

A Criticism of Fundamentals - By L. D. TROTSKY

dictatorship does not do away with this fact, but confirms it, only in a different way, and under different circumstances. Were it not for the fact that they are DIFFERENT classes and have DIFFERENT interests, there would be no need for AN ALLIANCE. Such an alliance is compatible with the Socialist revolution only inasmuch as it exists within the iron frame of the proletarian dictatorship. In our country a dictatorship is incompatible with the existence of a so-called Peasant League precisely because every "independent" peasant organization with its own national political objects would inevitably be found to be an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

Those organizations which in capitalist countries are known as Peasant Parties are in reality a peculiar type of bourgeois party. The peasant who has not accepted the proletarian position in view of his private property will inevitably look towards the bourgeoisie when it comes to fundamental political issues. Of course, any bourgeois party that relies or wants to rely on the peasantry, and, if possible, on the workers, is compelled to masquerade, that is, to create the impression that it consists of two or three different component parts. The celebrated idea of the "Workers' and Peasants' Parties" it would seem, has been purposely created to camouflage the bourgeois parties which must seek support from the peasantry and are even ready to have in their ranks also workers. The Kuomintang has from now on forever entered the annals of history as a classic type of such a party.

Bourgeois society as is known, is so built that the propertyless, discontented and deceived masses are at the bottom and the contented and the fakers are at the top. On the same principle is also built every bourgeois party, if it is a real party, that is, if it has in its ranks considerable masses. The exploiters, fakers and violators are in the minority in class society, every capitalist party is therefore compelled in its internal relations, in one way or another, to reproduce or reflect the relations of bourgeois society in its entirety. In every mass bourgeois party the lower ranks are therefore more democratic and more radical than the leaders. This is true of the German Center, the German liberals, and particularly the German Social Democrats. That is why the constant complaints voiced by Stalin, Bucharin and others that the leaders did not reflect the sentiments of the "Left" Kuomintang rank and file, the "overwhelming majority", the "nine-tenths", etc., etc., were so unpardonably naive. That which was regarded as a temporary disagreeable misunderstanding which must be eliminated by means of organizational measures, instructions and circulars, is in reality a fundamental and basic feature of any bourgeois party, particularly in a revolutionary epoch.

It is from this angle that the chief argument of the authors of the draft program in defense of all kinds of opportunist blocs in general—in England or China—must be viewed. According to them fraternization with the leaders is done exclusively in the interests of the rank and file. The Opposition, as is known, insisted on a withdrawal from the Kuomintang:

"The question arises," says Bucharin, "why? Is it because the leaders of the Kuomintang vacillated? And what about the Kuomintang masses, are they mere 'cattle'? Since when is the attitude to a mass organization determined by what is done by its leaders?" (The Present Situation in the Chinese Revolution)

The very possibility of such an argument seems impossible in a revolutionary party. Bucharin asks "And what about the Kuomintang masses, are they mere cattle?" Of course they are cattle. The masses of any bourgeois party are always cattle, although in different degrees. For us, the masses are not cattle. They are not cattle, and that is precisely why we do not drive them to the bourgeoisie, CAMOUFLAGING THE BOURGEOISIE BY MEANS OF A WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY. That is precisely why we must not try to subordinate the proletarian party to the bourgeoisie, but on the contrary, must at every step, set up one against the other. The leaders of the Kuomintang of whom Bucharin speaks so ironically, as of some secondary, accidental and temporary event, are in reality the soul of the Kuomintang, its social substance. Of course the bourgeoisie constitutes only the "top" in the Party as well as in society, but this top has capital, knowledge, connection; it can always fall back on the imperialists for support, and what is more it has actual political military power which directly merges with power in the Kuomintang itself. Precisely this top wrote laws against strikes, throttled the movement of the peasants, got the Communists into a dark corner, and, at best, allowed them to be only one-third of the Party, took an oath from them that petty-bourgeois Sun Yat Senism is for them above Marxism. The rank and file were picked; they served it, like Moscow, as a "Left" support, just as the generals, compradores and imperialists served it as a Right support. To

consider the Kuomintang not as a BOURGEOIS PARTY, but as a NEUTRAL ARENA OF STRUGGLE FOR THE MASSES, to play on nine-tenths of the Left bourgeoisie in order to conceal the question as to who is the real master, meant to add strength and power to the leaders, to help them to convert ever larger numbers into "cattle", and, under favorable conditions, to prepare the Shanghai coup d'Etat. Based on the reactionary idea of the dual composition of the Party, Stalin and Bucharin imagined that the Communists together with the "Lefts" will secure a majority in the Kuomintang and thereby power in the country, as in China power was in the hands of the Kuo-THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL 129 mingtang. In other words, they imagined that by means of ordinary elections at a Kuomintang Congress power would pass over from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat. Can one imagine a more idealistic idolization of "party democracy" ... in relation to a bourgeois party? It must be understood that the army, the bureaucracy, the press, and capital are in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Precisely because of this it already has leadership in the governing party. The bourgeois "top" tolerates or tolerated "nine-tenths" of the Lefts, and SUCH KIND of Lefts, inasmuch as they did not venture to tackle the army, the bureaucracy, the press and their capital. By this powerful means the bourgeois top holds in subjection not only the so-called nine-tenths of the "Left" Party members, but also the masses in general. The theory of class alliance, the theory that the Kuomintang is a workers' and peasants' party, is the best the bourgeoisie hopes for. When the bourgeoisie later meets face to face with the hostility of the masses and shoots them down, in this clash of two real forces, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, there is not even a whisper heard of the celebrated nine-tenths. The pitiful democratic fiction disappears without a trace in face of the bloody reality of the class struggle.

Such is the real and only possible political mechanism of the "dual composition Workers' and Peasants' Parties for the East." There is no other and there will not be.

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Although the idea of dual composition parties is motivated on national oppression, as if this neutralizes Marx' class doctrine, we have heard already about "Workers' and Peasants'" bagatelles in Japan where there is no national oppression at all. Moreover, this is not limited merely to the East. The "dual composition" idea is endeavoring to become universal. The most caricature-like character in this respect was assumed by the Workers' Party of America in its efforts to support the candidature of the bourgeois, "anti-Trust" Senator La Follette, so as to attach, in this manner, the American farmers to the wheel of the Social Revolution. Pepper, the theoretician of the manoeuvre, who is one of those who has ruined the Hungarian Revolution and who failed to notice the Hungarian peasantry, made here a great effort to ruin the Workers' Party in its first stages of activity. Pepper's theory was that the super-profit of American capitalism converts the American proletariat into a world labor aristocracy while the agrarian crisis ruins the farmers and drives them onto the path of social revolution. A party of several thousand members, consisting chiefly of immigrants, had, according to Pepper, to make common cause with the farmers through a bourgeois party and form a dual composition party, insuring thus the social revolution with the passivity or neutrality of the proletariat which has been corrupted by super-profits. This confused idea had its followers and half followers among the leaders of the Comintern. In the course of a few weeks the scales vacillated from one side to the other until finally a concession was made to the letter of Marxism. Having been taken off its feet the American Party had to be cut off from the noose of the La Follette party which died even before its founder.

What modern revisionism invents for the East is carried over to the West. If Pepper tried across the Atlantic to whip up history by means of a dual composition party in the United States, the latest information tells us that the Kuomintang experience finds its supporters in Italy where they are endeavoring to force on our Party the monstrous slogan of a "Republican Assembly on the Basis (?) of Workers' and Peasants' Committees". In this slogan the spirit of Chiang Kai-shek embraces the spirit of Hilferding. Will we really come to that?

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In closing, we only have to recall that the idea of a "Workers' and Peasants' Party" discards from the history of Bolshevism the entire struggle against the Narodniki, without which there would have been no Bolshevik Party. What was the essence of that historical struggle? Lenin wrote about the S. R.s in 1909, the following:

"The general idea of their program was not that an alliance of the forces of the proletariat and peasantry is necessary, but that THERE IS NO CLASS DIFFERENCE between the two, that there is no need to draw a class distinction between them, that the Social Democratic idea concerning the petty-bourgeois character of the peasantry in contradistinction to the proletariat is fundamentally wrong." (Vol. 11, Part 1, page 198).

In other words, the dual composition Workers' and Peasants' Party was the central idea of the Russian Narodniki. Only in the struggle against this idea could the Party of the proletarian vanguard in peasant Russia develop.

Lenin insistently and persistently repeated in the epoch of the 1905 revolution, that:

"Distrust the peasantry, ORGANIZE SEPARATELY FROM THEM, be ready for a struggle against them, inasmuch as the peasants are a reactionary or anti-proletarian force." (Vol. 6, page 113. Our emphasis).

In 1906 Lenin wrote:

"The last advice is, proletarians and semi-proletarians of town and country, organize separately. Do not trust any possessors, even those small ones, even though they 'labor'... We support the peasant movement to the end, but we must remember that it is a movement of another class, not the class which can or will accomplish the social revolution." (Vol. 9, page 410).

This idea can be found in hundreds of the larger and smaller works of Lenin. In 1908, he said:

"The alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry, we will remark in passing, must by no means be understood in the sense of a MERGING OF THE DIFFERENT CLASSES OR PARTIES of the proletariat and the peasantry. Not only merging, but even ANY PROLONGED CONCORDANCE would be detrimental for the socialist revolution of the working class and would weaken the revolutionary democratic struggle." (Vol. 11, Part 1, page 79. Our emphasis).

Is it possible to condemn the very idea of a Workers' and Peasants' Party more sharply, more ruthlessly and more effectively?

Lenin puts the question in the same irreconcilable spirit also in the epoch of the October Revolution. In generalizing the experiences of the third Russian revolution, Lenin, beginning with 1918, does not miss a single opportunity to repeat that in a society where capitalist relations predominate there are only two decisive forces—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

"If the peasant does not follow the workers, he follows the bourgeoisie. There is and there can be no middle course." (Vol. 16, page 290).

However, the "Workers' and Peasants' Party" is an attempt at the creation of a middle course.

If the vanguard of the Russian proletariat had not stood up distinctly against the peasantry, if it had not waged a ruthless struggle against the petty-bourgeois looseness of the latter, it would inevitably have itself been dissolved among the petty-bourgeois elements through the S. R.s or some other "dual composition" Party which, in turn, would itself inevitably have been subordinated to a bourgeois leadership. In order to arrive at a revolutionary alliance with the peasantry—this is not attained so easily—it is first of all necessary to separate the proletarian vanguard and thereby the working class as a whole, from the petty-bourgeois masses. This can be attained only by means of training the proletarian party in the spirit of staunch class irreconcilability. The newer the proletariat, the fresher and more direct its "blood relationships" with the peasantry, the greater becomes the importance of the struggle against any forms of the "dual composition" political alchemy. In the West the idea of a Workers' and Peasants' Party is simply ridiculous. In the East it is ruinous. In China, India and Japan this idea is deadly hostile not only to the hegemony of the proletariat and the revolution, but to the most elementary independence of the proletarian vanguard. The Workers' and Peasants' Party can only be a basis, a cover, a spring-board for the bourgeoisie.

Fatalistically also, in this fundamental question for the East, modern revisionism only repeats the errors of pre-revolutionary Social Democratic opportunism. Most of the leaders of European Social Democracy considered the struggle of our Party against the S. R.s a mistake and insistently urged the merging of the two parties, holding that for the Russian "East" a dual composition Workers' and Peasants' Party is just the thing. Had we taken their advice we would have never realized the alliance of the workers and peasants nor the dictatorship of the proletariat. The "dual composition" Workers' and Peasants' Party of the S.R.s became, and could not help becoming in our country, an agency of the imperialist bourgeoisie, that is, it tried without success, to fulfil the same historical mission in a different and "peculiar" way that the Kuomintang successfully fulfilled in China. Without containing a relentless condemnation of the very idea of Workers' and Peasants' Parties for the East, there is not and there cannot be a Comintern program.

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