

SOCIALIST



YOUTH REVIEW



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SOCIALIST YOUTH REVIEW

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Dear Friends:

WE REGRET THAT this issue is more than a month behind schedule. Technical handicaps in the National Office and the lateness of articles submitted are responsible for the delay. The first of these problems should be overcome this month and if articles are in on time, SYR will be published on schedule.

* * *

THE NEW YORK UNIT is organizing a workshop around SYR which other units would do well to follow. It is an excellent educational technique that is more interesting and more stimulating than the usual class method. Also, it would help insure the regular appearance of the magazine. The plan is simple. Unit members and contacts get together and discuss what articles would be appropriate for the next issue. A number of topics are chosen and assigned. A preliminary discussion on the subjects is then held. Two weeks later the articles should be completed and read before the group; discussed, revised and finally submitted to SYR. In New York the project is led by comrade Irving Howe.

* * *

A number of comrades criticized articles in the last issue dealing with questions of a semi-internal, organizational nature. The criticism is valid and henceforth the magazine will be devoted almost exclusively to educational and cultural articles.

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BEGINNING WITH THE next issue the SYR will feature editorials which will present the SYL position on national and international politics, specific youth problems and attitude toward other youth organizations.

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1906

Leon Sedoff

1938

Ten years ago, February 16, Leon Sedoff, son of Leon Trotsky died in Paris. The circumstances surrounding his death were mysterious at the time and later investigation indicated that his death was not a natural one; that the long, murderous arm of the GPU had sought out Sedoff and assassinated him. The following excerpt is from Trotsky's dedication to proletarian youth in honor of his son.

ON FEBRUARY 16th the Mexican evening papers carried a brief dispatch on the death of Leon Sedoff following a surgical operation. Absorbed in urgent work I did not see these papers. Diego Rivera on his own initiative checked this dispatch by radio and came to me with the terrible news. An hour later I told Nathalia of the death of our son in the same month of February in which 32 years ago she brought to me in jail the news of his birth. Thus ended for us the day of February 16, the blackest day in our personal lives.

WE HAD EXPECTED many things, almost anything but not this. For only recently Leon had written us concerning his intention to secure a job in a factory. At the same time he expressed the hope of writing the history of the Russian Opposition for a scientific institute. He was full of plans. Only two days prior to the news of his death we received a letter from him dated February 4, brimming with courage and vitality. Here it is before me. "We are making preparations," he wrote, "for the trial in Switzerland where the situation is very favorable both as regards so-called 'public opinion' and authorities". And he went on to list a number of favorable facts and symptoms. "En somme nous marquons des points." The letter breathes with assurance concerning the future. Whence then this malignant disease, and lightning death? In twelve days? For us, the question is shrouded in deep mystery. Will it ever be cleared up?



It presented no serious difficulty for the agents of Stalin to gain access to Leon, his clothing, his food. Are judicial experts, even if untrammelled by "diplomatic" considerations capable of arriving at a definitive conclusion on this point? In connection with war chemistry the art of poisoning has nowadays attained an extraordinary development. To be sure the secrets of this art are inaccessible to common mortals. But the poisoners of the G.P.U. have access to everything. It is entirely feasible to conceive of a poison which cannot be detected after death, even with the most careful analysis. And who will guarantee such care?

OR DID THEY kill him without resorting to the aid of chemistry? The young and profoundly sensitive and tender being had had far too much to bear. The long years of the campaign of lies against his father and the best of the older comrades, whom Leon from his childhood had become accustomed to revere and love, had already deeply shaken his moral organism. The long series of capitulations by members of the Opposition dealt him blows that were no less heavy. Then followed in Berlin the suicide of Zina, my older daughter, whom Stalin had perfidiously, out of the sheerest vindictiveness, torn from her children, her family, her

own militia. Leon found himself with his older sister's corpse and her six-year old boy on his hands. He decided to try to reach his younger brother Sergei in Moscow by phone. Either because the G.P.U. was momentarily disconcerted by Zina's suicide or because it hoped to listen in to some secrets, a phone connection, contrary to all expectations was made, and Leon was able to transmit the tragic news to Moscow by his own voice. Such was the last conversation between our two boys, doomed brothers, over the still-warm body of their sister. Leon's letters to us in Irkutsk were terse, meager and restrained when they described his ordeal. He spared us far too much. But in every line one could feel an unbearable moral strain.

MATERIAL DIFFICULTIES AND privations Leon bore lightly, jokingly, like a true proletarian: but of course they too left their mark. Infinitely more harrowing were the effects of the subsequent moral tortures. The Moscow Trial of the sixteen, the monstrous nature of the accusations, the nightmarish testimony of the defendants among them Smirnov and Krachkovsky whom Leon so intimately knew and loved; the unexpected internment of his father and mother in Norway, the period of four months without any news; the theft of the archives, the mysterious removal of my wife and myself to Mexico; the second Moscow Trial with its even more delirious accusations and confessions, the disappearance of his brother Sergei, accused of "poisoning workers"; the shooting of countless people who had either been close friends or remained friends to the end; the persecutions and the attempts of the G.P.U. in France, the murder of Reiss in Switzerland, the lies, the baseness, the perfidy, the frame-ups; no, "Stalinism" was for Leon not an abstract political concept but an endless series of moral blows and spiritual wounds. Whether the Moscow masters resorted to chemistry, or whether everything they had previously done proved sufficient, the conclusion remains one and the same; It was they who killed him. The day of his death they marked on the Thermidorian calendar as a major celebration.

BEFORE THEY KILLED him they did everything in their power to slander and blacken our son in the eyes of contemporaries and of posterity. Cain Djughashvili and his henchmen tried to depict Leon as an agent of capitalist restoration in the U.S.S.R., the organizer of railway wrecks and murders of workers. The efforts of the scoundrels are in vain. Tons of Thermidorian filth rebound from his young figure, leaving not a stain on him. Leon was a thoroughly clean, honest, pure human being. He could before any working class gathering tell the story of his life-alas, so brief-day by day, as I have briefly told it here. He had nothing to be ashamed of or hide. Moral nobility was the basic warp of his character. He unwaveringly served the cause of the oppressed, because he remained true to himself. From the hands of nature and history he emerged a man of heroic mould. The great awe-inspiring events which hover over us will need such people. Had Leon lived to participate in these events he would have shown his true stature. But he did not live. Our Leon, boy son, heroic fighter, is no more.

HIS FATHER, WHO was closer to him than any other person in the world and I am living through these terrible hours recalling his image, feature by feature, unable to believe that he is no more and weeping because it is impossible not to believe. How can we accustom ourselves to the idea that upon this earth there no longer exists the warm, human entity bound to us by such indissoluble threads of common memories, mutual understanding, and tender attachment. No one knew us and no one knows us, our strong and our weak sides, so well as he did. He was a part of both of us, our young part. By hundreds of channels our

thoughts and feelings daily reached out to him in Paris. Together with our boy, had died everything that still remained young within us.

GOOD-BY, LEON, good-by dear and incomparable friend. Your mother and I never thought, never expected that destiny would impose on us this terrible task of writing your obituary. We lived in firm conviction that long after we were gone you would be the continuer of our common cause. But we were not able to protect you. Good-by Leon! We bequeath your irreproachable memory to the younger generation of the workers of the world. You will rightly live in the hearts of all those who work, suffer and struggle for a better world. Revolutionary youth of all countries! Accept from us the memory of our Leon, adopt him as your son—he is worthy of it—and let him henceforth participate invisibly in your battles, since destiny had denied him the happiness of participating in your final victory.

Though there are numerous social differences between the Nazi and Stalinist totalitarian systems there are also many similarities. One of the most brutally striking resemblances is their systematic suppression of all socialist opposition. To dissipate the threat of socialist ideas and activity to their totalitarian rule, Hitler and Stalin through their Gestapo and G.P.U. have assassinated, executed, tortured and imprisoned thousands of socialists. Below are a few names from the tragically long list of.....

SOCIALISTS MURDERED BY.....

S T A L I N

LEON TROTSKY (leader of the 4th International assassinated by a G.P.U. agent—August 23, 1940)

EHRLICH and ALTER (Polish socialist leaders executed in Russia)

ANDRES NIN (leader of the Spanish P.O.U.M.—Party of Marxist Unity—assassinated by G.P.U. in Spain)

IGNACE REISS (murdered by G.P.U. in Switzerland when he joined the Fourth International)

RUDOLF CLEMENT (secretary of the Fourth International murdered by Stalinists in France)

SHELDON HARTE (American Trotskyist killed in Mexico)

ZINOVIEV, KAMENEV, BUKHARIN, RYKOV, (Old Bolsheviks—victims of the infamous Moscow Frame-up Trials) etc. etc. etc....

H I T L E R

SNEEVLIET, DOLLEMAN, SCHIEFFER WITTEVEN, EDEL, KOESLAG, BARTEN MENIST, GERRITSEN (leaders of the Dutch Trotskyists assassinated by the Gestapo—April 13, 1942)

LESOIL, NOPERE, MICHAUX, FRANQUET BEUGNIES, MARCOURT (leaders of the Belgian Trotskyists executed by the Nazis)

POULIPOPOULOS, MAKRIE, XYPOLYTOS YANNAKOS (leaders of the Greek Trotskyists executed by Nazis)

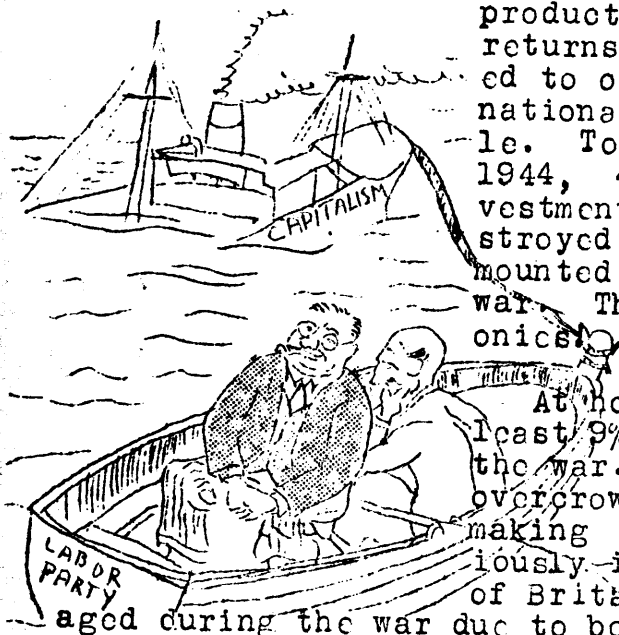
HIC, BOURRIS, GUEGUEN, COLLIARD MEICHLER, TRESSO, LAURENT, SUZIN WIDELIN (leaders of the French Trotskyists killed by Nazis)

etc. etc. etc....

(Only Trotskyists are noted here to throw the lie into the teeth of Stalinists who slandered us as "fascist agents" because we maintained our socialist opposition to the Second World Imperialist War.)

BRITISH "SOCIALISM" FAILS

THE BRITISH LABOR Party assumed the reins of government at the close of World War II. It was charged with the responsibility of re-organizing an economy which had been declining for years due to antiquated production methods and declining resources and which in addition had suffered heavy damages due to the war. By 1939 output per man in Great Britain was less than one half that of the United States. In every industry except shipbuilding, British productivity was less than that of the United States. In coal mining the sickest of her industries a steady decline in productivity had taken place. British output per man shift was 1.14 long tons as compared with the American figure of 4.37 long tons. By 1945 coal productivity had declined another 12%. Her returns from overseas investments however helped to offset this decline and maintain a higher national income than would have seemed possible. Today this advantage is wiped out. By June 1944, 4.2 billions of dollars of overseas investments were gone and her merchant marine destroyed. British overseas indebtedness has mounted to over 12 billion dollars during the war. The mother country is in debt to her colonies.

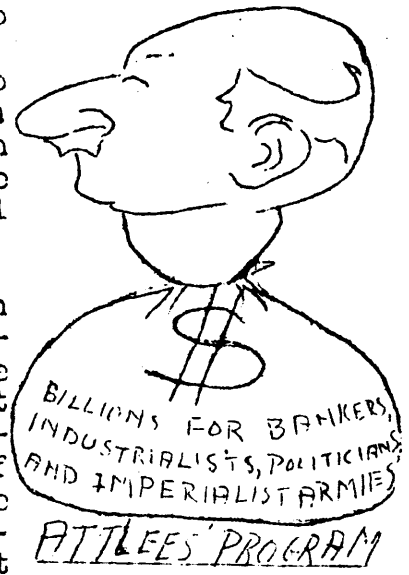


At home the picture is no less dreary. At least 9% of domestic capital was destroyed by the war. The losses in producers goods plus overcrowded housing and damaged transportation making travel to work difficult has cut seriously into output per man. Manchester, center of Britain's industrial wealth was heavily damaged during the war due to bombing. Hull, Britain's third port was the worst bombed city in the kingdom. A 25% decline in shipping tonnage resulted from the war. 300,000 homes were made uninhabitable due to the war and 5 million were damaged. More serious is the dangerous backlog that has occurred in much needed repairs.

IN ORDER TO recoup her losses as a capitalist nation, Britain must export. She must in fact increase her exports 75% over 1939. Since a 50% decline in exports took place during the war this becomes an enormous project. The difficulties in this undertaking cannot be overestimated. Take into account the heavy losses in industry, the lack of modern equipment, the loss of sources of raw materials, (Finland her chief source of timber, a vital raw material now sends all her timber to Russia as reparations) and the fact that most of her markets have been snatched up by competitors who can produce in greater quantities and more cheaply and we can see that recovery for Britain as a capitalist nation is next to impossible. Britain has for many years had to import more than she could export. This decline in exports plus her loss of overseas investments which previously made up for her unfavorable balance of trade strikes the death blow to Britain as an imperialist nation. Don Quixote cycling windmills is no less ludicrous than a Tory statesman fanning the dying embers of British Imperialism.

such a situation? The answer to this question is by no means given by the activities of the British Labor government. Far from carrying through a socialist program we can only refer to the statement of Prime Minister Attlee that the Labor government aims at no more than a mixed economy; that is they intend to nationalize no more than 15-20% of the economy. If we study the terms of the nationalization program we see that it too is far from being socialist. In fact when the Bank of England and the coal mines were nationalized it had the full support of the Conservative party, his majesty's loyal Tory opposition. The nationalization of the bank took the following form; 17,000 stockholders turned in shares having a nominal value of 100 pounds and received in return government bonds maturing in 60 years worth 400 pounds. Lord Cato, big shot in British finance will remain as chairman of the new Board of Governors. The joint stock banks which are more important since they issue new credits to industries are untouched by the nationalization program except insofar as new investors require government licenses. The relation of the joint stock banks to the Bank of England remains in the hands of Lord Cato.

FOR COAL A tribunal was set up to set the compensation for the coal mines taking into account current stock quotations and value of capital and property. A nine man coal board running the mines will manage it on a straight commercial basis, getting their own salaries and wages for employees. Demands by the miners organization that they be represented on the board have been rejected by the government. Compensation which will also be paid in government securities is estimated at from 4 to 6 billions. It is noteworthy that government bonds are gilt-edged and interest will be drawn no matter what the showing of the industry. In effect the British people will be burdened with the task of subsidizing the stockholders in the "expropriated" Bank of England and in the coal mines.



THERE IS NO doubt that the present crisis in the British economy is a product of years of capitalist mismanagement and could not possibly be completely solved in a short period by a socialist government. Even viewing the socialist reconstruction of Great Britain from a long range point of view it becomes obvious that her dependence on the world market would make impossible the construction of a socialist Britain without a socialist revolution in other countries, particularly the United States. Britain could not exist for any protracted period as a socialist nation without a socialist United States of Europe and a socialist America. The complete degeneration of the workers state in Russia is living proof of the impossibility of "Socialism in One Country"

WE DO NOT deduce however from this analysis that to attempt to build socialism in Great Britain is not possible and will not yield fruitful results. Great Britain could take great steps forward in industrialization and raising the standard of living of her people by introduction of socialized planning throughout the economy; by introducing workers control of industry; by withdrawing her troops from

foreign countries and her colonies utilizing these troops to ease the manpower shortage and using the funds for the upkeep of an army to develop socialist production.

LET US UTILIZE the recent fuel crisis in Britain as an example of what we mean. When the Labor government nationalized the mines it inherited a sick industry which had no reserves of coal. Although it increased production in the mines it supplied industry only on a day to day basis. Thus when the weather disrupted the economy the industry had no stocks of coal to tide it over through the emergency. We know that when the Labor government took over the mines there had been a steady decline in coal production under capitalist management and although production increased after nationalization it wasn't enough to meet an emergency of this type. How would we have met this problem?

IN THE PLANNING agencies of the labor government the capitalist representatives remain supreme. These are the same capitalists who mismanaged British economy for years. A socialist government would have replaced capitalist representatives with workers representatives. The workers would then have felt that the mines were really theirs and would have had an incentive to produce more. These workers representatives would have increased the wages of the miners as they demanded by utilizing the fabulous sums paid in compensation to the mine owners. It would have installed safety devices in the mines so that a miner wouldn't feel that he is taking his life into his hands every time he goes down into a mine. Instead of using anti-capitalist measures to raise production the British Labor Party used anti-working class measures. Witness the recent use of government troops in the dockworkers and trucking strikes. These measures would have helped ameliorate the tendency for miners to try and get out of the occupation which is hazardous and low paying for the type of work they are doing. A socialist government would have withdrawn foreign troops which only serve the purpose of propping up a dying empire and subjugating foreign peoples. These troops returned home would help solve the manpower shortage which is one of the chief problems of the British economy. A socialist government would have closed luxury hotels and ended luxury production. A socialist government would have socialized all of industry introducing a general plan throughout industry to coordinate and plan all branches. It would have instituted district fuel rationing, calling on all workers to set up committees in every district of representatives of workers organizations. It would have asked all co-ops and housewives to ensure the carrying out of its fuel economies. It would call upon the workers to help the government by introducing workers control of production until the state was ready to take over, and by this means prevent the remaining capitalist owners from sabotaging socialist planned production. This is what the Bolshiviks did in backward Russia in 1917. It would be a hundred times easier in modern and advanced Britain of 1947.

THIS IS THE program of the British Trotskyists, the Revolutionary Communist Party of Great Britain. The crisis in Great Britain is not a product of too much socialism but of not enough. Only socialist planning and socialist direction will prevent Great Britain from falling further into the backlog of capitalist decline.

Gertrude Blackwell

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HASHOMER HATZAIR AT THE CROSSROADS

THE MEMBERSHIP OF Hashomer Hatzair must face reality. In the next few months, Kibbutz Artzi plans to establish itself as an "adult Zionist-socialist party in the United States" (Youth and Nation, February 1947). This is an action which will have severe effects upon the American Hashomer Hatzair.

IN THE PAST, HH has been able to pass for an independent youth organization which generally supports the policies of the Kibbutz Artzi without being too restricted by the "line" set down by that organization. However, with the formation of KA as a political party in the United States (Miflegat Hashomer Hatzair), the conception of HH as an independent Zionist youth organization will change. Hashomer Hatzair will unquestionably become an appendage of this proposed political machine.



THE YOUTH ORGANIZATION will no doubt fight for its organizational independence. It will seek to set up organizational barriers between the party and the youth. An opposition to the formation of a party may, even arise in the next few months. But oppositions and organizational barriers will not prevent what is necessary, and thus inevitable from occurring. Political necessity demands that KA form a political party to represent its point of view on the important American Zionist scene: such a party will be established despite any opposition

that may arise from the youth of HH. Hashomer Hatzair is closely attached to the KA through a few Palestinian delegates that are maintained in the United States for that purpose. Will organizational barriers prevent the domination of HH by the party representing KA in the United States. From an organization presumably built from the "bottom up", HH will eventually be transformed into an organization whose political and educational line is determined at the top in co-ordination with the needs of the party.

FROM THIS INEVITABLE organizational development will flow important political consequences; some will concern only members of HH and others will prove of interest to all radical youth.

THIEVES CORRESPONDENCE

I beg you to accept my sincerest congratulations on your sixtieth birthday. I enclose with them my best wishes for your personal welfare as for a happy future for the peoples of the friendly Soviet Union.

Adolf Hitler

Berlin, December 21, 1939

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Mr. Joachim von Ribbentrop:

I thank you, Mr. Minister, for your congratulations. The friendship of the peoples of Germany and the Soviet Union, cemented by blood, has every reason to be lasting and firm.

Joseph Stalin

Moscow, December 24, 1939

FOR EXAMPLE IT might develop that joining the party of KA will prove to be an alternative to going to Palestine for the members of HH. This would change the entire political direction of HH. But this is a matter for conjecture and does not concern us here. On the other hand, there exists in the American HH a strong anti-Stalinist tendency in opposition to the pro-Russian line of the KA. The future development of this tendency is of great interest and importance to radical youth.

IN THE PAST, there has been very little "ideological pressure" upon the anti-Stalinists by the pro-Stalinists within the Hashomer. However, as political contact develops between the party of KA in America and the HH there will necessarily be a sharp clash on the nature of the Russian system between the party, which will undoubtedly be pro-Russian, and the anti-Stalinist tendency in HH. For the first time political questions will attain real meaning for HH. This clash will be of interest to every radical young person for many interesting points will develop in the discussion of the Russian State. Among other things the anti-Stalinist tendency will see that KA cannot be "reformed" on this question. The anti-Stalinist tendency will learn that serious anti-Stalinism, based upon a characterization of Russia as a non-socialist state, is incompatible with the Zionism of KA. Kibbutz Artzi itself, being a serious political organization, will be sure to impress these facts upon the consciousness of the American Hashomer Hatzair as soon as it has established itself as a political force upon the American Zionist scene.

THE PROOF THAT progressive anti-Stalinism is fundamentally incompatible with the Zionism of KA is simple. The fundamental interests of Zionism and imperialism are irreconcilable. This is our only premise and should be fairly obvious to any person from Hashomer Hatzair. On the one hand, Zionism needs unrestricted immigration and the development of Palestine as an efficient economic unit. On the other hand, an imperialist power seeking to exploit the Middle East (and by "Imperialist power" we mean here any state that finds it an economic and military necessity to exploit the resources, markets, and strategic positions of an area) cannot tolerate the development of Palestine as a strong economic unit because that would 1) pose a competitor for the markets and resources of the Middle East and 2) pose a threat to the utilization of the area as a military base. And today, when the great nations of the world are jockeying for strategic positions in preparations for third world war, this fundamental antagonism of interests between Zionism and imperialism will become ever sharper and manifest itself in further restrictive measures against Zionism and the development of Palestine.

NOW IF KIBBUTZ ARTZI saw that Zionism is faced with a wholly imperialist world, each nation of which would be operating in an imperialist manner, (and KA presumably could see this since it is a "Marxist" organization), Kibbutz Artzi would have to admit that a full solution of the Jewish problem through territorial concentration can only be achieved after imperialism is no longer effective as a factor in the Middle East; furthermore, that Zionism is not valid

historically as a solution for the Jewish problem under conditions of decaying imperialist capitalism; and that consequently a new, non-Zionist program for the Jewish people, basing itself upon anti-imperialist, revolutionary socialist perspectives, would be necessary. However, Kibbutz Artzi does not undertake this basic revision of Zionism. Why? Kibbutz Artzi does not even approach the conceptions outlined above because Kibbutz Artzi obviously doesn't believe that the world is wholly imperialist. Kibbutz Artzi believes that Russia is a Socialist progressive state that will intervene for the Jewish people at the appropriate moment. Kibbutz Artzi on this basis, and only on this basis, raises the cry: "Let the UNO take care of the Palestinian mandate." KA certainly does not have any bourgeois illusions about the UNO as have the rest of the Zionist organizations. KA certainly knows that the UNO is functioning as an international robber conference. But KA knows that Russia will be involved if the Palestinian mandate problem reaches the Security Council. In the position of Kibbutz Artzi on Russia lies the basis for the politics and program of Kibbutz Artzi.

THUS WE CAN see the situation is as we intended originally. Pro-Stalinism enables Kibbutz Artzi to be consistent in its Zionism and we have also seen that anti-Stalinism is incompatible with the Zionist perspectives of Kibbutz Artzi. What will the anti-Stalinist tendency do when it is "taught" by the Miglegeth-Hachomer Hatzair that anti-Stalinism is not compatible with the Zionist part of "socialist-Zionism"?



THERE MAY BE attempts on the part of the anti-Stalinist tendency in HH to resolve the difficulties of their position by claiming that the slogan for a UNO mandate is not basically designed to give Russia an opportunity to interfere in the Palestinian question but it is only meant to "stall for time" while immigration builds up the Jewish population in Palestine. Such arguments merely evade the question. Do these "Socialist" really believe that any imperialism will find it advantageous, and allow Jewish immigration into Palestine on a scale large enough to solve the Jewish problem? This is the crux of the problem.

WE DO NOT deny that revolutionary pressure by the Jewish masses within and outside of Palestine may result in enough immigration to relieve some of the hardships of the displaced Jews of Europe. What we do deny, however, is that the Zionists will be able to achieve the unrestricted immigration necessary for the fulfillment of the aims of Zionism under any imperialist set-up. As for illegal immigration it obviously cannot substitute for unrestricted immigration in an adequate manner. Illegal immigration cannot bring sufficient numbers of Jews into Palestine to change the situation therein favor of Zionism, i.e. obtain a Jewish majority.

THERE WILL BE a much more serious criticism of our position as presented above, arising from members of HH who will claim that there are intermediate "grey" positions lying between the attributed "pure blacks and whites" of our analysis. These people will say: "There are admittedly many flaws in the Russian system today, but these flaws are caused by the isolation of the Soviet Union, the necessity of arming for war, etc. Russia, however, still maintains a nationalized property form and this is the crucial point. Zionism can still rely on Russia because it still is socialism despite all bureaucratic deformation." This may well be the major argument presented by the anti-Stalinists within HH in order to resolve the contradiction between their position and political affiliation with KA. Implicit in this position are many contradictions and unproven assumptions, which the people who hold this position will have to resolve and prove. Let us attempt to point out some of the fallacies in this argument although obviously it would be impossible to go into a full discussion of the Russian question here.

THESE PEOPLE WILL recognize on the basis of their position that Russia has been forced to take non-Socialist steps inside and outside of Russian boundaries because of the pressure of world imperialism. Certainly, the acts of Russia in Poland and other countries under her domination cannot be called socialist actions. Nor can the policies of the Communist Parties in Italy, France, etc. be consonant with the socialist end. Even if one assumes that Russia is a "degenerated socialism" it is obvious that there is a contradiction between the "socialism" of Russia and the non-socialist acts of aggression it is forced to practice in order to survive. Given such a contradiction, how can one state that Russia will necessarily aid Zionism? Isn't Moscow as much interested in Arabian oil as London? Isn't Moscow as much interested in the strategic location of the Middle East as Washington?

THE INFORMATION WHICH has come to this country from Palestine indicates that Russia is more interested in dealing with the Arab States than with the Jewish people. The Palestinian Communist Party came out against Zionism in the thirties, and today an all Arab section of the Palestinian Stalinist movement is lined up with the reactionary "Arab National Front" against Zionism. It would seem there is a gap between Russian "degenerated socialism" and "Zionism can still rely on Russia" which is bridged only by the wishful thinking of the supporters of this position. It is this projection of a desire, alienated from the social forces, into political reality which makes the politics of Hashomer Hatzair so fuzzy; which transforms Marxism into utopian socialism for them.

THE HOLDERS OF the position that Russia is "degenerated socialism" have many things to explain. They must first explain why a nationalized economy can be equated to socialism if the working class of that economy has no political power. They must explain why the Soviet bureaucracy has had to revise the Marxist theories. They must explain why the Stalinist bureaucracy restored inheritance and reintroduced many of the reactionary social institutions and habits of pre-1917 Russia. These include establishment of tuition fees for secondary education, restriction of divorce, revival of the military caste system, etc. They must explain the growing differentials in pay.

between worker and bureaucrat, the low standard of living of the Russian people, the extensive use of slave labor and the complete lack of intellectual and political freedom. The list of evidence against the theory that Russia has anything in common with socialism is interminable. How degenerate must this vast Russian totalitarian prison become before these people lose their illusion about the "socialist" character of Russia.

THE ANTI-STALINIST tendency within HH must come out with a clear statement of their position on Russia. Only then will it be possible for this tendency to seriously consider the future of Zionism and the future of Kibbutz Artzi. For Hashomer Hatzair and Kibbutz Artzi Zionism stands or falls on a characterization of the Soviet Union.

WOULD THE ACCEPTANCE of our perspective that Zionism is unattainable while world capitalism exists mean that there could only be posed an assimilationist perspective? It was Trotsky who pointed out in his article "Thermidor and Anti-Semitism" that, "the very same methods of solving the Jewish question which under decaying capitalism will have a utopian and reactionary character (Zionism) will, under the regime of a socialist federation take on real and salutary meaning. This position does not imply assimilation for the Jewish people. We do not believe that mass assimilation is historically possible for the Jewish people under conditions of declining imperialism. This position means alignment of the Jewish people, inside and outside of Palestine, with the revolutionary socialist movement behind an anti-imperialist banner.

SPACE LIMITATIONS PREVENT elaboration of this point, but articles on this question have been printed and are available in the November 1946 issue of the New International, monthly theoretical magazine of the Workers Party.

WITH THE IMPENDING formation of the Miglegeth Hashomer Hatzair, all members of Hashomer Hatzair who disagree entirely or partially with Kibbutz Artzi on the Russian question and those who have not seriously considered the question must think about the Russian problem carefully. They must then determine whether their position on this paramount problem is consistent with membership in the new organization.

WE BELIEVE THAT our position on the Jewish question is the correct one. We ask that the membership of Hashomer Hatzair re-evaluate their position in the light of political reality. We believe that this re-evaluation can only have one result. "With the progressive elements of the Jewish people rests the obligation to come to the help of the revolutionary vanguard."

Arthur Conkin

HISTORY AND LESSONS OF THE FIRST WORKERS STATE-THE PARIS COMMUNE

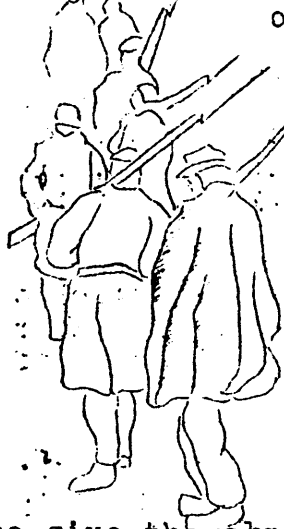
Each year in the month of March we celebrate the anniversary of the Paris Commune. We commemorate the establishment of the first workers state in history, and pay tribute to the heroism of its participants. By studying the Paris Commune, objectively evaluating it and learning its lessons, we ourselves contribute to its historical value. Through our actions, conditioned as they are by these lessons, the Paris Commune lives on.

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By 1871, almost a century after the Great Revolution, the relationship of forces in France was such that no revolution could break out without assuming a proletarian character.



In 1789 the propertyless masses were not an industrial proletariat, in the Marxian sense of the word but handicraftsmen and employees of small manufacturing enterprises whose suffering was increased by the destruction of the guilds. Even at that time however, they sought amelioration of their strife in the destruction of all class differences---not the privileges of the aristocracy alone. They were not constrained by the conservatism that comes with owning property and supported the most extreme left wing in the camp of the petty-bourgeoisie. It was this group which led them in the first Commune, that of 1791-93, which Kropotkin called "soul of the French Revolution". But their attempt at that time to give the slogan "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" meaning other than implied to it by the bourgeoisie was bound to end in failure. Capitalism in France was young; the productive forces were at a low stage of development and their own formlessness as a class in transition from handicraftsmen to wage workers precluded their developing and consummating an independent program.

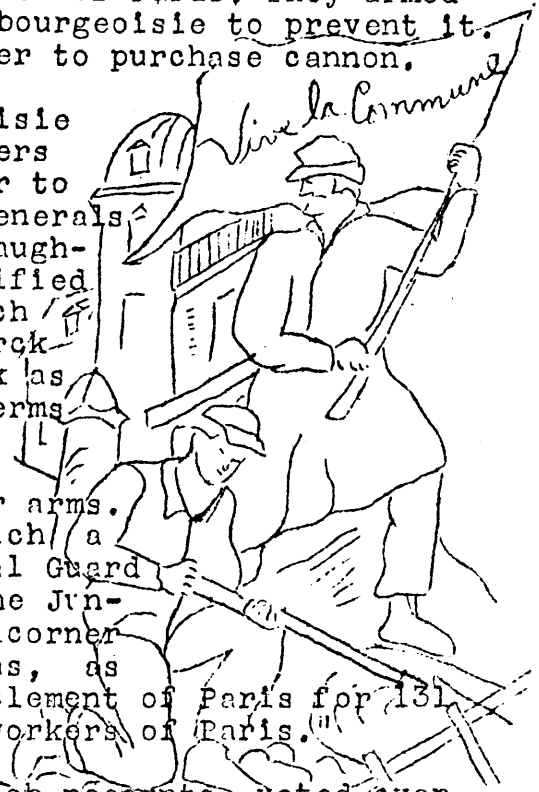
As the decades passed the rapid development of the productive forces converted ever larger numbers of the masses into proletarians. But as the masses became proletarians so were they impoverished, and there was an extensive agitation for a solution of their desparate plight. It was during this period that the ideas of the Utopian Socialists, Proudhon, St. Simon, and Fourier flourished. One might say, that the French proletariat was experimenting during these years, gradually becoming more conscious of its needs as a class and trying to find a program to satisfy those needs. They utilized every struggle in the camp of the ruling classes to put forward their own demands. In the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 they rose in Paris in an attempt to realize them. By 1848 it became clear that the workers would advance their banner two steps forward for every one taken by the bourgeoisie.

When the Franco-Prussian War was declared in 1870, Marx and Engels supported Prussia, as a victory of this state would bring unity and nationhood to Germany. This was a prerequisite to the unhindered class struggle against the German bourgeoisie. They withdraw their support, however, when Bismarck turned what was a war of defense against the expansion of Louis Bonaparte, ruler of France under the Second Empire, into a war of aggression on his own part.

When the armies of Louis Bonaparte at Sedan, in Northeast France, headed by the emperor himself, surrendered to the German troops a revolution broke out in Paris (September 4, 1870) which declared the empire dead and proclaimed a republic. But Paris was still besieged by the enemy and the armies of the emperor were either surrounded or already captured. In order to defend the city the peoples of Paris agreed to set up a government of National Defense composed of the Paris deputies to the former legislative bodies. Engels, a qualified student of military science, offered a plan of defense to this government.

It was the Parisian working class, organized in the National Guard which played the most heroic role in the defense of Paris. They armed themselves despite the efforts of the French bourgeoisie to prevent it. They even raised money by subscription in order to purchase cannon.

Throughout the siege of Paris the bourgeoisie gave evidence of their fear of the armed workers and their anxiety for obtaining peace in order to deal with the working class. The bourgeois generals deliberately sent the National Guard to be slaughtered in hopeless offensives against the fortified positions of the Prussians. Finally, the French government negotiated an armistice with Bismarck in order to elect a National Assembly to speak as the representatives of the French people on terms of peace.



But the Parisian workers maintained their arms. For them it was only an armistice during which a peace could be negotiated. The armed National Guard of Paris inspired such fear in the ranks of the Junker conquerors that they only occupied a small corner of Paris, and that only for a few days. It was, as Engels said, that the "maintained their encirclement of Paris for 131 days, were themselves encircled by the armed workers of Paris."

In the election that followed, the French peasants voted overwhelmingly for the reactionaries who were pledged to an immediate peace. They were tired of the war and wanted peace at any cost so that their sons could return by spring to work in the fields. As a result, the National Assembly was overwhelmingly reactionary and monarchist--just the kind of body needed by Thiers, the head of the government, to strangle the working class.

Proletarian Paris had good reason to be suspicious of the Assembly sitting at Versailles where its own delegates were howled down by the monarchists and bourgeois reactionaries. The National Guard was not demobilized but remained alert. The Prussians refused to leave France until the indemnity payments began and the bankers refused to lend the money to Thiers until "order was restored in Paris."

During the war the workers of Paris had confined themselves to demanding the vigorous prosecution of the fight. Now that the war was over Thiers realized that the propertied interestes were endangered as long as the workers kept their arms. So he attempted to disarm them. He mobilized 15,000 troops of the regular army and 3,000 police, on the night of March 17, 1871 to seize the cannon of the National Guard in the early hours of the following morning. The attempt failed; the workers of the Montmarte district, where the arms were kept, fraternized with the troops. The orders of the officers to fire on the people were disobeyed and the officers were arrested.

Upon hearing the report of the mutiny at Montmarte, the ministry of Thiers and the larger part of the bourgeoisie fled to Paris. With the government gone, the city was in control of the Central Committee of the National Guard. The Paris workingclass responded to the situation, but their immaturity kept them from realizing what was happening. Not having a perspective of its own, it adopted the solution of the petty-bourgeoisie and attempted to reconstruct the Commune of 1791.

The Commune of 1791 was, legally, nothing more than the Municipal Council of Paris. It was elected by meetings of the citizens in each section and was therefore the governmental organ most responsive to the pressure of the masses. Thus utilized, it was a weapon against the National Assembly and its municipal character remained only a fiction. The execution of its leaders marked the beginning of the decline of the revolution.

Although the Commune of 1871 was theoretically like its predecessor, it was forced by the stern realities of the struggle to speak on all the economic and political problems confronting the Nation at that time. It soon began to regard itself as the spokesman of the whole nation. Even though it never defined its aims systematically, we can say that despite all its confusion the Commune desired the abolition of wage slavery. Exactly how this was to be accomplished it did not know.

The Parisian workingclass had, traditionally, many Jacobin illusions. Instead of looking forward to the socialist revolution, they fought their battles with their eyes turned backward to the revolution of 1789-93. Trying to reconstruct that revolution could always only end in failure, in spite of the heroism displayed by the workingclass and its leaders. The agitation of the Utopian socialists, beginning with Babeuf, and the experiences of 1830 and 1848 helped shed many of these illusions. Later, the work of the First International in organizing the workers into trade unions gave many of them an understanding of the role which they could play in future struggles.

But even while the workers in the trade unions followed the International the great mass of the Commune still followed the leadership of those who had distinguished themselves in past revolutions by heroism if not by program. Most of these leaders were followers of Blanqui, a man who believed that the revolution would be brought about by a small number of well organized, resolute men who would seize power and hold it until it was possible to draw the masses into support of these leaders.

The Commune became an arena of conflict between these two tendencies, the socialist and the Jacobin. Unfortunately most of the socialists followed the theories of Proudhon, father of French anarchism and a utopian. This conflict presents a key to understanding the strength and the weakness of the Commune and its tragic end. The weakness lay in the leadership who represented the petty-bourgeois part of the workingclass; the strength of the Commune was embodied in the small minority who were beginning to understand the socialist future which the workingclass had in its power to mold.

Most of the activities of the Paris Commune during the 72 days of existence were concerned, of necessity, with the war against the reactionary armies of the Versailles government. Nevertheless, when we examine its legislation we can see its general trend. The Commune fulfilled many of the uncompleted tasks of the bourgeois revolution. It separated the church from the state and declared church property state property. It prohibited the church from interfering in education and declared that a free education was the right of everyone. Besides these, the Commune carried out certain revolutionary political measures which were incompatible with the continued rule of the bourgeoisie. It did away with the bourgeois parliamentary system and established the most democratic system of government ever known before. The Commune was both a legislative and executive organ, thus doing away with the state bureaucracy. The sections of Paris elected their delegates to the Commune for short terms subject to recall at any time. In this way they were in direct control of the government. The standing army was abolished and the National Guard into which were enrolled all citizens capable of bearing arms was established as the only armed force. This did away with any special armed force which could be used as the instrument of a ruling class to oppress the ruled. Magistrates and justices instead of being appointed were to be elected and were also subject to recall. The Commune destroyed the myth of the "nation" and in a truly internationalist spirit gave all foreigners the right to vote and hold office. To further prevent the rise of any government bureaucracy it was decided that the maximum salary of any functionary, whether elected or appointed, could be no higher than that of a skilled workingman.

The Commune also carried out measures which were specifically proletarian in nature. Mercantile and industrial establishments which were closed by their proprietors were opened and operated by co-operative associations of all the employees. All articles which belonged to needy persons were returned free from the pawnshops; the pawnshops were forbidden to take the workers' tools as security. All rents for the period of October 1870 to April 1871, the period of the war, were declared remitted. Any payment which had already been made was applied to future payment. Employers were forbidden to fine their employees. As if this were not enough the workers of Paris designated the Red Flag as the official emblem of the Commune, giving to the armies of Versailles all rights to the use of the tri-color, the traditional flag of bourgeois France. Most of the bourgeois democratic and revolutionary political measures were re-enactments of the decrees passed by the Commune of 1791-93. The workingclass measures were proposed by the Internationalists, particularly by Frankel and Vaillant, the members of the Commune most acquainted with scientific socialism.

The lack of a clear political goal spelled disaster for the Commune military operations. All political tendencies in the Commune were responsible, each in its own way, for the lack of centralization and organization necessary for the prosecution of the war. The Jacobins, revealing their faith in the spontaneity of the masses proposed it as a substitute for central authority. The Proudhonists were for de-centralization on principle, and the Marxists feared that centralization under the commune would mean the dictatorship of the Blanquists, that is of those who did not understand the socialist task of the proletariat.

The National Guard was elected on a democratic basis. The ranks elected their battalion commanders and their delegates to the Central Committee of the National Guard. This system although commendable proved impractical for the large scale, planned military operations necessary to defend Paris. The discipline of the ranks was based only upon the moral authority of the commander. The discipline of the battalion to the Commissioner for War was based on even less since there was a continual conflict as to whether the Commune or the Central Committee of the Guard was the higher authority on military matters.

The failure of the Commune to take the offensive against the Versailles armies proved a disaster. The National Guard outnumbered the troops of Thiers by about 7 to 1. On top of which the Versailles troops were demoralized and wanted to go home. But the morale of the National Guard was high. Engaged in a revolutionary struggle, the troops of the Commune were ready to fight for their cause with ardor. Delay could not possibly have gained anything, yet due to their narrow legalism, the Commune could not conceive of the government of Paris going beyond the city limits to launch an attack upon the National Assembly of France.

For the same reason the Commune refused to take over the Bank of France, whose holdings would have been a valuable hostage. They argued that the Bank belonged to the whole of France and not to Paris alone.

The narrow vision of the leaders of the Commune also led to its isolation. They made no attempt to rally the workers and peasants in the rest of France behind them. Had they made contact with the provinces and armed those willing to support them, the uprisings which took place in the cities like Marseille and Lyons might not have been suppressed so easily at the very least. They should have made some attempt at winning over the radicalized workmen who composed part of the Prussian army; instead they spent their time trying to refute the lies of the Versailles press.

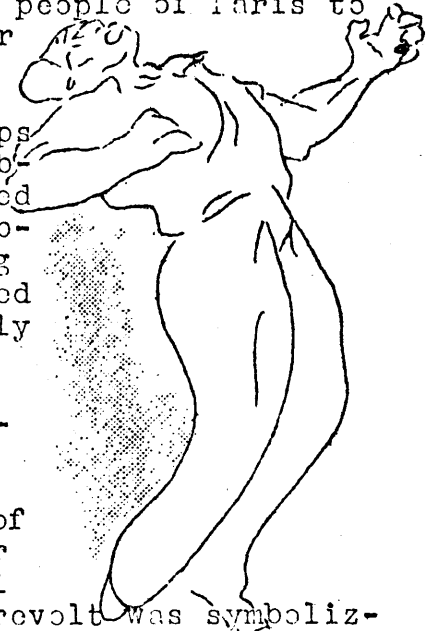
The Commune further weakened itself by its treatment of internal enemies. Its members did not want to suppress within Paris, those rights for which it was fighting the National Assembly. As the situation grew worse they were forced to adopt more stringent measures. But they were not enough. Although they suppressed about 40 papers which were hostile to the Commune and two pro-Commune papers charged with irresponsible action, they did not see the need for arresting all open enemies of the Commune. They failed to prevent passage of per-

sons between Paris and Marseille until the last few weeks. Most important of all, they did not disarm the battalions of the National Guard from the bourgeois districts. These battalions later joined the Versailles troops when they entered the city. Because of mistakes such as these the fall of the Commune was brought about at the hands of Thiers.

Seeing no other way out, Thiers went to Bismarck begging for the return of all French prisoners of war from Germany so that they could be used against the Communards. In this way he was able to get together an army at least as large as that of the Parisians. He put at their head a vanguard of the old labor-hating policemen of Paris.

The Communards had been negligent in garrisoning the strong ring of forts around the city. When the attack of the Versailles troops came most of these forts were either destroyed by bombardment or captured. Advancing to the walls of Paris, the Versailles prepared to break through. However, the carelessness of the defenders of the Porte de St. Cloud sector permitted an agent of the Versailles to open a gate and signal them to enter. The masses were aroused to a pitch of determination and enthusiasm for battle not before experienced when it was learned that the Versailles troops had entered the city. But what little central organization previously had existed now fell apart when Delccluze the commissioner of War, called upon the people of Paris to set aside militarism and prepare to barricade their streets and defend their districts.

It took some ten days for the Versailles troops to capture Paris. Every street and house was stubbornly defended. But while the Parisians exhibited their heroism, the Versailles showed only the barbarism which the ruling class employs in suppressing its revolting slaves. Some 30,000 workers perished in the week of bloodshed that followed. The newly invented machine gun replaced for efficiency the traditional volley of the firing squad. Workers were shot for the crime----of being workers; a calloused hand was the ace of spades in post-Commune Paris. It has been said that the peasants living along the banks of the Seine on the outskirts of Paris, crossed themselves as they watched the river turn red. The international solidarity which all capitalists display when confronted with labor in revolt was symbolized by Bismarck when he refused to allow the refugees from Paris to cross the Prussian lines. That some got through at all was due to the action of individual soldiers in the Prussian army who sympathized with the escaping Parisians. Practically none of the leaders of the Commune escaped. Most were killed during the struggle, or shot in an attempt to escape. The rest were taken prisoner and held for the trials that followed, thereafter shot by a firing squad. A few, sent to the penal camp in New Caledonia, rotted away in the fever-ridden jungle.



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All that remains of the Paris Commune are the lessons which we can draw from it. It is these lessons which will make it possible for us to accomplish in our own day, what the Communards did not do in theirs. Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, looked upon the Paris Commune as a revolutionary laboratory. They drew from the Commune several important lessons. The Commune proved that the state machinery of the old state cannot be taken over and "wielded for their own purpose by the workingclass." It must be smashed and be replaced by the new state machinery that will correspond to the aims of the proletarian rule. The Commune showed that the proletariat has no use for a parliamentary republic with its division of labor between those who make laws and those who execute them. The Commune was a working body which both decreed and administered the laws.

A lesson learned from the Commune, the truth of which we appreciate so much today, is that the workingclass is helpless and its insurrection foredoomed if it does not have revolutionary Marxist party at its head. At every step of the struggle this was the greatest need of the Commune.

The Commune was the first revolution in which the middle class was faced with the choice between the bourgeoisie or the workingclass. In Paris in 1871, the middle class was caught between the Commune and the National Assembly in Versailles.

The conduct of Thiers and Bismarck showed that the bourgeoisie will cease its inter-imperialist struggles and unite to suppress a proletarian revolution. Class is thicker than nation.

Once begun, the insurrection must maintain its offensive. In stopping at the gates of Paris, the Communards left the rest of France to the enemy. It gave them time and resources to begin an offensive which dealt the Commune its death blow.

The Communards should have realized that to capture political rule is not enough; Marx said "The political rule of the producer cannot co-exist with his economic slavery." Once the political power has been wrested from the bourgeoisie, there can be no hesitation in taking economic power from them. The class struggle, particularly in time of civil war, permits of no sentimentality or hesitation, no magnanimity towards the class enemy.

These, then, are the lessons of the Commune. They became the most powerful weapons of the proletariat in the Russian Revolution. The Commune itself has become a tradition. Further than that we can only repeat the words of Karl Marx written upon the fall of the Commune:

"Workingmen's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are forever enshrined in the great heart of the workingclass. Its exterminators. History has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them."

Justin Graham

LOVER OF MANKIND

From "U.S.A." by
John Dos Passos

Debs was a railroad man, born in a weather-boarded shack in Terre Haute.

He was one of ten children.

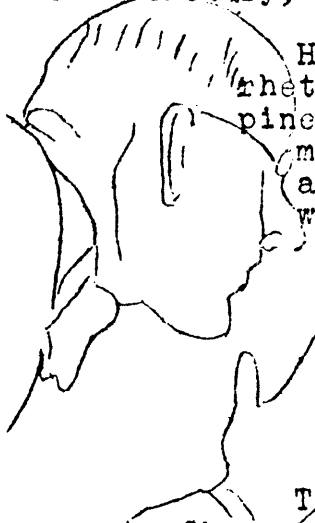
His father had come to America in a sailing ship in '49, an Alsatian from Colmar; Not much of a money-maker, fond of music and reading,

he gave his children a chance to finish public school and that was about all he could do.

At fifteen Gene Debs was already working as a machinist on the Indianapolis and Terre Haute Railway.

He worked as a locomotive fireman, clerked in a store

joined the local of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, was elected secretary, traveled all over the country as organizer.



He was a tall shamblefooted man, had a sort of gusty rhetoric that set on fire the railroad workers in their pineboarded halls made them want the world he wanted, a world brothers might own where everybody would split even:

"I am not a labor leader. I don't want you to follow me or anyone else. If you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of the capitalist wilderness you will stay right where you are. I would not lead you into this promised land if I could, because if I could lead you in, someone else would lead you out."

That was how he talked to freight handlers and gandywalkers, to firemen and switchmen and engineers, telling them it wasn't enough to organize the railroadmen; that all workers must be organized, that all workers must be organized in the workers' cooperative commonwealth.

Locomotive fireman on many a long night's run, under the smoke a fire burned him up, burned in gusty words that beat in pineboarded halls; he wanted his brothers to be free men.

That was what he saw in the crowd that met him at the Old Wells St. Depot when he came out of jail after the Pullman strike,

those were the men that chalked up nine hundred thousand votes for him in nineteen twelve and scared the frockcoats and the top hats and diamonded hostesses at Saratoga Springs, Bar Harbor, Lake Geneva with the bogey of a socialist president.

But where were Gene Debs' brothers in nineteen eighteen when Woodrow Wilson had him locked up in Atlanta for speaking against war,

where were the big men fond of whiskey and fond of each other, gentle rambling tellers of stories over bars in small towns in the Middle-West,

quiet men who wanted a house with a porch to putter around and a fat wife to cook for them, a few drinks and cigars, a garden to dig in, cronies to chew the rag with

and wanted to work for it
and other to work for it;
where were the locomotive firemen and engineers when they hustled him
off to Atlanta Penitentiary?

And they brought him back to die in Terre Haute
to sit on his porch in a rocker with a cigar in his mouth,
beside him American Beauty roses his wife fixed in a bowl;
and the people of Terre Haute and the people in Indiana and the
people of the Middle West were fond of him and afraid of him and thought
of him as an old kindly uncle who loved them, and wanted to be with him
and to have him give them candy,
but they were afraid of him as if he had contracted a social disease,
syphilis or leprosy and thought it was too bad,
but on account of the flag
and prosperity
and making the world safe for democracy,
they were afraid to be with him
or to think much about him for fear they might believe him;
for he said;

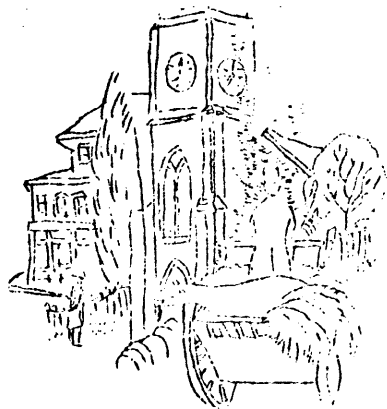
"While there is a lower class I am of it, while there is a
criminal class I am of it, while there is a soul in prison I am not free."

OUR TOWN

Wilmington is a small Ohio town some 60 miles from Cincinnati
and 18 miles from Xenia. With a population of about 5,000 it
owes much of its present size and industry to the blessings of
the last war.

Off hand, one would say that Wilmington, or as it is sometimes
called: Clinton County, is a farming center. Most of the farmers
here raise hogs and yellow corn for hog feed.

However, during the war the Army built an airfield just out-
side of town and private owners built a couple of new industries
in town. Even Henry Ford tried to establish a small concern in
C.C., but a Mr. Denver (owner of the Denver Bank and practically
half of the town's business) bought the ground which Henry was
eyeing and thus Ford expansion was somewhat stymied.



Folks in Wilmington are very friendly to-
ward one another. Everybody minds his
own business, sticks to his job, and stays
in his place. Negroes refrain from going
to the local white restaurants because that
would be out of place. Negroes always sit
on the right hand side of the theatre,
never in the center, because that's their
special place. To sit anywhere else would
upset the wonderful pattern which has be-
come a "tradition" in friendly Wilmington.

Prices on food and clothing in Wilmington stores are high, higher than many workers can afford. But workers at the Wilmington Casting Co. don't ask for a raise in pay from the present 70¢ to 90¢ an hour rates. Unthinkable. Farquahr Furnace workers start out at 65¢ an hour. Meat is 66¢, 77¢ and 80¢ a pound at Allier's Food Market, but workers don't demand more wages to meet rising prices. Of course not! To do so would upset the balance; folks would become excited; blood pressures would go up and profits would come down. Look at what happened at the August Bit Co. last summer in '46. Workers on strike up untill late September and a college student (Wilmington has a small Liberal Arts private College) on the picket line?

Poor union leadership however pulled the workers out too soon; company dismissed some of the more "radical" ones. The workers soon went back to work at original wage rates of 65¢ an hour.

One can't help but admire how neatly the pattern works out in friendly Wilmington. The well-to-do folks live in the finest homes, drive the biggest cars, and dress in the latest (and more expensive) styles. They also buy the choice cuts (and sometimes the only cuts) of meat in the stalls. They are the folks who own stock in the granaries, laundries, bakeries and factories in town.

Men and women who work in the laundries, granaries, bakeries, and factories can't expect to mingle with their betters. Consequently, these men and women establish themselves in residences suitable to their means. An amiable solution to a simple problem. Most of the Negroes restrict themselves (and not without outside persuasion) to the ghetto of Grant street. Poor whites live a few blocks away and in homes scattered along the back roads. In many instances entire families (grandpa and grandma too) live under the same roof. Newly weds often arrange to live with their in-laws, so it is quite clear to even a casual observer that there is no housing problem in Wilmington.

Folks from out of town always remark about how nice and friendly and quiet it is in Wilmington

Logan J.

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"BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES"

Reviewed by JACKIE ROBBINS

HOLLYWOOD HAS RECENTLY created a big splash with the production of The Best Years of Our Lives. Hailed unanimously by the press, granted all the usual awards, it supposedly is a fearless and moving exposition of the problems of the returning GI. The movie follows the lives of three veterans from the time of their arrival in the U.S. through the throes of homecoming to final contented readjustment. And it does show that the process is not at all peachés and cream -- that our society does create problems for the veteran. But beneath the veneer that a few realistic touches create, what is the real statement of this movie?

EACH OF THE three returning veterans has initial misgivings and fears. The most obvious problem is that of the sailor, Homer, who has had both hands burned off. How will his family and his girl receive the sight of his metal hooks? The returning bombardier comes from an impoverished background, was a soda jerk, has a certain native intelligence, has been an officer, and is unwilling to return to an economically and mentally unrewarding occupation. He hopes for a good job and a home, neither of which materializes.

THE SERGEANT-BANKER, Al, returns to a luxurious home, an understanding wife and daughter, but is worried about his adjustment to them.

THESE EXPERIENCES ARE very real and most of the tragic human reactions are genuine.

HOMER HAS TO contend with a family which cannot contain its pity and embarrassment for him, as well as with his subjective anxiety which does not allow him to accept the love of his fiancée. Eventually his girl's love overcomes his misgivings and they marry, but not till after a series of harrowing experiences during which "they either kept staring at the hooks, or kept staring away from them."

REHABILITATION TROUBLES

FRED, THE BOMBARDIER, comes home to find out that his wife is no longer living in his father's shanty, but has gotten a job in a night club. Not finding her in at once, he goes on an all night drunk with the sergeant, who has been having some rehabilitation troubles of his own. Fred was married to blonde Marie for twenty days before leaving and when he finally does find her, he learns that she is more interested in his captain's uniform and salary than in helping him establish himself in civilian life. He looks diligently for a fairly decent job but is forced back to his nightmare of soda-jerking for lack of money or opportunity. His wife is a shrewish slut and he finds himself falling in love with Al's daughter, Peggy; he is constantly disturbed by dreams of his traumatic war experiences; he is fired from even this detested job for knocking down a customer who angers him; and his wife leaves him because he hasn't enough money. About to leave town, to try to make a fresh start, he discovers a gang working on the demolition of planes for use in pre-fabricated houses and begs a job with them. He is then called to Homer's wedding where he and Peggy are reunited.

AL HAS HAD his entire world broadened by his experience in the infantry. When called back to his bank job (with a promotion attached) he finds himself acting more in terms of human experience and less within the protocol of banking procedure. He gives a destitute veteran a loan despite the lack of collateral, and is rebuked by his superiors; but at a club dinner he gets drunk enough so that he has the courage to make a dinner speech defending his own behavior in the bank.

THE FILM'S SOLUTION

THUS THE FILM takes very real and vital issues and poses their solution in this manner: If you are sent out into war and get your hands burned off -- 1) you will receive a pair of hooks and superb training from the navy in how to manipulate them; 2) you must not be a fool and rebuff your girl friend if you have one, but should realize that you can easily find a woman who will cheerfully accept a married life of that sort; and 3) you will get \$200 a month for life from the government.

IF YOU WERE born into poverty and come back from army life without a seat on the stock exchange waiting for you -- 1) you may get some hard knocks in the beginning; but 2) you will sooner or later find a steady job "in your class" even if it is not the most creative one in the world; 3) banker's daughters are just like people, even more so, and a pretty one is sure to want to marry you -- junk business or no.

IF YOU WERE a banker originally but have had your eyes opened to a thing or two -- 1) you will come back to an extremely comfortable home and job, and certainly never have to worry about material concerns; 2) you may feel uneasy about some business practices, but is you have a few extra cocktails a day you can manage to be happy though bleary-eyed.

IN OTHER WORDS, the film, rather than dealing with the problem seriously, takes up each individual conflict and side-tracks it in terms of wishy washy relationships involving Hollywoodian goodness and badness. The movie has the conventional happy ending, the audience leaves satisfied -- on what basis? Because even though Fred's wife was a floozy, she left him just in time for him to marry sweet Peggy. Because even though we start out with a terrifying sense of isolation and dispossession of the working class veteran, just when he's most down and out there's a derrick waiting for him on which to work.

THE THOUSANDS OF veterans who were seriously jolted mentally and physically during the war and came back unable to find a home or a good job, are expected to project themselves into the fairy tale resolution of the typical (American Boone City boys. Hollywood has done nothing more than to exploit the plot opportunities offered by this living situation to construct a witty, humane but superficial romance. Instead of a mean uncle to provide the conflict, we have the veteran's problem. Serious social commentary? No.

HOW SOLDIERS TALK

SIGNIFICANT TOO IS the fact that in the film none of the soldiers even speaks of the war in the half-way analytical or wondering fashion as did the GIs in some wartime movies. The men are simply unquestioning on the subject, even though the picture attempts to present a portrait of their lives in relation to the war's aftermath. In one significant scene in a drug store, a fascist tells the disabled sailor that we fought on the wrong side, that "we should have minded our own business." The sailor shouts in desperation that he saw four hundred

POETS CORNER

A YEAR AFTER

Trees in bloom
And flowers glowing
Birds rejoice
Where love keeps growing

Through these days
of fearful watching.
Youthful hopes
Are bright - and touching.

Nature wears
Green, shining sashes
Half our world
Lies - gray - in ashes.

H. J-S.

REVIEW

continued
buddies in an hour, was that for
nothing?

THIS IS THE sum total of the
thought, the idea which Holly-
wood permits itself; a question
posed by a fascist and a reply
which, while emotionally under-
standable, is not logically rel-
event.

AND SO WE see that even if
Hollywood has here touched on a
vital social and human problem
and has expended a certain amount
of technical skill, its method is
still the same old simple good-
and-bad approach of the cowboy,
gangster and love story films. The complexity of life, the shadings
of actual characters, the realities of social relationships, the spon-
taneous and unsteretyped aspects of human emotion - all of these the
picture cannot grasp, for as virtually all of Hollywood's productions
it is not honest or serious in its intentions.

(This review was submitted to Labor Action, and printed, by a New
York Socialist Youth League member, Jackie Robbins.)

THE WHOLE TRUTH

The dead do not speak,
They are dust.
The weeping is done,
And the crosses
Stand on parade:
Symbols to our pride
And cared for
By a grateful nation.

The dead do not speak.
Who say that they do?
Let us laugh at him,
For we know better -
We who saw them die,
We who buried
And avenged them -
We declare:
The dead do not speak.

And if they could speak -
What, if they could speak?
Would they be wiser?
Did not so many of us live
And suffer more than they (?)
And longer?
And: do we speak?
Or: are we wiser?

The dead do not speak,
They are dust.
And we, who know about them,
Are tired and have lost
The courage
To speak.

H.J-S.

REPORT FROM THE PARTY ON: UNITY WITH S.W.P.

IN APRIL OF 1940 the Trotskyist movement in the United States was split. The majority group led by comrade J. P. Cannon retained the name of the Socialist Workers Party; the minority, led by Max Schachtman took the name, WORKERS PARTY. The split itself was the culmination of many months of factional struggle over the political course to be followed by the Trotskyist movement in the war. Central to these issues of dispute was the all important "Russian question".

IT WILL BE recalled that in April of 1940 all Europe was engaged in war. Russia had made a pact with Germany in the latter part of August 1939. Several days later Germany invaded Poland and met the Russian armies at a predetermined line in that country. Russia also invaded Finland and the Baltic countries.

AT THAT TIME the official position of the Trotskyist movement regarded Russia as a Workers State. But not simply that. It held that This Workers State which retained many economic and social characteristics of the changes brought about by the revolution of 1917 (Nationalized property) etc.) was degenerating thanks to the international and national policies of the Stalin bureaucracy. Stalin had wrested the power of the Communist Party and the Russian State from its Leninist leadership and was inflicting vigorous hammer blows at the revolution. by physically exterminating the Leninist leadership; by destroying the Communist Party in Russia and elsewhere; by isolating Russia from the international working class; and by disarming the Russian Revolution by a systematic destruction of the institutions of expression and elimination of workers democracy. The Trotskyists characterized Russia as a degenerated Workers State. It called for a political revolution to overthrow the regime of Stalin and substitute the Party and principles of Lenin. It held that despite the distortions of the Revolution imposed by the reactionary Stalin it was the duty of all revolutionaries to defend the Soviet Union from imperialist attack. There were in the Fourth International groups which disputed that Russia was a Workers State but they constituted a small minority at that time.

WHEN RUSSIA INVADED Poland and Finland the minority in the Socialist Workers Party; condemned the invasion as "Stalinist Imperialism. As Russia became integrally involved in the imperialist war the minority vigorously opposed the old formula of "Defense of the Soviet Union" The Majority clung to the traditional slogan. Their cry for the defense of the "Workers Fatherland", was countered by us with a denunciation of the war as imperialist on both sides.

AFTER THE FORMATION of the Workers Party the character of the Russian State under Stalin underwent re-examination. The concept that Russia was a degenerated Workers State, was abandoned by us (but retained by the SWP). Our new analysis was codified in a resolution which characterized Russia as a "Bureaucratic Collectivist State", which we contended was anti-workingclass and counter-revolutionary.

AS THE SECOND world war was drawing to its close, particularly after the end of the war in Europe, a new minority was crystalized in the SWP led by comrades Goldman and Morrow. When comrade Cannon declared that the "Defense of the Soviet Union" (To which he and the majority of the SWP adhered) had receded into the background, and that the main task was now the defense of the European Revolution against Stalinists onslaughts, Comrades Goldman and Morrow called for the unification of the two Trotskyist parties (Workers Party and Socialist Workers Party) in the U.S. They argued that with the change in the world situation, and the recession of the Russian question into a secondary of passive phase, sufficient areas of political and programmatic agreement existed between the two parties to make unity not only possible, but mandatory. The Workers Party, immediately supported the proposition of comrades Goldman and Morrow and proposed the opening of unity negotiations.

THE SWP, ALTHOUGH agreeing to hold some meetings of the negotiating committees (to probe the areas of disagreement) did not declare for unity and after some months unification negotiations fell through. Comrade Goldman and a group of his followers then denounced the SWP majority for having blocked the unity, and despite many differences which the Goldman minority had (and still has) with the W.P., joined the Workers Party.

IN FEBRUARY OF 1947, three months after the National Convention of the SWP had categorically rejected unity and expelled from its party the outstanding proponent for unity (Comrade Morrow), a series of swift developments occurred which reopened the question of unity once more. The Workers Party, in response to these developments, convened a special meeting of its national committee which went on record reiterating its former position for unity. About a week later, the SWP held a national committee meeting at which it too took a position for unification.

SINCE THEN, EACH party has elected three representatives to serve on a joint negotiating committee. This committee has met several times and have come to some agreements as to collaboration of the two parties in several fields of activity where such collaboration pointing toward unity is practicable. For example, the two relief organizations were merged. Local units of each party have been directed to elect joint local committees to direct collaboration in the mass organizations, to arrange joint public meetings where possible. Originally it was expected that our first joint public meeting would be held to celebrate May Day, but several weeks ago we were informed by the SWP that they are opposed to a joint May Day meeting on grounds that such a joint meeting would restrict their political propaganda and is therefore inadvisable. They also asserted that their membership was desirous of examining more carefully the implications of unity. The W.P. representatives disagreed with the argument, and regretted very much the decision against a joint May Day meeting.

THIS IS ABOUT where matters stand today. The W.P. looks forward to the consummation of unity between the W.P. and the S.W.P. Such a merger will forge an instrument which will more effectively advance the interests of the American and International Working Class.

Nathan Gould
Dir. of Org.
Workers Party

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