

Herbert Zam Quits the Lovestone Group

The Lovestone group, both internationally and at home, marches from triumph to triumph! As a world-wide Right wing reaction to the more obvious follies of the Stalinist "third period", it first swept along thousands, and perhaps tens of thousands, of Communist workers, and not the worst among them. Its hopeless position determined its own disintegration. Its powerful Czechoslovakian section capitulated miserably to the 2nd International, while a small section in the German-speaking lands moved to the Bolshevik-Leninists. Its Italian "section" (Serra) went the way of the Czech, its Hollanders, under Wijnkoop, crawled back to the Stalinist fleshpots. Its white hope in France established the "Party of Proletarian Unity" for the capture of parliamentary sinecures, and the Brandlerites had to disown them, too. Its white hope in Spain, Maurin, was too wily to tie his cart to a shooting star. The big prestige and following it enjoyed in the Scandinavian countries completely disappeared, following the break with the strong Swedish section. All that remains of the so-called I.C.O. ("International Communist Opposition") is the broken frame of the Brandler group in Germany, begging piteously for readmission into the Stalinist, and the American Lovestoneites.

Life has been no bed of roses for the latter. Starting out with hundreds of members and functionaries from the official party in New York alone, it has dwindled to an essentially local movement with no influence outside the city. Capitulation to Stalinism has vied with splits and splittlets in other directions. The notorious Bert Miller and his friends eventually landed in the camp of Father Cox's Liberty party. Others went over to the American Workers Party. Gitlow, second-in-command, broke away with a group of followers, took a big step forward from Stalinism by advocating a new revolutionary party, and then fell victim of the contradictions in his position carried over from Lovestoneism.

Now another break has occurred. Herbert Zam, founding member of the Communist party, Young Communist League, and in 1929, of the Lovestone group, a member of its leading committee all the time, has sent in his resignation with an open letter to the membership explaining his position. Having taken a stand in favor of new parties throughout the world (except in the Soviet Union!) after the shocking collapse of Stalinism in Germany, Zam met with the furious resistance of the group's Elders, whose perspectives is bounded on every side by an artful hope of grace at the hand of Stalinism. If he was not expelled, it was only to "avoid a scandal"; he was sup-

pressed, however, thus permitting the Elders to boast so loudly about the "unanimity of the group". Zam's departure followed. Excerpts from the statement which he is circulating show some of the reasons for the disintegration and inevitable suicide of the Lovestone sect.

"I write this after hearing the report of our International representative that the Alsatian section of the I.C.O., the Communist Party of Alsace, has been expelled. This was the strongest section of the I.C.O. after the Swedish party, which was similarly expelled some months ago. The expulsion of the Alsatian section marks one of the major steps in the disintegration of the I.C.O., which has today been reduced practically to the German and American groups, thus giving substance to the charge of our opponents that the I.C.O. is only a 'Brandler-Lovestone faction'. **The I.C.O. as an international factor no longer exists.** Starting out with such great promise, it has passed into history, a victim of wrong methods of work and of leadership, of inability to reorientate itself when new contradictions and new problems came to the fore."

After showing that the prevalent view in his group was that some great event would bring the Stalinists to sanity, that this event occurred in Germany but produced no effect upon the bureaucracy, that the only way genuine revolutionary unity can be effected is by assembling the revolutionists outside the 3rd International, Zam continues:

"In the last year the group has moved backward, not forward, in its political orientation. It is not accidental that on all new questions the I.C.O. finds itself in substantial agreement with the Comintern. The I.C.O. and the Comintern agree in the condemnation of all groups desiring new Communist parties as 'Centrist' and 'counter-revolutionary'; the I.C.O. and the Comintern agree that only the Russian C.P.'s adherence can make a revolutionary international genuine ('Even if there were a new Communist party in every capitalist country there could not be a new International without the Russian party—', Wolfe); the I.C.O. has retreated from its previous estimate of the Trotsky movement and today agrees with the Comintern as to its 'counter-revolutionary' character; the I.C.O. and the Comintern are in complete agreement in their condemnation of the Left wing inside the Socialist movement as 'fake'; the German group (but not the American group) approves the shameful hero-cult which is being developed in the Soviet Union and throughout the Comintern; the American group (but not the German group) has become one of the most mill-

itant apologists for the failure of the German C.P. to organize a real fight against Hitler's assumption of power; the German group (but not the American group) agrees with the Comintern in its opposition to the formation of a Farmer-Labor party in the United States; the I.C.O. and the Comintern both agree in their sectarian attitude to the 'Centrist' parties and organizations and on the necessity of working for their destruction rather than their conversion to Communism. The I.C.O. developed for the Comintern the 'August Block' theory which grants the Comintern the monopoly on revolutionary integrity."

Zam's notes on the internal regime in this "International" of crusaders for party democracy reveal that Brandler-Thalheimer, in Berlin or in exile, differ little from the Stalin Secretariat. In the American group, the picture is no more alluring:

"In our own group discussion before the last convention (whatever discussion there was) name-calling became the main weapon of the majority ('Centrist', 'Trotskyist', 'social democrat', etc.); the leadership was anxious not to convince the membership of the proposed policies, but to stampede or even intimidate it, into accepting them. Cheap political trickery was resorted to at the convention itself, and the new National Committee was elected on a most factional basis, practically excluding all but a single representative of the minority from participation in the leadership of the group. A practice was developed of presenting new policies first to the outside world as the policies of the group, and then asking the group to pass upon them when the group had already been committed to them. Leading spokesmen of the group took it upon themselves, as individuals, to expound views which had been formally rejected by the group (Lovestone at open meeting on Socialist party convention). Comrades who were in agreement with the minority, or otherwise in discord with the Bureau majority, were squeezed out of work in the group, or out of the group altogether (Rubenstein, Conner, Jones). **Of internal party democracy, only the form remained, the substance was discarded just as surely as had been the case in 1929.**

"All this was done because the majority of the leadership of the group stood in deadly fear of a rejection of its policies by the membership, and because it was desirous of making a 'clean' appearance in the eyes of the official C. P. and Comintern leadership."

He is leaving his group, concludes Zam, "because I am a revolutionist, because I want to continue to work effectively for revolutionary working class unity; because I want to help build a real, world-wide, united Communist International. . ."

To the Marxist, politics finds expression only through organization. How, by what instrument, does Zam propose to effect the estab-

lishment of the genuine Communist International? On this score, not a word is uttered. If the Gitlow incident has more than a fleeting importance, it lies not so much in his break with the Lovestone group, as in the brief and futile career of the group which Gitlow formed after the break, the existence of which—never more than shadowy—is now a matter of concern only to a political coroner. Because a revolutionist is not an adventurer, his choice in politics is extremely restricted. After his breach with Lovestone, Gitlow thought he could avoid making the choice. He failed to draw the logical conclusions of the advance he made. His inability to think the problem out to the very end, manifested itself in his quaking fear of "Trotskyism", that is, of the bold, consistent principles of revolutionary Marxism. After the first few gingerly approaches, he leaped back. He has been moving to the Right ever since. On a different scale, but essentially of the same gender, the Frenchman Doriot has travelled the same road, with the result that he too is now tobogganing down the Centrist slide to the camp of the Right wing. It is worth while pondering over such lessons. . . .

Zam is now at the crossing of the currents. He is free to strike out vigorously to one side or another. In view of the direction from which he has come, there are really but two currents with which he can go. One will relentlessly impel him to the social democracy, and his resistance will only be diminished and eventually eliminated by the illusion that, as a single revolutionist, sailing without banner or rudder, unsustained by the collective physical and ideological collaboration of co-thinkers, he will be able to achieve his goal (the new International) on reformist shores. The other will bring him to the camp of organized Marxism, which, whatever the marching route that objective conditions may indicate to it, always proceeds with a banner collectively worked out and borne aloft, a clearly understood strategic goal, a trained army and staff—all of which make its blows a hundred times more effective.

There is the choice. It is not the easiest one in the world to make. The genuine revolutionist, however, will not choose wrongly. —M. S.

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P.S. As this goes to press, we learn from what appears to be an authoritative source that Zam, and it is added, Gitlow, are about to join the Socialist party. Having landed in a blind alley, they have taken the counsel of desperation. Confronted with the choice which a revolution would not have found difficult to make, they have taken the wrong course. We record it and pass on.

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