

TROTSKY'S "COMRADES"

THE *Labour Monthly* of June published an article by R. P. Dutt explaining loftily that Eastman's book on Trotsky was not Marxist because it indulged in personalities. (Dutt's reading of Marx cannot be very extensive!)

In another part of the same issue it published a violent personal attack by W. N. Ewer on J. F. Horrabin and myself; and an article by "P. Braun" (since issued as a pamphlet) which also contained abuse of me.

There is a good deal to be said for leaving this sort of thing alone. Mere abuse, and dirty controversial methods, in a way answer themselves. Ewer, for example, starts off with a quotation from a private conversation, over a year old, which he has polished up and published in the hope of scoring a point against Horrabin and, I suppose, making bad blood between Horrabin and myself.

But it is a mistake to leave it unanswered. People read it and say "Of course, this is pretty obviously prejudiced—but there may be something in what the man says—anyway, there's been no reply to it"; and so the mud sticks. And as Horrabin and I are both prominently associated with the movement for which THE PLEBS stands, a reply in these columns will not be out of place. (Besides, if we send our replies elsewhere they will probably be cut about or excluded; the *Labour Monthly* has declined to print replies from Plebs before.)

Ewer is vicious against us both because we dared to defend Trotsky. I have a certain sympathy for him—he rallied instantly to the order of the machine and wrote the now notorious review in the *Daily Herald*, where he called his fellow Communist a "senile colonel gabbling in an arm-chair." This was in an anti-Communist paper, by the way. Then, almost before the ink was dry, Trotsky was reappointed to most important posts, and Ewer has had publicly to eat his words. He can't turn on his superior, so he works off his humiliated feelings on

us! And it is true that the Comintern officials have treated him with an almost excessive disregard. In this very article that I am answering he explains lordily that it is just like a Cabinet disagreement: a man could not be allowed in the Cabinet after writing like Trotsky, etc., etc. In the interval between this being written and printed, he has had in the *Daily Herald* to chronicle Trotsky's appointment to posts "which are equivalent to Cabinet rank." Poor lamb! He ought not to be held up to ridicule like this; after all, they should remember he was doing his best.

Well, he has answered himself on that point. His next point is simply the assertion that we left the British Party in pique and hoped Trotsky would do the same with the Russian party. Every reader of *Lansbury's Weekly*, who saw my article, knows this is false. There is no more important thing than the strengthening of the Russian Revolution, and the Russian C.P. is its chief defence. If I were in Russia, I should certainly be in the C.P. For over there it is a serious party, the mainstay of the revolution, expressing the desires of the conscious proletariat. It is its chosen and tried defence, and it is at least roughly true to say that on its side are the workers, and those who are opposed to it are the workers' enemies. Are any of these things true of the British Communist Party? The question has only to be asked for the answer to be a shout of laughter. The parallel is absurd.

Ewer, foreign editor of an anti-Communist paper, in whose columns he abuses a fellow Communist, is good enough to insinuate that I change my opinion "at a word of command." I am not sure what he means, but I fear I must grant him first place here. I have not even learnt the trick of writing attacks in the *Labour Monthly* over pen names on my colleagues. No, in the matter of a slick and servile pen, I cannot pretend to compete with him.

So much for him. "P. Braun" is a simpler phenomenon: the ordinary dirt-slinger. Inquiry fails to reveal anything about "P. Braun," and it seems that, according to Party practice, this is a false name. It is wiser, you know, for people sometimes lose their tempers and even visit an office and kick their traducers in the backside or take other petty bourgeois action.

"P. Braun" manages to hint that I supported trade union unity "only in March, when the wind began blowing very strong in favour." You see the innuendo?—that I opposed until I felt it safe to go with the stream. I will not bother to answer it.

Then he rehashes and distorts the disagreement between *Lansbury's Weekly* and the *Sunday Worker*. The *Weekly* had demanded that the British workers should force the Government to accept any overtures from the Indian Swarajists. "I am not at all inclined to blame Lansbury for this," smirks "P. Braun" with the air of one in the know; "the lines to the greater glory of Das were obviously written by the hand of a renegade." Poor chap! for in point of fact G. L. wrote that note with his own hand! However, since "P. Braun" says so, no doubt the British workers will now realise that G. L. is a renegade.

I had thought of replying to "P. Braun's" last phrases in which he describes me as a "professional deserter," "harmful," "most dangerous," and so on. But I think that those who have followed what I have done will not want me to answer such phrases: those who believe them will not attend to any answer. As for those who know nothing of the matter, I only ask them to observe that the man does not even sign his real name.

I end with one quotation to show how incredibly silly the policy of these people is. It is about the I.L.P. conference:

"An honest political party of the working class should have demanded: (a) the dissolution of Parliament; (b) the bringing to trial of all those who participated in the Red Letter plot. . . . Such demands would have political sense."

What on earth would have been the

use of passing such resolutions? If this is political sense, what is political idiocy?

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THE April *Labour Monthly* contained a review by W. N. Ewer of Trotsky's book on Lenin, which was described as consisting of "pathetically feeble gossip," and its author labelled "a vain, garrulous tattler."

Whereupon I remarked in The PLEBS ("Bookshelf," May number) that it was rather comic that—before the Communist Party ukase went forth against Trotsky—a chapter of this "pathetically feeble" book was published in the *Labour Monthly*, and indeed "featured" as a star contribution.

This still seems to me to deserve some explanation. Ewer, in his article on "Trotsky and His 'Friends'" in the June *L.M.*, doesn't refer to it; which from a controversialist's point of view was perhaps wise of him.

Instead, with much play of irony, he labels me "Trotskyist," and does his best to corral me with the "disgruntled Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, S.R.s, monarchists, and Tsarist intriguers" who wanted to use Trotsky in order to "break the Russian Communist Party." May I disclaim any such melodramatic ambition? I aimed at nothing more than pointing out how smartly some people can "right about face" in the interests of "discipline." In short, I was writing about Ewer; and only incidentally about Trotsky at all.

There are two points in Ewer's article on which I would like to comment:—

He drags in "Dot and Carrie." This, of course, isn't being personal, because as he and all his colleagues tell us when discussing "Trotskyism," Marxism doesn't deal in personalities; and Ewer is a Marxist. But may I inquire of him, with all due restraint, just what the way in which he or I earn our livings under capitalism has to do with a discussion of our attitude or actions as Socialists?

Second, he says I "resigned in pique from the British Party." He is misinformed. I resigned, quite deliberately, because the British Party chose, equally deliberately, to act in a manner calculated to injure a move