

Who Is Leading the Comintern To-day?

CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE

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The native element of the Petrovskys, the Rafeses and the Guralskys is the bustle behind the scenes, gossip and combinations, diplomatic tricks around the Anglo-Russian Committee or the Kuo Min Tang, in brief, the intrigues around the revolution. The flexibility and adaptability of these people have a fatal limit: they are organically incapable, either of testing revolutionary initiative in action or of defending their views as a minority. And yet it is just two qualities, which complement each other, that make a real revolutionary. Without the ability to stand obstinately in the minority, it is impossible to gather a confident, firm and courageous revolutionary majority. On the other hand, a revolutionary majority, even when once conquered, by no means become a permanent and irrevocable patrimony. The proletarian revolution marches over great heights and depths, over beaten paths, through tunnels, and down steep declivities. There are still enough of these heights and depths for a decade. That is why the continual selection of revolutionaries, tempering them not only in the struggle of the masses against the enemy but also in the ideological struggle within the Party, testing them in the great events and at brusque turning-points, is of decisive importance for the Party. Goethe has said that once a thing is acquired, it must always be won again in order to possess it in reality.

During the first Party cleansing, Lenin recommended that ninety-nine percent of the former Mensheviks be thrown out. He had in mind Menshevism not so much as a conciliatory political line but rather the psychological type of adaptability seeking a protective coloration and ready to camouflage itself as Bolshevik—only so as not to swim against the stream. While Lenin recommended the pitiless cleansing of the Party from those who adapt themselves, after his death these elements began to play a great role in the Party, and in the International, a decisive role. Guralski crowned and uncrowned the leaders of the French, the German and other Parties; Petrovsky and Pepper directed the Anglo-Saxon world; Rafes taught the Chinese people revolutionary strategy; Borodin was the state counselor of the national revolution. All are variations of one and the same basic type: parasites of the revolution.

It is needless to say that the present "Left course" of Stalin has in no sense disquieted this public. On the contrary, all the Petrovskys joyously enter into this Left course today, and the Rafeses fight against the Right danger. In this Left-Centrist campaign, which is three-fourths inflated and purely formal, the adapters feel themselves like fish in the water, demonstrating cheaply—to themselves and to others—what remarkable revolutionaries they are. At the same time, they remain, more than ever before, true to themselves. If anything can kill the International, it is this course, this regime, this spirit, incarnate in the Petrovskys.

MARTINOV

One of the inspirers and determined educators of the International after Lenin is Martinov—a wholly symbolic figure in the history of the revolutionary movement. The most consistent, and consequently the most stupid, theoretician of Menshevism, Martinov remained patiently sheltered from the revolution and the civil war in a comfortable refuge, like a traveler shelters himself from bad weather. He ventured forth into the light of day only in the sixth year of the October. In 1923, Martinov suddenly unbosomed himself by publishing an article in the Moscow review, *Krasnaia Nov.* At a session of the Political Bureau, in the spring of 1923, I said in passing, half in jest, half in earnest, but at any rate as bearer of ill omen: "Watch out that Martinov doesn't worm his way into the Party." Lenin, his two hands around his mouth like a trumpet, "whispered" to me so that he was heard throughout the room: "Everyone knows very well that he is a block-head." I had no reason to contest this brief characterization made in a tone of absolute conviction. I merely observed that it is evidently impossible to build a large Party only out of intelligent people and that Martinov could belong to another category. Now the peasantry has taken a serious turn. Martinov has not only wormed his way into the Party, but he has become one of the principal inspirers of the International. He has been brought closer and he has been elevated, or rather, they have come closer to him and they have stooped to him—solely because of his struggle against "Trotskyism". In this respect, he had no need to begin his education anew. He continues to fight the "permanent revolution" just like in the past twenty years. Formerly, he spoke of my under-estimation of bourgeois liberalism and bourgeois democracy. He has not changed the cliché. He has only inserted the peasantry.

In the Menshevik journals of the period of the reaction, one could find not a few articles by Martinov designed to bring proof that "Trotskyism triumphed for the moment in October, November and December 1905" (*sic*) when the elements ran riot and extinguished all the torches of Menshevik reason. The high point of the revolution—October, November and December 1905—was designated by Martinov as its "Trotskyist" decline. For him the genuine high point began only with the Imperial Duma, with the bloc with the Cadets, and so forth, that is, with the beginning of the counter-revolution.

Having tarried in his refuge for the end of a new play, infinitely more terrible, of the "unfettered elements", the October revolution, the civil war, the revolution in Germany and Austro-Hungary, the Soviet overthrow in Hungary, the events in Italy, and so

forth and so on, Martinov came to the conclusion in 1923 that the time had come to relight the torch of reason in the Russian Communist Party. He began where he had left off in the period of the Stolypinist reaction. In *Krasnaia Nov.*, he wrote:

"In 1905 L. Trotsky reasoned much more logically and consistently than the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. But the defect in his reasoning was the Trotsky was 'too consistent'. The picture that he painted gave in anticipation a very precise, charming idea of the Bolshevik dictatorship of the first three years of the October revolution, which as is well-known, ended by landing in a blind alley, after having detached the pro-

10th Plenum of the Communist International

The Tenth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International will be recorded in history as the most fruitless and superficial world gathering of a revolutionary movement that ever assembled to solve the burning problems with which it is confronted and to diagnose the diseases corroding its vitals.

Characteristic of the gathering was the monotonous mediocrity of its spokesmen and their auditors. The sessions of the Communist International, once illuminated by the genius of Lenin and Trotsky, flanked by Zinoviev, Radek, Rakovsky, Bucharin and a host of others, were "graced" this time by such fourth-rate functionaries as Kuusinen and Manuilsky, the main political reporters, droning out their platitudinous wisdom to an audience of officials. The importance attributed to this Plenum can perhaps best be estimated by the fact that Stalin, the present leader of the International, its spokesman and theorist—save the mark!—did not even bother to attend a single session, much less to make an address.

Of the political reports, the less said the kinder one is to the reporters. Very few even of the Party members today pay much attention to what a Kuusinen or a Manuilsky have to say; even fewer read it. Manuilsky may repeat a hundred times that he considers "the capture of the majority of the working class to be a burning task of the political moment today confronting the mass Communist Parties of Europe", but everyone knows that there are no mass Communist Parties in Europe and that Manuilsky took four hours to fail to tell his inattentive audience how to remedy the defect.

As for the dry-as-dust professor, Kuusinen, with his ABC class lecture on economics, he reached the height of his directive genius in the Comintern at the 10th Plenum in a bloodless battle of quotations from Marx and Lenin with Varga. When he had no quotations left to fire, he simply stated: "I am not quite certain if a Red professor would not be able to ferret out some sentence in Marx' works as a proof that Marx had even taken the effect of the conveyor system into consideration." In the face of the sharp defeats of the Comintern in half a dozen countries, of its decline in every section, of the advancing strength of the social democracy internationally, of splits and degeneration in the International, we have this pitiful Punch-and-Judy battle of words occupying half the Plenum's time.

One gets the same impression of senility from the remarks of most of the speakers, chewing over again, like old men, the cud of infantile theories on the offensive, on social democracy, on fascism, on trade union work, for which better men than they were whipped by Lenin and Trotsky almost a decade ago.

At this Plenum the "Third Period"—probably because Bucharin was its co-parent with Stalin—did not occupy the center of the stage. That place of honor was reserved for the new theory of "social fascism", and it was mauled about by one speaker after another. Bear in mind that it has become one of the main-springs of Comintern policy today. It appears in every manifesto, every thesis, every article and news-story in the Party press. Yet, after all of its phases had been exhausted—even Bela Kun's theory of "the possibility, nay, even the necessity of the transformation of democracy into fascism"—it remained for Martinov to admit that although "the question of social fascism is now of tremendous and fundamental importance, yet no definition of social fascism has been given in the theses or in the main reports"! As to Kolarov, who probably had no other answer to Varga's contentions, it remained for this oyster to shed a pearl of truly classic luster: "As a matter of fact, bourgeois statistics have now entered into the period of their fascization, becoming transformed into fascist statistics." This is a fact which comrade Varga overlooks! Had Kolarov produced nothing else in his career, he would achieve eternal fame by that alone.

The same wearying blabber in a vacuum featured the "struggle against the Rights and the Conciliators". Serra was denounced, Humbert-Droz and Ewert were denounced, Weisert was threatened. Bucharin was openly attacked. But only one of them was present and none spoke. The Right wing is not yet ready to play its full hand of cards. When it does, Manuilsky and Kuusinen may have a different song to sing.

But it is with Piatnitsky, head of the organization al section of the Comintern, that the greatest interest

lectariat from the peasantry with the result that the Bolshevik Party was obliged to beat a great retreat." (*Krasnaia Nov.*, Nr. 2, 1923, page 262. My emphasis).

Martinov relates here, in all frankness, what it was that reconciled him to the October: the great retreat of the N. E. P., rendered necessary by the retardation of the world revolution. Profoundly convinced that the first three years of the October revolution were nothing but the expression of the "historic error of Trotskyism", Martinov entered the Party and, without waiting for a moment, took the place of the heavy artillery in the struggle against the Opposition. This fact alone illustrates more eloquently than many theoretical discussions the profound evolution that has taken place in the upper circles of the Party leadership in these last years.

TO BE CONTINUED

lies. According to the theses of the International, the Communist Parties are now on the very verge of capturing the majority of the working class, and in many cases, of entering into acute revolutionary battle for power, in the streets, on barricades. A sober review of Piatnitsky's report shows in what position the sections of the International are today with regard to their organizational strength. Exaggerated though most of his figures still are, they nevertheless give shocking proof of the tremendous decline of the membership of the world Party. They are a striking refutation of all the sickeningly bombastic claims of the daily Party press. His report is worth reading. We give a small excerpt from it here, summarized and tabulated:

PARTY	MEMBERSHIP IN					
	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
Czecho-Slovakia	138,996	93,220	92,818	138,000	150,000	81,432*
Great Britain	5,000	10,730**	9,000	5,556	3,500	
France	68,191	83,326	65,230	56,010	52,526	46,000

*Tremendous drop reported by secretary since new Party crisis.
**In October, at the time of the great strikes.

These figures are typical, and that even they are highly colored is clear from Piatnitsky's report that the American Party has between 9 and 11 thousand members, when the real figure is closer to 3 or 4 thousand. And in every case, the perspective for the next future is an additional decline. The picture Piatnitsky gives of the trade union work of the various Parties, of the virtual liquidation of the shop nuclei, of the general passivity and indifference of the membership as a whole, is one of the blackest yet painted in our movement. Piatnitsky's only remedy is an appeal that new members must be recruited, that more work must be done, that all resources must be utilized, i.e., a commonplace; and yet no one else had any thing else to propose for this alarming loss of blood in the Comintern.

These generals who talked so loudly of the approaching revolution never looked back once to see that their armies are melting away or dying of political malnutrition. Not a moment was wasted on the really burning questions before the revolutionary movement; the Thermidorian danger in the Soviet Union and the platform of the Opposition; the two class worker and peasant Parties sponsored by the Comintern which still exist in India, Japan and Mexico; the new situation and consequently the new problems of the Chinese revolution; the danger of corruption and decay of the Communist Parties; the destructive ultra-"Left" somersaults that are discrediting the movement in Europe and America and alienating the masses of the workers, and numerous other vital questions.

If there is such a thing as a Third Period in the International then surely it is the period of the ideological and organizational decline of the Parties. The echo of its hollow rattle is a warning sound to all conscientious Communists.

How Not to Build New Unions

The *Daily Worker* (9-17-29) carries a story from North Carolina which says in part: "Ten thousand leaflets calling for a one-day protest strike . . . have been issued. 'Every mill worker into the National Textile Workers Union,' and 'Every class conscious worker into the Communist Party,' are the slogans of the leaflet, which is signed by Hugo Oehler, southern organizer of the National Textile Workers Union, and Bill Dunne, organizer for the Communist Party."

We cannot think of a more harmful and incorrect act yet taken by the Party in the Gastonia fight than the issuance of this joint leaflet with those slogans. It is one thing for the Communist Party to urge workers to join the N. T. W. U. It is entirely senseless for the N. T. W. U. to sign its name jointly with the Communist Party urging workers to join the latter organization—particularly in the present situation in North Carolina. That is not the way to build the new unions. It is the way to "politicalize" them to a sectarian death, to "Communistize" them out of existence as a mass organization. "The whole of the Communist problem," said Lenin, "is to be able to convince the backward, to work in their midst, and not to set up a barrier between us and them, a barrier of artificial childish 'Left' slogans." That is precisely what the leaflet does. It is incomprehensible how comrades like Oehler and Dunne can be got to endorse such ridiculousness. Neither Communists nor unionists will be made that way.