BLAZING NEW TRAILS — BY JAY LOVESTONE

(We publish below as discussion material some extracts from the political report of Jay Lovestone to the recent plenary session of the National Council of the I.C.L.L. Other sections of his report will appear in the next issue.—THE EDITOR.)

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THE time has now come when we must examine everything, literally everything, objectively, on its own merits. We can take nothing for granted. It is up to us in this period of transition to view everything critically, to test everything in the light of our experiences internationally and in this country. Critical realism should be our fundamental slogan.

If we subject the basic principles of Marxism, of revolutionary socialism, of communism, to such an objective and critical analysis, we must reach the conclusion that they stand the test of experience to the fullest degree. Everything that has happened since the World War and the Russian revolution confirms these principles, altho sometimes in a thoroly unexpected and surprising way. In the future as in the past, we intend to hold firmly to these guiding principles.

But there are a vast number of traditional conceptions that have not stood up as well, that have shown their inadequacy, that need reexamination and revision. It is here that our critical thinking is most needed.

What Kind Of International?

Let us take the biggest question that confronts us: What is an international revolutionary organization of labor and what should a revolutionary-socialist International be like?

I think it is time we developed a more adequate conception of it. I think it is high time to think over our experiences in the Comintern and to see where we have erred and what we should do to avoid the same mistakes.

I cannot emphasize too much the international foundations of our movement, the international character and substance of our movement. This is an "absolute" for us. The very question of war, which is today the central question, is an international question which has within it every problem on a national scale expressed most intensely. The very nature of capitalism today is international; or, on the other hand, take the international consequences of the Russian crisis. They are of immeasurable import, not only for the Russians, not only for the communists and for the revolutionists outside of Russia, but for the labor movement as a whole.

Firmness in principle is the first prerequisite and the principles of the class struggle are international. Flexibility of tactics and self-direction in organization are as much prerequisites. The keystone is "exceptionalism." Without this, you cannot have a living revolutionary body.

For the sake of argument, let's say that the tactics of the People's Front in France were correct at a certain time. Does that mean that simultaneously they had to be applied in Siam and in the United States as well? This mechanical uniformity of tactics which has cursed the Communist International, in many ways not only recently but in a large measure since the beginning of the Comintern, this has been the bane of the international communist movement and I believe we should be thinking of a new type of international organization—flexible in relation to tactics, independent and self-reliant in organization.

Then, of course, there is collective international leadership. One-party domination of an international revolutionary movement is extremely dangerous. The Second International was dominated too much by the German social-democrats and the Third International was domineered almost entirely by the Russian policies. And one of the reasons the Second International collapsed so quickly when the last "war for democracy" came was that the moment the German social-democrats went over to the war camp, it was pretty hard to get across the idea in other countries that the socialists should not go over to their own governments.

The situation in the Comintern today isn't precisely the same but the moment the Russian Communist Party begins to impose on other parties its tactics, begins to impose the strategy of momentarily "friendly" diplomatic relations with bourgeois governments on the other communist parties in their relations with bourgeois parties in their countries, that is the end of it as an International.

Superficially, the Comintern looks like an International but this is misleading, because its underlying system of leadership makes it impossible for every section of international labor to march in the most rapid and effective way it knows how on its own sector of the international front toward the socialist revolution.

This is not the kind of organization that, in my opinion, can fulfill the tasks placed upon a revolutionary International in the world situation today. We need an International that will be a world federation of parties standing firmly on the same international foundation of revolutionary socialism but each self-reliant and independent in its organization, each itself determining its policy, strategy and tactics on the basis of its own conditions and the needs and interests of the masses. We have in mind an International as a world federation of parties, each an equal among equals.

Role Of Party In Revolution

I want to say a few words about the role of the party in the revolution, another one of the questions recent events have caused us to reexamine very seriously. The fundamental role of the communist party in a revolution is international. It would hold true in Germany, in Russia and in the United States. But there are different countries in the world and different conditions in these countries and I believe we ought to look into the different forms that revolution would take under different conditions.

For instance, I am of the opinion that the trade unions in countries like the United States, England, and Spain will play an infinitely greater role in determining the course, the leadership and the fate of the revolution than in a country like Russia was in 1917.

Take the question of the one-party system under the proletarian dictatorship. I am of the opinion that what has happened in Russia cannot be made the universal rule everywhere. Even in Russia, it was some time before the coalition with the Left S.R.'s broke up and a still longer time before the non-Bolshevik socialist parties were suppressed.

Anyway, I can see very well that, in Russia, there were a lot of factors making for a monopoly of leadership by the Bolshevik party.

But it would be the most fatal error for us to copy mechanically or to ape the Russian experience. It was necessary, for some time in Russia, to disfranchise everybody but the workers, even giving the peasants only one-fifth of a vote; but this certainly does not mean that, in countries like America or England, with their long tradition of universal suffrage, a completely similar course will be pursued.

I ask you to reread the reply of the Third International to the I.L.P. at the time the latter was negotiating to join the Comintern. One of the questions MacDonald asked was: "Do you propose to disfranchise everybody but workers?" And Lenin answered: "Not necessarily in the other countries."

The Spanish question brings this out most directly. I want to say that I would have very grave doubts, even if the Communist Party of Spain were a revolutionary and not a counter-revolutionary party, or if the P.O.U.M. were a mass party, I would have very grave doubts as to the necessity and soundness of a proletarian government monopolized by the P.O.U.M. There it would certainly be necessary to have a coalition of proletarian organizations and parties participating in soviets.

The specific form and structure of the proletarian dictatorship, otherwise than that it is necessarily based on the broadest kind of mass councils, are thus matters that will not everywhere follow the Russian "model" but will be determined by the specific conditions prevailing in the country, the historical background and traditions included.

Case of Bukharin And the Left S.R.s

By WILL HERBERG

AGAIN has the G.P.U. fallen into a pit of its own digging. Dimly aware of the universal contempt and indignation with which the earlier Moscow "trials" were met, Yezhov and his assistants apparently determined to "improve" the arrangements for the "trial" now under way. For one thing, the official stage managers decided to throw just a grain of truth into the mountain of falsehood. But it seems that the only effect they have been able to achieve is to make the grotesque frame-up stand out even more conspicuously by contrast.

The Grain Of Truth

Take one example. The main burden of the "case" against Bukharin is based on his activities as leader of the Left Communist faction in the early part of 1918, that is, just twenty years ago. The "chain of argument," if it may be dignified as such, runs approximately as follows: Bukharin was the leader of the Left Communists—the Left Communists were against the Brest-Litovsk peace and so were the Left Social-Revolutionaries—the Left Social-Revolutionaries engaged in a plot to overthrow the Soviet government and arrest Lenin—a Social-Revolutionary terrorist, Dora Kaplan, made an attempt on Lenin's life—therefore Bukharin was the moving spirit of a vast conspiracy to "overthrow the Soviet regime, restore capitalism and assassinate Lenin, Stalin and Sverdlow."

In this ingenious construction, the first four "links" are statements of fact, altho far from precise; the fifth, the conclusion, is as fantastic a falsehood as the G.P.U. has ever had occasion to concoct. What are the real facts?

1. Bukharin was indeed the leader of the Left Communist faction in 1918. And his opposition to Lenin's "peace" policy was shared by the Left S.R.'s. But, at that time, the Left S.R.'s were a legal party, broadly represented in the soviets and, for a period, even in the government together with the Bolsheviks. Some Left S.R. leaders did indeed suggest the possibility of a coup d'etat—but the Left Communists decisively rejected the idea and broke with them as a result. When the Left S.R.s precipitated a revolt of their own some months later (July 1918), there were no more loyal defenders of the soviet power and the Bolshevik party than the Left Communists. For this we have what the Stalinites must necessarily regard as unimpeachable evidence, the testimony of E. Yaroslavsky, the very same worthy whose venomous diatribe against Bukharin appeared in the Daily Worker a few days ago. Writes Yaroslavsky in his "History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (German edition, 1931, second part, p. 168):

"The Left Social-Revolutionaries, in their negotiations with the leaders of the Left Communists, actually touched upon the question whether it would not be possible to arrest the Council of People's Commissars and put thru a coup d'etat. When the Left S.R.s launched their attack, when it was a question of armed conflict with the Left S.R.s in order to liquidate their insurrection, then the Left Communists naturally did not hold back from the front ranks of the party. At that moment, the Left Communists liquidated their differences with the party."

And to this we may add the testimony of the history of the C.P.S.U., edited by W. Knorin and written by a group from the Red Professors Institute of Party History. We quote from the book, "Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (Moscow, 1935):

"The Left Social-Revolutionaries during the days of Brest tried to enter into relations with the Left Communists, especially Bukharin, for the purpose of organizing a coup d'etat, of arresting Lenin and forming a new government" (my emphasis.—W. H.)

"Tried" to enter into relations, notice—even this bitterly anti-Bukharinist history (written in 1935!) does not claim that they actually entered into relations with him, much less got his approval for a conspiracy against Lenin!

2. So sharp, indeed, did relations between Bukharin and the Left S.R.s actually become that, in 1919, there took place a Left S.R. attempt to assassinate him by blowing up the office in which he was working.

3. Dora Kaplan, who made the attempt on Lenin's life, belonged to the party of the Right Social-Revolutionaries, an entirely different party bitterly hostile to both the Left S.R.s and the Bolsheviks. What any alleged relations between Bukharin and the Left S.R.s would have to do with Dora Kaplan and her murderous act is certainly a mystery, one of those typical G.P.U. mysteries.

4. The above quotations from party textbooks show that Bukharin's conduct as the leader of the Left Communist faction and the attempts of the Left S. R.s to "enter into relations" with him were matters of common knowledge in 1931 and 1935—despite Vyshinsky's clumsy pretense that it was all discovered just a little while ago by the "ever-vigilant" Yezhov. As a matter of fact, the entire party, and Lenin above all, knew everything there was to be known about Bukharin as far back as 1918. Yet Lenin and the party raised Bukharin to the heights of party leadership—editor of the Pravda, member of the Politburo, author of the two drafts of the Comintern program, chairman of the Comintern. And, in his letter of December 1922, which is usually regarded as his last political testament, Lenin characterized Bukharin as "the best and most valuable theoretician of the party and legitimately looked upon as the favorite of the party." If it is to be taken seriously, Vyshinsky's indictment is an indictment not of Bukharin so much as of Lenin and the Bolshevik party!

5. Finally, sharing leadership with Bukharin in the Left Communist faction in 1918 were such figures as: Yaroslavsky, Menshinsky, Kuibyshev and Uritsky. Every-

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The Price of the Soviet Purge

FROM an article by Harold Laski in the Nation of November 20, 1937: **"There is no doubt but the mass executions in the Soviet Union in the last two years have greatly injured the prestige of Russia with the rank and file of the Labor Party. They do not understand them, and they feel that those who accept them without discussion are not satisfactory allies. I do not comment on this view; I merely record it. In my judgment, the executions undoubtedly cost the supporters of the united front something like half a million votes in the Bournemouth Conference."**

Virtuous Indignation

THE Daily Worker is all up in arms fuming with virtuous indignation—this time not against us but against their own allies on the "collective-security" war front, the right-wing socialists of the Social-Democratic Federation.

"The American Labor Party," the Daily Worker complains aditorially in its issue of March 2, "has received some free advice from the little group of right-wing 'socialists' . . . who now call themselves the Social-Democratic Federation. In a resolution, these 'socialists' issue a warning against the 'infiltration' of Republicans and Democrats into the American Labor Party. Naturally, there is always the danger that unhealthy elements will try to capture the A.L.P. . . . However, if honest persons are to be barred from the A.L.P. **merely because they are still Democrats or Republicans . . .** would mean narrowing down the organization instead of giving it the rapid, healthy growth that it needs" (emphasis ours.— The Editor.)

Now isn't that outrageous: keeping people—"honest" people, too, and probably kind parents and good neighbors—out of the American Labor Party "merely because they are still Democrats or Republican"! Of course, the idea of a labor party is precisely to break the hold of the Republican and Democratic parties over the working masses. Of course, the constitution of the American Labor Party specifically bars from membership those who belong to other political parties. But what do such details matter to the Stalinites who simply must have some genuine, true-blue Democrats and Republicans in the A.L.P. in order to make it a People's Front!