

Letters to a Stalinist

Where the Stalinists Go Wrong in the Fight Against McCarthyism

Dear Phil,
I'm sure you hope that your last question will prove to be a stumper: "Since the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party have both analyzed McCarthyism as the American brand of fascism, doesn't this show the closeness of the two parties despite their mutual hostility?"

By George Breitman
"Say, what's happening to you people?" My friend, who tries to keep abreast of radical politics and theories, was referring to the Militant and the Socialist Workers Party.



HITLER

How come you're labeling McCarthyism as fascism and designating fascism as a grave danger in this country today? I'm used to that kind of stuff from the Daily Worker and the Stalinists; they do it all the time; they call Eisenhower a fascist and they used to call Roosevelt a fascist too at times when they weren't supporting him. But you people always knew better, you were always more exact, more scientific, in such matters. Do you really mean that you consider McCarthy to be the American Hitler, despite all the differences between them?"

to characterize it as a workers state? Or do you recognize that the workers state created in Russia is only one form of working-class power, with many specific features that are due to the social, political and economic climate of Russian society and of the international situation at the time the revolution took place?"

"Now the question I would ask you is this: Must every workers state since 1917 be an exact duplicate of the Soviet state after Lenin's time or Stalin's time before you would be willing

"Well," I said, "if you grant that workers states can have different forms, just as capitalist states have different forms, then

you should also grant that fascism can have different forms, and you should not assume that McCarthyism is not fascist merely because the form in which it appears is somewhat different from the form in which the European fascist movements appeared. What we must do is to take account of the differences as well as the similarities, and to determine which are formal or secondary, and which are essential."
Few problems in politics are more crucial than the one of distinguishing between form and essence. Most of what we know about fascism we have learned from our study of the fascist movements in the countries where they came to power — Germany, Italy, Spain. The tendency of the mind is to regard as fascist those movements which resemble the generalized abstract conception that we retain of those European movements, and to dismiss as non-fascist those movements which do not conform to that conception.

of fascism, must act even more circumspectly than the European fascists, especially in the early stages, and must do more to conceal their real nature and aims.
Of course the question "What is McCarthyism?" may not appear as urgent as the question "How can we stop McCarthyism?" But the two questions are intimately linked.
If McCarthyism is the American form of fascism in the 1950's, as we contend, and if this can be demonstrated to the politically advanced and class-conscious workers of this country who already understand that they and fascism cannot co-exist peacefully, then the job of alerting and mobilizing them around a militant program of action to stop McCarthyism will be made easier and completed sooner.

THE MILITANT ARMY

The last of the 25th Anniversary Militant Mobilizations ended Dec. 20. In the series approximately 300 subscriptions and 3,000 single copies were sold mostly in door-to-door work in new neighborhoods.
New York and Twin Cities comrades set the pace nationally. Campaign Director Tom Denver reports, "The New York comrades are proud to finish off this campaign with 3,008 points. We did a little better than we did last spring and we now have a large group of new readers."
The Twin Cities lived up to their promise to provide New York with some stiff competition. They came down the home stretch this week with a gain of 1,084 points. St. Paul Literature Agent Winifred Nelson writes, "The comrades came through in wonderful style this past week. Marion came in with three subs — a one-year new sub, a one-year renewal, and a six-months renewal — all from packing house workers!"

McCarthy Seeks "Total Power"

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Frantz warns: "We are moving from political trials of individuals to political trials of groups and movements. Repression is tooling up for mass production."

that fair play is violated. 'Security' agencies are doing a good deal to help the passionate few to achieve this. If more cases like those of James Kutcher and Dorothy Bailey pile up — each discharged from federal employment without trial or after the travesty of one — it will begin to appear that the rules of the game are really being sabotaged. It is going to take some time for average Americans to discover that what goes on in Washington is not just a television show but something that affects his basic democratic sympathies. When this happens, and I think I see a drift in that direction, in traditional American fashion we shall check or alter our present notions about 'security' for the nation," etc.

A. L. Wirin and Sam Rosenberg, civil liberties lawyers, present a valuable summary of the record and pattern of the Smith Act trials to date.
The repressive nature of the federal "loyalty" program is revealed in an anonymous article by one who experienced it in real life, "The Strange Case of Miss X."

It is true that the "excesses" of McCarthyism generate new understanding and resistance. But it is extremely dangerous to overlook the fact that these same "excesses" have the effect of intimidating and silencing many people who already understand the danger, and that fascism feeds and grows on its "excesses." Hitler's "excesses" helped rather than hindered his rise to power. It takes extreme naivete to believe — in 1953, after seven years of an unprecedented witch hunt — that there is something so exceptional in the American tradition that "it can't happen here."

Alexander Meiklejohn, the noted educator, has an article on the First Amendment which finishes with the warning that "the Supreme Court, more than any other agency or person in our society, must be held responsible for the destruction of those constitutional principles which that court is commissioned to interpret and defend."

There are three personal accounts of lively interest: "The Fear I Felt" by Kermit Eby formerly CIO research director and now a faculty member at the University of Chicago, who was haled before the Jenner committee; "Challenge to McCarthy" by Corliss Lamont, who invoked the First Amendment in refusing to cooperate with the Wisconsin witch hunter; and "How Crazy Can They Get?" by Janet Scott who was fired from a reporter's job because she would not discuss her political views with the House Un-American Activities Committee.

In another section, a group of articles written from abroad, the novelist Kay Boyle, who has lived most of her adult life in Europe, tells why she is disregarding the advice of her European friends and returning to her own country now to join the struggle of "the other America," that is, the anti-McCarthyite America. Included in this section is an important article by Claude Bourdet, French editor, which will be discussed at another time in this paper.

The democratic tradition in this country can aid the struggle against fascism, but only if it is linked to a program of action capable of mobilizing the people for an independent fight on McCarthy's own terrain — the struggle for political power.

THE ADVICE THEY GIVE
And that's exactly what is missing from the conclusions presented by the editors of the Nation in their "Call for Leadership."
They offer advice to Eisenhower on what to do "to defeat the program of his own Attorney General" — fire Brownell, prevent passage of wire-tapping and anti-Fifth Amendment legislation, take "resolute action" against the concept of guilt by association, appoint men of high caliber to a presidential commission to study and report on the civil liberties situation while getting Congress to declare a moratorium on the witch hunt, etc., etc.

They offer advice to the Democrats — be a principled opposition, stop trying to show they are more "anti-communist" than McCarthy, "learn to stand erect in the presence of J. Edgar Hoover," "formulate a foreign policy consistent with (their party's) domestic program and one that does not breed McCarthyism at home," etc., etc.

A number of the writers — Miss X and Howard Mumford Jones, Harvard professor, for example — appear to think that McCarthyism will defeat itself by going too far. "I am confident that the senseless repression will pass, like the Salem witchcraft madness, in a wave of revulsion against its excesses," says Miss X.
Jones sees hope in "the general sense of fair play and the national sympathy for the underdog," and foresees a return to "proper procedures... when, and only when, the passionate minority can persuade public opinion

Democrats not to act like Democrats. This doesn't make much more sense than urging McCarthy not to act like McCarthy.
The fact is that McCarthyism owes its present sinister power first of all to the Democratic initiators of the witch hunt whose leadership McCarthy has seized, and second of all to Eisenhower, who helped McCarthy get re-elected last year and does not dare break decisively with him today.
No program is worth the paper it is written on if it fails to understand the thousand class lines between McCarthyism and the two parties of Big Business, or if it proceeds from the notion that American fascism can be effectively checked through traditional politics along two-party lines.

SOMETHING NEW
McCarthyism is something new in American politics. It doesn't recognize the old rules, and it can't be destroyed through parliamentary maneuvering. It already has a large mass base, and one that is growing. It will be beaten only by another and more powerful and more independent mass movement — a new political party, based on the labor movement and its allies who have the most to lose from the victory of fascism.

MALENKOV OFFERS BERIA AS SCAPEGOAT IN CRISIS
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But leaving aside Malenkov's time-table of the purge, it is a fact that his show-trial coincides with an unexpected worsening of the Soviet agricultural crisis. A harsh winter set in much earlier than any one expected.
Since October the columns of the Russian press have carried a long list of "alarm signals" about thousands upon thousands of acres of grain, potatoes, vegetables and fodder crops suddenly buried under mounds of snow and irretrievably lost.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE
"Senator McCarthy has now clarified the fundamental issue," say the editors of the Nation in a concluding article. "He has made it plain that he is driving for the Presidency, for total power, for the ultimate destruction of democratic procedures."
But neither the editors nor most of their contributors seem capable of drawing appropriate conclusions from this truth or of elaborating a program of action to fit the danger that they recognize.

Murphy Weiss
These are some of the differences between us and the Stalinists on McCarthyism. I hope you will consider them in the light of the seriousness of the situation in the United States.

"After all, the world has already had an unforgettable experience with fascism and hundreds of millions know it and hate it. The American fascists, operating in a country which was indoctrinated to accept World War II as a conflict to rid the world

week. To finish out the campaign and the year with this kind of achievement can mean only greater success for the Militant in the year ahead."
Chicago finished third on the national scoreboard with another week to go in their local campaign. Literature Agent Alice Wiley reports six six-months subs and 15 single copies sold over the weekend. In addition 19 Militants were sold on the campus by Bert and Wilson.
Most of Los Angeles' score is the result of single copy sales in a number of different neighborhoods, according to reporter-Dick Kirby. "The reception to the paper was friendly and the campaign was an enormously valuable experience for us. We now plan to go after the renewals and general subs. Our high scorers were: Erroll, 81; May, 74; Carolyn, 69; Clyde, 58; and Tby, 48. This includes no subs but just individual papers."
In fifth place on the national scoreboard, Seattle has one more mobilization to go in their campaign. Literature Agent Helen Baker writes, "We have one team in Seattle, Jack and Celia, who because of illness, have only been able to work in the few blocks surrounding their home. Their success is not so spectacular as Leon's and Ann's, but they have sold one six-months sub, have a promise of two more and have two neighbors who will buy the paper each week as they bring it to their door."
"A door-to-door mobilization next Sunday will complete our campaign. So far our pace setters are George with 189 points and Frank with 107. They secured most of their high score by getting subs on the job. Ann and Leo, who have scores of 100, and 80, account for theirs by going door to door, almost entirely by single copies."

Buffalo comrades sent in 14 subs this week to bring their total to 841. Cleveland brought in 734 points for the campaign, and Detroit rolled up a score of 606.

Milwaukee more than doubled its score in the last week of the campaign, bringing its total to 488. Local high scorers are Al C., 144 points; Paul R., 94; Jim B., 88; Francis, 82; and Fred, 46.

Pittsburgh got a late start on sales. "But we are chalking up some fair results anyhow," writes Literature Agent Marianne Moore. "Yesterday Mary and I went out house to house and sold 15 single copies in a little more than an hour. Enclosed are one new six-months sub and one new year sub. We have sold a total of 78 single copies so far."

Table with columns: City, Points. Lists cities and their scores on the national scoreboard.

Fascism and Big Business
By DANIEL GUERIN
A thorough scientific analysis of the social bases of fascism — fascist strategy on the march to power — and fascism in power.

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