

Hometown Revolutionists

REPORT ON THE AMERICAN COMMUNIST. By Morris L. Ernst and David Loth. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 240 pp. \$3.

By DANIEL BELL

IT IS a pity that Messrs. Ernst and Loth have written such a sloppy book, for theirs is one of the few attempts yet made to study why people become Communists and why they break. They have collected biographies from "nearly 300 former Communists." The number of cases is sizable, but meaningless, for of what validity are the conclusions unless we know how representative these individuals are? Messrs. Ernst and Loth assert, for example, that the typical Communist is a middle-class individual "brought up . . . in comfort and often in luxury . . . [He] has had far more schooling than the general population . . . [He] is found more often in the professions."

Why should such an advantaged person turn to Communism? The authors fall back on parlor psychoanalysis. The Communist has a "sense of personal inadequacy . . . induced by resentment and strong frustration . . . large groups have grown up under the egis of a dominating father or an overpowering mother." Since their explanations are primarily psychological, the authors assert that "the political complexion of government [at any given time] does not seem to have much influence upon the size of the membership." Further, the recruit of 1950 is very much like the recruit of 1920.

Such psychological reductionism is tendentious, and when it is not false, it is so general that one cannot differentiate those factors which lead some to find the Communist Party as an outlet and others to seek other modes of revolt. More important, it cannot explain the fluctuations of membership over the years.

The U. S. Communist Party in 1930, after eleven years of existence, had no more than 8,000 members. Four years later membership had tripled; by 1939 it had climbed to over 75,000. Clearly, the Popular Front and the climate of the New Deal allowed the Party to prosper. At different times, different

types of individuals have been attracted to the Communist movement. In the early Thirties the declassed youth and students who found their aspirations blocked by the Depression moved "left." Negroes, like Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, thought they could find social equality and comradeship and were cruelly deceived. The social-worker type felt that the "business values" of capitalism were inferior to the social engineering of Communism, and droves of those joined at a time. Scientists with a passion for order joined in the thought that a Communist social system was more rational. In the salad days of the Popular Front, Hollywood figures flocked in as part of a cozy non-conformity. If one were to construct a rough index of social types, based on signers of "front" statements, one would find a curious succession, with literary figures predominating in the Thirties, and ministers the prime dupes in the late Forties and Fifties. In part the answer lies in the different appeal of the Communists, in the one case a literary rebellion, in the latter, "peace"; but it is precisely these different images that attract different types of persons.

Apart from fellow-travelers and some of the middle ranks of Party leafers, the assertion that the Communist is primarily from a middle-class background strikes me as highly dubious. It certainly was not true of the rank-and-file in the Twenties. Although many middle-class individuals joined in the Popular Front, so did many union members as a consequence of Communist activity at that time. In fact, "Robert," one of Ernst's and Loth's cases, reports that when he organized a county in the West, half of the 400 members were from unions and only seventy-five were professionals.

One of the most interesting bits of data in the book is the information, attributed to the FBI, that of 5,395 Communist leaders in 1948, 3,908 were of foreign birth or immigrant parents and the overwhelming percentage of these were of Russian descent. Messrs. Ernst and Loth imply that as Russians they were more highly trusted by Moscow and hence placed into leading positions. The simpler answer would seem to be that these were the Communists with longer service, since the Party in the Twenties was primarily from foreign-language federations and first-generation urban children. Again, a simpler factor of time is ignored.

It is a pity that Messrs. Ernst and



—Justus in The Minneapolis Star.
"One Man's Poison Another Man's Meat."

Loth have concentrated so much of their energy to prove American Communism a form of middle-class neurosis. If they have failed to grapple successfully with the problem, they have raised real and important questions. Most important, they have tried to show the Communist novitiate as a human being with idealistic impulses and to convince the public that combatting Communism is much more than a police action or publicity via Congressional exposure. Of those who become Communists, a few become hardened and turn into Party hacks or agents. The greater number, after a painful period of soul searching, "break" and leave. Yet the decision is difficult. Communism provided a sense of involvement and a tingling feeling of action. In joining the Party old ties were broken and new ones are difficult to form. Becoming an ex-Communist often means becoming a pariah, especially recently when those who have broken late, or are the most vindictive, become shrill and vociferous and demand that all other ex-Communists be as shrill as they, or else face the mendacious insinuation that the break was not real.

Messrs. Ernst and Loth have a number of positive recommendations for dealing with the social and emotional problems of those who would like to break from the Party. They propose a national commission outside the realm of publicity-seeking, which would explore the extent of the Communist menace; they suggest, half seriously, the formation of a "Communists Anonymous" which would serve the same function as does Alcoholics Anonymous for those with alcoholic addiction. These proposals, made schematically, deserve wide discussion. It's a pity, again, that the authors did not do that job rather than indulge themselves in facile and misleading psychologizing.

Daniel Bell, labor editor of Fortune magazine, is the author of a history of Marxian Socialism in the U. S. that was included in the compendium "Socialism and American Life," published by Princeton University Press.

"The More Change the More the Same"

THE RUSSIAN MENACE TO EUROPE. By Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Edited by Paul W. Blackstock and Bert F. Hoselitz. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press. 288 pp. \$3.75.

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

IN 1894, near the end of his life, Friedrich Engels wrote an article for the Russian journal *Sotsialdemokrat* on "The Foreign Policy of Russian Tsarism." It was the ripe fruit of a lifetime of thought on this subject, and contained a prophetic warning of a possible world war in which "Russia and France would be on one side, Germany and Austria on the other . . . and the final decision depend on England." In 1914 this prophecy was fulfilled and Russian orthodox Marxism was proud of its prophet. But in 1934, when the Russian journal *Bolshevik* wanted to reprint the article in its number commemorating the twentieth anniversary of World War I, Joseph Stalin secretly forbade this act of Marxist piety. This was one of the first big steps in the censorship of the writings of Marx and Engels by Stalin. Now Messrs. Blackstock and Hoselitz have compiled a book of 215 pages (without counting their own commentary) made up of writings of Marx and Engels which have either never circulated freely in the "Marxist" Soviet Union or are now unobtainable, unquotable, or totally suppressed.

What can there be in these writings of "the Founders" so dangerous that the self-proclaimed "Best Disciple" has decided to suppress them? After all, Marx and Engels were not writing about Stalinism but about Czarism. They condemn Czarist reaction, autocracy, imperialism, and personal rule, but so did Lenin and Stalin. They express hope of a revolution in Russia which would put an end to Czarist absolutism and ruthless expansion, and Stalin can rightly allege that there has been such a revolution. Yet by 1934 Stalin was taking over so many elements of Czarist absolutism and autocracy to build them into his new total state regime, and so much of Czarist imperialist aims that these "sacred" writings became more and more uncomfortable and subversive.

Marx and Engels considered the ruthless expansion of Czarist absolutism to be the greatest menace to the freedom of the Russian people and

the freedom of Europe. Put Vozhd where they put Autocrat, put totalitarianism where they put absolutism, put purge where they wrote knout, and scores of passages achieve a startling contemporaneity.

"The policy of Russia is changeless," wrote Marx. "Its methods, its tactics, its maneuvers may change, but the pole star of its policy—world domination—is a fixed star."

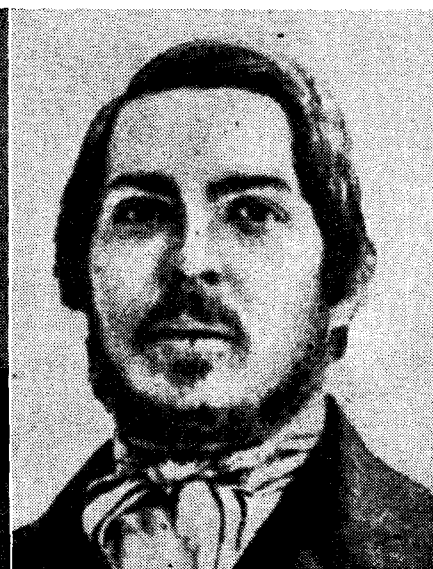
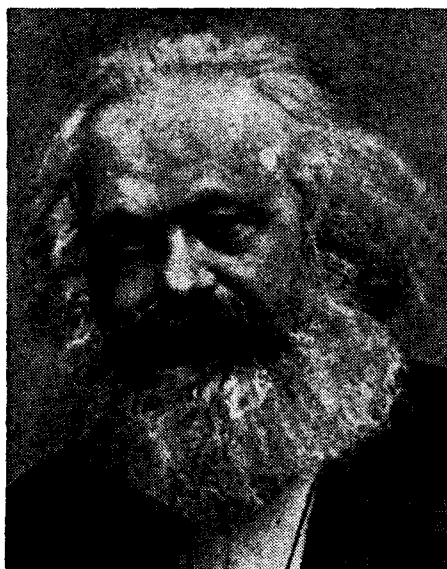
Stalin has taken up Pan-Slavism as an instrument of imperialist policy, but Engels wrote: "The immediate objective of Pan-Slavism is the setting up under Russian domination of a Slavic empire from the Erzgebirge and the Carpathians to the Black, Aegean, and Adriatic seas . . . to convert Austria . . . to cut off one-third of Germany and all of Hungary, to change Vienna and Budapest into Slavic cities." What Marx and Engels wrote about the Balkans, Greece and Turkey, and the Dardanelles during the Crimean War sounds uncommonly like an appeal to all good democrats and all good Europeans to support the Truman Doctrine. The calls for the liberation of Poland sound like a battle cry. Even more startling are the exposures of "Russian agents," of the pose that they are liberating the countries they seek to subjugate, the hope expressed that the Russian people will overthrow their tyrannical despotism, liberate subjugated neighbor peoples, take control of their own foreign policy and domestic affairs, get rid of their oppressive bureaucracy, give land to the peasants. "A people which oppresses another cannot liberate itself."

We must be grateful to Messrs. Blackstock and Hoselitz for having

given freedom of press to Marx and Engels and made available to us these works which are suppressed in the very country that professes to be based upon Marxism and to be the guardian of Marx's and Engels's works. But they have made two serious errors in their presentation which greatly weaken their effectiveness.

First, they have failed to note that some of what Marx and Engels wrote is out of date, some of it youthful, bloodcurdling bombast, some of it part of their unexamined heritage of German nationalism, though much of it contains deep and illuminating insights valuable for our own day. Their few criticisms are so feeble as to suggest an excessive worship of a sacred text as if one authoritarianism were set up against another. Thus, they single out to quote without demurrer in their own introduction Marx's estimate of the Russian Government as "a civilized government ruling over barbarian masses."

Much more serious, in their introduction one feels a total lack of any feeling concerning the fundamental difference between totalitarianism and the more limited despotism of the Czars. In their eagerness to score a debater's point they exaggerate continuity and minimize difference to the vanishing point, concluding their introduction with a passage which must vitiate their work for any sociologist or historian who has the faintest insight into the monstrous features which differentiate the total states of Hitler and Stalin from nineteenth-century despotisms. Their conclusion ("A comparison of Stalinist Russia with Czarist Russia may be summed up by the adage: *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*") goes a long way to undermine the very purpose they set out to serve in their work.



—Bettmann Archive.

Marx and Engels—"the policy of Russia is changeless."

Bertram D. Wolfe is the author of "Three Who Made a Revolution" and other works on the USSR.