

Who Is Leading the Comintern To-day?

By L. D. Trotsky

Nothing characterizes better the transformation of the official Party of the Soviet Union than its attitude towards the problems of the international revolution. For the majority of the apparatus people, the Communist International has become an office to be attended to by those engaged for it. In these last years, the leadership has systematically disaccustomed the Party from interesting itself effectively in the inner life of the international labor movement, more particularly in the world Communist Parties. It must be said frankly: the present journalistic information in the U. S. S. R. on the events taking place within the international working class is distinctly inferior to the information given by the best organs of the social democracy before the war. It is not possible to put any faith in the present essentially official information whose purpose always conforms with the momentary interests of the leading circles. One must forego following from day to day the development of the labor movement and its internal struggles. Certain events are suppressed, others, on the contrary, are deliberately exaggerated; but even this is episodic.

After a long period, in which one Party or another has almost disappeared from the range of vision of our press, there suddenly appears a "new danger", a new "deviation",—a catastrophe! The reader, however, learns of this catastrophe only after the leading organs concerned have taken "their measures". The reader, (that is, the Party), is simply informed that the catastrophe, whose approach he had not the least notion of, has been happily liquidated thanks to the decision taken yesterday by the Presidium of the International and that the national section involved is again assured of a "monolithic" development. The monotonous repetition of this procedure stupefies the reader and plunges him into indifference. The average member of the Party begins to regard the successive catastrophes in the International, as those in his own Party, as the peasant looks upon the hailstorm or the drought: Nothing can be done about it, we must have patience.

It is obvious that his phenomenon is conceivable only because of the heavy defeats of the international revolution, the sense of these defeats, moreover, never having been explained to the masses of the Party, so as not to disclose the bankruptcy of the leadership. Only the great ideological capital, moral and political, inherited from the past and the fact of the existence of the workers' state, still makes it possible for the International to include in the ranks of its organization throughout the world (excluding the U.S.S.R.), 400 to 500,000 members at the very most.

THEORETICAL DISHONESTY

Theoretical dishonesty has become one of the most important weapons in the internal struggle. This fact alone is a sure indication of the deep-seated disease that is consuming the organism of the International. Ideological dishonesty in a revolutionary leadership is the same as slovenliness in a surgeon. The one and the other lead fatally to the poisoning of the organism. However, the theoretical dishonesty of the leadership of the International is neither an accident nor is it a quality peculiar to them: it flows from the contradiction between the principles of Leninism and the actual policy of the Stalinist faction. The less authority and cohesion there are, the greater is the coercion. Discipline, as necessary as salt is to food, has in these last years been found to displace food itself. But no one has yet been able to sustain himself on salt. The selection of persons takes place in conformity with the course and the regime of the Party. The Communist fighters are more and more replaced by the bureaucratic staff officers of Communism. This is most clearly and crassly seen in the very focal point of Communist leadership: the central apparatus of the International.

Accordingly, it is of the highest importance to give an account of the kind of elements, the political type of the representatives who at the present moment hold the reins in the Communist International. I do not possess the general statistics and the political characteristics of the bureaucracy of the International. Moreover, that is not necessary. It is enough to point out with the finger some of the most "conspicuous" figures that personify the present leading line and the present regime.

BELA KUN AND PEPPER

Since I do not pretend to give a systematic study in these rapid notes, and since the gallery of the Stalinist International must be begun with someone, we will first of all name Bela Kun, without wishing thereby to exaggerate his importance either in the good or the bad sense. In all justice it must be recognized that Bela Kun, at any rate, is not the worst element in the leading circles of the International. He is supplemented by two other Hungarian Communists: Varga and Pepper. All three play an international role, appearing almost continuously as teachers and spiritual directors of the national sections. Two of them, Kun and Pepper, are highly qualified specialists in the struggle against

"Trotskyism". The short-lived Hungarian Soviet republic still casts a certain luster of authority upon them. Still, it must not be forgotten that these politicians did not have to conquer power; it was foisted upon them by a bourgeoisie that had landed in a blind alley. Having taken power without struggle, the Hungarian leaders more than showed that they were not big enough to keep it. Their policy was a chain of errors. Let us confine ourselves to mentioning two of the links: first of all they forgot the existence of the peasantry by not giving it the land; secondly, in their joy they united the young Communist Party with the Left social democracy as soon as the latter wheeled its way into power. Thus they showed—and Bela Kun in the first place—that the experience of the Russian revolution had taught them to understand neither the peasant question nor the question of the role of the Party in the revolution. Of course, these mistakes, which cost the Hungarian revolution its life, find their explanation in the youth of the Hungarian Party and the extreme lack of political preparation of its leaders. But is it not stupefying that Bela Kun, like his social democratic shadow Pepper, can believe himself called upon to denounce us, Oppositionists, for an underestimation of the peasantry and a lack of understanding of the role of the Party? Where is it written that a man who, out of carelessness, has broken the arms and legs of his intimates, is on this account promoted to the title of Professor of Surgery?

At the Third Congress, Bela Kun, flanked by his indispensable counterpart, Pepper, adopted an ultra-Left position. They defended the strategy employed in Germany in March 1921, of which Bela Kun was one of the principal inspirers. Their point of departure was the following: unless the revolution is immediately aroused in the West, the Soviet republic is doomed to die. Bela Kun endeavored many a time to convince me to "take a chance" along this path. I flatly rejected his putschism, and, together with Lenin, I explained to him at the Third Congress that the task of the European Communists is not to "save" the U.S.S.R. with the aid of revolutionary stage-plays but the serious preparation of the European Parties for the taking of power. Today Bela Kun, with the Peppers of all variety, feels called upon to accuse me of "scepticism" towards the vital forces of the Soviet republic and of "speculating" solely upon the world revolution. What is called the irony of history assumes here the aspect of a veritable buffoonery. Really, it is not an accident that the Third Congress proceeded under the resounding, like a leitmotif, of Lenin's formulation: "All that because of Bela Kun's stupidities." And when afterwards, in my private conversations with Lenin, I tried to defend Bela Kun against too harsh attacks, Lenin answered: "I do not dispute that he is a fighter, but as a politician he is fit for nothing; the comrades must be taught not to take him seriously."

As for Pepper, he is the consummate type of the man who knows how to adapt himself, a political parasite. Such individuals have attached themselves and will always attach themselves to every victorious revolution as unfailingly as flies stick to sugar. After the catastrophe of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Pepper endeavored to enter into relations with Count Karolyi. At the Third Congress he was with the ultra-Left. In America he became the herald of the LaFollette Party and dragged the young Communist Party into the swamp up to its waist. It is hardly necessary to say that he became a prophet of socialism in one country and one of the most ferocious anti-Trotskyists. Now he has made this his profession, as others run a matrimonial agency or sell lottery tickets.

VARGA

On Varga I must repeat what I have already said, that he is the perfected type of a theoretician a la Polonius, at the service of every leadership of the Communist International. It is true that his knowledge and his analytical qualities make him a useful and qualified worker. But there is not the slightest trace of power of thought or revolutionary will in him. In this regard Varga is a miniature edition of a Kautsky. He was a Brandlerist under Brandler, Maslovist under Maslov, Thaelmannist under the void that is called Thaelmann. Conscientiously and scrupulously, he always serves up the economic arguments for the political line of others. The objective value of his works is entirely limited by the political quality of the instructions upon which he himself has not the least influence. He defends the theory of socialism in one country, as I have once said, by invoking the lack of political culture of the Russian worker who needs "consoling" perspectives.

MANUILSKY

Manuilsky, like Pepper, enjoys a sufficiently established reputation even within the faction to which he now belongs. The last six years have thoroughly de-

bauched this man whose principal quality is his moral inconstancy. There was a time when he had certain talents, not theoretical, not political, but literary. A certain flame, always feeble, burned in him. However, some kind of internal worm gnawed at him incessantly. Fleeing from himself, Manuilsky constantly sought for someone to lean upon. He always had something of the "errand-boy" in him. It suffices to say that for a long time he strove to remain attached to . . . Alexinsky. During the war, Manuilsky did not conduct himself badly. Nevertheless, his internationalism was always superficial. The October days were a period of hesitations for Manuilsky. In 1918, he proclaimed unexpectedly (for me, above all) that Trotsky had liberated Bolshevism from its national narrowness. After all, no one attached any great importance to his writings. Manuilsky lived quietly in the Ukraine as an administrator of little ability, asserting himself, however, as a fine narrator of anecdotes. Like all the present leaders, he came forward and began his rise only after the death of Lenin. His intrigues against Rakovsky served him as a spring-board. The general esteem enjoyed by Rakovsky in the Ukraine was such that in 1923 no one dared to begin a campaign against him, despite all the urgings from Moscow. Manuilsky did dare. In private conversations, between two anecdotes, he openly acknowledged the kind of a commission he was discharging, proclaimed his contempt for his commissioner, and even more, for himself. His acquaintance with foreign countries established the field for his further exploits: the Communist International. If one were to gather what Zinoviev and Stalin say about him, he would assemble a very curious treatise on political cynicism. On the other hand, matters would not be changed very much if one gathered what Manuilsky has said about Zinoviev and Stalin. At the Sixth Congress, Manuilsky appeared as the principal accuser of the Opposition. For one who knows the leading personnel and the past of the Party, this fact by itself alone settles the question!

VALETSKY

In the apparatus of the International and in the press, Valetsky plays a very conspicuous role. In Die Kommunistische Internationale and in Pravda he frequently denounces Trotskyism from the "theoretical" and "philosophical" viewpoint. He was created by nature itself for this sort of task. In the eyes of the younger generation Valetsky is simply an illustrious unknown. The older generation has known him for a long time. At the opening of the century, Valetsky made his appearance in Siberian exile as a fanatical supporter of the Polish Socialist Party (P.P.S.). At that time Pilsudski was his god. In politics, Valetsky was a nationalist; in theory, he was an idealist and a mysticist. He became the propagandist for the theory of decadence, and for the belief in God and Pilsudski. In our colony of exiles, he was isolated. At the time of the splitting of the P.P.S., called forth by the revolution of 1905, Valetsky was found on the more "socialist" wing (the Left), but only so as to defend there an extremely Menshevik position.

Already at that time he fought against the theory of the "permanent revolution", regarding not only as fantastic but as senseless the idea that the proletariat could come to power sooner in backward Russia than in Western Europe. During the war, he was at the very best to the Right of Martov. One can be sure that five minutes before the October Revolution, Valetsky was an irreconcilable enemy of Bolshevism. I have no information as to the time when he became a "Bolshevik." But in any case it was not until after the Russian proletariat had taken power firmly in its hands. At the Third Congress, Valetsky tacked about between the line of Lenin and the ultra-Leftists. Under Zinoviev he was a Zinovievist only to change opportunely into a Stalinist. His mobility and his elasticity are not yet exhausted. It is easy for him, with his light baggage, to change from one train to another. Today, this former nationalist, idealist, mysticist, Menshevik teaches the working class how to take power, despite the fact that he himself heard of it for the first time only after it had been conquered. People of the caliber of Valetsky will never conquer anything. But they are perfectly capable of losing that which has been conquered.

TO BE CONTINUED

DANGER SIGNALS IN THE EAST

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ary general", the "leader of the masses", and the like. This cannot be forgotten, for the present situation is the fruit of that policy.

The workers of the world who up to now have shown an alarming indifference and inaction in the present situation must be aroused, and will be aroused if the helm is turned and the defense of the Soviet Union based on a proper foundation: not on the fight for Russian claims in China, but on the genuine danger, that exists daily so long as Russia remains a workers' state, of attack by the White Guards and counter-revolution of world imperialism.