

The MILITANT

Semi-Monthly Organ of the Opposition Group in the Workers (Communist) Party of America

"It is necessary that every member of the Party should study calmly and with the greatest objectivity, first the substance of the differences of opinion, and then the development of the struggles within the Party. Neither the one nor the other can be done unless the documents of both sides are published. He who takes somebody's word for it is a hopeless idiot, who can be disposed of with a simple gesture of the hand."—Lenin

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The July Plenum and the Right Danger

A short few weeks ago, the official Party press carried the first stories from Moscow about the "opening" of a new struggle within the C. P. S. U. These stories revealed that the struggle between the Right wing (Rykov-Tomsky) and the Center (Stalin), with Bucharin playing the customary buffer role, could no longer be concealed behind the curtains of the Political Bureau of C. P. S. U. and had broken out in the Moscow and other organizations of the Party, where advance "scouts" for the Right wing had been presenting in the lower units of the Party the policies already proposed by Rykov-Tomsky-Kalinin in the Political Bureau. The dispatches in the Party press, however, throw no light on the actual situation and the real issue at stake.

The entire course of the present developments in the C. P. S. U. was predicted with amazing precision by comrade Trotsky in his platform as far back as the 15th Party Congress (1927) and in the following suppressed arti-

cle written in July of this year. Just as Stalin fruitlessly attempted to deny the existence of a Right danger, as analyzed by Trotsky then, so he is now trying to deny the existence of this danger in the Political Bureau (Rykov, etc.), and continues to lull the membership of the C. P. S. U. and the Comintern into a false security. The article of Trotsky printed below was absolutely correct when it was written, and is even more correct now. It throws a penetrating searchlight upon the present situation within the Soviet Union Party, exposes the inexorable class forces represented by the contending groups, and proves again the irrefutable accuracy of the predictions and program of the Leninist Opposition. This article was sent to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International but was not distributed to the delegates. It is printed here for the first time in English. Other suppressed documents of equal importance will be printed in subsequent issues of The Militant.

THE report read by Rykov on July 13 at the meeting of the Moscow Party workers on the outcome of the July Plenum of the Central Committee¹ was an event of capital political importance. Here was expounded the program of the most authoritative representative of the right wing, carrying his banner to the tribune if not entirely unfurled, at least half-way. In his report Rykov did not pause an instant upon the program of the Communist International; he did not even mention it. He devoted his speech exclusively to the question of the grain collections. Moreover it is not without good reason that his report was delivered in the tone of a victor. The Right has issued entirely victorious from its first skirmish with the Center, after four or five months of "left" politics. The July Plenum of the Central Committee marks the first victory of Rykov over Stalin, gained to be sure with the consent of the latter. The essential idea of Rykov's report is that the swerve towards the left which occurred in February was only an episode due to extraordinary circumstances, that this episode ought to be buried and forgotten, that we must also lay on the shelf not only Article 107,² but also what appeared in *Pravda* in February, that we must abandon the former course and turn not to the left but to the right—and that the more brusquely this is done the better. To clear the road Rykov acknowledged (he would not do otherwise before the accusing facts) three of his small errors: "First, at the moment when the crisis arose I judged it to be less profound than it really was; but, second, I thought that thanks to extraordinary measures we would succeed in overcoming completely this crisis of grain supply. We did not succeed. Third, I hoped that the whole campaign of grain collection would be carried on in reliance on the poor peasant, and maintaining in perfect stability our union with the masses of middle peasants. Upon this point also I was mistaken."

Now this whole crisis of grain supply, with all the political phenomena which accompanied it, was foreseen by the opposition in its counter-theses,³ which showed Rykov accurately all that he did not comprehend and did not foresee. It was just in order to avoid tardy and exaggerated administrative measures, adopted in haste and without coordination, that the Opposition proposed in good season a forced loan of grain from the rich elements of the villages.⁴ To be sure this measure also was an exceptional one. The entire preceding policy had made exceptional measures inevitable. If the loan had been made methodically and soon enough, that would have reduced to a minimum these administrative excesses, which are too high a payment for

By L. D. TROTSKY

very slight material results. Measures of administrative violence do not belong to a correct course. They are the price we pay for an incorrect one. The attempt of Rykov to attribute to the Opposition a tendency to eternalize these procedures *à la* Rykov, derived from the period of Military Communism, is purely and simply ridiculous. From the very first the Opposition considered these perquisitions in the country, the re-establishment of flying squadrons, etc., not as the beginning of a new course but as the failure of the old. Article 107 on hoarding is not an instrument of a Leninist policy, it is one of the crutches of the Rykov policy. In trying to present as a program of the Opposition administrative measures of economic disorganization for which he is himself entirely responsible, Rykov is behaving as all petty-bourgeois politicians do, for they always in such a situation stir up the peasant against the Communist by depicting the latter as a bandit and an expropriator.

What is the significance of the change of course in February? It was an acknowledgement of the lagging of industry, of the threatening class-differentiation in the country, and of the extreme Kulak

danger. What should we deduce from it in order to establish the new line of conduct? A change in the distribution of the national income which should divert to the industries a part of what had gone to the Kulak, thereby diverting it from capitalism towards socialism, and accelerating the development of both light and heavy industry. Contrary to the article which appeared in February in *Pravda* (which merely repeated in this question the arguments of the Opposition) Rykov discovered the cause of the collection crisis, not in the lagging of the development of industry but in that of agriculture. To offer such an explanation is to make fun of the Party and of the working-class. It is to deceive the Party in order to accomplish a swerve to the right. It is the old way of posing this question in the manner of the Ustrialov professors. It is perfectly obvious that our agriculture is incoherent, scattered, backward, that it has a barbarous character, and that this backwardness is the fundamental cause of all the difficulties. But to demand on this basis, as Rykov does, a diversion of the financial resources due to industry towards the individual peasant estate, is to choose not only the bourgeois road but the road of the agrarian bourgeoisie, of the reactionary bourgeoisie. It is to become a Soviet

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GANGSTERISM!

On Monday evening, December 10th, two women comrades, Maria Reim and Pauline Gutringer, who were selling The Militant on the sidewalk in front of the Workers Center on Union Square, New York City, were set upon by an organized squad which had been detailed to execute the slogan given out by Party officials to "prevent the sale of The Militant at all costs and beat up the Oppositionists."

"Get out of here, you counter-revolutionary prostitutes!" This and similar commands, mixed with unprintable obscenities, were hurled at the two working class women before a crowd of several hundred which quickly gathered.

Screaming epithets and calling the women comrades every name in the vocabulary of the underworld, they seized the two comrades by the arms and began to push them away. The Communist women resisted and stood their ground. The papers were torn from their hands. Comrade Reim attempted to recover some of the papers and received a first blow in the face.

The police appeared and immediately seized the two women leaving their attackers unmolested. The two Communist women, who had attempted to sell The Militant on the sidewalk were then forcibly driven away by the police.

These events are the direct result of a planned campaign of incitement by Party officials who themselves never yet took part in a fight and who lacked even the courage to participate in the attack on the women comrades. Wolfe, who ran away from the Party like a craven during the Palmer raids, and also after the Bridgeman raid, directly incited to physical violence against the Opposition in his speech at the Workers Forum on November 25. Dr. Markoff in his speech to the Italian Party membership meeting on November 28 said, "The Oppositionists

are worse than Mussolini and his Fascists. We must beat them politically and physically." Party comrades have been directly instructed by such functionaries as Miller and Benjamin that they must not speak to the members of the Opposition but should spit upon them. More than that, physical assaults against comrades attempting to sell The Militant on the streets, have been directly discussed and planned in committee meetings of the Party in the New York district, where every kind of bourgeois and anti-Communist literature is freely sold in the Party's book-store.

The methods of violence which the bureaucrats are copying from the labor fakers are necessary only for a false policy. Their methods condemn their policy and will defeat it, for Communist ideas are stronger than the gangster's fist.

None of the Foster comrades participated in the shameful gangster attack. It is primarily the proletarian revolutionists in the Party ranks who must defeat this course. They must burn the incipient Fascist tactics out of the Party with a white hot iron. They must compel a free discussion of the disputed questions in a normal Communist way.

For our part we will take up the challenge of gangsterism incited and organized by poltroons who never yet took a blow on the picket line or in a raid. Our task and duty is to reach the Communist workers with our views. Since we are deprived of our Party rights by expulsion and suppression we must do this through The Militant. We will sell The Militant before every workers' institution and meeting. The rights of the revolutionary workers are higher than the rights of landlordism. We will maintain these rights by struggle. In this struggle our strength will be multiplied by steadfast belief in our views and by our courage to defend them.

1) The Plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. which was held in July 1928, was devoted to economic difficulties and to the Congress of the International, which was to convene immediately after. A bitter struggle arose at this Plenum, or more exactly behind the scenes of the Plenum, between the Stalin and Rykov factions. As appears later, it was in fact the Right which carried the day, with Rykov and Bucharin at its head.

2) Article 107 of the Penal Code deals with the struggle against speculation and the fraudulent concealment of surplus merchandise. This article was widely applied last Spring as an extraordinary measure for requisitioning grain from the peasants.

3) This refers to the Counter-theses, which the Opposition opposed to the official theses presented by the Central Committee at the 15th Congress of the Party. These Counter-theses, which appeared at the time in the discussion supplement of *Pravda*, were devoted to questions of Party policy in the country and the five-year plan for the development of industry.

4) Foreseeing the imminent crisis of grain hoarding, the Opposition proposed in its platform a forced loan of grain from the rich elements of the villages which should yield 150,000,000 to 200,000,000 puds.