

# THE DRAFT PROGRAM OF THE COMINTERN *A CRITICISM OF FUNDAMENTALS* By L. D. TROTSKY

CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE

Having inherited and restored these productive forces the workers' government is COMPELLED to import and export.

The trouble is that the draft program divides mechanically into its text the thesis of the incompatibility of modern productive forces with the national boundaries, arguing as if there were no question at all of this incompatibility. Essentially the whole draft is a combination of ready-made revolutionary theses taken from Marx and Lenin and of opportunist and centrist conclusions which are absolutely incompatible with these revolutionary theses. That is why it is necessary WITHOUT BECOMING ALLURED BY THE REVOLUTIONARY FORMULA CONTAINED IN THE DRAFT to watch closely WHITHER ITS MAIN TENDENCIES LEAD.

We have already quoted that part of the first chapter which speaks of the possibility of the victory of socialism "in one capitalist country." This idea is still more roughly and sharply formulated in the 4th chapter, saying that the:

"Dictatorship (?) of the world proletariat... can be realized only as a result of the victory of socialism (?) in individual countries if the newly-formed proletarian republics establish a federation with those which have been in existence before."

If we are to interpret the words "victory of socialism" as another name for the proletarian dictatorship then we will arrive at the general statement which is irrefutable for all and which it would be necessary to formulate less dubiously. But this is not what the authors of the draft mean. By a victory of socialism, they do not mean simply the capture of power and the nationalization of the means of production but the building up of a socialist society in one country. If we were to accept this interpretation then we would receive not a world socialist economy based on an international division of labor but a federation of self-sufficient socialist communes in the spirit of blissful anarchism with the only difference that these communes would be enlarged to the size of the present national states.

This idea is still more definitely and, if this is at all possible, more grossly expressed in the fifth chapter, where hiding behind one and a half lines of Lenin's distorted article published after his death, the authors of the draft declare that the U.S.S.R.

"possesses the necessary and sufficient MATERIAL prerequisites in the country not only for the overthrow of the nobility and the bourgeoisie but also for the COMPLETE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIALISM."

Owing to what circumstances have we secured such extraordinary historical conditions? On this point we find a reply in the second chapter of the draft:

"The imperialist front was broken through (by the revolution of 1917) at its WEAKEST LINK, Czarist Russia."—(Our emphasis).

This is Lenin's splendid formula. Its meaning is that Russia was the most backward and economically weakest of all imperialist states. That is precisely why her ruling classes were the first to suffer shipwreck as they had forced on the INSUFFICIENT productive forces of the country an unbearable burden. Uneven, sporadic development compelled, therefore, the proletariat of the most backward imperialist country to be the first one to take power. Formerly we were told that it is precisely because of this that the working class of the "weakest link" will have the greatest difficulties in its progress towards socialism as compared with the proletariat of the advanced countries for which it will be more difficult to take power but which, having taken power long before we have overcome our backwardness, will not only get ahead of us but will carry us along so as to bring us towards the point of real socialist construction on the basis of the highest world technique and international division of labor. This was our idea when we ventured upon the October Revolution. The Party has formulated this idea ten, nay, hundreds of thousands of times in the press and at meetings. But since 1925 they are trying to displace it by an idea which is quite the opposite to that. Now we learn that the fact that Czarist Russia was "the weakest link" gives the proletariat of the U.S.S.R., the inheritor of Czarist Russia with all its weaknesses, an invaluable advantage which is no more and no less than the

possession of its own national prerequisites for the "complete construction of socialism."

Unfortunately, Britain does not possess this advantage in view of the EXCESSIVE development of her productive forces which require almost the whole world to be able to secure the necessary raw material and to dispose of her products. If the productive forces of Great Britain would be more "moderate" and maintain a relative equilibrium between industry and agriculture, then the British proletariat would apparently be able to build up complete socialism on its own island protected from foreign intervention by the navy.

The draft program divides in its fourth chapter the capitalist states into three groups: 1) "countries of highly developed capitalism (United States, Germany, Great Britain, etc.); 2) "countries of an average level of capitalist development (Russia prior to 1917, Poland, etc.); 3) "colonial and semi-colonial countries (China, India, etc.)."

Notwithstanding the fact that "Russia prior to 1917" was much closer to present-day China than to the United States, one could refrain from any serious objection to this schematic division were it not for the fact that it serves as a source of wrong conclusions in connection with other parts of the draft. Inasmuch as the countries "with an average level" are declared to possess "sufficient industrial minimums" for independent socialist construction, this is particularly true concerning countries of high capitalist development; it is ONLY the colonial and semi-colonial countries that need assistance. That is precisely, as we shall see later, how they are characterized in the draft program.

If, however, we approach the question of socialist construction only with this criterion, abstracting from other conditions such as the material resources of the country, the correlation between industry and agriculture within it, its place in the world economic system, then we will fall into new, no less gross, mistakes and contradictions. We have just spoken about Great Britain. Being no doubt a highly-developed capitalist country, it, PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THAT, has no chance for successful socialist construction within the limits of its own island. Great Britain if blockaded would simply choke in the course of a few months.

The draft program forgets the main thesis that the present productive forces are incompatible with national boundaries, from which it follows that highly developed productive forces are by no means a lesser obstacle in the construction of socialism in one country than low productive forces, although for the reverse reason, namely, if the latter are insufficient to serve as their basis, for the former the basis will prove inadequate. The law of uneven development is forgotten precisely at the point where it is most needed and most important.

The question of the construction of socialism is not at all settled merely by the industrial "maturity" or "immaturity" of a country. This immaturity is in itself UNEVEN. In the U.S.S.R., where some branches of industry are extremely insufficient to satisfy the most elementary home requirements (particularly machine construction), other branches on the contrary cannot develop under present conditions without extensive and increasing exports. Among the latter are such branches of first importance as timber, oil, manganese, let alone agriculture. On the other hand even the "inadequate" branches cannot seriously develop if the "super-abundant" (conditionally) will be unable to export. The impossibility to build up an isolated socialist society not as a Utopia, not on the Atlantic but in the concrete geographical and historical conditions of our earthly economy is determined for various countries in different ways—by the insufficient development of some branches and the "excessive" development of others. On the whole, this means that the modern productive forces are incompatible with national boundaries.

Endeavoring to prove the theory of socialism in one country the draft program makes a double, treble and quadruple mistake—it exaggerates the level of the productive forces in the U.S.S.R.; it closes its eyes to the law of uneven development of the various branches of industry; it ignores the international division of labor; and, finally, it forgets the most important contradiction inherent in the imperialist epoch existing between the productive forces and the national barriers.

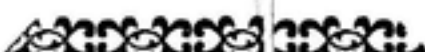
## 8. THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NATIONAL REFORMISM AND REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONALISM.

The question can be solved only on the arena of the world revolution. The new doctrine says that socialism can be built on the basis of a national state if only there would be no intervention. From here can and must follow (notwithstanding all pompous declarations in the draft program) an opportunist policy in regard to the foreign bourgeoisie. The object is to avoid intervention, as this will guarantee the construction of socialism, which is the main historical question to be solved. The task of the parties in the Comintern becomes, therefore, of an auxiliary character, namely their mission is to protect the U.S.S.R. from intervention and not to fight for the capture of power. It is of course not a question of the subjective intentions but of the objective logic of political thought.

"The difference here lies in the fact," says Stalin, "that the Party considers that these (internal) contradictions and possible conflicts CAN BE ENTIRELY OVERCOME on the basis of the inner forces of our revolution whereas Comrade Trotsky and the Opposition think that these contradictions and conflicts can be overcome 'only on an international scale, on the arena of the world-wide proletarian revolution.'"—(Pravda, Nov. 12, 1926).

Yes, this is precisely the difference. One could not express better and more correctly, the difference between national reformism and revolutionary internationalism. If our internal difficulties, obstacles and contradictions, which are in the main a reflection of world contradictions, can be settled merely by "the inner forces of the revolution" without entering "the arena of the world-wide proletarian revolution" then the International is partly a subsidiary and partly a useless institution, the Congresses of which can be held once in four years, once in ten years or perhaps not at all. If we were to add that the proletariat of the other countries must protect our construction from military interventions, then the International according to this scheme, must play the role of a PACIFIST instrument. Its main role, the role of an instrument of world revolution, recedes in this connection inevitably to a backward position. And this, we repeat, is not a result of anyone's deliberate intentions, on the contrary, many points in the program show the very best intentions of its authors—but as a result of the inherent logic of the new theoretical position which is a thousand times more dangerous than the worst subjective intentions. The draft program expresses an incontrovertible idea when it says that the economic success of the U.S.S.R. constitutes an inseparable part of the world-wide proletarian revolution. But the political danger of the new theory lies in the false comparative evaluation of the two levers of international socialism—the lever of our economic achievements and the lever of the world-wide proletarian revolution. Without a victorious proletarian revolution we will not be able to build up socialism. The European workers and the workers the world over must clearly understand this. The lever of economic construction is of tremendous significance. Without proper guidance, the dictatorship of the proletariat would be weakened but its downfall would be such a blow to the international revolution from which it would take many years to recover. But the main historical difference between the socialist world and the world of capitalism depends on the second lever, and that is the world proletarian revolution. The gigantic importance of the Soviet Union lies in the fact that it is a pillar of the world revolution and not at all because it is able to build up socialism independent of the world revolution.

The economic and political problem enters the world arena. Can the bourgeoisie secure for itself a new great epoch of capitalist growth and power? Merely to deny this, depending on the "hopeless position" which capitalism is in would be simple revolutionary nonsense. "There is no absolute hopelessness" (Lenin). The present unstable class equilibrium in the European countries cannot continue indefinitely precisely because of its instability. When Stalin and Bucharin maintain that the U.S.S.R. can get along without "State" aid of the proletariat of the other countries, that is, without its victory over the bourgeoisie, because the present active sympathy of the working masses protects us



## FOREWORD

With this issue the Militant prints the fourth installment of "The Draft Program of the Communist International: A Criticism of Fundamentals" by L. D. Trotsky. This document, a masterpiece of Marxist-Leninist literature was submitted by Comrade Trotsky to the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International which finally adopted the draft program drafted by comrades Bucharin and Stalin, without any important changes. The entire validity of this timely and fundamental criticism remains in spite of the fact that it was kept from the Congress and never discussed by the delegates. The sole attention accorded it was its distribution to members of the Program Commission and a report on the document to the "Senjoren-Konvent" of the Congress which immediately "settled" the issue without discussion.

A rigid control on this document was established forthwith and the few copies of the document which were distributed were recalled by the Secretariat. Our publication is an authentic copy which we have just received. It deals chiefly with the role of American Imperialism and the prospect of new revolutionary situations, the revisionist theory of "Socialism in one country," with the Chinese revolution and its lessons, and with the formation of workers and peasants parties which Trotsky, in line with Lenin, condemns in principle. Trotsky's comment on the "Third Party Alliance" with La Follette, the fight against which was led by him, will be especially interesting to American communists. The entire document will be printed in full consecutively in this and the forthcoming issues of The Militant without any changes. Its basic importance for the international revolutionary movement and the answerable correctness of its position on the burning problems of the Communist International make it an invaluable contribution to the Bolshevik literature of our period.

—Editor.



from intervention, this betrays such blindness as the entire ramification of the principal mistake in general.

It is absolutely incontrovertible that after the Social Democrats had disrupted the post-war insurrections of the European proletariat against the bourgeoisie, the active sympathy of the working masses saved the Soviet Republic. The European bourgeoisie proved, during these years, powerless in waging war against the Worker's State on a large scale. But to think that this correlation of forces will continue for many years, let us say, until the final establishment of socialism in the U.S.S.R. means to display the utmost short-sightedness and a judgment of the progress of a long period by the immediate development. Such an unstable position in which the proletariat cannot take power but in which the bourgeoisie does not feel firm enough that it is the master of its own home, must a year sooner or later, be definitely decided in one way or another, either in favor of the proletarian dictatorship or in favor of capitalist stabilization on the backs of the masses, on the bones of the colonial peoples and... perhaps on our bones.

"There is no absolute hopelessness!" The European bourgeoisie can find a way out of its grave contradictions only through the defeats of the proletariat and the mistakes of the revolutionary leadership. But it would be correct to say also the reverse. A new boom of world capitalism (of course with the prospect of new epochs of great upheavals) is impossible if the proletariat will only be able to find a way out of the present unstable equilibrium on the revolutionary path.

"It is necessary to prove now by the practice of the revolutionary parties," said Lenin on July 19, 1920 at the Second Congress, "that they are sufficiently conscious and organized and that they have enough contact with the exploited masses, and determination and ability to make use of the crisis for a successful and victorious revolution."—(Lenin, Vol. 1, page 264).

Our internal contradictions, however, which depend directly on the trend of the European and world struggle, may be reasonably regulated and abated by a proper internal policy based on Marxian forecast. But they can be finally overcome only when the class contradictions will be overcome, which is out of the question without a victorious revolution in Europe. Stalin is right. The difference lies precisely here, and that is the fundamental difference between national reformism and revolutionary internationalism.

## 9. THE THEORY OF SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY AS A SOURCE OF INEVITABLE SOCIAL PATRIOTIC BLUNDERS.

The theory of socialism in one country inexorably leads to an under-estimation of the difficulties which are to be overcome and to an exaggeration of the achievements made. It is impossible to find a more anti-Socialist and anti-revolutionary statement than that made by Stalin to the effect that nine-tenths of socialism has already been realized in the U.S.S.R. That statement seems to be suitable especially for a self-contented bureaucrat. By this one can hopelessly discredit the idea of a socialist society in the eyes of the laboring masses. The successes of the laboring proletariat are enormous if we take into consideration the conditions under which they have been attained and the inherited low cultural level of the past. But these achievements constitute an extremely small magnitude on the scales of the socialist ideal. For the worker, agricultural laborer, and poor peasant who sees that in the eleventh year of the revolution, poverty, misery, unemployment, bread lines, illiteracy, homelessness, drunkenness, prostitution, have not abated, the harsh truth and not pleasant falsehoods is necessary. Instead of telling him that nine-tenths of socialism has already been realized, we must say that by our economic level, by our social and cultural conditions, we are much closer to capitalism and a backward and uncultured capitalism at that—than to socialism. We must tell them that we will enter on the path of real socialist construction only when the proletariat of the most advanced countries will capture power; that it is necessary to work over that without folding our arms, and with the two levers at that—with the short lever of our internal economic efforts and the long lever of the international proletarian struggle.

One hears from prominent leaders of the Comin-

tern the following arguments. The theory of socialism in one country of course, is unfounded, but it gives the Russian workers a perspective in the difficult conditions under which they labor and thus gives them courage. It is difficult to measure the depth of the theoretical fall of those who seek in the program, not a scientific basis for their class orientation, but a moral consolation. Consoling theories which do not tally with facts belong to the sphere of religion and not science, and religion is an opiate for the people.

Our Party has passed through its heroic period with a program which was entirely orientated on the international revolution and not on socialism in one country. On its programmatic banners it was written that backward Russia with her own forces will not build up socialism. The Y.C.L. has experienced the most strenuous years of civil war, hunger, cold, hard Saturday-ings and Sunday-ings, epidemics, studies on a hunger diet, numberless sacrifices, paying dearly for every step forward that has been made. The members of the Party and the Y.C.L. fought at the fronts or carried logs to the stations, not that national socialism may be built out of those logs, but because they served the cause of international revolution for which it is essential that the Soviet stronghold holds out and for the Soviet stronghold every log is important. That is how we approached the question. The conception of time has changed and shifted so that God himself does not know the extent, but the fundamental idea has remained in full force now. The proletariat, the poor peasant, the partisan and the young Communists, have shown by their conduct up to 1925 when the new evangelism was for the first time proclaimed that they were not in need of it. But it is the official who looks down towards the masses, the petty administrator who does not want to be disturbed, the officer who seeks to command under cover of an all-saving and consoling formula, that need it. It is they who think that the ignorant people need the "good tidings", that the people cannot be dealt with without consoling doctrines. It is they who cling to the false words about the "nine-tenths of socialism" as this formula sanctions their privileged position, their right to command, their right to order, their need to be free from criticisms from the "incredulous", "sceptical" people.

Complaints and accusations to the effect that the denial of the possibility of building up socialism in one country dampens the spirit and kills enthusiasm are theoretically and psychologically closely related to the accusation which the reformists have always hurled along the same line against the revolutionaries, notwithstanding the different conditions under which they come. "You are telling the workers that they cannot improve substantially their conditions within the framework of capitalist society and by this alone you kill their incentive to fight." This is what the reformists used to say. In reality, under the leadership of revolutionaries, the workers really fought for economic gains and for parliamentary reforms.

The worker who clearly understands that the fate of the Soviet Republic and hence his own entirely depends on the international revolution, will fulfill his duty in relation to the U.S.S.R. much more energetically than the worker who is told that what we already possess is nine-tenths of socialism. For "is it worth while to strive for socialism?" The reformist orientation also here as everywhere else works not only against revolution but also against reform.

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In the article of 1915 dealing with the slogan of the United States of Europe, which has already been quoted we read:

"To regard the prospects of a social revolution within national boundaries means to become the victim to the same national narrowness which constitutes the substance of social patriotism. Vaillant to the very end of his days considered France the land of social revolution and it is precisely in this sense that he stood to the end for the defense of that country. Lensch and others—some hypocritically and others sincerely—consider that a defeat of Germany means first of all a destruction of the basis of social revolution. In general it must not be forgotten that in social patriotism there is apart from vulgar reformism a certain tendency of national revolutionary Messianism which believes its own national state, whether it is by the plane of its industry or by its 'democratic' form and revolutionary conquests, is called upon to lead humanity towards socialism or towards 'democracy.' If the victorious revolution would really be conceivable within the framework of a more developed nation this Messianism connected with the program of national

defense would have its relative historical justification. But as a matter of fact it is not conceivable. To fight for the preservation of a national basis of revolution by such methods which break up the international ties of the proletariat, actually means to undermine the basis of revolution which cannot be completed on a national basis but which cannot be completed on that basis under the present economic and military interdependence of the European states which has never been revealed so forcefully as during the present war. This interdependence which will directly cause concerted action on the part of the European proletariat in the revolution is expressed by the slogan of a United States of Europe." (Trotsky, Volume 3, Part 1, P. 90-91.)

Proceeding from a misinterpretation of the polemics of 1915, Stalin has many times endeavored to show that by "national narrowness" Lenin was alluded to. It is hard to imagine any bigger nonsense. When I polemized with Lenin I always did so openly because I was guided only by ideological considerations. In the given case Lenin was not involved in the least. The article mentioned the people against whom these accusations were hurled by their names—Vaillant, Lensch and others. One must remember that the year of 1915 was a year of social patriotic bacchanalia and of our heated battles against it. Every question was centered on this.

The principle question raised in the quoted passage, namely, THE CONCEPTION OF THE BUILDING UP OF SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY AS A SOCIAL PATRIOTIC CONCEPTION was undoubtedly formulated correctly. The patriotism of the German social democrats began as a patriotism for their own party, the most powerful party of the II. International. On the basis of highly developed German technique and the high organizational abilities of the German people, the German social democrats were bent on the construction of their "own" socialist society. If we leave aside the die-hard bureaucrats, careerists, parliamentary sharpers and political crooks in general, the social patriotism of the rank and file social democrats was a result precisely of the belief in the building up of German socialism. One cannot think that the hundreds and thousands of rank and file social democrats—let alone the millions of rank and file workers—wanted to defend Hohenzollern and the bourgeoisie. No. They wanted to defend German industry, the German railways and highways, German technique and culture, and especially the organizations of the German working class, as the "necessary and sufficient" national prerequisites.

A similar process took place also in France. Guesde, Vaillant and thousands of the best rank and file party members with them, and hundreds of thousands of rank and file workers in general, believed that precisely France with her revolutionary traditions, her heroic proletariat, her high culture, her flexible and talented people, was the promised land of socialism. Old Guesde and the Communal Vaillant, and with them the thousands and hundreds of thousands of workers did not fight for the bankers or the rentiers. They sincerely believed that they defended the basis and the creative power of the coming socialist society. They proceeded entirely from the theory of socialism in one country and made sacrifices to this idea believing that "temporarily" this was international solidarity.

The comparison with the social patriots will of course be answered by the argument that patriotism in relation to the Soviet State is a revolutionary duty whereas patriotism in relation to a bourgeois state is treachery. This is surely so. Can there be any dispute on this question among grown up revolutionaries? But this incontrovertible idea becomes as we progress more and more a scholastic cover for a deliberate falsehood.

TO BE CONTINUED

CLEVELAND

Cleveland, Ohio, Nov. 25, 1928.

Comrade and friend:

I received a copy of your Militant and I told the bureaucracy of District Six I cannot condemn policies I have never seen in print or otherwise.

I am opposed to expulsion of Bolsheviks, as it takes ten to fifteen years to make revolutionists, providing you have the material. I received a letter today threatening expulsion. This is their third attempt. I suppose they will be successful this time. I will fight for a genuine Workers Communist Party against the disruptionist tactics that are carried on.

JOHN FOLEY.