Capitalism's Labor Henchmen

THE C. I. A. AND LABOR

There is an old cliche which refers to double-edged weapons and to the fact that one can use a razor blade to shave or to cut one's throat. Labor unionism is also a weapon — a working class weapon — which, alas, the working-class "leaders" have been using effectively, in collaboration with the capitalists, to cut working-class throats. On the domestic front and in the field of international politics, labor leaders have been found to be ever ready to place themselves at the disposal of the employing class — along with the facilities which, theoretically, belong to the rank-and-file of the membership.

Recent disclosures of collaboration between labor union officials and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) underscore the role of the labor leader in support of the devious undertakings of labor's enemy, the capitalist system. And ugly as the deals between labor leaders and management have been through the years of class struggle in the United States, the role of union officials in the conduct of government foreign policy has been even uglier. They have cheerfully permitted — and still permit — themselves to be used as undercover agents of American capitalists against foreign governments and also against the interests of the international working class. Their excuse, like that of their U. S. capitalist employers, is "anti-communism" which label they also affix to Russian and Chinese state capitalism.

THE LABOR TOOLS

In a well-documented essay entitled *American Labor and the Root Commission to Russia.* (Studies on the Left, Number 1, 1962), Ronald Radosh tells the story of the precedent-making decision of the Wilson Administration in using labor and "socialist" leaders to further their interest in foreign affairs. The Russian Revolution of February, 1917 (old calendar) was hailed by the American Government as a stroke of good fortune. America was on the verge of entering the War and was faced with a large and vocal opposition. The War was supposedly being fought between democracy and autocracy, yet here was the world's number one autocrat, the Czar of Russia, allied with the "freedom" fighters. There was little sympathy for the Allied cause among the relatively large minority in the United States that had experienced the blessings of life under the Czar. Another relatively large minority, the German-Americans, was also unenthusiastic about the possibility of a defeat of the German Imperial Government, undemocratic as it was, by a far worse tyranny. And the Socialist Party of America which, in those times, was healthy enough to make itself heard had a few spokesmen of the antiwar variety to counteract their many pro-War leaders. Congressman Victor Berger, for example, and Morris Hillquit were actively offering anti-war advice that was being heard among the social democrats of Russia.

The overthrow of the Czar's Government and its replacement by a Provisional regime headed, at the beginning, by Prince Lvov — a "liberal" — but dominated by Russian Social Democrats (professed Marxists) and Social Revolutionaries (anti-Marxist radicals) was welcomed in Washington. But the situation was by no means an unalloyed boon to the Allies. There was considerable agitation among the Russian "socialists" for peace and the thought of millions of Russian soldiers leaving the trenches at the very moment American workers were entering them was disconcerting to the American Government. In fact, so urgent had the situation become that Ambassador David R. Francis wired from Petrograd to Secretary of State Lansing on April 10, three days after U.S. entry into the War, that there was grave danger of the Russian troops walking out. Something had to be done quickly, and it *was* done.

Secretary Lansing proposed that Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, be sent to Russia because he "would have a very decided influence with the labor element in Russia," and his presence would serve to prevent "the tendency of the socialists toward a separate peace with Germany." (*The Lansing Papers,* Vol. 11, p. 325, Lansing to Wilson, April 11, 1917.) Wilson responded favorably and immediately appointed a Commission which, although headed by the conservative Republican Elihu Root, included James Duncan — AFL first vice-president — and Charles Edward Russell — well-known throughout America as a "socialist." Russell, who was pretty much a stranger to working-class mannerisms, took along his best suit of old clothing in order to impress the Russian workers. Samuel Gompers, who refused to go, did, however, help pave the way of his fellow pro-War officials by wiring the new Russian political leaders to the effect that freedom could only be won by them on the battlefield against their German fellow-workers.

Summing up his account, Ronald Radosh comments:

> "...In effect both Russell and Duncan had simply allowed themselves to be used as agents of Wilsonian liberalism, without in any way advancing the interests either of socialism or the labor movement in whose names they spoke. The Administration, on the other hand, had reason to be satisfied. Although the Root Commission failed to achieve its primary objective, the precedent of having labor leaders pursue Administration policy in the name of American labor had been established."

But those were other times and more rivers of blood were to be spilled in the name of freedom, liberty, and democracy in the decades that followed World War I and the Russian Revolution. The Bolshevik rulers of Russia have been, of course, the classic example of a regime that spoke in the name of labor and, unfortunately, of "socialism" or "communism." Unknown millions of Russian workers have been tortured and murdered in the half century that followed with approval and even with complicity by labor leaders, "socialists," and "communists" in various parts of the globe. And that, too, is another tale.

GOLD FROM WASHINGTON

In his syndicated column of February 24, 1967 (Boston Globe), Drew Pearson writes of the CIA's "100-million Voice in Labor." Pearson claims that the $1 million paid to the Newspaper Guild over the last six years is but a drop in the bucket.

"The rest of the CIA money paid to organized labor, estimated at around $100 million a year, is probably the biggest fund dished out by Central Intelligence to anyone."

Then, Pearson proceeds to list the unions and union affiliates which have been the chief beneficiaries of the CIA's open purse policy. And lo and behold! Like Abou ben Adhem, the name of Mr. Jay Lovestone leads all the rest—in fact Jay Lovestone turns out to be head of a sort of Labor CIA through which all CIA funds allocated to labor unions must be cleared. Jay Lovestone is, without doubt, the living refutation of the oft-heard caution that one must start off on the "right foot" in order to become a success in the world. As the original General Secretary of the American Communist Party, Jay Lovestone certainly started off on the "left" foot.

Real old-timers in the socialist and radical movement in America will remember Lovestone when he was Moscow's number one mouthpiece in the United States. Those of us who entered the fray since 1929, when Lovestone was deposed and replaced by William Z. Foster in the wake of the purge by the Bolsheviks of Lovestone's hero Bukharin, will remember the loyal opposition or-