

*The 'Vanguard' Theory.*

I regret that the *New Reasoner* has not given more space to the constructive examination of the problems of working-class leadership, and to a critique of the Trotskyist solution.

At the risk of losing many friends, of being accused of opportunism, idealism, or other such sins, I would like to make my position clear in relation to existing theories of leadership. One does not have to oppose the need for a 'Vanguard', and therefore become a non-revolutionist, as some people suppose. The Hungarian workers had no 'Vanguard', yet the depth and understanding of the Hungarian workers was greater than any since the Russians of 1917. The 'Vanguard' corresponded to a given historical need, but is not essential to-day; in fact, it is a definite hindrance. Rosa Luxemburg understood the problem of party and masses well. We have her criticism of the Russian revolution, and her warning of its degeneration if the Soviets were deprived of real power. In her last speech, prior to being brutally murdered by the forerunners of Hitler, she said many sound things about the introduction of socialism: 'Socialism,' she said, 'will not and cannot be inaugurated by decrees, it cannot be established by any government, however, admirably socialistic. Socialism must be created by the masses, must be made by every proletarian.'

Earlier in the same speech she had said, 'that in whatever country after Germany the proletarian revolution may next break out, the first step will be the formation of workers' and soldiers' councils'; further, 'it is through the councils that we can alone hope to realise socialism'.

Lenin himself saw this too, when he pinned his hopes on the Soviets. Prior to Lenin's return from Switzerland, the Bolsheviks had raised the question of a Constitutional Assembly. It was Lenin, who, understanding that the Soviets were the genuine instruments of the workers, raised the question of 'All power to the Soviets'.

This does not mean that I think the workers will rise spontaneously, without aid, and end capitalism, nor does it mean that I think that Marxists ought not to organise. That they must do, but they must stop all attempts to impose artificially on to the workers, the 'line', 'God's message', which only they know.

The question of Marxist organisation is different for different periods. It seems to me that the serious people to face on this question are those who accept 'Trotskyism'. There are a number of groups who accept this label. The one thing which unites them all, is that each in their own way, they intend to become the 'new leadership'. They hope to succeed where the Communist Party has failed.

Their arguments are based on those of Lenin, and developed by Trotsky. In reality they stem from the view that the workers cannot get beyond Trade Union consciousness, that socialism must be brought to the workers from outside. The division of mental and physical labour is brought right into the workers' movement, and the unity of theory and practice is a continued separation. This is not to deny that Trotskyists are devoted workers for socialism (as they see it), who spare no efforts or sacrifice for their ideas (the same can be said of thousands of rank and file Communist Party members), but despite all this, their basic theory and practice is one in which the workers are directed and led, rather than the workers' self-

action with the Marxists going along with them as part of the general movement.

The problem of the Party and its relation to the mass of the workers, is a complex one, and as yet I do not believe that a satisfactory answer has been found. The position of the Trotskyists is a very contradictory one. To-day in the *Fourth International* (the paper of the official 4th International), the view is propagated that in a Socialist society there must exist more than one workers' party, a position held by Trotsky after his experiences in Russia. The question then arises, which party is the 'only true' leadership? Surely, the danger exists of action against all the other combatants, if one of the parties gains overall leadership. On the basis of personal experience with certain of the Trotskyist 'leaders' in Britain, where the term, 'we will smash you', is frequently used in discussion, I certainly do not feel too happy about prospects in a state where power was in their hands. Stalinism and Trotskyism in any case, seem to me to be twins, which have diverged and taken different paths, but in the end arrive at the same goal.

Trotsky changed his position many times on the question of the party. In 1903 he warned that excessive centralism could lead to the one-man dictatorship. Later he became one of those who was a super-centralist, and placed extraordinary emphasis on the power of the central committee. Even after his expulsion from Russia he maintained his position on this and was scathing in his attacks on Victor Serge (in the pamphlet, *Their Morals and Ours*), when Serge argued against the old centralist conception, attributing this as one of the main reasons for the Russian degeneration in socialist theory and practice.

Who was right, the early Trotsky, who warned of the consequences of excessive centralism, or the later Trotsky? I feel history has decided, now it is time to move on. Unfortunately, his modern followers despite the experiences of Hungary, etc., refuse to take any steps out of their centralist-leadership position. In a theoretical sense, to-day the Trotskyists are equally dogmatists. Many are new to the dogmas, and have only fairly recently thrown off the Stalinist dogmas.

The Trotskyist viewpoint must be seriously considered, and cannot be flippantly brushed aside. After all, we all have a debt to Trotsky. It was his stand which helped to save Marxism, and nothing can justify his brutal murder. Trotsky must be studied. The unfortunate thing is, he too is being 'Canonized', and his works are also now being transformed into a dogma.

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