

# SOCIALIST YOUTH REVIEW

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AN OPEN LETTER ON THE AYD  
by James T. Farrell

100 YEARS OF THE  
COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

Editorials, Films, Book Reviews,  
and other articles

PUBLISHED BY \_\_\_\_\_

10c THE SOCIALIST YOUTH LEAGUE

# SOCIALIST YOUTH REVIEW

Published by the Socialist Youth  
League. May - June Issue

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## NOTES . . . .

The article by James T. Farrell on the AYD was written at a time when the drive against that Stalinist front organization reached its peak. Though the specific subject is an old one, the general problem of the socialist attitude towards the legal rights of totalitarian Stalinist organizations is becoming of paramount importance.

Comrade Farrell comes to grips with these problems in his article and presents views which are shared by the Socialist Youth League.

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In the next issue of SYR we hope to have a letters-to-the-editor column. Readers are invited to send in suggestions and criticisms of the magazine. Also, articles that are of a discussion nature will be considered for publication.

\* \* \* \*

A new editorial staff for SYR has been elected and is planning a larger and technically improved magazine. The increased size of the magazine will allow for more articles topical political problems.

The editor and business manager are comrades Gertrude Blackwell and Jack Henry.

\* \* \* \*

The deadline on articles and letters for the next issue is May 31. Articles should be mailed to:  
Gertrude Blackwell  
Editor, Socialist Youth Review  
114 W. 14 St. (3rd floor)  
New York, N.Y.

Business correspondence should be mailed to Jack Henry at the same address.

\* \* \* \*

The increased number of pages, beginning with the next issue will necessitate a boost in the price of the magazine, from ten to fifteen cents.

# The AYD

II

By JAMES T. FARRELL\*

New York City  
May 5, 1947

Mr. Melvin Mencher  
Editor  
The Window  
The University of Colorado  
Boulder, Colo.

Dear Mr. Mencher:

Permit me to thank you for your letter of April 14th, and for the confidence you express in me by asking that I present my views on the AYD controversy to your readers. I am answering your request in this open letter.

You ask me the following questions: "... do you think that groups influenced by the Communist Party should be allowed to function once their identity has been established? Do you think there is any possibility of liberals changing the complexion of a Communist front organization? Or do you feel, with the president of the university, that any group with many Communists should be banned from the campus and from influencing youths?"

Your questions are posed too generally. You are really asking me what I think about the action of President Stearns of the University of Colorado in rescinding the charter of the AYD. I have read the report issued by the committee which investigated the AYD. This committee has, obviously, worked with care. It has attempted definitely to base its conclusion on facts. However, it has not clearly posed questions. Likewise, President Stearns did not go to the heart of the issues involved. Thus, he partially motivated his action by characterizing the AYD as "a front for a foreign dominated ideology." This phrasing is confusing. To be more precise, all Stalinist innocent organizations are a front for an international apparatus which works in secret. This organization or apparatus is controlled by the Kremlin. It uses any and all ideologies. There can be no doubt but that the AYD is Stalinist controlled. It is the Young Communist League under a new name; it uses the language of liberalism and American nationalism instead of that of Marx and Lenin. But to describe it as "a front for a foreign dominated ideology" permits its members and defenders to answer charges made against them by evasiveness. They can

\*Mr. Farrell is a well-known novelist, short-story writer, and essayist. His works include the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy; *The League of Frightened Philistines* (criticism, 1946), and his latest novel *Bernard Clare* (1946).

throw quotations from Thomas Paine in the face of critics. Those who control the AYD have no great need to concern themselves with their critics. They cannot make followers out of their critics. They are concerned with their followers, and with those naive and misinformed young people who can be made into followers. The action of President Stearns helps them more than it hinders them. It permits them to present themselves as suffering progressives who have the interests of the whole American people dear to their heart. In addition, to ban Stalinist front organizations amounts to a confession of impotence and bankruptcy. It implies that one lacks the confidence to fight Stalinism in the open and on the basis of principles.

The best description I know of the Communist parties of the world is that used by Ruth Fischer—"the Russian State parties." Innocent organizations are instruments of the Russian State parties. Thus, these groups are really a front for an internationally organized apparatus. Their purpose is to serve the needs of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. They are progressive only to the extent that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union can allow progressive action. These organizations allegedly fight for alleged progressive aims in many countries, but, at the same time, they remain silent about or else they openly defend the existence of slave labor and of concentration camps in the Soviet Union. They attack American or British imperialism, but only as a means of concealing Russian imperialism; they defend freedom of speech in every corner of the world, except in those places where freedom of speech is inconvenient to Generalissimo Stalin; they attack many crimes and injustices in the west (and these should be attacked) but they attack none of the crimes and injustices perpetrated by the rulers of the Soviet state. *They are Russian nationalists.* As such, they should be exposed and characterized. If they are innocent dupes, it should be remembered that while naivete and innocence can be charming in children and young girls, it is inexcusable in politics. "Neither a nation nor a woman" wrote Karl Marx, "can be forgiven for the unguarded hour in which a chance comer has seized the opportunity for an act of rape." Nor, in the last analysis, can a Stalinist dupe be forgiven for the unguarded moment when his mind has been raped by a misapplied quotation from Marx or Lenin or Jefferson or Paine or Lincoln. But at the same time, it is meaningless to ask Stalinists to admit what they are when it does not serve their purpose to do so. One can only press them with blunt questions, describe their tactics and in that way, isolate them.

These remarks more than suggest the answers\* I will give to your questions. These questions are not well posed. They should be more specific and more clear. For instance, in your first question, you use the phrase "groups influenced to some degree by the Communist Party." Monolithic parties which are totalitarian from top to bottom do not influence



merely to some degree. Either they influence to all degrees, or else, they influence on all vital questions which directly concern their own aims, and they create the illusion of democracy by allowing dupes to talk about that which is secondary or irrelevant to the main issues. But at the same time, I am opposed to the banning of the Communist Party. As a member of the National Board of the Workers Defense League (which is one hundred per cent free of Stalinist influence), I voted for a resolution which has publicly placed the Workers Defense League on record as opposed to any banning of the American Communist party. To ban the Communist party and its front organization will be to endanger all free anti-Stalinist liberal, radical and revolutionary voices in America. One can be sure that the masters of the Kremlin are not worried that their minions in America might suffer the loss of free speech. In one way or another, these masters have taken care of the free speech of their dupes and agents. The banning of Stalinist organizations will only give these organizations the moral credit they need in order to fool people. During the War, the American Stalinists pursued an out-and-out Wall Street line. This fact needs to be erased from the public mind. If you ban them, you will tell many people that they are really the champions of progressive aims and of the workers. And that is what they wish people to think. Then, if they have become established as such champions, they can state that as the leaders of the vanguard of Human Progress, that there is progress in Poland, in Hungary, in Russian occupied Germany, in Yugoslavia, in Roumania, in Bulgaria and even in Siberia which Henry Wallace seems to consider to be more or less like the American wild west of Bronco Billy. The reactionaries who attack the Stalinists as socialist revolutionists are really preparing the ground for reaction in America. They are turning a real force and danger into a demon. The best way to establish reaction is to turn men into demons of the imagination. Then, you slay the demons and you use this pseudo-accomplishment as the means of placing your political power firmly in your own hand.

Yes, it is possible for liberals to change the complexion of a Communist front organization. All they need to do in order to achieve this fine aim is to convince Generalissimo Stalin that he should order such a change. If liberals can so convince Stalin, then, they can change the complexion of Stalinist front organizations. However, it should be added that many in Russia who tried to change Mr. Stalin's mind are now either dead or else they are in jail in Henry Wallace's new wild west.

It is clear, then, that I do not favor a policy such as that of President Stearns. At the same time, I would also remark that I think the position taken by Mr. Brian Wadsworth, in the spring issue of *The Window* is dangerous. Mr. Wadsworth wants the AYD and other Stalinist organizations out in the open so that he can expose them. But for what?

the betterment of that world. But they should, at the same time, know that as long as they are students, they are or they should be trying to develop the most wonderful of all human instrumentalities—the human mind. And if they do, perhaps they will realize that the arm-chair Machiavellianism of Stalinist dupes offers neither the road to insight nor to action that will contribute towards making the world more free,

He does not tell us. There is lynch spirit within the law, and lynch spirit beyond the law. One should be aware of both. The two students who defend the AYD in the spring issue of *The Window* talk of programmes in a language of empty generalities: their articles could have been written by Earl Browder in the days when he was the "beloved leader" of the American people and the twentieth century edition of Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine and Abraham Lincoln. But Mr. Wadsworth has no programme. Why does he want to expose the Stalinists? Because they are not American? But they are Americans! Because they express a foreign ideology? But their language and formal ideology is coming from the same source as his. And there are injustices in America. There is race prejudice. Labor is exploited. America is perhaps the freest country in the world today, but it is not free enough. It must be more free. The *sine qua non* for opposing Stalinism is to fight every injustice in America. Then, one can attack, with principles, the inhuman policies of Stalinism all over the world. Then, and then only, will one's attack on slave labor and concentration camps in the Soviet Union have the convincing ring of principles. The answer to the AYD is an independent student group which dares to face and discuss every question, which bases itself on its own members and not on a central organization in New York City, and which really seeks to help students to become mature, independent, and fearlessly direct in their effort to think, to learn, to prepare themselves to take their place in the world we know. Against such an organization, democratically run, and with complete local autonomy, the AYD cannot stand a chance of winning influence. Of this, I am convinced. The Stalinists and their reactionary enemies are really alike. If one points out that there is Jim Crow in America, an out-and-out reactionary will answer by declaring that there is slave labor in Russia. If one points out that there are concentration camps in the Soviet Union, the Stalinoid liberals will evade the issue by talking about Girdler and Talmadge. The Stalinists so act that the bitterest reactionaries in America can pose as champions of freedom: these reactionaries so act that the Stalinists can come forth with the same pose. They are both threatening to eliminate all independent voices, and to clear the field for a struggle between themselves. They are gradually forcing on the public mind a false either-or proposition. They use different emotional words of appeal, but they have the same authoritarian type of mentality. To think, to act, to try and contribute towards making a better world, one must be free of both influences. Students can best learn to be free by forming a free and open organization which is controlled by its own membership, and which does not fear to raise, to study, to discuss any and all valid questions. This is the way to create free minds. Only free minds can fight authoritarian minds. Students should be interested in the world in which they live. They should try to contribute towards

and towards fighting for peace and plenty. James Connolly, the Irish revolutionist and national martyr once remarked that unity is a good thing, but that if unity must be achieved at the cost of principles then it is not worth the price. Unity with Russian State parties is not worth the price more than is unity with Eugene Talmadge.

# STALINIST POLITICAL CIRCUS

It is easier to go through a maze than to keep track of the Communist (Stalinist) Party changes in line.

Below, we quote from articles about Roosevelt and his politics published by the Stalinists, which should at least indicate the fabulous flip-flops which mark the whole history of Stalinism. Unfortunately, we have only enough space in this issue to merely indicate the web of lies and contradictions in which the Stalinists have been caught up.

"Roosevelt's policies, as is already evident, are policies in the interests of the bankers and big industrialists and against the interests of the toiling masses. The dictatorial powers already taken by Roosevelt -- already a step toward fascization-- are being used against the toilers.....this is the anti-working class program of Roosevelt."

(Statement of the Central Committee, Daily Worker, March 30, '33)

"At the same time a more insidious form of fascism is being foisted on the people, represented by the logical evolution of the National Recovery Act and Roosevelt's assumption of power never attained by former Presidents in time of peace."

(New Masses, January 2, 1934)

"Meanwhile, it is already being amply demonstrated that the attacks of the Reactionary Republicans and their stooges on Roosevelt's peace proposals is standing the Nazis in good stead."

(Daily Worker, editorial, August 19, 1939)

"Mr. Roosevelt, you.....with the applause of the Republicans, connived to bring Chamberlain and Hitler together for the Munich betrayal of Czechoslovakia."

(Daily Worker, editorial, October 30, 1940)

"Hooverism had driven the country as close to hell as a nation may approach and still remain a democracy, and then a new President (Roosevelt) took office. Right then, at the very beginning, the people knew he was their man."

"Better than most men, Franklin Roosevelt knew that American Democracy was a living, vital, and revolutionary ideology."

(New Masses, article by Howard Fast, April 24, 1945)

"....we know that we are a better people because Mr. Roosevelt was at the helm. We are a better people because somehow and sometime all of us have partaken of his wisdom. And somehow his greatness has seeped into the very fiber of our lives and of our beings. The man will shine in the national memory as long as the nation lives."

(New Masses, April 24, 1945)



# EDITORIALS...

## WE CAN'T WIN WITH WALLACE

The Wallace Third Party movement has tremendously increased its support in recent months, particularly among students and national minorities and to a lesser degree, among a section of the labor movement. This is due, not so much to "Wallace's" "program", as to the bankrupt politics of the other two capitalist parties. Wallace has successfully channelized the discontentment arising out of the Truman Administration's draft proposal, the Palestinian betrayal and the increasingly reactionary labor legislation of both the Democrats and the Republicans.

This development, though it contains some encouraging signs, is also an unfortunate one. It is encouraging in that it reflects a growing and active disillusionment on the part of youth and labor with the shabby, capitalist politicians of the two major parties. It is unfortunate in that this discontentment is being deflected by a movement which has nothing better to offer.

### WHAT DOES WALLACE STAND FOR?

Wallace's "program" is primarily a negative one. He and his leading backers are quite ready to draw up a long list of accurate grievances against the policies of the Truman administration and the Republican Party. But what does Wallace concretely offer in his domestic program? He tells us that he is against monopolies. Wonderful! So are a lot of people. But if he is going to break up monopolies what does he plan to put in their stead? On this, he has said little, except to emphasize his faith in the "system of free enterprise". How it is possible to maintain capitalist free enterprise today except on a monopoly basis, the Wallaceites have not explained. What Wallace's proposal actually boils down to is that we go back to the good old days of horse and buggy capitalism. We fail to see anything progressive in this.

Wallace also tells us that he is against religious discrimination and Jim Crow. But talk is cheap. Every politician plays on the healthy democratic sentiments of the American people with noble sounding declarations in every election year. Witness Truman's Civil Rights Report. Talk is cheap. How conveniently have Wallace and his cohorts forgotten his record! A cabinet member in the Roosevelt government for thirteen years, his actions then belie the promises he offers now. As Secretary of Agriculture, he was largely responsible for the criminal policy of plowing under crops, and the killing of every third pig when "one third of the nation was ill-fed, ill-housed and ill-clothed."

He makes fine speeches now about racial equality. But what a contrast all this talk is to the Jim Crow Department of Agriculture which Wallace proudly headed. Wallace must be judged by his record when in office, not by the vote-getting promises made so freely when out of office.

No candidate deserves even a second thought from anyone, unless he makes clear his stand on foreign policy. The age of isolationism is properly dead. What happens in London, Paris, Moscow, or Singapore vitally affects the well being of the mass of American people.

Insofar as Wallace has committed himself at all, he is committed to defending and apologizing for the reactionary politics of Stalinist imperialism. He has come out, not for One World, but for Two Worlds: one under the hegemony of American imperialism, the other dominated by Russian imperialism. Aside from the utopian absurdity of the practical aspects of this proposal, it reveals the Wallaceites' willingness to subject masses of people to the monstrous oppression of Russian totalitarianism, on the one hand, and the slightly more subtle exploitation by American big-business interests, on the other.

The Wallace movement is a contradiction in its domestic "program" and is still more inconsistent in its support of capitalism at home and Stalinism abroad. It is consistent only in its basic anti-working class and anti-socialist character.

#### FOR AN INDEPENDENT LABOR PARTY

The American people need a Labor Party. Not a fake Third Party like the one that Wallace and his Stalinist inspirers offer, but one based upon the needs and aspirations of labor and genuine progressives. An Independent Labor Party which will break from the politics and influences of the traditional capitalist parties and consistently oppose reaction in Washington as well as in Moscow. A party which can transform the American government from its present status as servant to big-business, to a Workers Government which will serve the interests of the broad mass of people -- the workers, the farmers and the youth. It is only such a party that can fill the vacuum in American politics today.

### Editorial [ AGAINST THE MARSHALL PLAN ]

If the abstract meaning of the Marshall Plan is economic aid for the devastated nations of Europe and food for their hungry peoples, then no socialist - or any person with a spark of human feeling - could oppose this plan. However, the Marshall Plan as the Abstract Idea has little in common with the Marshall Plan as a reality. The only meaningful way in which the plan can be discussed is when placed in its social context. Only then, is it at all possible to get an accurate picture of the Marshall Plan: its motivations, aims and consequences. "Motivations" are important to uncover, as they give us a better insight into the Plan, facilitating an analysis of it and predictions as to its results.

It should be clear that the European Recovery Program is not motivated by humanitarian considerations. The plight of the millions of starving peoples today in China and India has not produced any Marshall Plans for those nations. In Truman's original address to congress on the plan, and in the subsequent congressional hearings and speeches, it has been adequately demonstrated that the Marshall Plan is an attempt to stabilize American capitalism.



This stabilization is to be accomplished through two basic techniques. First is the industrial aid designed to re-establish American markets in Europe and, secondly, through food loans to the hungry people, to destroy the popular base that Russia has demagogically built for its own imperialist interests among the European working class, particularly in France and Italy.

The ability of American capitalism to effectively rebuild the European economy is negated by several factors inherent in the capitalist system itself. The plan means a tremendous initial investment in Europe which may never pay dividends should the Stalinists succeed to frustrate the plan through their political influence in the working class of Europe. Without such dividends the Marshall Plan could only succeed in hastening an economic collapse at home. Secondly, we must remember that capitalism is a competitive system. The individual capitalist in America competes with other native capitalists for domestic and foreign markets, and competes on the world market with foreign capitalists. To significantly rebuild the capitalist economies of Europe would mean the revival of a European capitalist class which would eventually become a competitor of, and threat to the security of American capitalism.

That is, in brief, the dilemma of American capitalism today in relation to aid for Europe: effective economic assistance is self damaging in the long run; no aid means the immediate loss of necessary markets and sources of raw material.

The only "guarantee" that Washington could have today that even the inadequate aid now proposed would stand the American capitalists to any good, would be its assured hegemony over Europe's political life. Wall Street would have to reduce Europe to a semi-colonial status. There is no other way that American capitalism could protect its interests from competing Russian imperialism, from the ambitions of a renascent European bourgeoisie, and from the economic and political aspirations of the European working class.

It is not necessary to point out where capitalist politicians have openly said that the Marshall Plan means the economic and political subjugation of Europe. Imperialism always parades as the benefactors of mankind, not its oppressor. Our understanding of the general nature of capitalism and the specific needs of American big business monopolies today, reveals the Marshall Plan as a more subtle extension of the imperialist pattern.

As socialists, our opposition to the Marshall Plan flows from our basic criterion of how this plan will affect the independence, and the living standards of the European working class. We are opposed to any plan which is used as a weapon against the independence of the working class. We do not believe in imperialist alms plans that are used as a means of perpetuating capitalism, a system which means a constantly decreasing standard of living for all working people.



# A SOCIALIST APPEAL

The trap is being set.

The war hysteria is being consciously manufactured by the "men of state" to enlist mass support for conscription and war. The Marshall speech, the Byrnes speech, and the Truman address on "The state of the world" are all part of the same pattern for war.

The fight of the socialist Youth League against conscription is part of our fight against all forms of imperialism - at home and abroad. It is part of our fight against American Dollar Diplomacy which is attempting to subjugate the entire world under its dollar shaped heel. It is also part of our socialist struggle against the rapacious imperialism of the Russian state; a state which in its practices and ideology has betrayed every socialist concept.

Youth cannot afford to sit on the sidelines. It must actively participate in the fight for human dignity and freedom. That fight must not be translated into support for either Stalinist or American imperialism.

The battle for human dignity and freedom is synonymous with the fight for a socialist America. A socialist America in a socialist world where factories produce for useful consumption --- not for armies, wars and profits; a world where the masses of people determine their own destiny, not where it is dictated by the interests and needs of a selfish few. This fight is much more than a moral one. It is a fight for our personal existence and the continued growth of human culture.

We must not remain mere spectators.

\* \* \* \*

The above three editorials, plus the article of clippings from the Stalinist press, have been stapled together and may be ordered by individuals, groups or any youth or party units for distribution in front of schools and youth meetings. The price is six dollars per thousand copies, which is the cost of publication.

Thousands of copies have already been distributed and great interest has been evoked.

\* \* \*

# DEMOCRACY, SOCIALISM AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The relationship between democracy and socialism is a problem that has become primary for the socialist movement. The rise of dictatorship in Russia has become for many liberals and intellectuals, proof of the ultimate tendency of proletarian dictatorship towards elimination of economic democracy and individual rights.

The Socialist society as seen by Marx is historically conditioned. By this we mean that such a society is only possible once techniques of production are developed to a point where the struggle of man for existence is outmoded. For, so long as scarcity exists, the desire to appropriate the production of others will exist. The strong will seek to enslave the weak and reap the fruits of their labors. Slave society, feudalism and capitalism viewed as class societies rested on the struggle between classes for that which was produced.

## ECONOMIC BASIS OF SOCIALISM

A classless society can maintain itself only when productive techniques are so developed that material struggles will become subsidiary to other aspects of living. The existence of such a society wherein production is at such a high level, means several things. It means an abundance of leisure and consequently a human and cultural development unparalleled in history. Contributions to art, philosophy and science have come for the most part from groups which have had the leisure time to develop non-productive pursuits. "Time is the father of all culture".

Such a development of technology would mean that the struggle for the necessities of life which has dominated all of human existence would subside in importance. The class struggle would no longer be necessary. Witness the example of a subway train. When there are not enough seats, passengers push each other around. More subway guards are needed to open and close the doors. When there are plenty of seats, however, the situation is quite different. There is no mad scramble for seats. Passengers don't push each other. Less subway guards are needed. To project this example to the historical level, only in a highly productive economy where there is plenty for everyone, can we think of the possibility of a socialist society. The struggle for the means of existence, i.e., the class struggle, will be outmoded.

## THE DEGENERATION OF THE RUSSIAN WORKERS STATE

Russia, at the time of the revolution, was a backward country. whose productive level, compared to that of an advanced capitalist nation, was insignificant. The material basis for a classless society in Russia simply did not exist and could not be developed within Russian boundaries. The Bolshevik party which led the Russian Revolution was well aware of this situation. That is why they based all their aspirations for Russia on a victorious



revolution in an advanced country, specifically Germany. Lenin hoped that the Russian revolution would light the fires of proletarian revolution throughout Europe. Indeed, the period following the Russian revolution was one of intense revolutionary struggles outside of Russia. These struggles failed. The defeat of the European revolution following World War I, insured with it the defeat of socialism in agrarian, isolated Russia.

## WHAT IS BOLSHEVISM?

There is another aspect to the question of democracy and socialism which developed within the socialist movement. This problem can be summed up as Bolshevism. The degeneration of the Russian revolution was not caused primarily by the economic backwardness of Russia, according to the theoreticians of the Social Democracy, but was inevitable for quite different reasons. It was, they claim, a natural outgrowth of Bolshevism which is essentially undemocratic in nature. Bolshevism, for them, is a conspiratorial, monolithic tendency which aims to seize state power undemocratically and establish, not the proletarian dictatorship (a misnomer according to them), but a dictatorship of the Bolshevik party. This is social-democratic mythology not historical fact. The reality is that Bolshevism is antithetical to stalinism in theory and action. There is no inherent continuity between the two.

The first point we must establish is the difference between the stalinist and bolshevik concepts of the party. The latter concept of the revolutionary party rests primarily on the necessity of the party to be prepared for all eventualities. The party must combine those aspects of centralism which will afford its effectiveness in action, and those aspects of democracy which will provide for a rich and fruitful ideological life within the party. This means that minority differences on policies, tactics and theory which arise within the party must be given freedom to influence the rest of the party. The history of the Bolshevik Party was one of discussion and controversy. Minority tendencies existed within the party on most of the important questions. It was for this reason that Bolshevism made outstanding contributions to revolutionary theory and practice.

## BOLSHEVIK CENTRALISM AND DISCIPLINE

The question of how much centralism and discipline is to exist in a revolutionary party cannot be answered in a formula. In Lenin's "What Is To Be Done" he states that the high degree of centralism, the rigid standards for party members, the necessity for the strict discipline which he outlines for the Russian party should be modified when applied to a democratic country. The Bolshevik Party in Russia was subject to close surveillance by the Tsarist police. For years a Russian police inspector sat as a member on the central committee of the Bolshevik Party. Under these conditions it was not possible to have all party affairs discussed openly. All members of the party could not be familiar with each other. It was necessary, for example, to give leading committees the power of co-optation, i.e., the power to appoint a member to a committee without an election.



## ROLE OF THE BOLSHEVIKS IN THE REVOLUTION

The relationships of the Bolshevik Party to the revolutions of 1917 give little credence to the totalitarian myth. The first revolution occurred in February. The Tsarist government was overthrown and was replaced not by one government but in actuality by two. One was the provisional government which was a coalition of bourgeois parties and eventually of all other parties except the bolsheviks. The masses who had overthrown the Tsarist autocracy established their own councils in the factories, the army and the rural regions. These were the soviets. Much of the actual work of administering government was performed by the soviets. A state of dual power existed. The Provisional Government had not been elected. It simply stepped in to fill a vacuum.

The Bolsheviks raised three slogans: "All Power to the Soviets", "A Constituent Assembly", and "Land, Bread and Peace". By September, the soviets in Petrograd and Moscow, the leading industrial centers of Russia supported the slogan of "All Power to the Soviets". Neither the Mensheviks nor any other party supported this slogan. The Provisional Government repeatedly promised and repeatedly delayed the convocation of the constituent Assembly, which when it finally met after the Revolution was no longer representative of the sentiments of the Russian people.

## ROLE OF THE OTHER PARTIES

The policy of the other parties both bourgeois, peasant and working class was notoriously undemocratic. The Provisional Government, which was not an elected body, suppressed the peasants' seizure of land from the large land owners, and refused to recognize the legitimate democratic nature of the Soviets. It delayed the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. It provided a forerunner of the Stalinist Moscow Trials technique by framing the Bolsheviks as "German Spies". It pursued an imperialist war policy when the overwhelming majority of the people wanted peace.

The peasant supported Social Revolutionary party split in two. The split was mainly due to the policy of the provisional government in arresting peasants who seized the land. The Right-Wing Social Revolutionaries supported the Prov. Govt.; the Left-Wing opposed the policy of the party leadership. It was the Left-Wing which collaborated with the Bolsheviks in the November Revolution. The majority of the peasants for obvious reasons supported the left-wing. Thus the November revolution was essentially a socialist revolution whose key slogans were those of elementary democracy which rallied around it the majority of the workers and peasants.

When the Constituent Assembly was finally convoked it was no longer a Constituent Assembly. Electoral lists which had been prepared months before, gave no cognizance of the split which had occurred in the Social Revolutionary Party. The majority of the peasants who supported the left wing of the party were recorded as voting for the right wing. At the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly, which occurred a few days after the Soviet Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky presented the Assembly with a document calling on them to recognize the power of the Soviets. When this unrepresentative, undemocratic body refused, it was disbanded.

The early days of the Revolution saw no suppression of other parties that propagandized against the government. The first active steps against other parties were taken only when they joined the forces of counter-revolution who were organizing in the South. It was admitted in the Menshevik party Congresses in 1918 that many sections of their party had joined the counter-revolution.

It was after the Civil War, when the rigors of War Communism were barely over, when the European Revolution had evidently failed, when thousands of worker militants had died at the front when conditions were so bad that in some sections of the country cannibalism prevailed, that degeneration began to seep through the party apparatus. Lenin began to speak of Russia as a bureaucratically deformed workers state. The terrible material forces of history had begun to make themselves felt despite the heroism of the Bolshevik-Leninists.

### STALINISM FLOWED FROM THE DEFEAT OF BOLSHEVISM

Today we see the final product in the Stalinist police state. Before Stalin could consolidate his power, however, he had to exterminate physically the leading cadres of the Bolshevik party including Lenin's Central Committee. Stalinism was physically incapable of co-existence with Bolshevism. He had to distort all Bolshevik theory including the concept of the Party. The Communist Party is similar to Lenin's party only in name. No opposition is tolerated. There is no freedom of discussion, no ideological life.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

If we are to discuss blame at all, and it is not always fruitful to do so, then the failure of the Russian Revolution lies not with the Bolsheviks but rather at the hands of those who betrayed the European Revolution. It was the German Social Democracy who suppressed the German Revolution. Under the orders of Noske, the Social Democrat, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered and the German revolution destroyed. It was the European Social Democracy which supported the first World War and supported the intervention in Soviet Russia. The Social Democracy today has gone further into the imperialist camp than anyone would have dreamed twenty years ago. Leon Blum calls himself and his party "The trustee of French capitalism". The French Socialist party supported the action of the French government against the national struggle of the Indo-Chinese. The imperialist betrayals of the British Labor Party bear little repeating. The German Social Democracy, numbering nine million organized workers, allowed Hitler to step into power without a demonstration. That is the record of the self-righteous democratic critics of Revolutionary Socialism.

### THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY IS THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

Bolsheviks believe that the essence of socialism is the fulfillment of all types of Democracy. The trend toward Fascism in present day capitalism leaves little hope for democracy under the

status quo. The Workers Party and the Socialist Youth League have continued to fight for democracy in the only way which can succeed; by continuing the socialist struggle. Those who consider themselves "trustees of capitalism" have abandoned not only the struggle for socialism but the struggle for democracy as well.

Gertrude Blackwell

R o s a   L u x e m b u r g   o n :

## THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The party of Lenin was thus the only one in Russia which grasped the true interests of the revolution in that first period. It was the element that drove the revolution forward, and, thus, it was the only party which really carried on a socialist policy.

It is this which makes clear, too, why it was that the Bolsheviks, though they were at the beginning of the revolution a persecuted, slandered and hunted minority attacked on all sides, arrived within the shortest time to the head of the revolution and were able to bring under their banner all the genuine masses of the people: the urban proletariat, the army, the peasants, as well as the revolutionary elements of democracy, the left wing of the Socialist-Revolutionaries.

The real situation in which the Russian Revolution found itself, narrowed down in a few months to the alternative:—victory of the counter revolution or dictatorship of the proletariat — Kaledin or Lenin. Such was the objective situation, just as it quickly presents itself in every revolution after the first intoxication is over, and as it presented itself in Russia as a result of the concrete, burning questions of peace and land, for which there was no solution within the framework of bourgeois revolution.

....And he who tries to apply the home-made wisdom derived from parliamentary battles between frogs and mice to the field of revolutionary tactics only shows thereby that the very psychology and laws of existence of revolution are alien to him and that all historical experience is to him a book sealed with seven seals.

from "The Russian Revolution"  
by Rosa Luxemburg