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The 'Scientific Morality': Independent Marxists and Stalin's Russia, 1935-1940

Judy Kutulas

Post-World War II anticommunism owes a tremendous intellectual debt to a small group of Marxists active during the 1930s. Although these men and women were neither popular nor influential at a time when Stalin's Russia enjoyed general acceptance within liberal and radical intellectual circles, their ideas ultimately affected millions of Americans. The individuals were independent Marxists, rebels from the Communist Party of America (CPUSA) who criticized Stalinism because of their own dreams of what pure, "objective" Marxism should be.¹ Although snubbed by other intellectuals, they became visible during the fifties, when their anti-Stalinism lost its Marxist taint and formed a main ideological current of anticommunism. Their story represents in extreme form the journey followed by many American liberal intellectuals from an idealized Marxism to a more conservative and pessimistic liberalism. In their case, a belief in the rational, the pragmatic, and the scientific drove them first from party Marxism then to independent Marxism, and finally to liberalism. Like the rest of their radical cohorts, the independents became disappointed with Soviet socialism. Their disillusionment spread among nearly all of the intellectual left by 1950.

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The primary antecedent of anti-Stalinism was some American Marxists' conscious recognition that their Marxism was different. Generally this perception followed a difference of opinion between themselves and the CPUSA. After quitting the party, or being expelled from it, they rationalized their independence by insisting that their Marxism was purer and more objective than the party's. V. F. Calverton, for example, claimed that most American Marxists chose radicalism because it satisfied emotional urges. Calverton believed he became a Marxist for rational reasons, because Marxism was a science. Calverton saw it as a "scientific method" based on social phenomena governed by observable laws of development. He suggested that most other American Marxists did not use Marx's ideas scientifically, but instead tried to bend social realities to fit Marxism, converting the vital scientific method into a "sterile dogma." He and the other rebel Marxists blamed the rigidity of the American party on the Comintern. They believed that the Comintern had defined the American party line according to its own narrow needs, and that factionalism characterized both the party and the Comintern. Hence, the Comintern's policies were not scientific.²

The factors which inclined some American Marxists to make distinctions between themselves and the Communist party were personal. As a group, the independents were diverse in age, background, and education, yet they shared an outlook which emphasized a scientific approach to life. They were naturalists in that they rejected metaphysics and teleologies in favor of the observable and verifiable natural world. They believed that experience was the key to all knowledge, denying the existence of absolutes. These ideas were neither new nor unique to the independents. Instead, they often came from a philosophic tradition of pragmatism or instrumentalism made popular by William James and John Dewey. Not surprisingly, Dewey influenced a good many of the independent Marxists, especially two of his graduate students, Sidney Hook and Max Eastman. Hook and Eastman both extracted from Dewey the suggestion that the scientific method extended from common sense, in the process linking rationality to measurable and verifiable knowledge. The independents believed that social phenomena were subject to natural laws, and that through science man could create more effective methods of social organization.³

The scientific method so dominated independents' lives that it was reflected in every aspect of their thinking and their scholarship. As naturalists, they tended to be atheists or agnostics who questioned God's existence because it was unverifiable. They were suspicious of

systems which relied on religious absolutes. Their scientific approach to life made it more likely that they would become social scientists, critics, or academics rather than poets, writers, and artists, although many independents were highly creative individuals as well. Generally, they were best known for their analytic work: Edmund Wilson for his literary criticism, Lewis Corey for his economics, Louis Hacker for his interpretations of American history, Meyer Schapiro for his art history. They displayed unending curiosity, particularly over why things occurred and how they worked. Whatever they set out to accomplish, independents attempted to attack their subject with the systematic approach of a scientist.⁴

The independents' naturalism also shaped their moral views. Although their notions of right and wrong were not based on religious absolutes, they had clearly defined moral codes nonetheless. Social criteria determined the validity of actions and ideas, programs, policies, and philosophies needed to provide for the common good in order to satisfy independents. They approved of programs which liberated mankind and emphasized freedom, equality, cooperation, and justice. Tyranny, injustice, and competition violated their moral codes because they benefited some individuals at the expense of others.⁵

In Marxism independents believed they found a philosophy which combined their social ideals and their scientific methods. Sidney Hook called it a "scientific morality" rooted in experience and shaped by human needs. Yet in order to see Marxism as a "scientific morality," independents rearranged elements of Marxism to suit their own tastes. Their "objective" Marxism was fraught with subjective interpretations.⁶

Most significantly, they ignored the entire system of Marxian dialectics. Since these "metaphysical trappings" of Marxism (the description is V. F. Calverton's) clashed with their scientific methodology, they merely defined them out of existence. Sidney Hook, for instance, contrasted dialectics with his own scientific method, demonstrating that verifiable scientific information was much more valuable than knowledge based on "a mystical philosophy of nature." Even those who defended the dialectic suggested that Marx based it on the best available scientific information for his time. William Phillips castigated not Marx but his successors for failing to revise the dialectic as the social sciences became more sophisticated. Independents identified the dialectic with factionalism, suggesting that the dialectic provided a rationalization for factional Marxism. They refused to acknowledge that dialectical

materialism was a central part of Marxism, and they excised it from the more scientific elements altogether.⁷

Having restructured Marxism into a more scientific form, the independents also rewrote Russian history. They cast Lenin in the role of a pragmatist who battled the demons of mysticism. Although Max Eastman described Lenin as a scientific Marxist in his 1927 book, *Marx and Lenin: The Science of Revolution*, he had even earlier compared Lenin to his old mentor John Dewey. Eastman justified his rejection of the dialectic by arguing that Lenin also denied it. Edmund Wilson added to this portrait by suggesting that Lenin was a moralist as well, "the agent of his cause...[who] cared nothing about power for its own sake."⁸ Lenin thus became a hero who embodied all of the ideas independents valued.

While Lenin was the hero responsible for the triumph of scientific Marxism in Russia, Stalin became the independents' villain. Many independents found Stalin personally offensive; more importantly, his policies violated their "objective" Marxism. Consequently, Stalin symbolized the antithesis of their scientific Marxism, which they called "factionalism." This they defined as a system of government which sought power as its end, ignoring the needs and desires of the people in favor of a leadership clique. Stalin became a sort of straw man for the independents. They drew sharp contrasts between scientific Marxism and Stalinist factionalism which formed the basis for their anti-Stalinism.⁹

Independents first identified factionalism in the American radical movement. Their differences with the CPUSA convinced them that the party failed to use Marx's ideas effectively within an American setting. Yet this factionalism was always linked to Russia. They saw the American party's failure as a consequence of the party's reliance on the Comintern for guidance. The Comintern, they argued, was a factional organization which used the Communist Party of America for its own purposes. Although the Comintern inflicted factionalism on the American party, during the early thirties independents concentrated most on the American party's inability to resist factionalism. By the later thirties, their attention shifted away from the impact of factionalism in America, and they became more concerned with Stalinism directly. As they explored the effects of factionalism in Russia, they became very outspoken Marxist critics of the Stalinist regime. The result was the doctrine of anti-Stalinism.

Almost from the beginning some American Marxists were sensitive to the tensions between the American communist movement and the Comintern. Occasionally an individual would question the Comin-

tern's authority, insisting that the American party should have the right to formulate its own policies independent of the Comintern.¹⁰ The first dissident American Marxist to explain his estrangement from the party as a result of its obeisance to the Comintern was Max Eastman. Eastman was an eyewitness to the early stages of the succession struggle after Lenin's death, returning to America anxious to share his insider's view of the proceedings. But American communists wanted no part of his information. Eastman grew critical of the American party, insisting that party leaders weathered the succession storms by not taking sides. He suggested that by following the Comintern's lead, American party leaders protected their tenure but lost their integrity. In 1928 he resigned from the editorial board of *New Masses* because he felt the party was so concerned with its status vis-à-vis the Comintern that it neglected the real issues of socialism.¹¹

Eastman was the first, but other American Marxist intellectuals also became critical of the CPUSA. Some fled such organizations as the supposedly independent National Committee For the Defense of Political Prisoners because of the "bullying factional tactics" the party used to insure that the committee remain consistent with its own line. Others were hounded out of the party more directly. Each came away with the conviction that "if the literati want to engage in radical activities, they ought to organize or something independently—so that they can back other people besides the comrades and so that the comrades can't play them for suckers." They justified their differences with the party by demonstrating that the American party's Marxist line originated with the Comintern's factionalism rather than with any creative, objective, or scientific interpretation of Marx. Thus the independents' notion of factionalism was based both on their personal experiences with the party and their own definition of Marxism.¹²

V. F. Calverton best defined factionalism as a form of politics which had as its goal "the preservation of power at all costs." Like Eastman and the other independents, Calverton acknowledged that factionalism began with the Comintern and reflected Stalin's struggle against Lenin's other heirs. He blamed American party leaders for lacking the gumption and perspective to break with the Comintern and use Marxism creatively rather than as a "substitute" for thought. He suggested that most American Marxists willingly became "footballs of Russian factional politics" in order to have access to the Comintern's ideas and prestige. The difficulty with this exchange was that Comintern policies had little to do with

American realities; they were designed to protect one series of Bolsheviks against their opponents. Therefore, Calverton noted, American leaders forced ideas on their followers with an absolute and dictatorial hand, countenancing no question, doubts, or alternative viewpoints. Calverton experienced firsthand the party's campaign of "villification, distortion and slander" when he tried to express Marxist interpretations at odds with the Comintern line in 1933. He concluded that the party's factionalism offended his notions of what Marxism was: "Marxism is dynamic and not static," he warned. "It is significant as a scientific method but dangerous as a sterile dogma."¹³

Calverton and the growing band of rebel Marxists singled out two American party policies as particular examples of the fallacies of following the Comintern's line. These two policies were the party's literary and political lines during the period known as the "Third Period" (1928 to 1935). They demonstrated the weaknesses and problems of borrowing political programs wholesale. At this time the Comintern established a very narrow proletarian perspective. Member organizations were advised to avoid other left-wing organizations, form no coalitions, and keep their memberships small, select, and wholly working class.¹⁴

The independents considered this point of view inappropriate during the depression. Lewis Corey demonstrated that the depression leveled farmers and some members of the middle class to the status of the working class. Calverton considered these declining groups perfect allies for the working class against the capitalists. Perhaps the most disillusioning example of the party's attitude toward its logical allies was its activities during a Socialist Party-organized meeting of workers in support of Austrian socialists held in Madison Square Garden in 1934. Much to the horror of the crowd, party members disrupted the meeting, physically abusing some of the socialists. Independents considered the incident "a climax to the policy of sectarianism," arguing that it demonstrated that the party was "organizationally and intellectually bankrupt." To them, both the party's lack of concern for nonparty workers, and its brutality in enforcing its attitude, demonstrated that the party had become a bastion of factionalism.¹⁵

The party's literary line during the early thirties also reflected the Comintern's interest in a strict working-class movement. *New Masses* became a journal of proletarian literature, and a series of John Reed Clubs in major cities encouraged young writers of proletarian origins. V. F. Calverton examined the literary ideas of Marx and Engels, finding no justification for the party's emphasis on

proletarian culture. Others argued that proletarian literature was wasteful; Will Herberg, Edmund Wilson, and Louise Bogan contended that such a narrow view of art ignored too much of America's literary heritage, a heritage writers would need after the revolution. Max Eastman considered proletarian literature a means of repression which forced authors to limit their topics to those approved by the party. Eastman also argued that it lowered standards by emphasizing class backgrounds over style or quality. All independents found the proletarian literature irrelevant to American culture, "silly," and sometimes "destructive."¹⁶

As an antidote to factionalism, independents proposed to "Americanize" Marxism, widening its appeal to include what Calverton called the "little men" against the "big."¹⁷ Yet their attempts to create either theoretical or practical Marxist alternatives to the CPUSA failed rather badly. Independents blamed their failures on the American party's domination, insisting that it bullied intellectuals to parrot its line. This attitude merely fueled the independents' conviction that factionalism ruined Marx's potential in the United States. And, while they were somewhat frustrated by their inability to translate scientific Marxism into a practical movement, they were still generally optimistic about the possibilities of socialism.

The mainstay of their optimism was the Soviet Union. Even though they considered the Comintern a factional battleground between Stalin and his opponents, they still had a great deal of faith in the Russian revolution. Whatever qualms they had about the impact of factionalism in Russia were balanced by their firm belief in the possibilities of economic socialism. Like other American Marxists, they were convinced that the primary condition for true democratic freedom was economic equality. They were therefore sure that Russia's socialist economy provided a "sane, scientific, economic foundation" which obviated against permanent factionalism. Independents were critical of particular aspects of Stalin's Russia, but they tempered their criticisms with the belief that Russia was "building the civilization of the future."¹⁸ Consequently, they considered their estrangement from the Comintern merely temporary. They assumed that the sectarian struggles would end, and that the Comintern would return to the scientific outlook of the Bolshevik revolution. In the meantime, their major concern was with the short-term effects of factionalism in a country which did not enjoy the luxury of economic equality, the United States. Not surprisingly, they worried more about the lost opportunities of the depression years in America than about the effects of factionalism in Russia.

By 1935 the independents' critique of factionalism was complete. It grew out of their commitments to Marxism as a creative science with humane goals, but first appeared as a justification for personal difficulties with the American party. The concept of factionalism forever retained this curious mixture of motives; it contained elements of rational evaluation tinged with the emotionalism of a series of personal struggles. The advantage of factionalism was that it allowed the independent Marxists greater freedom by eliminating the restraints of the party. By defining factionalism as a form of Marxism which contrasted their own, they could protect what they admired in Marxism without confronting the problems engendered by translating theory into actual policies. The disadvantage of factionalism was that it became an emotional symbol more than a concrete and realistic definition of party weaknesses. Independents came to label their opponents "sectarian" with little thought as to what the label meant. It became a symbol embodying the evil as well as the unscientific, an emotional red flag waved at a snorting bull.

Just at the moment when the independents' critique of American party factionalism became fairly well-developed, the situation on the left changed significantly, forcing them to alter their ideas in response. Through the introduction of the Popular Front, the Comintern gained a large number of noncommunist supporters, particularly intellectuals. Since these followers worked in conjunction with the CPUSA, the party improved its status and prestige within the left-wing intellectual community. Independents, who already disapproved of the factionalized American party, grew even more suspicious of the party as it acquired more intellectual clout. Exacerbating the tensions of the Popular Front was the Spanish Civil War, which precipitated direct clashes between supporters of the Popular Front and the independents. The most important development during the Popular Front years, however, was the Moscow trials. The trials provided the critical ingredient for converting the independents' critique of factionalism into anti-Stalinism by persuading independents that "the experiment in Socialism in Russia is at an end."¹⁹

By 1935 there were signs that the Comintern was moving away from its strict proletarian line. In the summer of 1935 the Comintern called for a Peoples Front of all progressive individuals in order to fight against fascism.²⁰ The CPUSA made immediate overtures of friendship to many nonparty radical intellectuals. Independents avoided the organizations and causes that the Popular Front created. Although they encouraged Marxists to work toward broader-based programs which recognized the shared needs of certain groups, they

did not see the Popular Front as a proper vehicle for their own ideas because it was associated with the factionalized CPUSA. Moreover, they did not appreciate the increased power the Popular Front gave the American organization.

The independent Marxists believed the Front enhanced the power of radical leadership cliques without assisting the working class. Sidney Hook distinguished between the "united" front he supported and the Comintern's Popular Front by suggesting that united fronts shared only limited goals whereas popular fronts shared tactics as well. Hook claimed that in any popular front situation the program of the least progressive group always triumphed. Therefore, he concluded that "a Socialist who calls for the formation of a popular front cannot do so without in effect surrendering his socialism." While the Stalinist leadership group benefited by enlisting the support of liberal allies, the prospects for a socialist revolution declined.²¹ Hook's arguments were typical of the opinions of the independents, who considered the Popular Front a means of advancing not the socialist revolution, but the hegemony of factionalist Marxism. The introduction of the Popular Front changed the independents' relationship with the CPUSA and other supporters of the Front. Before the Front, independents had coexisted uneasily with the party. After the Popular Front, they became enemies not just to party Marxists, but to progressives also.

The Spanish Civil War became the first major battleground between the Popular Front and the independents, hardening the already-existing splits between the two groups. The Popular Front and the independents possessed tremendously divergent opinions of what was going on in Spain, and these differences became a major source of conflict. Leaders of the Popular Front contended that the Spanish Civil War was a struggle between democracy and Fascism. Independents, on the other hand, insisted that the war was an illustration of the limitations of popular fronts. They saw the outbreak of civil war as an opportunity to bring social revolution to Spain. Their optimism collapsed, however, when the Spanish Popular Front government, with the Spanish Communist Party playing a leading role, suppressed such socialist reforms as nationalization of large landholdings. Worse yet, as Russian aid to Spain increased, the Spanish Communist Party improved its position in the government, persecuting radical anarchist groups and eliminating the revolutionary thrust of the war entirely. Independents concluded that Stalin was the only individual who benefited from the increasingly nonrevolutionary Spanish government. He appeared a more traditional statesman who supported

democratic capitalism over fascism.²²

Underneath a facade of democracy and moderation, independents maintained, a factional battle raged. Independent reporter Anita Brenner, who had resigned from the National Committee For the Defense of Political Prisoners in 1933 because of party domination, probed the Russian role in the Spanish Civil War. She found evidence which suggested that the Russian GPU (secret police) ran rampant through Spain, terrorizing and incarcerating anarchists and left-leaning socialists. The purpose of the campaign of terror was to eliminate any opposition to the Spanish Communist Party, strengthening the hand of the Comintern.²³ Brenner and other independents saw the Popular Front as a smokescreen which obscured these unpleasant episodes, bringing liberal support to a cause that did not deserve it.

Independents were further incensed by the effect the Spanish Civil War had on many liberals. The war galvanized progressive support behind the Popular Front. Independents considered this support the result of misrepresentation. They argued that the CPUSA had persuaded intellectuals that party fought for democracy in Spain when, in fact, it merely fought to enhance the power of the Stalinists in Spain, in the Comintern, and at home. Philip Rahv suggested that American intellectuals were "spiritually terrorized" by the Comintern. Max Eastman believed that their faith in Russia made intellectuals gullible.²⁴ These opinions further alienated independents from much of the rest of the radical intellectual community.

The League of American Writers (LAW) became the independents' primary example of the tight partisan control the CPUSA exerted over the Popular Front. Leon Dennen maintained that the league was created by the party. Edmund Wilson, and many others, noted that "heretical groups" were not welcome in the LAW, a designation which included both Trotskyists and independent Marxists. Philip Rahv demonstrated that the program of the League's Second Congress neatly matched the Comintern's pro-democratic, anti-fascist propaganda line. James Rorty raised a fuss when the League's president, Waldo Frank, resigned after taking a public stand at odds with the party; Rorty insisted that Frank was forced out of office. The personal experiences of a few independents who attended the LAW's Second Congress in 1937 confirmed the suspicions they harbored about the sectarian nature of the organization. Their opinions were labeled "Trotskyite" by the Popular Front press. The LAW demonstrated to independents not just that the party used the Popular Front to control progressives, but to attack its enemies as well.²⁵

As American party factionalism tightened, and as Spanish communists used the smokescreen of anti-fascism to persecute members of other left-wing groups, independents concluded that factionalism was a serious problem. The Moscow trials confirmed these fears and raised enormous doubts for them about the future of socialism. V. F. Calverton called the trials "the most important issue of our time."²⁶ Independents considered the trials the ultimate representation of factionalism, Stalin's final attempt to establish his rule over Russia. Because of the trials, independents lost their faith in socialist Russia. Their anti-factionalism became anti-Stalinism.

The first news of the assassination of Bolshevik Sergei Kirov and the trials and executions surrounding his 1934 death had little impact on independent Marxist circles. Most concluded that the brief purge was a carry-over from "the Russia of the Tsars." When the terror did not end with the assassination of Kirov, however, they became more distressed. They could think of no legitimate reasons for the trials, the confessions, or the executions. Nor could they believe that the leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution conspired with Trotsky and fascist Germany to collapse the socialist economy as Stalinists maintained. Even their earlier belief that terror was a traditional Russian phenomenon took on sinister overtones. Scott Nearing wondered if there was actually any difference between the Russian autocracy and Stalinism. All the evidence they evaluated suggested that the trials represented a massive miscarriage of justice accomplished for Stalin's benefit.²⁷

Independents explained the trials as the center of Stalin's growing factionalism. They concluded that the purges underway in Spain and the sectarian struggles in the American party were smaller reflections of the Russian purges, with the Popular Front hiding these sectarian purposes under the noble cause of anti-fascism. This explanation of the trials helped make sense of American factionalism, the Popular Front, and even the Spanish Civil War in a consistent manner: Stalin was to blame for each. The trials offered ample proof for them that Stalin's government betrayed the ideals of the Russian revolution. They argued that Stalin's government was not a dictatorship of the proletariat, but a dictatorship of a carefully selected and controlled party elite personally loyal to Stalin.²⁸ When the *Modern Quarterly* surveyed independent opinion on the possibilities of converting a party dictatorship into a true proletarian government, most of the respondents believed such a conversion impossible.²⁹ Because of the trials, independents came to doubt the possibility of reversing the process of factionalism in Russia. Instead, they decided that this factionalism would generate greater repression

and control.

This conclusion forced independents to reconsider their earlier opinions about Russia. Before they had defended the Soviet Union on the grounds that its economy was socialist, and that its economic freedom guaranteed that other freedoms would follow. In fact, precisely the opposite appeared to happen. Despite the socialist economy, the government became more repressive and the masses less free. Was the Soviet Union actually a socialist state? Clearly it was not a capitalist state but politically it was hardly proletarian. Independents faced the paradox of a socialist economy grafted onto a repressive political apparatus. As Scott Nearing asked, "If to win socialism and lose all our freedoms—are we paying an excessive price?"³⁰

Independents resolved the paradox posed by Stalin's Russia by creating a Marxist critique of it. A central theme of this anti-Stalinism was the notion that economic and political mechanisms could not be separated as easily as they thought. Philip Rahv suggested that American intellectuals had been duped for many years by what he called "an elementary plot of mistaken identity." He argued that the Russian masses did not control the economy, but that the state and the Bolshevik party did. Stalin's dictatorship of the state and party produced not socialism but "state capitalism." V. F. Calverton agreed; he considered the Russian workers the "victims" rather than the beneficiaries of Stalin's state capitalism. Independents thus believed Stalinism was "not socialist in the Marxist sense."³¹ Rather, they saw the Stalinist government as a bureaucracy built to protect and maintain itself while demolishing all vestiges of Marxism-Leninism. They blamed Stalin for diverting the Russian revolution away from the selfless Marxist aims of Lenin. They concluded that Stalinism was not a form of Marxism and never would become one. Consequently, they ceased supporting Stalin's Russia in any way after 1937 or 1938. Instead, they became outspoken critics of the Stalinist regime.³²

Such a position placed independents into direct conflict with supporters of the Popular Front. They called for a nonpartisan airing of the truth about Russia, particularly the Moscow trials, which Philip Rahv labeled "trials of the mind and of the human spirit." Many independents became active in the American Committee For the Defense of Leon Trotsky (ACDLT), a group sponsoring a series of public hearings at which Leon Trotsky answered the Stalinist accusations against him. While they deplored the often factional nature of the ACDLT (which contained a fair proportion of Trotskyists), most were nonetheless impressed with Trotsky's

detailed statements.³³ Their admiration of Trotsky did not extend to his political ideas, however; Edmund Wilson noted that Trotsky was "the obverse of the Stalinist coin." Independents criticized Trotsky for continuing to hope that the Russian revolution would right itself, a dream they considered futile.³⁴ Their opposition to Stalin convinced supporters of the Popular Front that they were Trotskyists; Trotskyists disliked them as well for their independence. Independents spent the last years of the thirties isolated, attacked, and ignored.

Yet, as Irving Howe has suggested, "their best hours were spent on the margin, in opposition."³⁵ It was only under such circumstances that independents confronted Stalinism from their novel viewpoint, using Marxism as the social tool they advocated. They did transcend the all-too-often hackneyed ideas of the CPUSA with their scientific Marxism. As such, anti-Stalinism was the most significant left-wing intellectual current to emerge from the thirties. At the same time, it suffered from the defects of anti-factionalism. At an extreme, anti-Stalinism became a sort of conspiratorial explanation of history quite out of keeping with Marxist theories. "Stalinism" became a negative symbol much as "fascism" did; it embodied pure evil rather than a specific form of evil. Like most opponents, independents exaggerated the intensity of their enemy, blaming Stalin for the failure of all Russian Marxism. Anti-Stalinism was less sophisticated than it appeared on the surface. Not surprisingly, underneath this intense doctrine of scientific Marxism, doubts seethed.

By 1939 anti-Stalinism had become the dominant force in the independents' intellectual lives. Yet, while vitriolic in tone, anti-Stalinism's foundations were precarious. In fact, its foundations were so unsound that only a year later the whole edifice collapsed. Afterwards, independents remained anti-Stalinists, but their perspectives shifted dramatically. In 1940 most became disillusioned with Marxism, and their anti-Stalinism became tinged with anticommunism. The main reason for the change was Stalin's Russia, even though their earlier anti-Stalinism suggested that Stalinism had nothing in common with true scientific Marxism.

Most independents found anti-Stalinism too simplistic a doctrine to satisfy their scientific and critical attitudes. As Philip Rahv suggested, blaming Stalin for the failure of the Russian revolution "seems to us to beg the question." Rahv argued that if Marxism was a science, Stalin's counterrevolution seemed to have disproved its validity. Rahv agreed with the anti-Stalinist doctrine by observing that Stalin was an aberration, but noted too that such aberrations

plagued the radical movement regularly. Consequently, he suggested that the problems which led to Stalinism might be contained within Marxism itself. He called upon his fellow intellectuals to reconsider Marxism in light of the failure of the Russian experiment, sorting out "what is living" from "what is dead."³⁶

Although Rahv's suggestion implied that Stalin was perhaps less of a charlatan than anti-Stalinists believed, Rahv was one of the few independents who stuck to his earlier view of Stalinism. He continued to argue that Stalinism resulted from a series of historical accidents which gave Stalin the opportunity to gain ascendancy in Russia. Rahv and a few others believed that Russian backwardness, the Allied intervention into the Russian civil war, and the failure of the world revolution created a nascent bureaucracy and precedent for terror which Stalin exploited.³⁷

Most other independents found this explanation flawed. Will Herberg, for example, pointed out that accidental factors always deflected movements away from their goals. But, he argued, a truly scientific government would make allowances for accidents and guard against those who might take advantage of them. Herberg noted that the Bolshevik government failed to correct its impoverished mechanisms, leaving itself open to Stalin's abuses. Other independents considered those historical accidents Rahv described the "fundamental error" of the Bolshevik revolution.³⁸ To them, Stalinism was not an inevitable consequence of Russian circumstances, but the result of deliberate choices by the leaders of the Bolshevik party.

Nearly all of those who reconsidered Stalinism in 1940 agreed that the "fundamental error" of the revolution was Lenin's single-party rule. They believed this rule led to a dictatorship of the party, which in turn became bureaucratic and self-serving. Max Eastman noted that a party dictatorship worked in the name of the proletariat rather than being controlled by the proletariat; party leaders often resorted to repressive and terrorist tactics to keep the masses in line. Lenin's small revolutionary clique, Eastman concluded, served as the precursor of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Leninism, he said, led to Stalinism.³⁹

Eastman's conclusion, which a number of others shared in 1940, held enormous consequences for independents' views of Marxism. Had independents blamed Lenin more forthrightly for the failure of the Bolshevik revolution, they might have sacrificed the revolution entirely and kept their Marxist convictions intact, much as they had sacrificed Stalin's Russia earlier in order to protect their faith in the Russian revolution. Instead, independents maintained their admira-

tion for Lenin, casting him as a victim rather than a villain. Edmund Wilson defined Lenin's goals as "humanitarian, democratic and anti-bureaucratic," but suggested that the "logic of the whole situation" prevented Lenin from achieving his goals. Max Eastman commented that Lenin realized his errors in the last few months of his life, but was unable to correct them. These independents could not repudiate Lenin entirely. They therefore had little choice but to trace the failure of the Russian revolution back beyond Leninism to Marxism itself.⁴⁰

Lenin's failure to convert Marxist theory into practical reality became the independents' symbol of Marxism's defects. If Lenin was a pragmatic and honorable man (which independents believed), his inability to fashion a workable socialist system without the potential for abuse suggested that the ideas he espoused were wrong.⁴¹ In contrast to earlier anti-Stalinism, this implied that Marxism was seriously flawed. The more independents explored the roots of Stalinism, the more convinced they grew that Marxism did not fulfill their requirements as a "scientific morality."

The major flaw these independents diagnosed in Marxism in 1940 was what William Phillips called "the devil theory of the dialectic." Independents never accepted this "metaphysical side" of Marxism, but they did consider it a useless appendage to Marx's scientific analyses. In 1940, however, they decided that the dialectic was actually an intrinsic part of Marxism, a religious determinant of a supposedly scientific system. The decision that Marxism did contain mystical elements which could not be separated from Marx's scientific observations interjected a pseudo-religiosity which made Marxism suspect to them. As Edmund Wilson explained: "As long as he [Marx] keeps talking as if the proletariat were the chosen instrument of a Dialectic, as if its victory were predetermined, he does assume an extra-human power." The practical outcome of this line of thinking was the conclusion that Marxism was not a scientific system, but one constructed on "the myth of the dialectic."⁴²

Lewis Corey was one of the first independents to explore the extent to which the notion of inevitability pervaded Marx's system. Like Wilson, Corey believed that Marx's commitment to the proletariat as a revolutionary force was not based on science or logic. In fact, Corey suggested that the proletariat was not committed to socialism, but only democracy. This difficulty, he argued, plagued those who tried to lead a socialist revolution. The proletariat was not reliable and the revolutionary program required constant revision to win the support of other social groups. Corey's analysis

rocked independent Marxism to its foundations. He questioned not only the role of the proletariat, but the validity of the class struggle as a revolutionary tool. He noted that farmers and white collar workers shared interests and goals in common, interests Marx's fanatical dedication to the dialectic kept him from seeing.⁴³

Max Eastman found another set of defects in Marxism when he explored the impact of the dialectic on the rest of the system. He suggested that Marx's faith in the inevitability of socialism undermined the type of socialism Marx imagined. Eastman defined Marx's goal as the liberation of mankind through shared economic abundance and political freedom. Yet Marx's certainty that socialism would evolve made his definition of how it would evolve vague and sketchy. Eastman argued that Marx's vagueness gave ruthless men like Stalin the opportunity to seize power for themselves. Like Will Herberg, he believed a scientific system would avoid this pitfall. Eastman also believed, however, that Stalinism was not necessarily inconsistent with Marxism. Since Marx felt freedom through socialism would come eventually, he was less concerned that it be a part of the process. To Eastman and many other independents, freedom had to be a part of the process, or the process itself became immoral.⁴⁴

Ultimately, the dialectic became for most independents not just a mythical element of Marxism, but the root of Marxist immorality as well. Marxism, and other reforms of religion, Max Eastman claimed, "cherish moral irresponsibility more than they correct it." Lionel Trilling suggested that at the heart of Marxism "there has always been a kind of disgust with humanity as it is and a perfect faith in humanity as it ought to be." Until such time as mankind actually achieved communism, Trilling argued, Marxists believed man had to be controlled and repressed for the sake of the future. Lewis Corey thought Marxism "arrogantly authoritarian." Eastman argued that this authoritarianism separated the Bolshevik leaders from the masses rather than trusting the proletariat to do it themselves. Stalinism became an exaggerated form of the amoral authoritarianism most independents believed was already present in Marxism. Eastman, Corey, Trilling, Wilson, and others concluded that Marxists had no faith in the very group of people upon which they based their vision of the future. Consequently, they believed that Marxian socialism was inherently undemocratic because it gave the leaders limitless power to determine the future of the voiceless masses. This contradiction proved unresolvable for independents. To them Marxism was based on a false view of man's possibilities.⁴⁵

This pessimistic view of man that independents saw as an

implication of the dialectic contradicted their own more optimistic view. As scientists and rationalists, they had a great deal of faith in man's abilities to conquer his universe. Along with this faith went a firm belief in democracy since they considered all individuals responsible and rational enough to determine their own destinies. Stifling opinion and dissent was a moral offense to them as well as a sure indication that power was unequally shared. In Marxism, though, they found no concern that democracy exist. Such issues seemed less important in the early thirties than they did after Hitler assumed power in Germany and began to spread his empire. During the late thirties, Stalin's Russia reminded them that economic freedom did not guarantee the types of democracy they admired. In 1940, both governments—Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany—seemed to them to share similarly pessimistic attitudes toward democracy. In both cases, this pessimism led to brutally repressive totalitarian forms of government. The dictatorship of the proletariat provided no greater protection for civil rights or liberties than did Hitler's fascist dictatorship.⁴⁶

Lewis Corey summarized many independents' difficulties with the dictatorship of the proletariat when he suggested that it was too powerful. He argued that under such a dictatorship there were no separations between economic and political structures. Political planning and control became merely an adjunct to economic planning. Will Herberg agreed that there was totalitarian potential in economic collectivism. Centralization and power became necessary to build socialism, he noted, but they also fostered bureaucratic control and political repression. Herberg identified a central dilemma of Marxism: was it possible, he wondered, to manage economic collectivism without repressive controls?⁴⁷ Other independents did see ways around Herberg's dilemma, but at the expense of a class-based government and other elements of Marxism.⁴⁸

Independent disillusionment with Marxism because of its unscientific, immoral, authoritarian base was so swift and so sweeping that Edmund Wilson stopped to ponder: "Is there nothing left of Marxism, then? Are there no basic Marxist ideas that may still be accepted as true?" Wilson believed that Marx's main contribution to history was his notion that economic organization affected all other aspects of a society.⁴⁹ Actually, what was "left" of Marxism in 1940 was a far more pervasive style of thought which combined a scientific attitude with a scrupulous morality. Independents had once thought that Marxism possessed these attributes they valued so highly. Stalinism persuaded them otherwise. Still, when they sacrificed Marxism in 1940 in favor of what Sidney Hook once called

“the cherished values of the philosophic liberal tradition—truth, justice and intellectual integrity,”⁵⁰ disillusioned independent Marxists were actually protecting those virtues they once admired in Marxism. Their faith in the scientific, the humane, and the rational led them to Marx; so too did it lead most of them away.

In 1939 American Trotskyists James Burnham and Max Shachtman captured a portrait of the independent Marxists just as many hovered at the brink of disillusionment. Burnham and Shachtman described men like Edmund Wilson, Sidney Hook, Max Eastman, James Rorty, Philip Rahv, and Louis Hacker as radical anti-Stalinists retreating slowly toward liberalism. The two Trotskyists detailed three fundamental aspects of Marxism which disturbed these radical anti-Stalinists: the dialectic, the nature of the single party democracy, and the relationship between Leninism and Stalinism. Burnham and Shachtman criticized these anti-Stalinists for discarding their Marxist ideals by attempting to demonstrate the folly of their evolving perspective.⁵¹

While decidedly partisan in tone, Burnham and Shachtman's portrait did outline the process of independent Marxist disillusionment. The factors they cited proved to be the critical determinants of that disillusionment. Each presented independents with a series of moral dilemmas, first about their own communist party, then about Stalinism, and, finally, about Marxism as a theory. Many resolved their dilemmas by adopting analyses more in keeping with traditional liberal ideas than Marxism.⁵² Although Burnham and Shachtman offered a reasonably accurate picture of independent disillusionment, they failed to explain why the process occurred. Coming from a Trotskyist perspective, they could not understand the motivations and values which propelled the independent Marxists. Drawn to the rational and scientific in style, independents sought a social system which would combine the tools of science with the values of their moral vision. Marxism answered these needs, particularly in the early thirties. But, as economic problems declined in importance in the face of large-scale international power struggles, independents' optimism about the possibilities of Marxism declined. The key step in this process was their development of the doctrine of anti-Stalinism, which confronted the realities of Marxism in operation. Once they lost their faith in Soviet socialism, independent Marxist intellectuals could not sustain their belief in Marxism. Even while they made distinctions between Stalinism and Marxism, they were plagued with doubts about those distinctions. Too much of their emotional energy was committed to the cause of the Russian revolution; they were unable to divorce the outcome of

the revolution from Marxist theory. Their scientific Marxism became the ironic victim of the same emotionalism they decried in other Marxists.

Their central disappointment with Marxism grew out of what they perceived as Marx's inability to coordinate science with morality—means and ends. They maintained that the processes of Marxism contaminated and contradicted its purposes because they failed to provide the values Marx ultimately sought. Unwilling to view the failure as a compromise based on the realities of life in Russia, they saw it as resulting from the unscientific nature of the doctrine. V. F. Calverton once commented that "Marxism is nothing more than a tool in the social process," but dangerous as a religion.⁵³ Yet independents actually expected Marxism to function as a scientific substitute for religion, coordinating the moral values of a society according to human need. They criticized other Marxists for failing to use Marxism creatively; though their real conflict with other Marxists came because they disagreed with Stalin's use of the "tool" of Marxism. They could not harmonize the results of practical Marxism with their own moral ideas.

Before, during, and after their Marxist phases independents remained true to these ideals, merely rearranging the relationship between them and established doctrines, policies, and philosophies. All retained their scientific outlooks and their support of Hook's "cherished values of the philosophic liberal tradition."⁵⁴ Even though Max Eastman became a political conservative in the fifties, for example, he kept his suspicion of the unverifiable and unscientific. He broke with the conservative journal, *National Review*, because editor William F. Buckley insisted that a moral order must be religiously based. Similarly, Edmund Wilson, who remained on the political left, continued to cast a skeptical eye toward forms of factionalism, criticizing American foreign policy on the grounds that it was bureaucratic and power-hungry. Sidney Hook, whose political commitments wavered and changed, attacked his fellow intellectuals for what he saw as a retreat from science during the war.⁵⁵ Throughout the forties, fifties, and sixties, former independents continued to support their scientific and humane value system through a variety of very different vehicles and perspectives.

The independents' legacy to the later conservative and liberal intellectual community, however, was not this rationalism but emotional anti-Stalinism. Independents themselves proved to be obsessed with Stalinism. During and after the war they continued to warn against Stalin.⁵⁶ Sidney Hook revived a 1939 organization opposing both German fascism and Russian socialism, the American

Committee for Cultural Freedom, in 1949 in order "to expose Stalinism and Stalinist liberals" wherever they might be found.⁵⁷ Their fervor played itself out all too often apart from moral considerations. Independents became fearful anticommunists, although a proportion of them did help "organize anti-Stalinism into a politics barely distinguishable from reaction." The emotional element in independent anti-factionalism and anti-Stalinism helped fuel anticommunism.⁵⁸

Cold War anticommunism also owed an intellectual debt to the independent Marxists. Sidney Hook's American Committee For Cultural Freedom became the premier anticommunist organization in the United States. Many of its members were former independent Marxists, and most of its ideas were purely anti-Stalinist. The committee considered totalitarianism an immoral form of government sanctioned by Marxist ideology. Its members doubted that Russia would ever become more free, more just, or more cooperative. They feared Stalin because they considered him unbound by any moral limits. His power, they believed, was total, and no policy was too evil for him to adopt. Finally, like prewar anti-Stalinists, postwar anticommunists of varying beliefs saw democracy as a cornerstone of civilization.

While the independents spent the thirties out of the mainstream of the left-wing intellectual community, both they and their ideas became central during the forties and fifties. Their anti-Stalinism set the tone for both decades, even though their ideas became dislodged from their moorings.⁵⁹ Their transitions into the postwar years symbolized the direction of left-wing intellectuals in general. Still, the wide variety of their later activities and their often lengthy popularity as intellectuals,⁶⁰ suggest that the values they espoused served them as well and that their commitments to a "scientific morality" were shared by many.

NOTES

¹ V. F. Calverton, "Marxism and the American Pattern," *Modern Monthly* 10 (1937), 9.

² On the problems of American Marxism see *ibid.*, 9-11; Calverton, "In the Name of Marxism," *Modern Monthly* 9 (1935), 69-70; and Calverton, "What Socialism Means To Me," *Socialist Call*, June 22, 1940, p. 4. See also, Max Eastman, "Discrimination About Russia," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934), 479-85; "Challenge," *Marxist Quarterly* 1 (1937), 3-4; Max Eastman, "Motive-Patterns of Socialism," *Modern Quarterly* 11 (1939), 50-54; and V. F. Calverton to Van Wycks Brooks, Dec. 29, 1939, in box 2, V. F. Calverton Papers, New York Public Library, N. Y. On the CPUSA see Edmund

Wilson, *The Thirties* (New York, 1980), 116, 212; V. F. Calverton, "The Crisis in Communism," *Modern Monthly* 7 (1933), 140-145, 151; Calverton, "Letter to New Masses," *Modern Monthly* 7 (1933), 110-114, 127-128. The phrase "sterile dogma" comes from this last article.

³ On the values independents espoused see Paul Kurtz, ed., *Sidney Hook and the Contemporary World* (New York, 1968), 17-27, 181-196, 283-295, 309-331, 337-351; Max Eastman, *Love and Revolution* (New York, 1964), 14-15; Calverton, "What Socialism Means to Me," 4. On the impact of Dewey on Eastman and Hook, see for a contemporary's view Theodore Brameld, "The Literary Caravan," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934), 498-500. For a later analysis, see Alan Wald, *James T. Farrell* (New York, 1978), 8. William Barrett, *The Truants* (Garden City, N. Y., 1982), 184, notes that Dewey's ideas had a tremendous impact on students at Columbia University. Nine independent Marxists attended Columbia.

⁴ Among those independents rejecting religion at the time were Wilson, Max Eastman, Will Herberg, and Sidney Hook. For some of the reasons why see Eastman, *Love and Revolution*, 15; Kurtz, ed., *Sidney Hook*, 258-278; Irving Howe, *Decline of the New* (New York, 1963), 242. Perhaps most revealing was Max Eastman's attempt to analyze humor in his *Enjoyment of Laughter* (New York, 1936).

⁵ See Kurtz, ed., *Sidney Hook*, 17-27; Sidney Hook, "Marxism and Values," *Marxist Quarterly* 1 (1937), 38-45; Calverton, "What Socialism Means to Me," 4.

⁶ Hook, "Marxism and Values," *passim*. On the appeal of Marxism to independents, see Brameld, "The Literary Caravan," 498-500; V. F. Calverton, "Marxism and Religion," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1935), 716; Eastman, "Motive-Patterns," 54; Eastman, "What Science Is," *Modern Quarterly* 11 (1940), 35. Other analyses include James Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans* (New York, 1968), 270; Sherman Paul, *Edmund Wilson* (Chicago, 1967), 97; Leonard Kriegal, *Edmund Wilson* (Carbondale, Ill., 1971), 27.

⁷ See Sidney Hook, "Why I Am a Communist," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934), 153-165; Hook, "Dialectic and Nature," *Marxist Quarterly* 1 (1937), 253-284. See also Calverton, "Marxism and Religion," 717; Hook, "Science and the New Obscurantism," *Modern Quarterly* 11 (1938), 68-69; Edmund Wilson, "The Myth of the Marxist Dialectic," *Partisan Review* 6 (1938), 66-81; William Phillips, "The Devil Theory of the Dialectic," *ibid.* 6 (1938), 82-90. Other analyses include Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans*, 242; Richard Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams* (New York, 1973), 128.

⁸ Max Eastman, *Marx and Lenin: The Science of Revolution* (New York, 1927). See John P. Diggins, *Up From Communism* (New York, 1975), 49-51; Eastman, *Love and Revolution*, 446. Max Eastman, "The Soul of Man Under Communism," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934), 93. See also William O'Neill, *The Last Romantic* (New York, 1978), 90-92; Paul, *Wilson*, 121-123; Kriegal, *Wilson*, 48, 63. Quote is from Edmund Wilson, "Stalin As Ikon," *New Republic* 86 (1936), 271-273.

⁹ On Stalin see *ibid.* See also Will Herberg, "The Crisis in Communism," *Modern Monthly* 7 (1933), 283-288; Bertram D. Wolfe, "Marx and America,"

ibid., 432.

¹⁰ The first of these was Louis Fraina (Lewis Corey), who helped found the American communist movement only to break with it in 1922 because it was "factional." See Corey's F.B.I. depositions in box 78, folder 7, Bertram D. Wolfe Papers, Hoover Archives, Stanford, California. See also Corey to Wolfe, March 1, 1952, and Corey to Esther Corey, March 1, 1952, box 4, folder 71, ibid.; Esther Corey, "Lewis Corey," *Labor History* 4 (1963), 112; Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York, 1957), 293-302. According to Louis Filler (letter to author, July 25, 1977), only the upper echelons of the party knew Corey was Fraina.

¹¹ See Eastman, *Love and Revolution*, 491-493. See also Diggins, *Up From Communism*, 17-25; Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left* (New York, 1961), 119-126, 315-321; Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York, 1960), 359-362. Eastman's letter of resignation from New Masses is in his "Bunk About Bohemia," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934), 201-202.

¹² The first quotation comes from a letter of resignation from the NCDPP signed by Herbert Solow, Lionel Trilling, Anita Brenner, and Eliot Cohen in box 8, Herbert Solow Papers, Hoover Archives, Stanford, California. Among those who were driven from the party (besides Eastman) were V. F. Calverton, Scott Nearing, William Phillips, and Philip Rahv. The second quotation is Edmund Wilson to John Dos Passos, Feb. 29, 1932, in Elena Wilson, ed., *Letters on Literature and Politics* (New York, 1977), 221. *Letters* is a collection of Edmund Wilson's correspondence edited posthumously by his wife. See Wilson, *The Thirties*, 116, 212; Calverton, "The Crisis in Communism," 140-145, 151.

¹³ Calverton, "Letter to *New Masses*," 110-111, 127-128; Calverton, "Marxism and America," 9. "An Editorial," *Modern Monthly* 7 (1934), 707.

¹⁴ Daniel Bell, *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (Princeton, 1967), 139-140; Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party* (Boston, 1957), 177-190.

¹⁵ See Lewis Corey, "American Class Relations," *Marxist Quarterly* 1 (1937), 134-143; Corey, *Decline of American Capitalism* (New York, 1934); and Corey, *Crisis of the Middle Class* (New York, 1935). V. F. Calverton, "Will Fascism Come To America?" *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934), 469-478; Bertram Wolfe, "New Aspects of Cyclical Crises," *Marxist Quarterly* 1 (1937), 99-114. "An Open Letter to American Intellectuals," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934), 87-92. This letter was signed by Sidney Hook, James Rorty, V. F. Calverton, and James Burnham among others.

¹⁶ See Aaron, *Writers on the Left*, 205-213, 219-228, on the strictures of proletarian literature. V. F. Calverton, "Criticism on the Barricades," *Modern Monthly* 10 (1936), 116-118, 131; Calverton, "Book of the Month," ibid. 8 (1934), 185-186, 191; *Workers Age*, May 14, 1932, p. 4; Edmund Wilson, "The Literary Class War," *New Republic* 70 (1932), 319-323; Louise Bogan to Rolfe Humphries, July 6, 1935, in Ruth Limmer, ed., *What the Woman Lived* (New York, 1973), 92-94; Max Eastman, "The Humiliation of Boris Pilnyak," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934), 42-50; Eastman, "New Masses for Old," ibid., 292-300. The descriptions are Calverton's and Bogan's.

¹⁷ Calverton called for the Americanization of Marx in his "In the Name of Marxism," 69-70. *The Marxist Quarterly* was created for the express purpose of Americanizing Marx. See "Challenge," 4. Calverton on the "big" versus the "little" men is in his "Will Fascism Come to America?" 469-478.

¹⁸ See, for example, Hook, "Why I Am a Communist," 143-145. Quotations are from "Editorial," *ibid.* See also *Workers Age*, Nov. 1, 1934, p. 2; Sidney Hook, "On Workers' Democracy," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934), 541; Eastman, "Discrimination About Russia," 479-485; Scott Nearing, "USSR Revisited," *Soviet Russia Today* 3 (1935), 9.

¹⁹ Max Eastman, *The End of Socialism in Russia* (Boston, 1937), 46.

²⁰ Aaron, *Writers on the Left*, 274-276. 21 Sidney Hook, "The Anatomy of the Popular Front," *Partisan Review* 6 (1939), 33-40.

²¹ Sidney Hook, "The Anatomy of the Popular Front," *Partisan Review* 6 (1939), 33-40.

²² See Bertram Wolfe's "Background of Spain's Civil War," *Marxist Quarterly* 1 (1937), 345-355; Max Nomad, "Wither Spain," *Modern Monthly* 8 (1934), 606-613; "Beyond Franco," *ibid.*, 10 (1937), 2; "Bolshevism in Spain," *ibid.*, 2; *Workers Age*, Aug. 15, 1936, April 18, 1936, and April 17, 1937; Hugo Oehler, "What is Happening in Spain?," *Modern Monthly* 10 (1937), 11-12; Max Eastman, "An Open Letter to the Nation," *ibid.*, 4-7; V. F. Calverton, "Will England Give Spain to Franco?" *ibid.*, 5-8; Anita Brenner, "Class War in Spain," *ibid.*, 4-17.

²³ See *ibid.*, 4-17.

²⁴ Philip Rahv, "Trials of the Mind," *Partisan Review*, 4 (1938), 4-5. Max Eastman, "Bolshevism versus Menshevism," *New Republic* 91 (1937), 252.

²⁵ Leon Dannen to Max Eastman, as quoted in Eastman's *Heroes I Have Known* (New York, 1942), 203; Wilson to Dos Passos, May 5, 1935, in Wilson, ed., *Letters*, 266. Rahv contrasted the 1937 League Congress with the 1935 pre-Popular Front one where proletariat concerns were stressed. See his "Two Years of Progress," *Partisan Review* 4 (1938), 22-30; *Socialist Call*, June 5, 1937, 8. Box 29 of the Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover Archives, Stanford, California, contains a copy of Waldo Frank's resignation, but there is nothing that suggests he was forced out of office. The party's response to Rorty is "From Rorty to Hearst," *New Masses* 23 (1937), 14-15. See Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans*, 179-180. "The Writers' Congress," *New Masses* 23 (1937), 8-9; and Donald Ogden Stewart, *By A Stroke of Luck* (New York, 1975), 238, offer the opposite perspective. The clash is described by the leader of the conference in Granville Hicks, *Part of the Truth* (New York, 1965), 147-148.

²⁶ "The Moscow Trials," *Modern Monthly* 10 (1937), 3.

²⁷ A representative early view is Edmund Wilson's. See Wilson to Dos Passos, Jan. 11, 1935, and May 9, 1935, in Wilson, ed., *Letters*, 255-265; Wilson, "Russian Idyls," *New Republic* 86 (1936), 341-342. Later views include Eastman, *The End of Socialism*, 42-46; V. F. Calverton to Margaret Lamont, Sept. 18, 1937, in Calverton Papers; "Moscow Trials," 3; "Stalin on Trial," *Modern Monthly* 10 (1936), 3-4. Sidney Hook in a radio broadcast reprinted in *Socialist Appeal*, April 9, 1938, p. 3. Edmund Wilson to James

T. Farrell, Feb. 23, 1937, and Wilson to Malcolm Cowley, April 15, 1937, both in Wilson, ed., *Letters*, 285-288; Wilson, "Stalin, Trotsky and Willi Schlam," *Nation* 45 (1937), 648-653; *Workers Age*, July 3, 1935, p. 5, and April 9, 1938, pp. 1-2; Martha Gruening, "Trotsky and Civil Liberties," *New Republic* 90 (1937), 113. Several independents offered their opinions of the trials in the *Modern Monthly* symposium "Is Leon Trotsky Guilty?" *Modern Monthly* 10 (1937), 4-7. Nearing to Calverton, March 13, 1938 in Calverton Papers. Philip Rahv, "Dostoevsky and Politics," *Partisan Review* 5 (1938), 25-36.

²⁸ Ibid. See Calverton to Carleton Beals, n.d., in box 1, Calverton Papers, and Calverton to Nearing, March 21, 1938, in *ibid.* Sidney Hook, "Liberalism and the Case of Leon Trotsky," *Southern Review* 3 (1937), 281-282.

²⁹ "Symposium: Was the Bolshevik Revolution a Failure?" *Modern Quarterly* 11 (1938), 6-28.

³⁰ Nearing to Calverton, Mar. 13, 1938, in Calverton Papers.

³¹ Rahv, "Trials," 6-7; "Shall We Defend the Socialist Emperor?" *Modern Quarterly* 11 (1939), 2-4; "Is State Capitalism Socialism?" *Modern Monthly* 10 (1938), 2-3; Hook, "Anatomy of the Popular Front," 42; Jay Lovestone, "Toward the American Commonwealth IX: New Frontiers for Labor," *Social Frontier* 5 (1938), 54-59. Quotation is from Hook, "Anatomy of the Popular Front," 42.

³² *Workers Age*, Dec. 18, 1937, 3; Edmund Wilson to Muriel Draper, Nov. 14, 1938, in Wilson, ed., *Letters*, 311; Calverton to Lamont, Sept. 18, 1937. Calverton to Carleton Beals, n.d., and Calverton to Nearing, March 21, 1938, all in Calverton Papers. Liston Oak in "Symposium," *ibid.*, 14-15. S. L. Solon, "The Stalin School of Falsification," *Modern Monthly* 10 (1937), 15; Max Eastman, "Violence, For and Against," *Common Sense* 7 (1938), 20; Bertram Wolfe's speech to the ACDLT, March 9, [1938] in box 25, folder 24, Wolfe Papers.

³³ Rahv, "Trials," 4-5; "Moscow Trials," 3. Independents who participated in the ACDLT included Calverton, Herberg, Hook, Rorty, McCarthy, Schapiro, Wilson and Wolfe. See Mary McCarthy, *On the Contrary* (New York, 1951), 94-103. McCarthy wove her experiences with the ACDLT into a novel. See McCarthy, *The Company She Keeps* (New York, 1942), 218-231. Meyer Schapiro to Bertram Wolfe, Nov. 24, 1937, in box 63, folder 13, Wolfe Papers; Bertram Wolfe, "Trotsky's Defense," *New Republic* 93 (1937), 79.

³⁴ Wilson's opinion of Trotsky is in his 1937 article "American Critics, Left and Right," contained in Edmund Wilson, *The Shores of Light* (New York, 1952), 645. Other independent opinions of Trotsky include Bertram Wolfe, "Trotsky's Case," *New Republic* 91 (1937), 164-165; Edmund Wilson to Malcolm Cowley, April 15, 1937, *Letters*, 287-288; V. F. Calverton to Carleton Beals, April 24, 1938, Calverton to Beals, n.d., and Calverton to Harry Dana, Aug. 24, 1937, all in boxes 1 and 2, Calverton Papers; Sidney Hook, "Correspondence," *Southern Review* 3 (1937), 415; Alfred Kazin to author, May 7, 1981, and William Phillips to author, April 24, 1981.

³⁵ Howe, *Decline*, 222.

³⁶ Ibid., 175-180.

³⁷ "The War of the Neutrals," *Partisan Review* 6 (1939), 5; Phillips to author, April 24, 1981.

³⁸ *Workers Age*, June 8, 1940, p. 4. The phrase is Eastman's. See his *Stalin's Russia and the Crisis in Socialism* (New York, 1940) 8, 100-105, and Sidney Hook, "Reflections on the Russian Revolution," *Southern Review* 4 (1939), 453-454.

³⁹ Eastman, *Stalin's Russia*, 120-121; Lewis Corey, "Marxism Reconsidered-I," *Nation*, 150 (1940), 245. *Workers Age*, June 8, 1940, p. 4.

⁴⁰ On the continued admiration independents had for Lenin, see Diggins, *Up From Communism*, 37-38, 344; O'Neill, *Last Romantic*, 90-92; Paul, *Wilson*, 121-123; Kriegel, *Wilson*, 57, 63. Wilson's quote is from his *To the Finland Station* (Garden City, N. Y., 1940), 480-481. Eastman, *Stalin's Russia*, 8, 32-33. Other examples of independent attitudes toward Lenin include Eastman, *Marxism: Is It Science?* (London, 1941), 216-224; and Calverton, "What Socialism Means To Me," *ibid.*

⁴¹ Eastman, *Stalin's Russia*, 7-13.

⁴² Phillips's quotations are from his "Devil Theory," 82-90, and Wilson's, are from *Finland Station*, 189. Lewis Corey, "The Need Still Is: A New Social Order," in *Whose Revolution?* ed., Irving DeWitt Talmadge (Westport, Conn., 1941, reprint ed., 1975), 251; Eastman, *Stalin's Russia*, 173-177; Meyer Schapiro, "The Revolutionary Personality," *Partisan Review* 7 (1940), 474; Eastman, *Marxism: Is It Science?* 15.

⁴³ Lewis Corey, "Marxism Reconsidered - II," *Nation* 150 (1940), 272-274. Several other independents took their cue from Corey's series of articles reevaluating Marxism, either for or against his approach. See, for example, Philip Rahv, "What is Living and What is Dead," *Partisan Review* 7 (1940), 179; Calverton, "What Socialism Means To Me," *ibid.*, Will Herberg, "Reconsidering Marxism," *Workers Age*, June 8, 1940, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Eastman, *Stalin's Russia*, 100-105, 161-177; and Eastman, *Marxism: Is It Science?* 19-24, 263-264; Schapiro, "The Revolutionary Personality," 478.

⁴⁵ Eastman, *Marxism: Is It Science?* 261; Lionel Trilling, "Elements That Are Wanted," *Partisan Review* (1940), 374-377; Corey, "Marxism - I," 245. Both Wilson and Eastman attributed Marx's authoritarian outlook to the German philosophic tradition, an explanation perhaps reflecting their opinions of Hitler more than anything else. See Wilson, *Finland Station*, 483.

⁴⁶ Eastman, *Stalin's Russia*, 82-94, lists a series of comparisons between the two nations. Corey later noted in his 1945 Antioch College speech, "A Rediscovery of Democracy," that "neither I nor most of my comrades of the time were enemies of democracy; the mistake we made was in taking democracy for granted." See Corey, "Lewis Corey," 109.

⁴⁷ Corey, "Marxism - I," 246-247; *Workers Age*, June 15, 1940, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Lewis Corey, "Marxism Reconsidered - III," *Nation* 150 (1940), 305-307; Eastman, *Stalin's Russia*, 250-266.

⁴⁹ Wilson, *Finland Station*, 483. Other opinions included Eastman's in *Marxism: Is It Science?* 25, and Eastman, *Stalin's Russia*, 197; Lewis Corey,

"A Liberal Looks At Life," *Social Frontier* 7 (1941), 232-234.

⁵⁰ Sidney Hook, "Seeking Truth About Trotsky," *New York Herald Tribune Books* 14 (1937), 8.

⁵¹ James Burnham and Max Shachtman, "Intellectuals in Retreat," *New Internationalist* 5 (1939), 3-22.

⁵² Interestingly, few independents called themselves liberals because liberalism had been discredited for them by the Popular Front. See Wilson to Dos Passos, Feb. 1, 1964, in Wilson, ed., *Letters*, 643. Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans*, 270, and Diggins, *Up From Communism*, 441-443, also discuss the phenomenon.

⁵³ Calverton, "What Socialism Means To Me," *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Hook, "Seeking Truth," 8.

⁵⁵ See Diggins, *Up From Communism*, 343-348; also O'Neill, *Last Romantic*, 242-244, on Eastman. Wilson's later views are in his letters to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., April 13, 1958, and to Kazin, May 30, 1962, both in Wilson, ed., *Letters*, 567, 619. On Hook see his "The New Failure of Nerve," *Partisan Review* 10 (1943), 2-23.

⁵⁶ See, for example, "The 'Liberal' Fifth Column," *Partisan Review* 13 (1946), 279-293; Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans*, 257; O'Neill, *Last Romantic*, 212; and William Chace, *Lionel Trilling* (Stanford, 1980), 48.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Victor Navasky, *Naming Names* (New York, 1980), 55. On the Committee for Cultural Freedom, see *ibid.*, 55-56; Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (New York, 1969), 78-93.

⁵⁸ The quotation is from Howe, *Decline*, 222, 224. The logic of this apparent switch from radicalism to conservatism is not as strange as it first appears given the independents' hatred of Stalin and mistrust of liberalism.

⁵⁹ See William L. O'Neill, *A Better World: The Great Schism: Stalinism and the American Intellectuals* (New York, 1982). O'Neill demonstrates not only that the anti-Stalinists' perceptions of Russia were more realistic than those of the Popular Frontier's, but that most former supporters of Russia came around to the anti-Stalinist point of view.

⁶⁰ A 1970 survey of the seventy most influential intellectuals contains only eleven intellectuals active in the community of the 1930s. Of those eleven, six were former independents (Mary McCarthy, Lionel Trilling, Edmund Wilson, Alfred Kazin, Sidney Hook, and Philip Rahv), two were Trotskyists, one was a liberal, one was a progressive, and only one was a Stalinist. See Kadushin, *The American Intellectual Elite* (Boston, 1974), 30-31.