

Karl Radek and the Opposition

During the last few weeks there has been considerable talk in the world press about the "disintegration" of the Russian Opposition and comrade Radek has often been called the leader of the group that is joining Stalin. The uninformed — and they are the majority in the West — may conclude from this that Radek has only lately turned from the Opposition to the apparatus Centrists. In reality, comrade Radek's hesitation has been going on for about a year and a half. It would be still more correct to say that comrade Radek's path, beginning with 1923, has crossed with the line of the Opposition only to turn from it to the Right or to the Left — mostly to the Right — and then again to meet with it. Up till 1926 Radek held that it would be impossible to carry through any economic policy other than that of Stalin-Bucharin. Up till 1927 Radek was under the illusion that it would be possible to work together with Brandler and his group. Radek was against the Chinese Communist Party leaving the Kuo Ming Tang. After the general strike in England, Radek was against the dissolution of the Anglo-Russian Committee. After the Right and Left Kuo Min Tang had betrayed the revolution, Radek was against the slogan of the proletarian dictatorship and for that of the "democratic" dictatorship, interpreting that the same way Stalin, Bucharin and Martinov did. In 1928-4 Radek argued that the theory of the permanent revolution was basically one with the strategic line of Lenin. In 1928 he attempted to build up a complete contradiction in this question between Lenin and Trotsky. He had to repeat, with minor reservations, Zinoviev's hackneyed arguments. On the other hand, on the question of the Thermidor and two Parties, Radek went ultra-Left in 1927. He attempted several times to proclaim that the Thermidor was already "accomplished." For a time he refused to sign the Platform only because it spoke too categorically for a single Party. There is nothing unnatural in this combination of ultra-Left conclusions and Right premises. On the contrary, the history of the Comintern is replete with such combinations. Nor is there anything unnatural in Radek's going over so easily from ultra-Left deductions on the question of the Thermidor and two Parties to the road of unprincipled conciliation with regard to the Left-Centrist zig-zag. We have seen also in other countries, particularly in Germany, how easily people who have accused the Russian Opposition of "not going far enough," and who have proclaimed dozens of times that the Thermidor was already "accomplished," went over with their light baggage to the camp of the social democrats.

RADEK'S IMPULSIVENESS

To be sure, none of us means to put Radek on the same plane as these weathercocks. Radek has to his credit a quarter of a century of revolutionary Marxist work. Not only is he incapable of going over to the social democrats, but he can hardly become one with the Stalinites. At any rate, he will not be able to live together with them. He is too much of a Marxist for that, and, above all, too international. Radek's misfortune lies where his strength is: his excessive impulsiveness.

Radek is undoubtedly one of the best Marxist journalists in the world. It is not only the precision and strength of his style. No, it is first of all his ability to react with amazing quickness to new phenomena and tendencies and even to their first symptoms. Here lies Radek's strong point. But the strength of a journalist becomes a source of weakness to a statesman. Radek exaggerates and anticipates too much. He measures with a yardstick where it is only a matter of inches. Therefore he almost always finds himself to the Right or to the Left — much more often to the Right — of the correct line.

As long as we lived in Moscow, Radek's impulsiveness was often of service to the Opposition. At almost every session he would bring up suggestions for decisive changes in the policy of the Opposition — in the whole of it or in this or that question. He usually met with friendly resistance and was soon reconciled to it. But under his exaggerated and dangerous innovations one could often find some valuable observation or new impression. That is why Radek's participation was always beneficial to the collective work. And none of us would have made a list of the numerous zig-zags of Radek — to the Right as well as to the Left; more often to the Right, though, than to the Left. The trouble is, however, that since 1928 the leading group of the Opposition has been dispersed. All of us were separated from one another by enormous distances, and each was left to himself. It is clear that under such circumstances Radek's extreme impulsiveness would serve him badly.

RADEK'S RIGHT-ABOUT-FACE

Since February 1928 comrade Radek has made a very abrupt turn in the question of the Thermidor and "two Parties." He did not foresee the possibility of resistance on the part of the Centrists to the Right, as did all those who first heard about the Thermidor from us and immediately began to vow that it was already "accomplished." Only, since Radek does not merely repeat general, empty phrases, but tries to observe facts and understand them, he went to the opposite extreme. The Stalinites began to seem to him, after February 1928, to be Marxist, and the Thermidor almost a myth. Had we all been in Moscow, Radek would probably have quieted down after his first exaggerations — until a new flare-up. But Radek was in Siberia. He sent letters and theses to a number of comrades. Everyone jumped on him. The correspondence was intercepted by organs of the G. P. U. and turned over to the Central Committee. Yaroslavsky reported Radek's views at meetings, making a mess of it for lack of understanding and telling lies out of malice. Thus Radek became the

ced more and more to color Stalin's zig-zag in order to justify his own.

This story, as already stated, has been going on for about a year and a half. In July of last year Radek wrote his draft of an appeal to the 6th Congress. At that time the exiles were still permitted to correspond somewhat freely; the Stalinites hoped that the split would manifest itself more quickly that way. Through an exchange of telegrams between the colonies of the exiles a sort of vote took place on the two texts of the appeal to the Sixth Congress. Radek gathered half a dozen votes. My draft was signed by several hundred. In the end Radek also attached his name to the collective declaration.

On July 17, 1928, I subjected the draft of Radek's theses to an analysis in a letter which I sent to the exiles and to Moscow. I consider it timely to publish this analysis now. The reader will become convinced through that, I hope, that in 1929 Radek has added little to his mistakes of 1928. At any rate, these individual or group zig-zags, even when made with the best intentions, cannot turn the Opposition from its path.

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Constantinople,
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The Theses of Comrade Radek

Three days ago I received the draft of comrade Radek's theses, sent to the eight comrades. These theses have probably already been sent to the Congress so that the immediate practical purpose of my remarks is lost. But since we need clarity for the future as well, I consider it necessary to express an opinion on these theses.

THE ANTI-KULAK AGITATION

1. First of all, the theses say: "Several months of anti-Kulak agitation — that is a fact of the greatest political significance which it would be complete political blindness not to recognize." In these words the polemical spear is pointed in the wrong direction. In my opinion, the following should have been said: "Several months of anti-Kulak agitation, if they are not followed by a radical change in the line, will inevitably throw the Party back considerably and will undermine the last vestiges of confidence of the ranks in all slogans and in all campaigns."

2. With regard to the capital outlay, Radek says: "Instead of investing the basic capital in a series of undertakings in the same branch of production which would only show results several years later, concentration of funds is necessary in order to obtain goods with the least possible delay." This obscure expression is apparently intended to convey the idea that funds should be transferred from heavy industry to light. This is part of the Right wing's program. I see no reason why we should enter on that road. If it is a purely practical proposal, then it should be supported by figures; that is, it should be proved that in allocating the funds, the necessary proportion between heavy and light industry is not being preserved. If such a reallocation of funds were to be made only on considerations of the moment, it would mean to prepare a still greater crisis in two or three years. Improvisation in such a question cannot be allowed at all and, as has been said, is only grist to the mill of the Right. It is sufficient for us to demand the allocation of funds for light as well as for heavy industry.

3. With regard to the Stalinist argument that it is impossible to combat the Kulak as long as the middle peasant has not been won over, Radek's theses say: "We still haven't won over the middle peasant sufficiently." This is to embellish the reality. With our policies we have lost the middle peasant whom the Kulak has led away, something that is acknowledged by the February article in Pravda.

4. Coming out against the view that the left move is a mere maneuver, the theses say: "Whether or not this struggle will be carried to the end depends on the strength and the determination with which the working masses will insist on the extension of this struggle." This, of course, is true, but it is too general. It would mean: The Central Committee did what it could, but now it is the turn of the masses. In reality it should be said: "The measures undertaken above will result in an inevitable fiasco if the Opposition — in spite of the dreadnoughts of bureaucratic Centrism — will not educate the masses and help them carry this struggle to the end."

5. "The Center in the Party," say Radek's theses, "by concealing the existence of this group — the Right — only weakens the chances of the struggle for a correction of the Party line." This is to put it very tenderly. The struggle against the Kulak means in the Party a struggle against the Rights. Carrying on a "campaign" against the Kulak, the Center in the Party covers up the Right wing and stays in a bloc with it. The theses remark reproachfully that this "only weakens the chances of the struggle." No, it dooms the struggle to inevitable defeat, if the Opposition will not open the Party's eyes to this whole mechanics.

6. The characterization of Schwartz* as a "comrade keenly attuned and tied up with the proletarian masses" sounds strange. Did he protest anywhere against the infamous banishments under Article 58? It seemed to me that he "keenly voted for these banishments."

*Schwartz is the chairman of the All-Russian Miners' Union of the Central Committee of the

FRAUDULENT SELF-CRITICISM

7. With regard to self-criticism, the theses vow: "It is not a fraud and not a maneuver, because the intervention of a number of Party leaders implies the greatest concern for the fate of the Party and the revolution." Is not here meant the latest appearance of the master's (Stalin) understudy (Molotov) with a shower of abuse addressed to the Opposition and with an explanation that criticism of the administrative organs is useful, while criticism of the leadership — harmful? I should say: "If in the question of the Kulak the purely combinatory maneuver amounts to 10-20 per cent and the positive measures forced by the bread shortage amount to 80-90 per cent of the given zig-zag, then in the question of self-criticism the apparatus-manuevered tricks amount even at the present moment to not less than 51 per cent, and 49 per cent are general expenses of the maneuver: redeeming victims, scapegoats, etc., etc." There is hardly any reason for swearing with such assurance that there is neither maneuver nor fraud here.

8. Radek's theses refer to Stalin's speech before the students, without mentioning that with regard to the question of the Kulak, the speech is also a complete withdrawal of the February article in Pravda, and may mean the obliteration of the Left zig-zag also in this important and specific question. Incidentally, this speech is astounding for its illiteracy in economic questions.

9. Further on comes the explanation why the Center, as distinct from the Right, was against inner-Party democracy. Because, you see, our Party is not one hundred percent democratic — (Stalin). Radek's theses accept this explanation at its face value, repeat it and develop it. It is as if the Centrists were afraid that the insufficiently proletarian Party would not comprehend their truly proletarian policies. This is inadmissible apologetics. The Centrists felt that their Chiang-Kai-Shek, Purcell and Kulak policy would not be accepted by the proletarian kernel of the Party. That is why they have been and are strangling democracy.

10. "The question of inner-Party democracy lies alone in the awakening of the Party masses. If they do not take into their hands the matter of self-criticism" . . . etc. Again too general. In order that the masses may actually participate in this matter, it is necessary that they do not allow the Centrists to lull them to sleep. The Centrists have considerable means for that even now. They lack only the blissful confidence on our part. "Piatakoviade," "Safaroviade" are at present the most effective "opium" for the people. All the more frequent should be the antidote from us.

11. The deductions of Radek's theses with regard to self-criticism are the following: a) further extension of self-criticism; b) curtailment of the Party apparatus; c) proletarianization of the apparatus; d) prosecution of those who strangle democracy in the factory; e) ridding the Party of bourgeois and bureaucratic elements. All this is too general and is repeated on every possible occasion, without furnishing any guarantees. As an afterthought, it is said: "Finally, the readmission of the Opposition into the Party is necessary." That is correct. And in place of the other points, which are too general, it should be said more concretely: "a) to fix the date for the 16th Congress during 1928 and to bind the preparations for the Congress with every guarantee of real self-criticism; b) to publish immediately all the articles, speeches, and letters of Lenin that have been hidden from the Party — I have named seven groups of such documents in my letter to the Congress; c) to curtail at once the Party's budget twenty-fold, that is, to five or six millions, because the present budget is the financial basis of the apparatus of autocratic and bureaucratic corruption. These demands do not, of course, exhaust the questions of the regime, but they are perfectly concrete and mark a step forward."

PROBLEM OF THE COMINTERN

12. It is still worse when it comes to the question of the Comintern. Radek's estimation of the February Plenum as a great, in a way decisive, turn about face to the road of Marxist policy, is basically incorrect. The symptomatic significance of the February Plenum is very great; it shows that the Right-Centrist policy has landed completely in a blind alley, and that the leadership is trying to find a way out not to the Right, but to the Left, and that is all. There is no unifying idea in the Leftism of the February Plenum. This Leftism reminds one a great deal of the Leftism of the Fifth Congress. No real conclusion have been drawn from the greatest defeat of the Chinese revolution; instead there is the fanfare of boasting about the approach of the so-called new wave, with regard to the peasant movement — and this after the proletariat has been decimated. This whole perspective is false and the whole manner of approaching the question gives its blessing to adventurism. The little reservations on putches are for self-justification in the future. If there is a new wave, then the revolts in the provinces are not putches. In reality, it is the destruction of the remnants of the proletarian vanguard that is going on. Theoretically the Menshevik resolution on the Chinese question, though it was written in pseudo-Bolshevik terminology, should, from the strategic point of view, destroy the Chinese Communist Party. The English and French resolutions cover up the traces of yesterday, combining with them elements of ultra-Leftism and Right premises. Here, too, there is much resemblance to the Fifth Congress which tried to eliminate the question of the German defeat of 1923 by means of ultra-Left violence.

13. Finally, Radek's theses say that those should be returned to the Comintern "who sincerely