Maoists Assault Trotskyist Leader

[The following report is taken from the March 15 issue of the Toronto revolutionary-socialist biweekly Labor Challenge.]

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On Wednesday, Feb. 24, Dick Fidler, a leading member of the League for Socialist Action [the Canadian Trotskyist organization], was attacked and beaten by three supporters of the Canadian Party of Labor, a small Maoist grouping.

Fidler came upon the three about midnight pasting CPL posters on the League for Socialist Action headquarters in Toronto, and asked them if they had permission to do so. Their response was to attack him and beat him until diverted by the approach of a passing taxicab driver. Fidler was severely bruised.

The Toronto LSA has distributed the following statement to CPL members and the local radical press:

"We, in the League for Socialist Action protest this attack. In our view it is an attack on and threat to the whole left.

"Such attacks make it easier for the authorities to divide the left and to attack it. They lend justification to charges that those on the left are the source of violence in this society. They can open up the left as a whole to attack by these authorities—themselves the promoters and perpetrators of violence in Canada today.

"There are a number of groups within the radical movement which hold widely varying views. Are the differences between these groups to be settled by physical violence until the group with the strongest members wins out? Using physical violence to this end is an old discredited Stalinist tactic and we must make sure that it does not return to plague the left.

"We, in the League for Socialist Action, have important political differences with the Canadian Party of Labor. We are ready at any time to discuss these differences openly and democratically with CPL.

"We believe that democratic relations between the different left groups are essential to the development of the left as a whole. Do the members of CPL have such a lack of confidence in their political ideas that they must attack their opponents on the left physically rather than participating in democratic debate with them?"

"The Canadian Party of Labor must publicly apologize for this attack and commit itself to cease the use of physical violence against its opponents on the left."

REVIEWS

Soviet Art Exhibition in London

Londoners who wish to see the exhibition of Soviet art and design called "Art in Revolution," sponsored by the Arts Council, will have to go—not just to the Hayward Gallery—but also to the Anneley Juda Gallery.

Even at that they will miss the PROUN [for the new art] Room designed by Lazar Lessitsky in 1923. This room of twelve square feet, designed by the eminent architect, typographer, and artist, was completely reconstructed down to the last detail at the Hayward. But officials, unable to remove it, agreed to seal it up and paper it over—so it would not even be known to have existed.

The paintings in the Anneley Juda Gallery were originally in the Hayward exhibit. They were removed on the insistence of officials of the government of the USSR, who loaned material for the exhibit. The items that met with bureaucratic disapproval include works by the major figures of that incredibly free, innovative cultural upsurge that immediately followed the October revolution—Vladimir Tatlin, Lyubov Popova, Kasimir Malevich, and Lissitzky.

The story of the exhibition is a sorry one of bureaucratic dictation and obsequious compliance.

It appears that top officials of the British Arts Council held discussions in Moscow in June 1970 with Deputy Minister of Culture Popov. They were shown lists of exhibits that were available but claim only to have come to agreement on the project when Soviet officials agreed to include some works of the 1920s which were suppressed during and since Stalin's time as deacon.

In the meantime, Hayward Gallery officials went about borrowing various works, including some by Lissitzky from the widow of the American rebel journalist Lincoln Steffens.

When the Moscow loan arrived, it was discovered to be a rejected list.

Arts Council Chairman Lord Goodman's protests to Popov were to no avail—the exhibit went on—and when Moscow gallery officials arrived and demanded the removal of the borrowed materials, the British officials complied.

With the agreement of Minister for the Arts Lord Eccles, they blotted out the Lissitzky room, and they even wrote into the catalogue—in a summary of the ingenious stage director Meyerhold's last work—that "he never lived to see its completion" and that it offers "a tantalizing glimpse of what Meyerhold might have achieved."

Meyerhold was not only barred from completing this work but all his work was proscribed, and he disappeared under the torture and murder machine of Stalin.

—Ross Dowson

After a Lengthy Investigation

The British Foreign Office announced March 19 that Chou En-lai had apologized for the sacking of the British embassy in Peking in 1967. Chou reportedly blamed the incident, which occurred during the cultural revolution, on a "bad element." It's probably only a matter of time until we'll be told the culprits were directed by Liu Shao-chi.

The Wonders of Science

A recent study by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research has discovered that workers paid low wages are not as happy as workers who get higher wages. Next they'll be telling us that higher-paid workers aren't as happy as capitalists.