

The July Plenum and the Right Danger

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caricature of the "Friends of the People," of the Zemstvo of 1880. Agriculture cannot be elevated except with the aid of industry. There exist no other levers. Nevertheless our industry is frightfully backward in relation to the peasant economy, incoherent, scattered and barbarous as it is. The lagging of industry is observable not only by comparison with the general historic aspirations of peasant economy, but also by comparison with the buying capacity of the peasant. To confound these two questions, one having to do with the general historical backwardness of country as against town, the other having to do with the backwardness of the cities in face of the present need of merchandize in the villages, is to capitulate and abandon the hegemony of the cities over the country.

Our agriculture in its present form is infinitely backward open in comparison to industry, which is backward enough. But to conclude that this consequence of the operation throughout centuries of a law of unequal development of the different parts of an economy, can be overcome or even attenuated by reducing the already insufficient funds allocated to industrialization, would be like combatting illiteracy by shutting down the institutions of higher learning. That would be to tear out the very roots of historic progress. Although our industry has a type of production and technique infinitely superior to that of agriculture, not only is it not big enough to play a directive and transforming role—a truly socialist role towards the country, but it is not even capable of satisfying the current needs of the village market, and it thereby holds up the development of this market.

It is exactly upon this basis that the collection crisis became so sharp. It was not caused either by the general backward historic character of the country, or by an alleged too rapid advance of industry. On February 15, *Pravda* informed us that three years "had not passed without leaving their mark," that the country was enriched, that is to say especially the Kulaks, that in the face of the delay in the development of industry this must inevitably bring a hoarding crisis. Directly contradicting this interpretation, Rykov judges that the mistake committed during the last year by the Party heads was on the contrary to have excessively speeded up industrialization and that it is necessary to slacken the pace, diminish its share of the national revenue, and utilize the funds thus made available as subsidies for the rural economy, especially in its predominant private property form. It is by means of such procedures that Rykov hopes in a very short time to double the yield per acre. But he says nothing as to the means of disposing of this doubled yield on the market, that is to say, of exchanging it for the products of an industry whose rate of development will have grown still slower. It is impossible that Rykov does not raise this question in his own mind. A doubled harvest would entail a five or ten times multiplied demand of merchandize by the rural economy; the dearth of industrial products would thus also be multiplied several times. It is inconceivable that Rykov does not understand this very simple correlation. Why then does he not divulge the secret which is to enable him to triumph in the future over this disproportion, destined to grow monstrously? Because the hour has not yet come. For politicians of the Right, words are silver but silence is gold. Rykov moreover had already spent too much silver in his report. But it is not difficult to estimate the value of his gold. An increase in the rural economy of the capacity to buy merchandize, faced by a backward movement in industry, would mean quite simply an increase in the importation of manufactured products from abroad, destined both for the towns and the country. There does not, and there cannot exist any other alternative. As a result, the necessity of entering upon this course will be so imperious, the pressure of the growing disproportion will be so menacing, that Rykov will decide to coin his gold reserve and will demand out loud the abolition—or a reduction that is equivalent to abolition—of the monopoly of foreign trade.

This is exactly the plan of the Right which our platform predicted. From now on it will be carried openly to the tribune, if not as a whole, at least in one of its very considerable parts. As it appears from the whole speech of Rykov the raising of the price of grain is hypothesized upon that plan. It is above all a bounty to the Kulak. It permits him to lead along with still more assurance the middle peasants explaining to him: You see, I have made them pay me well for the damage caused by Article 107. It is in struggle that we will win our rights, as say our masters, the Social Revolutionaries. One

cannot doubt that functionaries who really know their business, are consoling the politicians by assuring them that it will be possible to recoup upon other raw materials produced by the peasants, what is to be paid in excess for grain. But such talk is pure charlatanism. In the first place, the worker consumes bread and not the raw materials utilized by the machine; the raising of the price of grain will thus strike directly at the budget of the worker. In the second place, we will not succeed any better in indemnifying ourselves through the other peasant products if it is first decided to cover the losses of the Left zig-zag course with the ruble. In general maneuvers of retreat are carried out with more loss than gain. This is still more true of a retreat as disordered as that marked by the decisions of July as against the resolutions adopted in February. The raising of the price of grain, even conceived as an exceptional and extraordinary measure, as a kind of article 107 read backwards, conceals in itself an enormous danger: it only accentuates the contradictions which gave birth to the hoarding crisis.

This rise in prices strikes only the consumers, that is, the worker and the poor peasant whose harvest is not sufficient for his personal consumption. It is not only a bounty to the Kulak and the well-off peasant, but a still further increase of class differentiation. If industrial products are lacking already under the old price of grain, the lack will be still greater after the rise in prices and the increase in the quantity of grain harvested. This will amount to a new extension of the shortage of industrial merchandize, and to a continuation of the growth of social differentiation in the country. To combat the hoarding crisis by increasing the price of grain, is to enter decisively upon the road of the depreciation of the chervonetz—in other words, it is to quench your thirst with salty water. This would be so, even if it were an isolated and exceptional measure. But in the mind of Rykov this rise in prices is in no wise an extraordinary proceeding. It is one of the essential parts of the Rykov policy of sliding towards capitalism. Upon this road currency inflation is only a technical detail.

On the subject of the danger of inflation, Rykov says with a meaningful air: "In the meantime the buying capacity of the ruble continues firm." What does this mean: "in the meantime"? It means: Until the sale of the new harvest at increased prices, in the face of a shortage of industrial products. But when the inflation arrives, Rykov will say to the workers, whose wages will fall inevitably in such a situation: "You remember I said to you 'in the meantime'." And then he will begin to develop

T. J. O'Flaherty for the Opposition

Tom O'Flaherty, the most popular Communist propagandist in America and the writer of the famous Daily Worker column "As We See It" and a revolutionist of many years' standing, has issued a statement setting forth his unconditional support of the Platform of the Russian Opposition and his solidarity with all comrades expelled for these views.

"After studying new material on the question of the Trotsky line in the C.P.S.U. and the Comintern," said comrade O'Flaherty in his statement, "I have come to the conclusion that the line of the Russian Opposition led by comrade Trotsky is the correct Leninist line and therefore I associate myself with the position taken by comrade Cannon and his associates in the Workers (Communist) Party of America. They were unjustly expelled from the Party for attempting to explain to the membership of the Party the political line really advocated by Trotsky in the C.P.S.U. and the Comintern."

Comrade O'Flaherty's statement sets forth his agreement with the position of the Russian Opposition on such specific questions as Socialism in one country, the Anglo-Russian Committee and the problems of the Chinese Revolution, and brands the accusation of "counter-revolutionary" hurled at its supporters as ridiculous phrase-mongering having no basis in actual fact and carrying no conviction.

Comrade O'Flaherty, who has been removed from his position on the Daily Worker, has promised to contribute regularly to The Militant.

the part of his program on which he now remains silent. It is impossible to solve the crisis by entering the road of the NEO-NEP without impairing the monopoly of foreign trade.

At the same time that Rykov was celebrating this triumph, Stalin, the vanquished, made a speech at Leningrad. In his really impotent speech (it actually makes one sick to read it), Stalin presents the bounty now accorded to the rich elements of the villages and extorted from the workers and the poor peasants, as a new consolidation of the bridge uniting town and country. (How many of these consolidations have we had already!) Stalin doesn't even attempt to show how he intends to avoid the contradictions which are closing in on him. He has just got out of the difficulties produced by Article 107, and proceeds to tangle himself up in those of the rise in prices. Stalin is merely falling back on the same general phrases about the "bridge" which have already been repeated *ad nauseam*. As if the problem of the "bridge" could be solved by a phrase, a formula, a promise, as if one could believe (anyone, that is, except Stalin's docile functionaries) that if the next harvest is good, it will be able by a miracle to overcome the disproportion which has only been aggravated by the three previous harvests.

Stalin is afraid of the Rykovist solution from the Right, but he is still more afraid of the Leninist solution. He is waiting. He is turning his back and occupying himself with manipulating the apparatus. Stalin is losing time under the impression that he is gaining it. After the convulsive shock of February we are now again in the presence of "Khvostism" in all its pitiable impotence. The speech of Rykov has a totally different tone. When Stalin dodges the issue by keeping still, it is because he has nothing to say. Rykov, on the contrary, leaves certain things unmentioned because he doesn't want to say too much. The policy of raising the price of grain (especially accompanied as it was by an expose of the Rykov motives in explaining the abrogation of the Left zig-zag in the Spring) constitutes, and cannot but constitute, the beginning of a change of orientation towards the Right, a deep and perhaps decisive change. Legal barriers erected upon this road, such as the limitation of leaseings, and of the employment of wage labor, will be abolished with a stroke of the bureaucratic pen, along with the monopoly of foreign trade—at least unless these people break their heads against the iron wall of the proletarian vanguard. The logic of the Right course can very quickly become irrevocable. All the false hopes in the false policy of the Right, all these reckless calculations in general, the loss of time, the minimizing of contradictions, the mental reservations, and the diplomacy, are nothing but an effort to put the workers to sleep, to support the enemy, to promote, whether consciously or unconsciously, the Thermidor. In the speech of Rykov commenting on the resolutions of the July Plenum, the Right wing has thrown down the gage to the October Revolution. We must understand that. We must take up the gage. We must immediately and with all our might give the first blow to the Right. The Right, in issuing its defiance, has fixed its strategy in advance. For this it did not need any great ingenuity. Rykov asserts that at the basis of the Centrist tendencies of the Left there is "a Trotskyist distrust of the possibility of building Socialism on the basis of the Nep, and a desperate panic before the Moujik." The struggle against "Trotskyism" is the favorite hobby of those who are beginning to slide. But if this sort of arguments were fairly stupid on the lips of Stalin, they become a pitiful caricature on the lips of Rykov. It is just here that he ought to have remembered that silence is gold. It is those who distrust the conquest of power by the proletariat in peasant Russia who are really panic-stricken before the Moujik. These heroes of panic were seen on the other side of the barricades of October. Rykov was one of them.

As for us, we were with Lenin and the proletariat, for we never doubted one instant that the proletariat was capable of leading the peasantry. The Rykov policy of 1917 was only an abridged anticipation of the present economic tactic. At present he proposes to surrender one after another the dominant economic positions already conquered by the proletariat to the elements of primitive capitalist accumulation. It is only thanks to the privileges which have been conferred upon him these last years by the falsification of history, that Rykov dares to describe as a panic the uncompromising

5) Rykov was in 1917 among the most resolute opponents of the seizure of power. Appointed a Commissar in the Government after the Revolution of October, he deserted several days after with Zinoviev and Kamenev. At the moment when the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries began their open struggle against the newly-formed Soviet Government, Rykov, Kamenev and Zinoviev demanded a capitulation to them and the formation of a coalition government. When the Central Committee refused to agree to the formation of such a government, they announced their resignation from the Central Committee, and Rykov and some others deserted the positions in the Government which had been confided to them by the Party.

Whither Foster?

struggle carried on by the Opposition in defense of the Socialist dictatorship. He attempts at the same time to pass off as political courage his disposition to capitulate to capitalism with his eyes wide open.

At present Rykov is directing his reactionary demagoguery, perfectly adapted to the psychology of the small owner on the way to wealth, less against the Opposition than against Stalin and the Center who incline toward the Left. Just as in his time Stalin directed against Zinoviev all the attacks which Zinoviev had directed against "Trotskyism," so Rykov is now learning to repeat the same operation against Stalin. Who sows the wind reaps the whirlwind. You can't play with political ideas. They are more dangerous than fire. The myths, legends, slogans of an imaginary "Trotskyism," have not become an attribute of the Opposition, but certain classes have seized upon them, and thus these conceptions lead their own life. To drive them more broadly and deeply, the agitation of Stalin had to be a hundred times more brutal than that of Zinoviev. Now it is Rykov's turn. One can imagine what persecutions the Right is going to turn loose when relying openly upon the property instinct of the Kulak. We must not forget that if the Rykovists form the tail of the Centrists, they have in their turn another, still heavier, tail.

Immediately behind Rykov, come those who, as *Pravda* has already recognized, want to live in peace with all classes—that is to say, want once more to force the worker, the hired man and the poor peasant to submit peacefully to the master. Behind them looms already the small employer, greedy, impatient, vindictive, his arms raised and the knife within reach. And behind the small employer, beyond the frontier, the real boss stands ready with dreadnoughts, airplanes and asphyxiating gases. "We must not let ourselves become panic-stricken. Let us go on building as we have in the past." That is what the little Judases of the Right are preaching, putting the workers to sleep, mobilizing the property holders, preparing the Thermidor.

Such is the present position of the men on the chess board. Such is the veritable mechanism motivating the classes. Rykov, as we have already said, deceives the Party in stating that the Opposition would like to perpetuate the exceptional measures to which we are reduced, to our shame, after eleven years of dictatorship by the policy pursued since the death of Lenin. The Opposition has said clearly what it had to say in its documents sent to the 6th Congress. But Rykov was perfectly right when he said: The principle task of the "Trotskyists" is to prevent this Right wing from triumphing. That at least is true. The victory of the Right wing would be the first step leading to Thermidor. After a victory of the Right wing it would no longer be possible to rise again to the dictatorship by the sole method of inner-Party reform. The Right wing is the handle on which the enemy classes are pulling. The success of this wing will be but a temporarily disguised victory of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. Rykov is right. At present our principal task is to prevent the triumph of the Right. In order to achieve this, it is necessary not to put the Party to sleep as the Zinovievs, Piatakovs and others are doing, but to sound the alarm ten times as loud all along the line. We say to our Party and to the Communist International: Rykov is beginning openly to surrender the Revolution of October to the enemy classes. Stalin is standing now on one foot, now on the other. He is beating a retreat before Rykov and firing to the Left. Bucharin is lulling the mind of the Party with his reactionary scholasticism.

The Party must lift its voice. The proletarian vanguard must take its destiny in its own hands. The Party must discuss broadly the three courses: Right, Center and Leninist. The Party needs the reinstatement of the Opposition into its ranks. The Party has need of a Congress honestly prepared for and honestly chosen.

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AN impression prevails which, for the sake of absolute and impartial truth, should be corrected. The opinion that the E.C.C.I., under Bucharin's leadership, always and under all circumstances is supporting Lovestone and Pepper in all things is not quite so. It is true that Lovestone and Pepper, not to mention Wolfe, receive the necessary political support to maintain their artificial hold on the party apparatus. But along with this whole-hearted backing to the opportunist adventurers go occasional "concessions" to the Foster group and these "concessions" are the bread they live by. After all, half a loaf is better than a crust and a crust is better than a crumb.

The arrival of one of these crusts of concession was made known through the columns of the *Daily Worker* on Dec. 3rd. It was a cable urging the Polcom to allow the Foster group to "express its dissociation from 'Trotskyism'." This cable resulted in the publication on the same day of the Bittelman statement of the Foster group. Up till then the document had been suppressed by the Lovestone majority which had been unfairly hogging the credit for the fight against the "Trotskyist," right or left—take your choice—"danger". This illuminating document of Bittelmanism had been living a furtive life, so to speak, being smuggled around as an illegal work, surreptitiously shoved under back doors, etc. The cable of the E.C.C.I. legalized the statement and made its publication possible.

The Foster group leaders, who appreciate all small favors, were very happy about this "victory". But we believe the jubilation was ill-placed. Sober reflection on the part of anyone able to read the thesis of Bittelman through will lead to the conclusion that the decision which authorized its publication was in reality a defeat for the Foster group. It would have been more merciful to suppress the document altogether and to order the confiscation of the extant copies.

The statement begins with a plaintive wail about being deprived of the "credit" for promptly reporting our Right deviations on Left Trotskyism to the Right Wing Polcom. Being ourselves fair and impartial and wanting to see everyone get his due, we wish to say a word in favor of this claim. It is an absolute and indisputable fact that the Foster group dutifully furnished this evidence to Lovestone and Pepper, and they are fully entitled to all the honor and glory which services of this kind usually bring to those who perform them. If the "leadership" of Foster and Bittelman in the heroic battle against "Trotskyism" lasted only for a day, or, more precisely for an hour, and was strictly limited to the role of information-givers, it is not because of lack of ambition on their part. The greater energy and initiative of the Polcom majority and their control of the apparatus, on the one hand, and the determined opposition of the proletarian supporters of the Foster group to such a course on the other, combined to frustrate their aspirations in this case, as their plans are so frequently frustrated by the inability to see where the second step leads when the first step is taken.

"The Right Danger in the American Party" which the Foster group signed yesterday was a straight-from-the-shoulder document. It said in plain terms (and correctly) that "the main danger comes from the Right" and said (also correctly) that the present leadership of the Party is the consciously organized Right Wing. The Foster statement of today crawls away from this straight-out declaration and cannot find room in a document of six or seven thousands words to directly characterize the opportunist charlatans who control the party. The plain words of yesterday which called these adventurers the Right Wing and the greatest menace to the Party are emasculated into vague talk about "opportunist tendencies" in the statement of today. Nowhere is there a direct and straight-forward characterization of the present leaders without which there can be no question of a serious struggle against them. And furthermore—let the proletarian Communists of the Foster group take note and remember—this "diplomatic retreat" from the basic position taken at the Sixth Congress is only a transition step to a further retreat and an abandonment of the struggle after the Convention. A part of the leadership of the Foster group is moving directly to this. The pressure of the rank and file of the Foster group who really want to struggle against the Opportunist leadership make such an immediate capitulation impossible. This explains the fact that the leaders of the Foster group, lacking firmness and definiteness of principle, are moving in zig-zags backward.

Right and Left deviations, arising out of specific

objective conditions, represent obstacles to the class development and victory of the proletariat. In the struggle against them, as Lenin said, "Bolshevism grew, gained strength and became hardened." Lenin precisely defined the nature of these deviations, explained their source and origin and gave invaluable instruction for combatting them, enriching this instruction with illustrations from the history of the Bolshevik Party. All this is lost insofar as the statement of the Foster group is concerned. The whole business is reduced to a Chinese puzzle of contradictions, inconsistencies and light-hearted jugglery of words and formulae which have nothing at all to do with serious politics.

According to the Bittelman evangel "deviations to the Left in the American Party grow out of the same objective situation as right deviations." Moreover, right deviations are the same as Left deviations, the Right being "a fatalistic attitude toward American capitalism, toward the possibilities of struggle against it and the opportunities of building up a mass Communist Party in the United States", while the Left is "pessimism in the possibility of building up a Communist Party in the United States."

Thus Right is Left and Left is Right. The main danger comes from the Right, and "Trotskyism" which Foster and Bittelman called a social-democratic and counter-revolutionary tendency on October 16, is now re-baptized (after Stalin's latest right-about-face speech on October 19) as a Left deviation. The fight against it "as an organic part of the general struggle against the Right Danger," which they prescribed on October 16, is now replaced by a "merciless struggle on two fronts—against the open Right Danger and against the Trotsky Opposition led by Cannon." Then to make everything absolutely clear, so that even a Gomez can understand it, it is pointed out that the Right Danger is the greatest, therefore the Left must be expelled "to protect the Party from the demoralizing effects of Trotskyism."

It would be a great error to identify this nonsense with the actual standpoint of the great majority of the Foster group supporters. These are proletarian and revolutionary, animated by a relentless opposition to the opportunist adventurers and the will to fight them—an attitude firmly crystallized and maintained over a period of years, and soundly based on experiences in the class struggle. It is their misfortune, and the Party's misfortune too, that their revolutionary antagonism to the Lovestone faction is capitalized by such "leaders" as the authors of this document and thus deprived of real effectiveness in the struggle. These leaders act as lightning rods, catching the opposition sentiments of many worker-Communists, diverting them from their real objects and running them into the ground.

A serious fight on their part to change the present leadership of the Party is, of course, impossible with such a policy. The task of the proletarian supporters of the Foster group is to break through this contradiction and find a clear and consistent line. That all their tendencies are in this direction has already been clearly shown in recent weeks. It was their pressure which has compelled Foster and Bittelman to come forward with proposals to moderate the criminal expulsion policy of the Lovestone majority. But the worker-Communists must not be fooled or pacified by this temporizing half-measure. It is impossible to fight the opportunist leadership and at the same time support in any way the expulsion of its real opponents. The workers in the Foster group—the great majority—who understand the disruptive consequences of this expulsion policy and stand opposed to it, must come out in the open against it. The same holds true for the many who secretly sympathize with our whole position. Mere caucus agitation only plays the game of small-scale caucus politicians and serves the interest of the Right Wing splitters.

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THE MILITANT

of

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