product of multiple causes. In the first place stood his clash with the Catholic Church; in the second, the success of English Liberalism as a political alliance between the industrial middle-class and working-class which had renounced the revolutionary agitations of Chartism. The products of this alliance were a series of important political and social reforms; and, in the third place stood Acton's austere notion of history as an independent science. For Acton history was a form of revelation and not an apologia for vested interests who had offended against the idea of Freedom. And for this he deserves much honor.

Acton's definition of Liberty begins

with religious toleration. This was no accident. As a member of England's Catholic Minority he had personally suffered from the disabilities which deprived Catholics of their full rights as English citizens. Though Acton came from an aristocratic family, he had been forced to go abroad for his degree after being rejected by three English colleges. Their doors were still officially closed to Catholics.

Freedom, says Acton, truly begins when political and religious obligations are severed and the latter become a private concern, a matter of conscience. The essence of despotism, whether in the form of absolute monarchy or the secular tyranny of the democratic state, is to exempt nothing from its rule, including religious belief. The truly Christian State, the "free" state is the exact opposite since it obeys the precept "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, to God the things that are God's."

Having established his premise, the young Catholic Acton proceeds to a paradox. England, with all its imperfections and despite its apostasy, is a free and Catholic state. State power is not absolute and religious belief is a matter of conscience. On the other hand, the Catholic Monarchies of the Continent are least Catholic in spirit since the Church has subordinated itself to absolutism.

Unfortunately, Acton had reckoned without the Papacy in this as in other questions. Under the blows of 19th century democracy, nationalism and science, the Papacy was in full and dogmatic retreat on all fronts, temporal and spiritual. And the greater the defeats, the greater the submission it demanded from its subjects. Acton was brought into head-on collision with the Catholic Church by the

promulgation of a series of Dogmas, the most important being: the Immaculate Birth of Mary; the Syllabus of Errors, which in 80 propositions condemned everything modern including the notion of religious tolerance, the secular state, progress, Liberalism, science and everything else remotely connected with modern civilization; And the greatest blow of all, the Dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope.

Since he was opposed to arbitrary and unwarranted power in the state, consistency drove Acton to oppose it in his Church. And Acton's quarrel with the Papacy was not merely that the doctrine of Infallibility, for example, had no warrant in the traditions of the Church, but that the Council which confirmed Pope Pius IX in his new powers was handpicked, coerced and bribed into submitting in a manner of which an American political boss could have been proud.

Acton never formally broke with the Catholic Church on the issue of Infallibility, as some of his friends did. And one may wonder at this inflexible moralist and enemy of the absolute. But his quarrel with her left an indelible and deep stamp on his thinking. In his youth he had written an extraordinary and thoroughly false defense of the Catholic Inquisition on the ground, that unlike the Protestant Inquisitions, the former had never molested those of other faiths for mere belief. In his mature years he was to denounce the Catholic Inquisitions and the Church in the most bitter and violent terms. He was to write that the Papacy contrived murder and massacred on the largest and also the most cruel and inhuman scale. They were not only assassins, but they made the principle of assassination a law of the Christian Church and a condition of salvation.

The Papacy was the "fiend skulking behind the Crucifix." The enemies of Liberty had begun to appear in the most unexpected of places.

In his revolt against Papal abuse of authority, Acton was to finally write that a "Liberal is . . . essentially secular. He grounds himself, not indeed against the lower types of clergy, but against the priesthood of the great Churches." The formulation had its uses in illuminating the history of religious liberty and its connection with political freedom.

In his *Lectures on Modern History*, Acton would declare of the Puritans, the Independents who had made the Revolution of 1640-1660, that their "Church was governed not by the State or by bishops or by the presbytery, but by the multitude of which it was composed. It was the ideal of local self-government and of democracy." Acton then draws the political self-government and of democracy reached far. The supremacy of the people, being accepted in Church government, could not be repudiated in the State. . . . They inclined not only to liberty, but to equality, and rejected the authority of the past and the control of the living by the dead."

The separation of church and state was the triumph of conscience. But historically it had gone hand in hand with the struggle for political democracy. The young Acton had accepted the first proposition, and his experiences with the Catholic Church reinforced it. He still rejected the second. In 1867 he argued that liberty depended on inequality, and inequality implied a propertied aristocracy.

An aristocracy could be trusted to check a monarch and limit his power; a condition that allowed for religious tolerance. And at the same time this

division of power left room for the assimilation of social change in orderly fashion. English history was Acton's text here too. "The Glorious Revolution" of 1688 had brought about just such a peaceful settlement. It also installed in power an aristocratic party based on the principle of liberty and the practice of compromise. This party, to whose philosophy the young Acton so fiercely subscribed, the party of Edmund Burke, had entered English history under the name of the Whigs.

Acton discovered, however, that he was living not in the 18th, but the 19th century. The Whigs of the 19th Century had forgotten the principle of liberty and remembered only the practice of rotten compromise. Acton looked at industrialized England and was shocked. The gulf between rich and poor grew with every increase in the country's wealth. Just as spiritual authority had offended against the spirit of liberty, so now did the aristocratic wielders of political authority, the representatives of property.

A Christian impulse to relieve the sufferings of the poor turned Acton's mind to this problem. But Liberty, he saw, demanded it as well. Where poverty and ignorance existed, liberty was jeopardized. To correct the abuses of property, it was necessary that capital share—not abdicate—its political supremacy with labor. Democracy had become indispensable for liberty.

Acton became a convert to the party of middle-class reform, the party of Liberalism, and a close friend of its supreme representative, Gladstone. To be sure, Acton's doubts about democracy never vanished completely, but he saw the circle of political rights widen to include the masses and produce no revolutionary up-

heavals, no movement subversive of society and religion. The masses were capable of participating in politics in a responsible way.

HAVING DRAWN THE CONNECTION between religion and politics, Acton now drew the connection between politics and economics. He read everything the century had to offer. He read Marx, he read Engels, in fact, all the schools of socialism. And he wrote of the German "Socialists of the Chair," that they "are proceeding to construe history, making property and the social conditions the determining factor, above the acts of government or the changes of opinion; and this is by many degrees the most important addition made of late years to historical science."

Acton knew the Socialist ideas we connect with the names of Marx and Engels and rejected them. Obsessed with the fear of a too-powerful state, of a violent rupture in the social fabric, he could note the powerful logic of the Socialist argument and conclude "Socialism can only be realized by a tremendous despotism."

Acton's vision was never to go beyond the limit of middle-class reform, of which his politically supple friend, Gladstone, was the exponent. The early Acton who had feared the despotism of the masses in power, had retreated. In his place stood the Liberal, who no longer stood resolutely opposed to democracy and in essence accepted the dream of steady progress. The Idea of Liberty was in the dominant. On the world's agenda, he noted, stood three principal items: Peace, Socialism and Education.

The Acton who is truly of interest is the historian, with his face turned to the past. For this Acton, the problems of social crisis and revolution lie

not in the future but the past. Liberty abhorred violence and yet it seemed its cause had been advanced by revolution. A judgment had to be passed on the American and French Revolutions.

Acton had earlier denounced the French Revolution as the most harmful event of modern times. He had taken the English settlement of 1688 as his model of social change, since it conformed to the principle of history and continuity. But the history of his own time revealed to Acton that the method of compromise was apt to turn rotten. The Party of Burke, the Whigs who had effected the "peaceful revolution" of 1688 had betrayed the principle of Liberty. It had compromised on slavery, the extension of suffrage and religious toleration.

With time Acton began to turn more and more to the American Revolution as the incarnation of Liberty. Yet this new society, which had solved the problem of religious and civil liberty in radical form, had been the product of a subversive movement.

In the end Acton made a decisive judgment. He said, "We have to make up our minds to a breach of continuity." Acton's high opinion of the American Revolution is worth quoting: "On this principle of subversion (unconditional devotion to the idea of Liberty—A. S.) they erected their commonwealth, and by its virtue lifted the world out of its orbit and assigned a new course to history. Here or nowhere we have the broken chain, the rejected past, precedent and statute superseded by unwritten law, sons wiser than their fathers, ideas rooted in the future, reason cutting as clean as Atropos."

Yet the virtues Acton granted the American, he never gave the French Revolution. Even though in basic con-

tent and aim, as he well understood, they were alike, branches from the same tree.

The reason is not far to seek. In America, the revolutionary wave of 1776 gave way to the conservative ebb-tide of 1789. In France the conservative revolution of 1789 was inundated by the terror of 1793. Moreover, in France a new and terrible *dramatis persona* had for the first time stepped forth on the stage of history—the revolutionary masses. Acton is unerring in tracing the historical line of descent and notes "Socialism is not a product of our age, though only now terrible. . . . Only the French Revolution made it formidable. . . . Development of the proletariat by the French Revolution. Labor is the whole of society. . . . The established order overturned—questioned—exposed. In nothing so absurd as in the promotion of poverty."

In her biography of Lord Acton, Gertrude Himmelfarb devotes a considerable section to Acton's irresolution and ambiguity in judging the French Revolution. As she makes abundantly clear, Acton saw all the reasons which compelled the revolution to apply the stern expedient of terror. Still, Acton shrinks back from the Terror, the worship of abstract reason, unlimited democracy and the doctrine of equality.

Acton wanted too much: revolution and reform; the "breach of continuity" and respect for history; stern adherence to the principle of liberty as well as the practice of compromise. He was to observe wryly, "The triumph of the Revolutionist annuls the historian."

The contradiction appears in another form. As absolute moralist, Acton passed a severe judgment on that school of history which forgives the crimes of the past by recording them

in "neutral and objective" manner; that explains and thereby condones the foul deeds of those who have governed.

Acton deserves the highest praise for his exposure of immoral "objectivity." But his standard caused him the greatest confusion. The sanctity of human life was the minimum standard by which to judge history. Yet in the next breath Acton could assert that this principle could be violated for the sake of freedom. The confusion was complete and paralysis of judgment its product. The History of Liberty would never be written.

All of this is subject matter for the student of history and psychology. But in what sense is Acton's confusion relevant to our time? The early Acton is not to be taken seriously as a political philosopher except by reactionaries. The later Acton has overcome his total dread of democracy, enough to say "democracy is that which divides us least." History has not borne Acton out.

Certainly he stands no higher on the plane of political prescription than John Stuart Mills, let us say, who progressed from the dreary doctrines of Manchester and Bentham to a generous concept of social reform and an ethical acceptance of Socialism. Mills, too, had a tender regard for the rights of minorities against the tyranny of the majority and proposed safeguards that are formally no whit inferior and quite similar to those Acton devised: proportional representation, a bi-cameral system, and a free press. And he is morally superior to Acton in one respect—his support of woman suffrage: One half of humanity was excluded from the circle of liberty by its historian.

Acton is poverty stricken as a political realist. Witness his lifelong de-

votion to the principle of federalism, which seduced him into supporting the American Slavocracy and hymning the praise of the rotting Austro-Hungary empire. If we apply Acton's sacred principle to our time we get some curious results. For the banner which reaction has raised in the United States bears the inscription of "state's rights!"

Acton's visions of the future are no more impressive than his trivial contributions to the art of politics. The work of his later years is benign in its anticipations of things to come. He says, ". . . we have no thread through the enormous intricacy and complexity of modern politics except the idea of progress toward more perfect and assured freedom and the divine rights of free men."

To link Acton's name with Hegel's seems strange, since their attitudes toward the state clash head-on. Yet, both view God working through history toward the goal of liberty. Certainly, Acton rejected, if he ever entertained the notion that the entire system of capitalism would grow rotten and begin to choke society. If there is a sense of foreboding it is in his religious notion of man's corruptible nature which is dialectically counter-posed to man's upward struggle to freedom.

Acton did not sense the direction and shape society was to take and the problems it would present. He did not see that the state was to grow tremendously, simply to maintain a balance between classes in a rapidly expanding society; he did not envision the even more important fact that the power of the state would grow by leaps and bounds at the expense of society because the social equilibrium would tend toward permanent disruption as the general rule.

What would Acton have said to the real alternatives of our time? That either the workers, at the head of the other exploited classes, would reconstitute society on a democratic and socialist basis, by taking political power, ousting an outlived ruling class, reorganizing the state and abolishing private property; or, as in Germany, Italy and Spain, the bourgeoisie would seize the state, overthrow democracy and subject society to total and barbarous slavery; or, if neither of these two classes proved capable of solving the crisis, a decaying society would take a third road—that shown by bureaucratic totalitarianism in Russia. A new social class would rise and rule, bred by the domination of the state over a paralyzed society.

The alternative solutions point in diametrically opposite directions—either Barbarism or Socialism. But they share one trait in common: The crisis can only be solved through the state. This alone invests the latter with enormous powers for good as well as evil. Yet Acton preaches the inherent evil of state power. Could anything be more irrelevant to our time? Both his politics and history end in paralysis of the will.

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

Moscow Under Lenin

"It is a paradox of our time," Camus writes in his preface, "that I should have to introduce Rosmer today whereas the contrary would be more decent." To us Rosmer's credentials should be well known in any event: revolutionary syndicalist before World War I, internationalist during the war, rallied to the Russian Revolution in 1917, participated in the second, third and fourth congress of the Comintern, member of the executive committee of the Comintern from June 1920 to June 1921 and of its bureau since the Congress of Tours; Lozovsky's collaborator and co-founder of the Red Trade-Union International; member of the Comintern delegation to the Congress of the three Internationals in Berlin and to the fusion congress of the 2nd and Vienna (2½) Internationals; in the French CP, member of the Executive Committee, the Political Bureau and the Directing Committee of *L'Humanité* from 1923 to March 1924; took sides with the Left Opposition in the struggle against the bureaucracy, participated in the French Trotskyist movement, later joined the group around *La Révolution Prolétarienne* where he is today, defending an independent, third-camp revolutionary position.

"He has now written a very necessary and timely book*. It is necessary because few living records subsist of the first years following the Russian Revolution, the 'origins of communism.' There is, of course, John Reed's *Ten Days* and Arthur Ransome's *Six Weeks in Russia* published in 1919, but they are more limited in their scope. The period covered by this book extends from 1920 to Lenin's death in 1924—decisive years for the Russian Revolution and for the fate of the World Revolution. Rosmer describes the congresses of the Comintern and of the Red Trade-Union International at which he was present; also episodes from the civil war, Kronstadt, the Workers' Opposition, the trial of the SR's, the origins of the French and the Italian

*Alfred Rosmer—MOSCOU SOUS LENINE—Les origines du communisme.—316 pages. Preface by Albert Camus.—Editions Pierre Horay, Paris, 1953. 600 frs.

CP; the discussion on the trade-union question in 1921, the war against Poland, the NEP, Genoa, Rapallo, the occupation of the Ruhr, the collapse of the German revolution in 1923, Lenin's death. Through the sober descriptions clearly appear the immense hopes of these years, the intense participation of all in the shaping of policy, the democratic, informal habits, the honesty and sincerity of what was then the communist movement, the revolutionary passion. Also the insane fear and hatred of the bourgeoisie, especially of the French bourgeoisie under the Poincaré government. All the great leaders of international communism appear in these pages, particularly Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Radek, Zinoviev, but also many others. In these years, Rosmer saw Stalin exactly twice: once intriguing with Zinoviev and Kamenev against Trotsky, and another time lobbying in the corridors of the 4th Congress of the Comintern, "in uniform even though the war was over for four years and in high boots even though it was in the month of July."

Rosmer's purpose in writing the book has been, above all, to re-establish historical truth. "I will have achieved my purpose," he says, "if I succeed in focusing attention once again on a forgotten epoch, and if my contribution to its study helps to better understand it." He sets out to uncover painstakingly all the historical facts that have been smothered through the years by several successive layers of lies, so that we may once more learn from them. Among the falsifications he has specifically in mind are not only the Stalinist ones but also those like Ypsilon's *Pattern for World Revolution* or the piles of nonsense written about Kronstadt. His tone is restrained throughout: a sober, matter of fact account of events. In his introduction he writes: "I will simply say: I was there, and this is the way things happened." His comments are measured and few—too few almost. One might have wished a fuller discussion of certain political issues such as the trade-union question, the early opposition groups, perhaps others. Only at the end he draws a conclusion. After having shown by his ac-

count how different the revolution was in its beginnings from the outfit that today pretends to govern in its name, Rosmer writes:

"Stalinism, in order to maintain itself, to maintain its hold over the working-class, has to appear as the heir and the mainstay of the socialist revolution, as the incarnation of the Russian Revolution. This is a lie; it is neither one nor the other. Why allow it to claim descentancy from a revolution it has betrayed? To identify its totalitarian state with the October Revolution is to serve its aims and to support its propaganda. For its power will collapse when the socialist mask is torn from its face and when the workers, seeing it as it is, in its totalitarian nakedness, cease to support it."

It is best to conclude this brief survey with some excerpts from Camus' preface, because they contain as good an evaluation of the book as can be made:

"It is difficult indeed to be a witness to the degeneration of a revolution without losing faith in its necessity. This problem is precisely one that concerns us, and for this reason Rosmer's book is relevant today. It concerns itself with a his-

torical phenomenon which is in the center of our preoccupations: the rise and degeneration of revolutions. . . . But, in order to be able to think rationally about this problem, one must not be one of those who insult revolution itself and who see an abortion in every birth. To draw the necessary conclusions from the decadence of a revolution, one must be one of those who suffer from this decadence, not of these who greet it joyfully.

"As far as I am concerned . . . of all the guides that offer themselves so generously, I prefer to choose those like Rosmer, who do not offer themselves readily, who do not rush to the aid of the winning side and who, refusing both dishonor and desertion, have preserved for years, in day-to-day struggles, the precarious chance of a revival. Yes, our comrades in this fight are those who are scoffed at because they are not powerful and because they seem to stand alone. But they are not alone. Only servitude is lonely, even then it drapes itself in a thousand voices to applaud its own power. What those few have maintained, on the other hand, is what we still live by today. If they hadn't maintained it, we would have nothing to live by."

A. G.

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