

Leader of LYL 'Explains' Attack on Stalin

By EDWARD HILL

The New York Labor Youth League was given the line on the Twentieth Party Congress last week by Leon Wofsy, the national chairman of the LYL.

Wofsy approached his subject from a point of view previously associated with Isaac Deutscher—that Stalin was the result of a primitive-socialist accumulation in a backward society—but relied on his assertion that Russia was socialist to answer all objections.

During the question period, and immediately after the meeting, the LYL national chairman ducked a challenge to debate made by YSLers from the floor.

Several YSLers attended the meeting, taking the floor and challenging the LYL to a debate on the meaning of the Twentieth Congress of the Russian Communist Party. In addition, the YSL distributed copies of *Challenge* and a special leaflet on Stalinism in front of the meeting hall.

The political center of the Wofsy line was the assertion that Russia is a socialist society. Following from this, criticism is permissible, discussion is to be welcomed, but any questions which raise the basic issue—the nature of the Russian state—are equated with John Foster Dulles and American imperialism. The revelations concerning Stalin are thus admitted to be serious, but any which related his errors and crimes to the social system which he led is to be dismissed as the politics of reaction.

Wofsy primarily relied upon the statistical evidence of Russian industrial growth to document his claim that it is a socialist state. He asserted, of course, that this development had taken place under the control of the working class, but not a single reference was made to the absence

of free working-class institutions in Russia.

When a YSLer challenged him from the floor, pointing out that Japan expanded its economy between World War I and II at a faster rate than Russia and under the aegis of a reactionary ruling class, he fell back on what he called the achievements of Russia in the field of education and culture and sports.

OUT OF THIN AIR

Needless to say, Wofsy did not go into the fact that, according to the Twentieth Party Congress, education for the past two decades in Russia has been mis-education, i.e., determined by the whims of Stalin, based upon the now-discredited *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)* and the later *Economic Problems of Socialism*. Nor did he deal with the recent statement of Russia's leading painter (Stalin's favorite portraitist) about the anti-artistic nature of cultural development for two decades.

Russian success in the winter Olympics at Cortina was naturally referred to as a consequence of "socialism" (comparison to the Nazi sport program oriented toward the 1936 Olympics was, of course, absent).

Having established his political base by this definition of Russia as socialist, Wofsy then went on to explain the de-

velopment of Stalin. Lenin, he told the audience, had foreseen that the transitional socialist state would have two characteristics: it would be both democratic and tremendously powerful. As a result of the backwardness of the economy, of capitalist encirclement, the threat of Nazi and American imperialism, the second part of this equation was over-emphasized—the state apparatus became overly strong and, in certain instances, anti-democratic. Enter Stalin. He was the expression of this development.

When Wofsy was asked if he, a self-confessed Marxist, was proposing the idea that an individual, Stalin, had materialized out of the thin air, with no relation to the social system which he led or the party which he created, he fell back on his primary argument: Stalin did create socialism.

QUESTION OF A SYSTEM

In his talk, there was no realization of the fact that Stalin was indeed the architect of a social system, and that it is his party, his co-workers, his co-criminals, who now announce, top-down, to a cheering and unanimous congress, that Stalin made serious errors, even suicidal ones (as in the case of the Hitler Stalin pact).

Thus, the material conditions to which Wofsy referred—the backward nature of the society, encirclement, war, etc.—are conceived of as primarily affecting a single individual and of having no serious consequence in the social system itself.

The fact that the current "re-evaluation" is proceeding in a typically Stalinist, i.e., bureaucratic, dictatorial fashion, was simply slurred over. And time and time again, every objection was met with the simple assertion: but Russia is socialist.

The YSLers present were, of course, unable to counterpose a basic political analysis of Stalinism because of the limitation of time. The basic answer to Wofsy's line would have had to go into the complete absence of any working-class or democratic control in Russia, into the privileges of the bureaucracy (which have now been made more secure, i.e. free from secret police and arbitrary, Stalin-type interference, by the new line), into the destruction of all political opposition and so on.

It was because of the importance and complexities of the question that the YSLers present made an open and public challenge to Wofsy and the LYL to air them in public debate.

FERMENT

At first, Wofsy tried to dodge the question, referring to sectarians who sat on the sidelines of history (this being his reference to the only nationwide socialist youth organization in America). In an exchange with a YSLer immediately after the debate, he based his refusal on two points: that he didn't want to provide an audience for the YSL; and that he knew from liberal (SDA) sources what a vicious organization the YSL was. He even went so far as to say that the LYL would prefer to debate various questions with pro-American-camp organizations than with the YSL.

Emerging from this meeting were several important points.

First, there is clearly a ferment in the LYL. These young people have been giving their political adherence to Stalin for years, and the "re-evaluation" has understandably affected them. Therefore, a certain amount of internal, and even public, discussion has become inevitable at this time.

The meeting itself was open, i.e., opposition points of view were stated from the floor, and even various YSLers voiced their doubts out loud (on the confessions of Rajk; on the top-down, bureaucratic nature of the new "discussion"). But it is clear that there is a fundamental limitation to debate: it must take place within the assumption that Russia represents a socialist society.

Secondly, it is also obvious that there are many sincere radical youth who have been attracted to the LYL out of opposition to the witchhunt in American society. Some of these people have been shaken by the cracks in the monolithic ideology of pro-Stalinism. They now hear voices, even from their own ranks, questioning the all-wisdom of various decisions which have taken place in Russia.

WHY DODGE?

But if this discontent is to be politically meaningful, if it is to be a gain for democracy and socialism, it must issue into a realization that the man and the social system were consequences of each other; that Stalin was not a personal accident of socialism, but a result of a bureaucratic, anti-democratic society, the very antithesis of socialism.

It is because of the tremendous importance of this point that the YSL is continuing its efforts to meet the LYL in a democratic discussion. To those who remain sincere (if, from our point of view, misguided) adherents of the LYL, we say this: What is there to fear from such a discussion? Why did Wofsy dodge a debate with socialists and state his preference for talking with liberals who supported the witchhunt?

To these youth we say: Push your questions in the LYL; push for outside debate with other socialists; think over the implications of the Stalin revelations, not simply in terms of an individual, but as indicative of a nature of a society which could produce such an individual.

BOOKS

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THE AIM OF THE YSL

The Young Socialist League is a democratic socialist organization striving to aid in the basic transformation of this society into one where the means of production and distribution shall be collectively owned and democratically managed. The YSL attempts to make the young workers and students, who form its arena of activity, conscious of the need for organization directed against capitalism and Stalinism.

The YSL rejects the concept that state ownership without democratic controls represents socialism; or that socialism can be achieved without political democracy, or through undemocratic means, or in short in any way other than the conscious active participation of the people themselves in the building of the new social order. The YSL orients toward the working class, as the class which is capable of leading society to the establishment of socialism.

—From the Constitution of the YSL

Young Socialists Challenge LYL to Debate Issues

The following letter was sent to the Labor Youth League by the Young Socialist League, on April 9.

Sirs: The repudiation of Stalin and the Stalin cult at the Twentieth Congress of the Russian Communist Party has aroused a wave of interest throughout the world. As is revealed by the discussion taking place in the pages of the *Daily Worker*, it has also raised questions and stirred doubts in the minds of many members and sympathizers of the Communist Party in the United States. The same undoubtedly obtains for the members and sympathizers of the Labor Youth League.

This development at the Twentieth

Congress of the Russian Communist Party confirms to the hilt, in our opinion, all that the revolutionary socialist opponents of Stalinism said about Stalin for over thirty years.

But it confirms more than that, in our opinion. We believe that it confirms our view that not a trace of socialism can be found in Russian society; that the social and political power held by the working class as a result of the October Revolution was long ago wrested from its hands by those who ruled Russia under Stalin and who rule it today under Khrushchev.

With this analysis your members and sympathizers will not agree. Hence we propose a debate between a representative of your organization and a representative of the Young Socialist League on "The Meaning of the Twentieth Congress of the Russian Communist Party." The details of the debate can be jointly arranged by the two organizations.

At a meeting of your Manhattan section on April 6, Leon Wofsy, national chairman of the LYL, stated that it was interested in debating such questions with socialists. The Young Socialist League is the only nation-wide socialist youth organization in the United States. We therefore do not see how you can object to debating this question before an audience consisting of the members and sympathizers of the Young Socialist League, the members and sympathizers of the Labor Youth League, and generally interested students and young workers. We for our part would welcome a confrontation of the views of the LYL and the views of the revolutionary young socialists of the YSL.

YOUNG SOCIALIST LEAGUE
MAX MARTIN
National Secretary

YSL FORUM • NEW YORK

REPORT ON MONTGOMERY RESISTANCE TO JIM CROW

Speaker:

Bayard Rustin

of the War Resisters League just returned from Alabama

FRIDAY, Apr. 20 — 8:30 p.m.
114 West 14 Street, N. Y. C.